HUMAN FACTORS

BRIEFING NOTE No. 18

Leadership

Process safety leadership – leadership entails influencing and directing others within the organisation and is distinct from 'management'. Leaders can work at any level in the organisation. Leaders use the framework provided by the safety management systems to plan, deliver, monitor and review process safety initiatives and activities. Leaders have a strong influence on the safety culture of an organisation.

Why leadership? The illusion of leadership

Recent events across a range of major hazard industries show that there is a need for health and safety to be led from the very top of an organisation. In some organisations, good procedures and management structures appeared on paper to be in place, but on closer examination those at the Board level were found to be either uninterested in health and safety issues, ill-equipped to deal with such issues, believed they had health and safety under control but were measuring the wrong things, or in some other way failed to take a positive lead on safety.

Does your organisation have effective safety leaders?

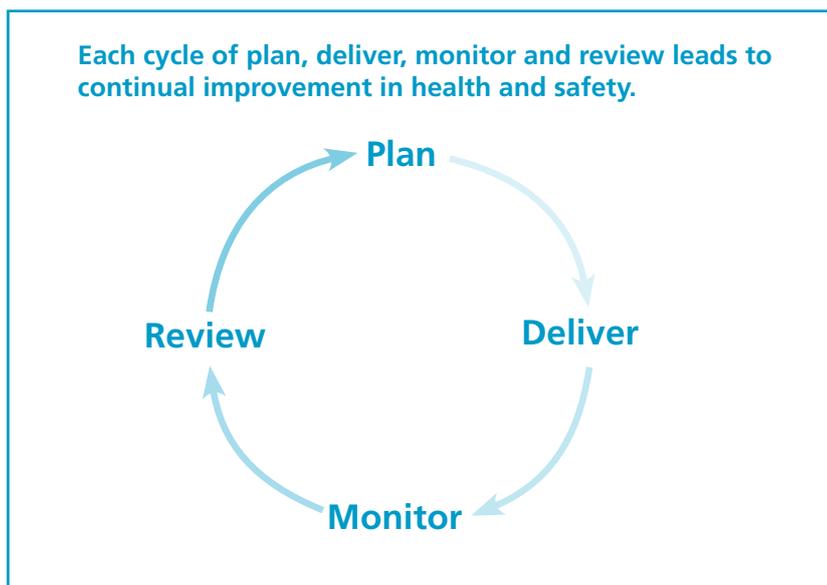| If the answer to any of the following questions is 'No', then you should take action!	Yes	No
1. Does the workforce know who leads health and safety in your organisation?		
2. Are your leaders visibly committed to the organisation's safety policies – for example, do they show this by useful site visits and regular two-way communications with the workforce on safety matters?		
Do your leaders:		
3. Respond rapidly and positively to reported problems?		
4. Provide clear incentives to act safely?		
5. Ensure that everyone knows their responsibilities regarding safety?		
6. Ensure that the workforce has the right competencies to meet their safety responsibilities?		
7. Give safety top priority – for example, by putting safety first on meeting agendas; by supporting anyone who stops production for safety reasons?		
8. Provide adequate funding and other resources (e.g. time) for safety initiatives?		
9. Look beyond your own organisation for fresh ideas and information?		
10. Actively check that safety procedures are being followed?		
11. Take firm but constructive action if procedures are not being followed?		
12. Have the trust and respect of the workforce?		

What should my company do about it?

Health and safety should be led from the very top of an organisation. Board members should demonstrate clearly that they are committed to health and safety and communicate their message to all employees ideally by 'walking the talk' on site.

The workforce should be included in health and safety related initiatives and should receive training to allow them to do this (see Reference 1 on workforce involvement).

The Board should ensure that all risks to health and safety are identified and treat them with the same priority as business risks. They should seek advice and external support if necessary on all matters of health and safety that they are not entirely competent in themselves and should continue to monitor, review, report and improve health and safety performance.

The framework in the diagram below of 'plan', 'deliver', 'monitor' and 'review' is similar to a standard safety management model, but the message from recent events, from regulators and from industry is that health and safety must be owned and driven from the very top of the organisation and given the same priority as other business goals.

Each cycle of plan, deliver, monitor and review leads to continual improvement in health and safety.

