



Your Health, Safety and Environment help.

Coeus
EUROPE

Brochure



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Safety and
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The purpose of this pamphlet is to give some guidance to safety professionals. This will happen with the help of three articles:

- **How to pick the best safety supervisor for your project?**
- **How to optimize the way we do safety trainings?**
- **What to do when they come for you?**

The first article is about thinking about the right criteria when hiring a safety help. In the second article we discuss the pre-requisites which are deemed to help optimize safety trainings in such a way that participants come to the job place with knowledge, skills and expertise that will make them employees, colleagues and team members for whom safety is priority number one. And finally ending with some tips on how to deal with police officers after a severe accident took place on your project. This when the police officers are pinpointing at you as the wrongdoer.



How to pick the best safety supervisor for your project ?

This is maybe a question that you will ask yourself when hiring a new safety professional for your upcoming project. But the question that could come up to mind is whether you're looking for the right criteria when hiring that safety help.

And there's something striking about it. Not always, but in many occasions when I meet up with a project leader or the responsible for hiring they ask me for a 'strong' personality. It seems that people on their construction site needs some firm guidance. The question is raised to have someone besides them that is able to respond in a more than assertive manner and who is able to control the group of people with whom they work with. And these questions are posed in an agreeable way without any connotation.

However, when some thought is giving to this, some strange questions can be asked. Is it really such a chaos out there that a strong hand is needed ? That must be devastating. What is going on that a dramatic intervention seems obvious. Moreover, there's no one asking himself the question if such profile is really appropriate. But fair is fair, I do get the importance of striving for authority.

I do see that the behaviour of a safety professional is a key element in obtaining safety success on site. The ability to adapt to his or her environment and take the right actions and behave in the best manner is what makes the difference. It is also why we test safety professionals on their HSE strategy. It is important to know what the basic

set values are of a safety professional. What is his vision and how does he applies this in field. Nevertheless, this does not supersede some basics. The need for some basic training is vital. And let us not forget the legal requirements. According to the risks and number of people in your organisation a certain diploma is needed.

There's no way around it. It is the law. Although some do not respect, how can anyone be at a leading HSE position without any knowledge of local legislation ? Even when backed by a legal department.

But more, there's on one hand the culture that resides with the Client side and the beliefs and norms of a safety professional and by logic both need to be in line. So in the example given of the 'strong' profile, it does wonder in which kind of environment one would work. It gives the impression that a strong leadership is needed due to lacking basic standards on the project. And that would sometimes astonish me. So it indicates that this so wanted profile is probably not the right pick. What is then at play ?

When one looks to today's common practices, you'll see that a more intelligent or soft approach is promoted. This gives in a higher yield in terms of safety. The impact on people is way higher and lasting. It needs empathy from the people at work, experience of the task and problem solving thinking. An approach that is way more complex than the first suggested hard dictature. It may come off as soft, but towards effect the outcome is day and night difference. The general idea goes more onto convincing people than to impose people instructions. Thus this means that the safety professional that you're looking for should have this competency of convincing by empathy. Easy to understand that with a hard liner this is less obvious.

Yet, the depicted image is still ambivalent while reality is more complex. I rather believe in stages of where an organisation is. A bit referring to the Bradley curve you can see that the stages of a work environment changes depending on their influence from top management. Does one execute a task because it is imposed upon him or does he do it because out of conviction ? And there's a whole range of emotions that will lead to certain behaviour of people. Is the population rather reactive to safety rules and regulations or did the population evolve to a more sensible interdependent state. Interdependent. The word is out. Stephen Covey's philosophy that gets applied on the work floor.

It is not dependent nor independent. It is the in-between, it is the stage where independent people still take care of the other co-worker. Interdependent. People in an interdependent mode are triggered to safety in a more positive manner. If you would use the hardliner safety person it would have the complete opposite effect. The population is already convinced of safety and is knowledgeable of the regulations. A safety person with more an empathic feel, and who is very knowledgeable on the how and why of safety regulations will be way more of benefit for the work environment.

The needed HSE profile seems to be completely different that the so wanted hardliner. So the type of you desired HSE profile does not only depend on his qualifications and experience but very much towards his relationship of his HSE strategy and the stage the work environment is in. In case safety is not fully implemented and we are still into the reactive phase than a safety supervisor with a strong communication on basic rules will have the best impact. But if it would appear that the environment evolved to a more adult stage such as independent stage, the stimulus to use will be different. Empathy and a higher safety knowledge will be more needed.

So easy to understand that when choosing the best pick out of your stack of safety persons cv's, the first questions to ask are not on the desired person but on where you are with safety. On which stage you have reached. Out of that, you will be able to define the best profile that would obtain synergy with your work force. Checking the legal requirements will give you an idea on the needed education and years of experience. By putting the importance of the HSE strategy of the profile first e.g. in relation to his working environment a better outcome can be reached.

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How to optimize the way we do safety trainings ?

