

July 2016 – do you know how good (or bad) your health and safety performance is?



To manage a business requires critical data to be collected and for the data to be analysed to derive underlying performance and set strategic direction. Health and safety is no different but leaders need to be mindful that their analysis of, and focus on, health and safety statistics can influence the culture of the organisation.

The leadership influence on the culture of the organisation will directly impact on the reporting of hazards, near misses and incidents and therefore the opportunity to learn from these events through pro-active measures. If a negative health and safety culture exists and trust is poor within an organisation, can the absence of RIDDOR events and high potential incidents really be celebrated as a success?

Statistics play a part in the management of every organisation but mindful leaders do not believe good news audits or statistics and constantly challenge the organisation to ask the 'what if' questions. The absence of accidents does not mean the presence of great health and safety!

The opportunity to learn from events will be lost if the organisation attributes blame on individuals or teams on the front-line. Short-term 'fixes' such as further training, more processes and procedures or imposing penalties do not address the root causes and will further erode trust.

Consequently, the organisation loses the opportunity to learn and nothing changes because the flow of information and the opportunity for quality conversations reduces. Unfortunately, cover-ups occur and supervisors / managers ignore the obvious until a serious injury or event causes a shock to the organisation. Something that was entirely foreseeable and preventable!!!!!!!!!!

Mature organisations look beyond pure compliance and 'good news' statistics / audits to focus on the behaviours of people and the culture of the organisation. Leaders need to create an environment where people are trusted and feel enabled / empowered to make the right decisions each and every day because the culture in the business is one where health and safety is a core value and part of every business decision.

The content of this article is intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter. Specialist advice should be sought about your specific circumstances.

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