

Integrated Safety Management System

(Adapted from “Creating & Maintaining a Practical Based Safety Culture©”)

The Four Whats, the Four Hows and the Tools of Safety Management

I’ve been experiencing health and safety management for over thirty years now. I’ve evolved my thinking as I continue to learn about what needs to be managed and how those critical safety factors need to be managed. I’ve developed this view of safety management from seeing tens of thousands of worksites and thousands of companies. Everywhere I’ve been and everywhere I will go in the future people are managing these factors in a variety of ways. Some companies will excel and see marvelously positive rewards for their safety efforts. Some will fail miserably and be extremely frustrated by safety.

My model of safety management is called the Integrated Safety Management System (ISMS of short...rhymes with prisms); it comes from the observation of those many places where people work and play. I didn’t invent this management system; I observed it over many years until it finally made sense to me.

ISMS – Everything is Connected

The most interesting thing that I’ve observed is that there are four critical factors that need to be managed and are present in every workplace. There are four critical ways in which these factors need to be managed. The success your company has in safety is linked to the degree in which you managed those critical whats and hows of the ISMS.

I first described this model in my popular book *The Emperor Has No Hard Hat – Achieving REAL Workplace Safety Results*. These factors and methods are all connected together and they have a significant impact on all of the other factors and methods we use. If we do them all in an integrated and thoughtful manner we will get REAL safety results that we’re proud of. If we do these things poorly we will be frustrated and extremely unhappy with the results we get for our efforts. So as you join me on the journey to understand how to get real safety results, remember that all of these things are intra-dependent on each other and need to be managed as a whole.

Fractionalizing your efforts will undermine your efforts and in fact may be the very reason you are reading this book. Your frustration with your lack of results has driven you to seek out a solution. Well my friends, you have indeed found the solution. The beauty of this system is that it is already being managed in your company, you just need to start to align your efforts in an integrated fashion. By thoughtfully and skilfully starting to think and act a bit differently you will see different possibilities and certainly different results. As I tell all who will listen, if you do the things in this system in the ways prescribed, and you don’t get outstanding safety performance let us know. We’ll send out a team of scientists to see how you managed to screw this up!



Figure 1

The Four Whats

I believe that for good communication of the issues that four main categories of “what to manage” are alive and well in all organizations. They are:

- Company Culture
- Accountability
- Safe Environment
- Safe Behaviours

Let’s start with the four critical things that need to be managed well to get these safety results I’m promising. Remember that they are integrated and intra-dependent on each other. They all have a dramatic effect on each other so they cannot be managed in isolation. It is because these factors are intra-dependent that they are in no particular order of importance. I haven’t given them priority numbers (Figure 1). Instead, I have linked them graphically because they are all very much connected. We could start anywhere so let’s start with company culture.

Company Culture

Company culture is simply “the way it is around here”. It is how your company thinks and acts as a group of people. It is the result of your collective thinking and actions (and in some cases your inactions). In most companies their desired state of culture is reflected in their mission, vision, and value statements. The culture is created by your intentions and your actions. The gap between what we intend for our

companies and what actually happens is manageable. There are extremely logical and practical ways in which to manage the factors that create our cultures. There are also some very impractical and frankly highly ineffective ways in which to do this. You've probably experienced some of those in your history of managing safety. The methods used by successful companies will be revealed as you work through the sections of this book. Always remember that the culture is already there at your company. The question is, are you managing it with purpose and clarity?

The safety component of your company culture is demonstrated by what you say about how you want safety to be, then by what you collectively do about it. The time and money you spend on safety is a measurable demonstration of your desire to actually create safety.

Accountability

Every company has an accountability system. In fundamental terms this is what is measured as important, and what happens when people do or don't do what is important. The critical questions here are "what is held important to us here at our company?" and "how are employees and contractors motivated to do the important things and dissuaded from doing the things that aren't desired by our company?" What gets measured gets done, what gets rewarded gets results. Holding people positively accountable to do the things that create safe production makes it much more likely that you'll succeed in achieving world class safety results. Managing this factor poorly will just as assuredly result in frustration and unintended results. Holding people accountable for the wrong things can get people injured and killed.

This is the fundamental reason that some companies fail to get the safety results they truly want. They have inflicted upon themselves a safety management system that doesn't fit their culture. They have bought into an audit system that doesn't measure how they do business. They artificially do safety tasks that are added onto the way they do their work-it's not part of the way their work gets done. Therefore they are doomed to failure. Practical Based Safety Culture© companies wouldn't dream of doing something "for the audit." It's silly and counter-productive. Who wants to be working against themselves? That's what buying into an off the shelf safety management system does.

