# SEVEN STEPS TO IMPLEMENT BETTER SAFETY TRAINING

## HOW TO GET A BETTER RETURN FROM YOUR SAFETY TRAINING

IN ADDITION TO THEIR SOCIAL COSTS, WORKPLACE INJURIES AND ILLNESSES HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT ON AN EMPLOYER'S BOTTOM LINE. IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED THAT EMPLOYERS PAY ALMOST $1 BILLION PER WEEK FOR DIRECT WORKERS' COMPENSATION COSTS ALONE.

Safety training isn't usually an employee's favorite thing to do. In fact, employees might rather get a root canal than sit through one more hour-long lecture that is a repeat of the week/month/year before; or read yet another training manual that's packed with technical jargon, old policies & procedures, and pictures with 80s style haircuts.

**However, there are ways to engage employees and highlight the importance of compliance.**

Because of the diversity of training requirements and logistical problems of getting your people trained, administering safety and health training has always been a major operational problem for organizations, however, with these 7 proven steps, your implementation will not only be compliant, but efficient and cost-effective too.

# STEP 1
## MAKE A COMMITMENT TO SAFETY

Training is a critical part of workplace safety. It can help ensure employees are up to date on the latest safety practices, motivate employees to always work safely and bring new workers on board with the company's safety practices and procedures.

**For strategies to succeed in the long term, it takes commitment.**

Commitment is when you walk the walk. It's what makes safety practices meaningful rather than mechanical. It's what inspires employees to contribute personally to workplace safety. Building a commitment to safety has been shown to significantly reduce injuries in the workplace. But it's easier said than done. It requires a comprehensive approach that involves the continuous improvement and an alignment between leadership, systems, behaviors, employee engagement, internal person factors, and other conditions.

More so, commitment needs to come from the top, or as close to the top as possible. If the executive team doesn't live and breathe your safety message, the best laid training plans will often go astray.

## STEP 2
# IDENTIFY YOUR TRAINING NEEDS

The first step all employers, OHS professionals, and HR departments need to take is to understand local and jurisdictional requirements.

Sometimes meeting legislated requirements is still not enough. If an employer recognizes a hazard that training would mitigate, that employer has a legal duty to protect its employees and the public by providing the necessary training, regardless of whether a standard exists for that particular hazard or not.

Training does not solve all problems. Sometimes the problem may be work procedures, equipment, or lack of employee motivation. Ask yourself, "Could the employee do the job if he wanted to?"

Training may need to be done due to:

- Employee's lack of knowledge;

- Employee's lack of skills;

- New machinery or equipment;

- New procedures or job change; and

- Any aspects of behavior needing to be changed.

More so, you should be looking at your own data to make decisions about what training is required; specifically:

- Accident and injury records;

- Incident and near miss reports;

- Audits and inspections;

- Observing employees while working;

- Safety meetings;

- Suggestions from employees; and

- Job hazard analysis and developed solutions for the hazards

As you work to identify the overall company training needs, you also need to determine which employees need training in what area. All employees do not have to be trained on all jobs. Train each employee on their job procedures and the overall safe way to perform that job. Each time an employee is assigned a new job procedure, train on the new procedure. Some variables to consider are:

## "HEALTH AND SAFETY IS NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN EVER BE TICKED OFF YOUR TO-DO LIST."

- Employee age (younger employees have higher injury incident rates, especially in the first year);

- Length of time on the job (new

employees have higher incident rates, especially in the first year);

- Is employee physically able to perform the task? (tall enough, short enough, strong enough, fit in the work space, etc.);

- Company size;

- Type of work to be performed:

- Specialized equipment;

- Personal protective equipment; and

- Any use of hazardous materials/ substances?

After gathering and studying all of this material and information, you will have identified:

- Problem areas in the workplace;

- Tasks and skills needed to perform the job; and

- Employees needing training.

# STEP 3
## SET CLEAR GOALS & EXPECTATIONS

Remember everything we wrote about commitment being an alignment between leadership, systems, behaviors, employee engagement, internal person factors, and other conditions?

Well, if you want to maintain your safety culture while implementing a new safety training plan, after identifying what training needs to be done, you have to be fully transparent about what your goals and expectations are. How do you know if it is successful if you don't know what success looks like?

It isn't necessarily as binary as impacting your accident/incident rate; in fact, it has been shown time and time again that investments in safety training pay dividends in increased productivity and the overall well-being of employees. What's more, safety training should have a positive ROI in the first year of implementation – so making sure that you have a list of metrics and targets to reach for is critical when you are looking at implementing a better safety training program.

Lastly, you need to think about the goals for your employees. More than just

completion or attendance rates, you should be aiming for a higher retention rate, a reduction in retraining and time to train, and an improved (and measurable) level of engagement with the training.