Plan → Deliver → Monitor → Review → Plan

Plan

- Board level meetings should have safety regularly on their agenda.
- At least one health and safety champion should be appointed from the Board (though maintaining collective Board responsibility for health and safety).
- Safety should be made a director level responsibility (with all management levels having responsibility for health and safety).
- The Board should set targets for health and safety.
- Processes for dealing with risk should be robust.

Deliver

- Provide adequate resources for health and safety.

- Seek advice from competent experts.

- Conduct risk assessments.

- Involve employees or their representatives in health and safety decisions.

- Manage changes that could affect health and safety.

- Ensure leadership presence on the shop floor is visible and sets a good example.

- Set health and safety standards for procurement of goods and services.

- Ensure that any changes required by law or as a result of events outside the organisation are made.

- Assess supplier standards.

- Set up a risk management or health and safety committee with senior executives as chair to set priorities for health and safety.

- Provide health and safety training to the Board to increase awareness where necessary.

- Promote workforce participation in health and safety.

Monitor

- Create effective systems for routine reporting and for reporting of exceptional issues such as incidents.

- Monitor incidents, accidents, sickness and absence rates.

- Monitor progress on initiatives to improve health and safety such as training and maintenance programmes.

- Report impact of changes on safety as soon as possible.

- Benchmark performance against others in the organisation's sector.

- Include health and safety in senior management appraisals.

- Monitor contractors' health and safety performance.

- Consider involving the workforce in monitoring programmes.

Review

- The Board should review health and safety at least annually and:

  - Determine whether the current policy is still valid.

  - Determine whether systems for reporting up to the Board have been working effectively.

  - Identify problem areas, especially those caused by management decisions.

  - Take action to solve these problems, and then monitor those actions.

- Include health and safety in annual reports to investors.

- Take credit for and publicise good health and safety performance.

CASE STUDY 2

Bristow Group set up a safety campaign known as 'target zero', strongly believing that their vision (that accidents can and should be prevented) is achievable but required new ways of reducing risk.

The company conducted a survey of employees' safety perceptions, then held a series of safety leadership workshops for 500 managers, supervisors and others in positions of influence.

The purpose was to ensure that all involved were able to:

- Convey the target zero message to their own teams face to face.

- Identify tangible safety improvements to show commitment.

- Take the lead on safety by setting an example and making their teams accountable for their safety behaviour.

Specific coaching and leadership skills were also taught within the workshops and decision-making and incident investigation exercises were conducted.

Participants were supported in developing their own target zero implementation plans. A follow up survey showed that the campaign was proving successful.

Source: Andy Evans and John Parker, *Beyond safety management systems*, Flight Safety Foundation, Aerosafetyworld, May 2008.

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www.energyinst.org/humanfactors

Management responsibility

Research shows that senior managers, middle managers and supervisors strongly influence safety in an organisation. Two key problems are:

1. Some managers underestimate the influence they have.

2. They may know what makes a good leader but find it difficult to translate this into action.

Leadership is not simply management – managers are no longer required to simply direct work and check compliance with rules and procedures.

Instead, to become true leaders, they need the skills to motivate employees, develop trust, increase participation. They need to adopt attitudes, styles of management and behaviours that encourage their teams to be equally committed to safety. If managers are unsure about these matters, leadership training courses are available, though these should be chosen carefully as not all of them are effective.

References

1. Energy Institute (2008), *Guidance on effective workforce involvement in health and safety*, http://www.energyinst.org/WFI.

Further reading

- HSE webpage: http://www.hse.gov.uk/leadership/.

- HSE leaflet INDG277 *Leadership for the major hazard industries*, HSE Books.

- HSE (2003), *The role of managerial leadership in determining workplace safety outcomes*, RR044, http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr044.htm.

- HSE (2007), *Leading health and safety at work*, INDG417, HSE Books.

- HSL (2005), *Director leadership of health and safety*, Report number HSL/2005/21, http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/hsl_pdf/2005/hsl0521.pdf

- HSE (2001), *Development of a leadership resource pack*, OTO200/098, http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/otopdf/2000/oto00098.pdf.

For background information on this series of publications, please see Briefing note 1 *Introduction*.