Needless to say that our working environment has undergone massive changes. The standard population we see these days at a construction site is no longer a homogenous one. You may expect on-site staff coming from all over the place on this blue planet with the aim to work together. They come from different backgrounds, from different cultures, their norms and values are different, they speak different languages. And all of this happens under the daily constraints of a challenging life at a construction site. Having said that, it is clear that the need to optimize efficiency of the construction process is higher than ever. And for me this means that there is a significant demand out there to find and work with high-skilled, well trained professionals who are competent enough to be able to work in accordance with all guidelines of safe conduct. I outline below the pre-requisites which are deemed to help optimize safety trainings in such a way that participants come to the job place with knowledge, skills and expertise that will make them employees, colleagues and team members for whom safety is priority number one.

Following my rather general introductory words, let me reiterate that there is great diversity on our sites. In reality, at any point in time you encounter people coming from diverse cultural backgrounds speaking a number of languages and despite these remarkable differences they need to start working together immediately. There is no time to adapt, work should have started already and there is no time left to adjust to the diverse environment. The company expects this diverse on-site population to start now, blend-in well, adapt quickly and be fully prepared to work in a safe manner, i.e. have completed their indispensable safety training. In other words, people arriving on site are expected to be ready to start and to need no time to learn, all that they are expected to need at the point of arrival is an access badge and then they need to be ready. So, how to make all this happen, how to get people ready and obtain a good result at a safe work place? Personally, I find prior preparatory training a magnificent tool.

An online platform making it possible for people to get ready and train beforehand is a fundamental tool which helps save time, increase efficacy and boost confidence of both current employees as well as newcomers who perform better knowing that they come in prepared. Such online tool is available at any point in time, people can find what they are looking for at any time, work at their own pace and concentrate on what they feel they miss most and need most for the upcoming job. The tool guides them through the intricacies of the ever-changing safety environment and allows them to benefit from the abundance of safety training videos accompanied with additional materials including questionnaires allowing students to evaluate their level of knowledge. Again, just like coming on site feeling to be well-prepared for the job at hand helps people feel more confident, seeing results of work they do online is an invaluable means to raise people's motivation.

The training session is split up into specific chapters, each devoted to a distinct safety item. Videos form part of the chapters to give variety of learning materials and also to bring in a focus on hands-on performance. At the end of the online training students receive and may print out a certificate showing which course they completed. In other words, students who follow a program receive a proof of participation and completion of the course. Programs are designed to be easy to follow at one's pace, at one's preferable schedule and, most importantly, safety rules and regulations are shown and explained in a way which accommodates the specificities of broad variety of audience with differing background and level of knowledge and experience. The 24/7 availability of the training session suits all segments of work force with differing time schedules and differing needs for flexibility.

Yet, I do see this as only a 'warm-up session', this tool is available to enable students to have access to the follow-up hands-on site-specific introductory training course upon arrival. Having already completed the online course, students can concentrate on more practical issues and their onsite trainer can leave the theoretical foundation behind. I find it instrumental to start with role play situations allowing to apply the lessons-learned from the online training and follow up with a more tool-kit focused practical training session to introduce basics of use of tools such as a grinder. In my opinion, the best way to optimize and streamline your safety training arrangements is to split up the learning process into a prior to arrival on site part and an on-site part.

People progress faster, training is delivered at higher and more refined quality standard and people completing the course join their colleagues at the construction site much better prepared and much more motivated to work better and learn more.

The two complement each other and there are fundamental rules to be observed if you want to structure it well and make sure that there are no gaps and no overlaps. Once you broaden and refresh the knowledge of students prior to their arrival on site you are immediately able to upgrade the follow-up practical course to a level that saves time of all involved and, most importantly, leaves a much more pronounced mark in the students' memory. They are learning by doing after they learned independently with the help of the platform. This approach empowers students and gives them not only the knowledge they need but also the confidence and motivation to study on an ongoing basis which is, after-all, the ultimate goal of any safety-conscious employer. People progress faster, training is delivered at higher and more refined quality standard and people completing the course join their colleagues at the construction site much better prepared and much more motivated to work better and learn more.

But this is not the only way to enhance safety trainings. As I said earlier, there are multiple nationalities present at a construction site and there are many languages spoken. It is vital to make sure that the message you want to send out to staff does in fact come across. It is absolutely necessary to deliver training to your audience in a language that they understand. Moreover, I find it also important to take account of cultural differences encountered among the workforce population. A group of Polish speakers will most likely require a different training approach than a team of workers from the South of France. There will be more at play than the language only. The vibe in the class room will be different, just like the expectations of the students will be different. It is important to note that every audience appreciates a different style, different teaching method, different approach. Translation itself is a good step but not an ultimate one. Having a feel for the culture, habits and background is equally important.

This is why I am a big advocate of getting all training packages translated and of bringing in native speakers as trainers. The efficiency of the training goes up and the message gets across better.

This approach also enables you to train a broader target group. I advise caution here, not every non-native speaker of the English language can be assigned into a safety training session delivered in English.

