



Key Factors for Health and Safety Success

- What factors are involved in managing Health and Safety well?
- How can you use it as a positive force in your Company?

To help you take an overview and size your Company up against the most important Health & Safety issues, we have put together 8 Key Factors that, if managed well, will lead you to success.

Ask yourself how your Company measures up to the following 8 Key Factors..

1. Do you.. know what you're doing in Health & Safety

(or do you know someone who does!)



“No human being will work hard at anything unless they believe that they are working for competence”.

William Glasser

Competent Advice is a legal requirement¹. This shouldn't be surprising, as if you don't know what you're doing you'll probably get it wrong.

If you have someone 'in-house' who knows about H&S law and Codes of Practice, then you are lucky as this is rare in small businesses.

If you're not sure, then ask yourself whether the person you'd like to nominate to this position has sufficient H&S expertise in terms of these factors: Skill, Training, Attitude, Knowledge, and Experience. (hint: think - are they a good 'STAKE-holder'?).

Just as important as knowing what the law requires is knowing how to prioritise effort and how to efficiently implement this in a way that fits your Company – this is where your Adviser will save you time and money.

Whether you have someone internally, or you choose to outsource this until you can manage it yourselves, you'll need to designate them as your 'H&S Competent Person' in your H&S Policy so that your managers know who to go to for advice on complying with H&S legislation, Codes of Practice etc.

¹ Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

2. Do you.. tell people know what you want them to do?



“The length of this document defends it well against the risk of its being read”.

Winston Churchill

Health and Safety Policies are a vital – and don’t always have to be long and boring!

As well as being a legal requirement², they set the tone, legitimize actions, and act as a valuable communication tool. But they also need to be written clearly and as concisely as possible.

Many Policies aren’t seen as useful because they become jam-packed with Do’s and Don’ts – sometimes in a vain attempt to pass responsibility onto employees. Your Policy should be written from a Management perspective i.e. what the Company is doing to effectively manage this important element.

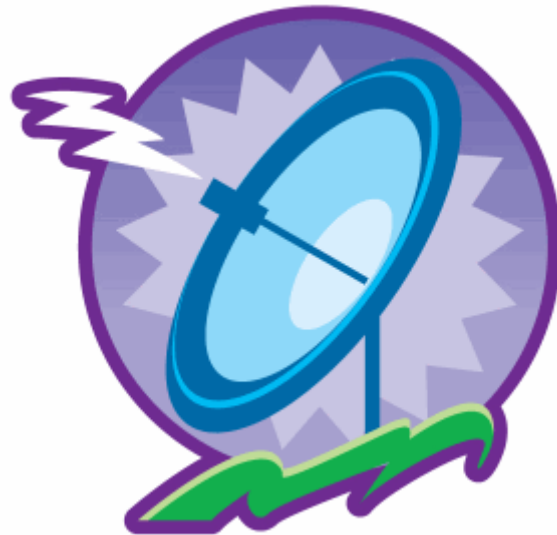
As important as the drawing up of a good H&S Policy is making sure there is collaboration in its formation, and making sure that it is

- promoted (so that everyone knows about it) and
- maintained (so that it doesn’t get out-of-date).

To support the Policy, senior managers must then visibly show their commitment by consistently following it and getting involved in making improvements.

² Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

3. Do you.. communicate regularly and effectively on H&S matters?



“Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after”.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Communication on H&S matters between and within different levels of your Company must be effective - and to be effective it needs organising, both formally (e.g. policies and procedures) and informally (e.g. team meetings).

One method that is effective is the creation of ‘diagonal slice’ groups – such as worker, team leader, engineer and manager – to work together as an improvement team.

Staff must, by law, be consulted about measures that may affect their health and safety. At the very least, all your staff should know how to identify hazards, suggest control measures, and provide feedback.

However, ideally they should feel that they ‘own’ the Company’s health and safety standards and procedures - because they have helped to create them.

They should also feel that management have confidence and trust in them and that there is recognition of good safety performance.

In fact, there should be as much effort spent on rewarding good performance as correcting poor performance.

Don’t think that all this needs to be expensive – it can be as simple as a ‘thank-you’ or a message in an email or on a notice board.

4. Do you.. target the risks that need sorting out quickly, against those that are not significant?



“He that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils; for time is the greatest innovator”.
Francis Bacon

Risk Assessments are required by law³.

There are hidden benefits in having a good risk assessment system in that you gain the confidence to work on reducing the important risks, and leaving other matters until later on.

A key test of good risk assessments is whether anyone ever looks at them – they should directly relate to what’s going on at your workplace, and should be reviewed in the light of new information.

