

The Importance of Building a Safety Culture

Provided by: Acumen Solutions Group

Of course workplace safety is important to you. But how important is it to your employees? If you don't know, it may be time to evaluate the safety culture at your business and think about what you can do to improve it.

What is a Safety Culture?

A safety culture is the shared beliefs, practices and mindsets that shape behavior at an organization in a positive way.

A safety culture sets the standard for overall safety at your company. For example, if the head chef at your restaurant carries knives blade-up while walking through the kitchen, that tells the rest of the kitchen staff that safe knife handling is not a priority and that they can carry a knife any way they choose. This unsafe behavior is perpetuated by new employees who think this is an acceptable thing to do.

But if the head chef is diligent about health and safety in the kitchen (and always carries knives close to his or her side with the blade down), that attitude will influence the rest of the staff and create a culture of safety.

Why Should I Implement a Safety Culture?

According to OSHA, an established safety culture can reduce your injury and illness costs by 20 to 40 percent. When it comes to the costs associated with safety, consider these statistics from OSHA:

- Employers pay almost $1 billion per week for direct workers' compensation costs alone, which comes straight out of company profits.
- Injuries and illnesses increase workers' compensation and retraining costs.
- Lost productivity from injuries and illnesses costs companies roughly $63 billion each year.

If you have high workers' compensation costs or your premium increases every year, analyzing the effectiveness of your

Your company's safety culture is a direct reflection of the overall culture of your company and employees.

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company's safety culture is a good way to start controlling these costs.

How Can I Motivate My Employees to Care?

You can motivate your employees to care about safety by tying it directly to compensation or incentives. Reward employees who err on the side of safety over efficiency. But make sure you understand the difference between reward and recognition—you don't want employees doing something just because they know they'll get something tangible in return.

A strong safety culture with appropriate recognition and rewards will inspire employees to look out for one another and point out unsafe behaviors or situations. Everyone will feel responsible for safety and pursue it on a daily basis by going beyond the "call of duty" to identify unsafe conditions and behaviors, and to intervene to correct them.

Where Do I Start?

Your first step to promoting a safety culture is to contact Acumen Solutions Group today. We can provide you with the roadmap you need to get started and help you along the way, with a portfolio of hand-picked resources to share with your employees.

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