But there is more. There is even a special action you can take as a trainer to get a catalytic result. Self-training. This is a teaching method allowing students to train to become trainers themselves. Just the mere fact of being told and knowing that one would become a trainer after the completion of the training works like magic. Train-the-trainers programs help raise awareness and this so very needed interaction brings dramatic results. No need to say that the atmosphere in the class room changes. I let you guess what then the outcome is for such a student. An in-between solution here is to pick students out of the class room and let them explain to their colleagues what the content of the training is.

Still, there is one more absolutely vital element here as an absolute must to succeed to optimize your safety training. The trainers. They are the backbone and it is them who have the key to the optimal training strategy. The common mistake and tendency here is that people pick trainers based on their craft experience, based on their level of expertise, their experience in field practice. Whenever I hear that this approach was adopted I get a bit concerned. I do understand where this is coming from of course. Having a person with loads of experience stand in front of the class room can only be a benefit to all. But let us not forget the point of the exercise. The aim is training. We want people to learn. The ability to teach and train people is a craft itself. It cannot be replaced by site experience. It is a specific competency. An extra skill if you like. And if you find that special one who excels in both areas of expertise, congratulations.

If you cannot find that precious combination in one person, please note that training abilities take priority over craft experience. Training delivery is a competency, a highly qualified skill. And above all, there is a specific element that distinguishes a safety trainer from another trainer. A safety trainer gives lessons with a safety driven aim in mind. It is not just training people or giving instructions and getting the message across, there is that one extra part where you, deep down, want people to be safe and work in a safe manner. And is not that just the purpose we are all after ?

In fact your lawyer may not interfere during the hearing, except when your rights are not respected. In practice things are different. Lawyers do interfere and protect you better. This trick will give you an important benefit.

Nevertheless, I really hope you will not need these advices. And I would still advocate the philosophy to take safety at heart on an ethical level. Main purpose is still to apply the safety regulations fully and protect your colleagues against any form of damage.

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The trainers. They are the backbone and it is them who have the key to the optimal training strategy.

What to do when they come for you ?

Imagine, you are a member of hierarchy such as a project manager, site leader,.... and you have a police officer in front of you ready to take you away for some serious questioning after a severe accident took place on your project. What to do now ?

And I just sincerely hope that you are not in this situation right now and that this event will not occur to you or one of your colleagues, but there are a couple of things you need to be aware of. And let me be clear, my profound feelings do really go out to the victim(s) and the colleagues. But there's also a reality out there that defines responsibilities and that in such cases and enquiry will be carried out to find the causes and ... the eventual offender.

And oh, by the way, do not forget that psychological lesion is also to be accounted as damage. So, colleagues who are suffering from seeing an accident are also to be seen as an accident at work. Needless to say that seeing an accident happening to a colleague is also a traumatic experience. Do not forget to foresee help such as psychological assistance when needed.

But back again, to our imaginative situation where a couple of officers are pinpointing at you as the wrongdoer. And to make things worse, also all your beloved co-workers seem to do the same. That one colleague with whom you have a fine professional relationship all of a sudden depicts you as an extreme careless person not attaching any value to safety. Even your prevention officer comes up with a list of events in the past to proof that you are a real piece of work. And not in a positive manner. Not to forget your superior who was destructive. So you have experience now the support of your colleagues.

What to do now or which questions will come up ? In fact imagine that you are in the position of a police officer or better the investigator. They do not know you. So the first questions that will arise will be to define who you are or even better were you rank in the organization.

And this is not in the manner you think but in a legal manner. They need to understand if you make part of the following categories : employer, hierarchy or employee. And the responsibilities of these groups are very different. So, you can imagine when you answer that you are XYZ manager that they have no clue at all where to position you under these categories. Very quickly they will ask questions such as to show your contract and your organization chart. And this is my first advice. Get to know your contract, read it well. And as said earlier, the difference in responsibility between these are huge.

The employer is mainly responsible to apply the dynamic management of risks, set up of the global and yearly action plan, ... simply put the employer foresees the big elements. I would not be amazed if the employer could find a way out in saying that he invested X euro into safety, that he applies a safety system,... and that he cannot make his bed next to every staff member. Into my opinion, when the employer did his job well, he has a shot at getting away with this.

Towards the employee, the situation is different. The employee has to follow instructions and take care of his safety and the safety of his colleagues to the best of his abilities. So here, it seems, that when the employee did not make a safety mistake, he will be able to defend him well. And now you may make an educated guess, which position of the three I see as the most challenging. I think you figured that one out already. In fact I have to write a new article to explain all responsibilities of hierarchy.

So would it wonder you if, under such difficult circumstances, a member of hierarchy would talk himself up or down the hierarchical ladder ?

And before I forget, my second advice and this one is a real killer. Way more than one may think at first glance. The Salduz legislation. This part of the law protects persons suspected and interrogated through a right prior confidential consultation with a lawyer and a right to be assisted by a lawyer during the hearing. Maybe you may think all of this goes automatically,...well, I would be more careful. This is the part where it can go wrong. Demand your rights when you are accused of a crime. It could really save you. It will at least oblige your interrogators to play by the book and respect your rights. And there's even a slightly sneaky advantage with this.