Sometimes, productivity and safety seem to be at odds with each other. It’s important that those in managerial or supervisory positions keep their heads when productivity appears to be under threat – maybe because of an unforeseen snag. Safety should never routinely be jeopardized in favour of productivity, so it’s important to think carefully through any amendments to working practices that are risky, but haven’t been through the normal risk assessment process.

P.S. For more support on carrying out Risk Assessments, you’re welcome to request a free copy of our ‘Guide to General Risk Assessment’ from our ‘Latest Offers’ webpage.

³ Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (and other specific Regulations)

5. Do you.. match time, money, and other resources with your H&S priorities?



“Life is constantly providing us with new funds, new resources, even when we are reduced to immobility. In life's ledger there is no such thing as frozen assets”.

Henry Miller

Resources for H&S can mean many different things e.g.

- time spent on putting documents together
- effort spent in solving a H&S problem
- time or money spent on the training of staff
- money spent on buying safer equipment.

It is clearly helpful to H&S efforts if the organisation is in a good financial state, however when finances aren't so good the law doesn't allow the neglecting of H&S standards.

In fact, many of the resources start with something we all seem short of these days – ‘time’. If you've not honed your time management skills, then it's likely you'll never have time to properly manage H&S

Overall the answer is to try to allocate resources in proportion to the risks. A proactive risk assessment programme will help in controlling the resources you spend on H&S, so that you have a sound justification for why a certain problem was tackled, whilst another was put on the ‘back burner’ for resolving later.

6. Do you.. train your people for what you want them to do to make improvements in your H&S?



“It is your people who make the ultimate difference. You put the investment into training the people and then, when you get invited to the party with the big boys, that is a unique selling point”.

Franz Kafka

Training for health and safety should be properly managed. Too often, training is used as a ‘one-hit’ solution, or as a vehicle to blame staff at a later date (‘we told them this during the training’).

Training should be designed and provided only after careful consideration of what training is needed and why. For example, it would make no sense to get everyone trained in ‘Manual Handling’ when your risk assessments show that the major risk your Company faces relates to lack of staff who are trained to enter ‘Confined Spaces’.

There should be a clear route to the trainee using any new knowledge/skills back in the workplace. Managers should be involved in choosing training, and be prepared to support newly-trained staff so that they can start to integrate new knowledge and skills into their work.

Obviously, the content of any training must be well-targeted and the quality high. Professional support should be used when needed – don’t assume that just because a member of staff is experienced, they can necessarily get the messages across. Training should be stimulating and involving - we’ve all sat through long training sessions where the only thing remembered is the monotonous drone of the trainer’s voice!

7. Do you.. plan and integrate good Health and Safety practices as a part of the job roles within your company?



“Plans are nothing; planning is everything”.
Dwight D. Eisenhower

Job Planning is important, so that workers aren't unwittingly being 'set up to fail'. When jobs just 'evolve', misunderstandings become engrained and often only come to light after an accident. In addition, 'evolving jobs' put all of the control in the hands of the employee and weakens management, particularly when key people leave the business. So try and get some of the basics right such as revising the job descriptions, carrying out induction training and refresher/development training, keeping up supervision and setting targets.

As part of designing a job, consideration should be given to the working environment. This can include simple - but often forgotten or neglected - factors such as the space available to work in and the ergonomic design and layout of the workplace, levels of heating, lighting, ventilation, general housekeeping and hygiene facilities, and equipment suitability.

Although jobs themselves may be designed for the 'average employee', management should be flexible in allowing adaptations for others e.g. persons outside of these average dimensions, those with disabilities or pregnant staff.

It is also desirable to have a balanced-age workforce. Age discrimination law tells us not to discriminate against workers because of their age, but it is also sensible for safety reasons so that older, more experienced and socially stable workers can pass on their experience.

8. Do you.. look to see where you can improve and take constructive criticism well?



“The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with, but whether it is the same problem that you had last year”

John Foster Dulles

Continual improvement in H&S should be your goal. The journey never stops! You must aim to improve the methods you use, and learn from any mistakes made along the way i.e. make use of the feedback mentioned above.

Businesses that get it wrong often see H&S as something that can be done in ‘one hit’, but the most vital stages of any policy, procedure, or risk assessment is to carry out a review and modify things that need changing.

Sensible procedures are honed over time – but the good news is that this should eventually lead to a reduction, rather than an increase, in bureaucracy as the risks you decided were significant at the beginning of the process become better controlled or eliminated.

P.S. If you just haven’t got the time or expertise to organise all this, then Consultancies like ‘Just Health and Safety’ specialise in making the process easy for you.

Call us on 01202 417 022 to find out if we are ‘Just’ right for you.