You can make use of surveys to baseline and measure changes, but some Learning Management Platforms can not only deliver safety training (online and offline), but also measure engagement and retention through combined analytics from quizzes, time spent on courses, pageviews and a whole host of other key performance indicators.

What's the most important thing to takeaway from all of this is that everything needs to be measurable, you need to know what you are measuring, you need to know what success looks like, and you need to make sure everybody knows all of these things… if you do that, your chance of hitting your goals is 10 fold.

# STEP 4
## DESIGN & DEVELOP LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Once you've identified what training is required, both legislatively and unique to the hazards of your workplace, created your learning objectives, you should have a road map for all the rest of your training.

You should create training content to help workers satisfy those learning objectives. You should notify workers that the training is intended to help them perform those learning objectives. You should create assessments to determine if workers can perform those assessments after training. And you should observe on-the-job behaviors after training to see if workers are performing those behaviors, skills, and/or procedures on the job.

Safety training, can be delivered in different methods:

• One-on-one training

• Instructor-led training with a group in a class

- Mentoring, shadowing, and/or following programs on the job

- Field-based skill demonstrations

- Written training materials

- Video-based training materials

- Online training materials

- And more

Research shows that, in general, none of these methods are inherently more effective than the others. Instead, you'll often find that

one type of training delivery method may be more appropriate for a particular safety training need, while a different training delivery method may be more appropriate for a second safety training need – the same could be said for type of employee. This is why it is critical to look at your safety training as a holistic program.

You can look to vendors to provide you with compliant and engaging safety training, or look to develop your own yourself; however, there are best practices for adult learning that should be followed regardless of where you source your content.

Your training materials should include nothing that doesn't directly help your employees satisfy the learning objectives.

## "ADULT LEARNERS ARE NOT THE SAME AS YOUNG LEARNERS - AND DO NOT RESPOND WELL TO PRIMARY INSTRUCTION METHODS"

Don't add non-essential information, even if it's a "nice to know" or if you think it "makes things more interesting."

That second point, about keeping non-

critical information out of your safety training is very important. It's also a very common mistake. The reason for this rule is that people can only process a very small amount of information at any one time. It's very easy to overload a person's brain, and adding unnecessary information to safety training risks doing just that. To learn more about this, read our series of articles on how people learn (and don't learn).

**Adult Learning Principles**

Adults learn differently than children do. It's important to develop your safety training materials with adult learning principles in mind. Adult learners often:

1. Are self-directed

2. Bring a lifetime of knowledge and experience to training

3. Are goal-oriented

4. Want training that's relevant and task-oriented

5. Learn when motivated to do so

6. Like to be and feel respected

If you want your training to be engaging,

impactful, and exceed your goals & objective, some best practices to follow are:

- **Keep It Short** - the human brain acts as a limit to the amount of information we can process and store at any one time. It's important not to drone on in your safety training. Do your best to keep it short and sweet. Don't cover an entire regulation, but focus on what an employee needs to know to do his or her task safely.

- **Chunk Your Training** - Trainers use the term "chunking" to refer to the process of taking training information, separating it into smaller, bit-sized "chunks" that are easier to process, and then putting them together in a logical order. Chunking helps you avoid situations in which the training materials overwhelm the processing capacity of your employee's working memory.

- **Use Language Your Employees Speak, Read, and Understand** - Your employees will experience a large percentage of your training materials through language. In some cases, they'll read it. In others, they'll hear it. More than just making sure the training is in their native tongue, you

should also make sure it uses common language and tone, avoids jargon, and is presented in a conversational cadence. Don't take things for granted like assuming everyone knows all the acronyms and abbreviations, nothing will turn off a learner faster than feeling like they're dumb, or not in on the secret code.

- **Use Visuals In Your Safety Training** - Our brains have a whole other area that processes images than written and spoken language. Relevant images in tandem with audio and text that needs to be read causes more areas of the brain to fire at the same time. From a neurological perspective, these additional "firings" helps develop new neural pathways and increases the likeliness of the material sinking in.

- **Rekindle Previous Learning** - When people are introduced to new information, their brain tries to integrate that information along with related information that was already stored away in the brain.

  As a trainer, you can aid this process and make it more effective by prompting the employees to think about and "activate" that related

information that's stored in their long-term memory at the beginning of a training session. That makes it easier for the workers to make sense of the related, new information you'll introduce during the safety training session. And it will make it more likely that the workers will successfully store that new information in their long-term memory

- **Tell Stories** – Ever since we started out and climbed down from the treetops, human beings have been story tellers. We've used stories to teach what to eat and what not to eat, when to hide, and when to run. As a result, our brains are hard wired to remember stories more so than facts or processes, that's why story-based learning is such a powerful learning tool.

- **Have Employees Practice/Make Decisions and See Consequences** - People are active learners. That means we learn by doing. As a result, you should create training that includes built-in chances for employees to practice new skills, see the consequences of their performances, and receive supportive, helpful feedback. All in an environment that's safe and protects

them and others from any negative results that would result from making a mistake in a real work environment. Hands-on training is a great way to do this. Scenario-based online safety training as described in this video can help, too.

