

Improving employee perspectives on safety to reduce risk



Strategies for building a culture of health and safety in your organization

Employee attitudes toward health and safety in the workplace can make a significant difference in how effective, or ineffective, your safety programs can be. If employees don't take health and safety seriously, or even view safety protocols negatively, it can become a serious risk to your business. A negative attitude towards health and safety at work can lead to carelessness, short cuts, and even avoidance of safety measures altogether, which can result in greater risk of accident or injury.

Safety rules, processes and procedures are sometimes viewed as unnecessary to productivity at work. Employers may not always see the benefits of increased safety and workers may feel it is nothing more than extra work. This negative view, however, can have a huge effect on your business. Cutting corners, resistance to new policies and dangerous behavior in the workplace can lead to accidents, injuries, and ultimately, increased costs.

Turning a negative to a positive

It's not always easy to change an employee's negative attitude towards safety. And the work it requires can result in a lengthy process. However, the impact of a positive safety culture is well worth the energy and effort. As employees feel more valued (and safe), productivity and quality of work go up and thus an increase in profitability can result. Additionally, when employers prioritize safety, employees feel valued and are less likely to leave the company. So investing in safety means investing in your business.

Changing attitudes

As stated, before changing negativity takes time and dedication. A critical first step is to create clarity, show each DSP worker what impact they have on achieving safety. This way they can understand how each task, meeting, policy and process matters to the DSP as a whole.

Safety education

A way to demonstrate the importance of safety in your organization is to educate employees and incorporate real life examples of accidents and their consequences. Doing this, the reason for safety measures becomes tangible. Education about risks helps prevent complacency, as drivers are once again made aware of the hazards they face while at work.

Leading by example

Commitment from DSP owners or safety management personnel is very important in turning around negative attitudes. When owners, leaders or safety managers demonstrate that safety is important to them by, for example, participating in safety training, it shows workers their health and safety is important to their employer.

DSP owners or safety management should also listen more closely to concerns employees have about health and safety. Consult with employees about their work and the pressures they face. If DSP owners, safety management or supervisors act on signals they receive from employees, it will most likely reflect positively. After all, people want to feel listened to.

Addressing behavior

Follow-through and enforcement of policies and practices can go a long way toward demonstrating your commitment to a healthy and safe workplace. Recognizing positive safety actions is one way to reinforce a positive safety culture. Recognizing workers for displaying positive safety behaviors with a compliment can help employees feel that their efforts are worthwhile. Positive reinforcement will help facilitate future proactive safety behavior.

It is also important to address safety inaction or blatant disregard for safety procedures. Lack of consequences for negative behaviors can also demonstrate the organization's lack of commitment to safety.

