

Developing an Organization-Wide Safety Program

1. **Obtain Top Management "Buy-in"** - This is the very first step that needs to be accomplished. Top managers must be on board. If they are not, safety and health will compete against core business issues such as production and profitability, a battle that will almost always be lost. Management needs to understand the need for change and be willing to support it. Showing the costs to the organization in terms of dollars (direct and indirect costs of accidents) that are being lost, and the organizational costs (fear, lack of trust, feeling of being used, etc) can be compelling reasons for doing something different. Because losses due to accidents are bottom line costs to the organization, controlling these will more than pay for the needed changes. In addition, as you are successful you will eliminate organizational barriers such as fear and lack of trust – issues that typically get in the way of all of the organization's goals.
2. **Continue Building "Buy-in"** for the needed changes by building an alliance or partnership between management, your union (if one exists), and employees. A compelling reason for the change must be spelled out to everyone. People have to understand WHY they are being asked to change what they normally do and what it will look like when they are successful. This needs to be done upfront. If people get wind that something "is going down" and haven't been formally told anything, they will tend to naturally resist and opt out.

Identify key personnel to champion the change. These people must be visible and are the ones to articulate the reasons for the changes

3. **Build Trust** - Trusting is a critical part of accepting change and management needs to know that this is the bigger picture, outside of all the details. Trust will occur as different levels within the organization work together and begin to see success.
4. **Conduct Self Assessments/Bench Marking** - In order to get where you want to go, it is essential to know where you are starting from. You can use a variety of self-audit mechanisms to compare your site processes with other recognized models of excellence such as Star VPP sites. Visiting other sites to gain first hand information is also invaluable. You can use perception surveys to measure the strengths and weaknesses of your site safety culture. These surveys can give you data from various viewpoints within the organization. For instance, you can measure differences in employees' and managers' perceptions on various

issues. This is an excellent way to determine whether alignment issues exist and, if so, what they are.

5. **Initial Training** of management-supervisory staff, union leadership (if present), and safety and health committee members, and a representative number of hourly employees. This may include both safety and health training and any needed management, team building, hazard recognition, or communication training. This provides you with a core group of people to draw upon as resources and also gets key personnel on board with needed changes.
6. **Establish a Steering Committee** made up of management, employees, union (if present), and safety staff. This group's purpose is to facilitate, support, and direct the change processes. This will provide overall guidance and direction and avoid duplication of efforts. To be effective, the group must have the authority to get things done.
7. **Develop Site Safety Vision**, key policies, goals, measures, and strategic and operational plans. These policies provide guidance and serve as a check-in that can be used to ask yourself if the decision you're about to make supports or detracts from your intended safety and health improvement process.
8. **Align the Organization** by establishing a shared vision of safety and health goals and objectives versus production. Upper management must be willing to support by providing resources (time) and holding managers and supervisors accountable for doing the same. The entire management and supervisory staff needs to set the example and lead the change. It's more about leadership than management.
9. **Define Specific Roles** and responsibilities for safety and health at all levels of the organization. Safety and health must be viewed as everyone's responsibility. Clearly spell out how the organization deals with competing pressures and priorities, i.e., production versus safety and health.
10. **Develop a System of Accountability** for all levels of the organization. Everyone must play by the same rules and be held accountable for their areas of responsibility. The sign of a strong culture is when the individuals hold themselves accountable.
11. **Develop Measures** and an ongoing measurement and feedback system. Drive the system with upstream activity measures that encourage positive change. Examples include: the number of hazards reported or corrected, numbers of inspections, number of equipment checks, Job Safety Analysis (JSA), prestart-up reviews conducted, etc. While it is always nice to know what the bottom line performance is, i.e., accident rates, overemphasis on rates and using them to drive the system

typically only drives accident reporting under the table. It is all too easy to manipulate accident rates, which will only result in risk issues remaining unresolved and a probability for future, more serious events to occur.

12. **Develop Policies for Recognition**, rewards, incentives, and ceremonies. Reward employees for doing the right things and encourage participation in the upstream activities. Continually re-evaluate these policies to ensure their effectiveness and to ensure that they do not become entitlement programs.
13. **Awareness Training and Kick-off** for all employees. It's not enough for a part of the organization to be involved and know about the change effort. The entire site needs to know and be involved in some manner. A kick-off celebration can be used to announce "It's a new day," and seek buy-in for any new procedures and programs.
14. **Implement Process Changes** via involvement of management, union (if one is present) and employees using a "Plan To Act" process such as Total Quality Management (TQM).
15. **Continually Measure** performance, **Communicate Results** and **Celebrate Successes**. Publicizing results is very important to sustaining efforts and keeping everyone motivated. Everyone needs to be updated throughout the process. Progress reports during normal shift meetings (allowing time for comments back to the steering committee) opens communications, but also allows for input. Everyone needs to have a voice, otherwise, they will be reluctant to buy-in. A system can be as simple as using current meetings, a bulletin board, or a comment box.
16. **On-going Support** - Reinforcement, feedback, reassessment, mid-course corrections, and on-going training is vital to sustaining continuous improvement