- **Provide Refresher Training** - Here's a truth you probably already know about training: people forget stuff. They forget a lot of stuff and they forget it quickly. Scientifically, the exponential relationship between time and memory is called the forgetting curve, and it says we forget 70% of what we learn in the first hour.

Knowing this fact, your training should have quizzes, but also make use of refresher training and micro-learning to reinforcing your safety message at defined spaced intervals.

# STEP 5
## DELIVER LEARNING ACTIVITIES

We've already mentioned that safety training can, and should, be delivered in multiple formats depending on the type of training and the person being trained, among other variables and considerations. But is there a preferred method for certain types of training that makes the impact better than others? Short answer, yes. Long answer…

- **One-on-one training** – best used when training requires hands-on, practical learning, like operating a forklift or anything requiring spatial learning; also, very useful when trying to bring one employee up to the same learning level as the group

- **Instructor-led training (ILT) with a group in a class** – best used with reinforcing and general training; unfortunately, this method is entirely dependent on the ability and charisma of the instructor to be effective

- **Written training materials** – very useful for training on general awareness and processes, but should always be followed with some form of testing, be it a quiz

or discussion

- **Video-based training materials** – just like ILT, and written based training, this is resource efficient (most training for least instructional involvement), but its also encourages lower engagement, and as such, is less effective than other methods

- **Online training materials** - easy, flexible, and inexpensive alternative for providing safety and health training - it's a great fit for businesses of any size, and when mobile optimized, can

be rolled out anywhere, anytime, to anyone.

Developing training can be expensive because it needs to be created by qualified professionals, for relevancy and effectiveness. The most common training options are live classroom training, led by instructors, and online training.

Although live training can have many benefits, the costs of qualified trainers, of time away from the job for participants, and for facilities, add up quickly. And live training is not always consistent among different training classes. Whereas online training can be scalable, inexpensive, and far more responsive than any other method – in addition, it has built in reporting functionality.

# STEP 6
## KEEP RECORDS

It's legally required to create and store records and other documentation related to safety training.

According to standards, these records should be:

- Maintained in an orderly fashion

- Accurate

- Current

- Legible

- Dated

- Easy to retrieve

- Easy to identify

- Kept for a specified amount of time

- In conformance with any regulatory and/or legislative requirement that applies

In addition, your records should also include (to be able to adequately defend a due diligence case):

- Intended target audience

- Learning objectives

- Sources used to develop training

- All training materials actually developed

- Plans for evaluating effectiveness of training

- Plans for continuous improvement of training

- Records of Training Delivery and Completion

- Date of training

- Location of training

- Duration of training

- Name of trainer(s) delivering training, if applicable

- Delivery materials used

- Trainees who participated in/attended the training (each trainee should have a unique number associated with him/her)

- Trainees who completed the training

- Certification of training and testing

- Records of Training Evaluation

You should also keep records of the periodic evaluations you perform of your safety training materials.

Learning management platforms for online training can help you simply the task of creating safety training records automatically, for both online and offline training.

If you issue a certificate to employees for successfully completing the training, that certificate should include:

- Trainee's name

- Unique trainee identifying number

- Title of course

- Statement that trainee completed course

- Level of training or type of certificate awarded if applicable

- Number of credits issue, if credits were issued

- Date of training

- Duration of training

- Name and address of trainer or training provider

- Signature of trainer or training provider

- Any other information required by regulations, legislation, etc.

- Confidentiality and Availability of Training Records

Your company should establish procedures for making training records accessible and available to employees and yet also keeping them confidential.

# STEP 7
## EVALUATE & ITERATE

The previous six steps do not guarantee a perfect safety training program. They will make your program far more effective and lead to you reaching your goals and objectives (see Step 2), but perfection is unattainable. Your true goal should be to consistently strive for improved performance day after day.

It's important to create a process for continuous improvement of your safety training.

You want to use your required reporting and measurements to answer, are employees "getting it" or not?

You can make use of quarterly surveys, safety metrics, and other key performance indicators to answer these questions. All of this information can help you identify specific problems with your safety training and you can use that information to improve your training, either by modifying the original content, by providing additional refresher training, or through some other safety training intervention.

Lastly, you need to remember to update your training when processes, procedures,

equipment, conditions, or regulations change, or if any other change that affects safety takes place.

One of the benefits of sourcing training content from a 3rd party is the guarantee that the training is always compliant and consistently refreshed so that you are not always delivering the same old message the same old way.

## SAFETYNOW

A Division of Bongarde Media

**Contact**

Tel: 1.800.667.9300
Email: sales@SafetyNow.com
Web: www.SafetyNow.com

**Address**

9 West Broad Street, Suite 430, Stamford, CT 06902