Safe Environment

This is simple enough- the tools, equipment, materials and work environment that we supply and manage have a huge impact on what happens to us. The more we manage these things the better our results. Using the wrong tool or an inappropriate piece of machinery will predictably result in an unintended consequence. We won't like what happens. In some cases this will result in a serious injury or death. The materials we use in our business have a huge impact on our health and safety and need to be constantly managed. The work environment in which we do our work or provide our services also impacts our results. Managing this factor can improve our results in measurable ways. Look carefully at the "hardware" your company uses. If this part of the ISMS model isn't right, then fix it!

Safe Behaviours

Much of what has been written and sold as behaviour-based safety is neither practical nor logical. I hesitate to use the term myself, since I've heard such bad delivery of the term in a lot of instances. In ISMS, safe behaviour is not a program; it's not a package of observation cards. It's not like some consulting companies would have you believe. It was once described to me by one very dissatisfied client of a 'famous' BBS provider as the intravenous BBS drip. "In ten years they will STILL be here inflicting their brand of manipulating humans on us."

Managing the safe behaviour component is as simple as developing an understanding of how humans are. How we act and why we act in certain ways. We don't behave in a vacuum; many exterior factors contribute to our behaviour for many very logically and manageable reasons. The best safe behaviour management comes from doing this with people and not to them. Helping people understand why they do what they do and to manage the factors that will help motivate them. As efficient as it sounds to do the planning and execution of safety programs with small group of employees, without the engagement of all your employees and contractors it just isn't effective.

As you can probably see, the four whats of ISMS are forever linked. The way it is around your office drives your employees' behaviour and the tools and equipment we decide to use have a huge impact on the safety outcomes. What we are held accountable for drives our behaviours. All of these critical factors establish the company culture and these are naturally and logically linked.

This brings us to the crucial four hows we need to manage the factors.

The Four Hows

"How" we implement our safety activities is just as important as "what" we manage These "hows" are:

- Encourage
- Engage
- Evolve
- Evidence-based

The style in which you manage the four whats is as important as what and/or who you manage. The critical four hows are encourage, engage, evolve and evidence-based. These four "Es" are necessary to replace the classic fairly ineffective "Three E's" of safety prescribed in the 1930's by Heinrich. Unfortunately for many companies they just haven't let go of these out-dated and ineffective methods of engineer, educate and enforce. Although there are aspects of Heinrich ideas that still have merit, the sophistication of humans over the past 80 years has made these simple approaches less appealing and much less functional. If you transplanted a worker from the 1930's into your work environment among the workers of today, they wouldn't be very successful. Why would a management system for the 1930's be expected to work today?

Encourage

Delivering safety programs to uninspired passive employees is doomed to failure. Safe production of your company's products and services needs the people who do the work to do the work safely. Practical human management principles tell us that without encouragement, people just won't do the things needed to help your company be successful. How could they? More importantly, why would they? Would you?

Engage

You can't deliver safety like a pizza in a box. The tasks required to do safety require the very people who do the work to use the safe methods to make it safe. The failure of safety programs can typically be tracked to doing safety to people rather than with them. Engagement gets almost immediate results. It's a logical and practical way to do work without taking unnecessary risks.

Evolve

We, as humans, evolve in our thinking and our physical being. Over time we change, and not always for the better. But change is not a surprise; it is predictable. Safety management is not immune to this natural evolution process. Over time we learn what works well and what doesn't work so well. We learn from our experiences. Things that bring us positive results are likely to become the way we do things over time. We constantly need to learn from our previous challenges and problems in order to successfully deal with the new challenges we face. It's natural and expected to have to evolve your efforts over time. Standing still is simply not an option for us, even if it does sound somewhat appealing.

Evidence-Based

Here is where the power of ISMS is demonstrated in reality. What works is what works! Your evidence will prove to you that you are doing the right things to make your production safe production. You'll see evidence of safety if you know where to look. You'll start to see safety in a different way than ever before. This new vision will help you know what you need to do next to make safe production a natural and logical way to do the work that needs to get done for your customers. The results will tell you when you are successful, and they will tell you when you've failed.

The Tools

There's one last element of ISMS that helps lock the pieces together. Right in the center of all of these whats and hows are the tools needed to make the management of ISMS happen. Almost all companies have these tools available to them. The internet is filled with free tools for the taking that you can use to help make safe production more likely at your company. Hazard assessments, incident investigation forms, signs, work procedures, safety rules, communication techniques, memos, emails, websites, etc. are all just tools. These tools make your job the job of creating safety more likely.

The real power of these tools comes from the encouragement, engagement and evolution of letting your employees and contractors own the safe production of your products and services. The process of creating and tweaking the ISMS tools is where real safety starts to be empowered.

So there you have it: the four whats, the four hows and the tools of ISMS. We'll explore in detail the practical nature in which these factors work together in creating and maintaining a Practical Based Safety Culture©.

As I often told my University of Alberta and Northern Alberta Institute of Technology OH&S students when they asked me what chapters of their text books they should read...I simply told them, "Since you've already paid for the book, you should probably read...THE WHOLE THING!"

Keep reading...we're just getting started!



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