THE ROADMAP TO SAFETY EXCELLENCE:
8 ESSENTIAL STEPS FOR CHANGE
INTRODUCTION

Every 15 seconds, more than 150 workers are involved in a workplace accident\(^1\). Leaders committed to safety know that the only way to reduce these numbers – and create truly injury-free workplaces – is to approach safety as a change management imperative that engages the whole organization.

Despite substantial efforts, many organizations hit roadblocks on the way to success. Lack of resources, internal pushback, or underlying issues, such as gaps in supervisor skills, can all derail good intentions. Sometimes the resources are there, but the people tasked with making the workplace safer are shut off from them by senior leaders who don’t understand their benefit to the total enterprise. This creates frustration and stymies change. True organizational transformation requires more than just an assessment of what is working and what is not. Organizations also need a way to awaken leadership around safety and ultimately move the entire company forward.

DEKRA Insight has worked with thousands of company leaders across the world to bring about meaningful change. We have created an eight-step process designed to successfully transition organizations from the assessment stage of an initiative through implementation—so you get where you want to be with as few setbacks as possible. This eight-step process is a roadmap for safety improvement, one that is fully owned and implemented by each organization using it.

SAFETY PERFORMANCE IS NOT A FUNCTION OF LUCK, CHANCE, OR CIRCUMSTANCE. THE QUESTION IS NOT WHETHER SAFETY EXCELLENCE IS POSSIBLE, BUT WHAT MAKES IT POSSIBLE.

– THE ZERO INDEX
1

ESTABLISH THE PLATFORM

Often overlooked in the creation of an improvement process is the role the senior leadership team plays in advancing safety. It is easy to skip this step because it involves pulling together high-level people with very limited time. But executive involvement is critical to the process because it shows they value safety and are committed to assuring the wellbeing of people throughout the organization. Here is what you can do to build a safety improvement platform:

ESTABLISH VISION AND OBJECTIVES

To achieve any goal it is essential that leaders are clear on what they want to get out of the process. Perhaps they want to be the top performer in their industry, or they want to eliminate exposures to serious injuries and fatalities. Whatever it is, the goal needs to be explicit and owned by senior leaders, not just safety professionals.
EDUCATE YOUR TEAM
Senior leaders don’t need to be safety experts, but they do need to have a working knowledge of what matters in safety, including the principles of organizational safety, process safety, and data management. To calibrate effectively, it is important to begin the education process in advance of assessment results so leaders have the time to process the information and not get lost in the findings.

CREATE A SHARED UNDERSTANDING
The ultimate focus of establishing the platform is to align stakeholders around a shared vision and to understand the key elements necessary for safety excellence.

THE CHANGE MANAGEMENT DISCIPLINES THAT SAFETY HAS ESTABLISHED OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS ARE HIGHLY TRANSFERABLE TO OTHER GOALS, SUCH AS SUSTAINABILITY AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE. EXECUTIVES WITH FLUENCY IN SAFETY PRACTICES AND PRINCIPLES WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO NAVIGATE THESE CHALLENGES AND LEAD THEIR ORGANIZATIONS INTO THE FUTURE.

-MICHAEL MANGAN, PH.D.
ESTABLISH GOVERNANCE

Some organizations need to establish safety governance, while most will have to make adjustments to assure its effectiveness. We recommend having both a governance team for safety overall and a sponsor team focused on the assessment and roadmap process.

**SAFETY GOVERNANCE TEAM** - It is important to establish governance prior to initiating implementation so that skilled hands are in place to guide the organization through the assessment, along the safety roadmap, and beyond. The governance team continues after the process is complete and will become part of the larger organizational safety structure.

**SPONSOR TEAM** - This team is tactically focused on the assessment and roadmap process. It is led by operations and supported by safety personnel, and will end upon completion of the roadmap, when the implementation team takes over.
ENGAGE CRITICAL STAKEHOLDERS - To get the most out of the assessment process it is essential that key stakeholders are onboard with the process and aligned on the objectives of the organization, especially if there are sensitivities that could present obstacles. This needs to be done prior to beginning the assessment.

ASSESS THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ORGANIZATION

It is critical that organizations use a valid assessment methodology that is correlated to safety outcomes. Gather current data and compare it with the desired future state as described in the behavioral vision. Then identify and prioritize the gaps. This will help leaders develop the planning process.
WHEN PEOPLE LOSE AN APPRECIATION OF HOW THEIR SAFETY SYSTEMS WERE INTENDED TO WORK, SAFETY SYSTEMS AND CONTROLS CAN DETERIORATE, LESSONS CAN BE FORGOTTEN, AND HAZARDS AND DEVIATIONS FROM SAFETY OPERATING PROCEDURES CAN BE ACCEPTED... PEOPLE CAN FORGET TO BE AFRAID.

-BP TEXAS CITY SAFETY REVIEW PANEL

ENSURE SUPPORT - The sponsor team is responsible for reaching out to leaders and building the support needed to ensure the process runs smoothly. The team needs to communicate the vision and objectives to the right people, coordinate tasks, and maintain communication throughout the entire process.
SHARE INFORMATION APPROPRIATELY

During the assessment, breakdown information to workable tasks and share it with teams and individuals rather than presenting it in total at the end of the process. Set goals and standardize the general approach. Clearly define a two-way communication process that describes the behavioral vision and helps everyone know his or her role in safety fully.

COMMUNICATE PERSONALLY FIRST - Discuss the findings with executive leaders before sharing it with the larger organization. This allows them the time to process the information and make plans. This should happen after the initial findings, with a second meeting to go over recommendations for improvement.

PRESENT TO THE BROADER GROUPS - Only after meeting with senior leaders should you speak with the governance teams. Along the way, you will need to communicate with team leaders, senior safety leaders, and the CEO to ensure they are kept up to speed.
Once senior leaders have been briefed and the governance team understands the steps they need to take, it is time to involve the stakeholders critical to defining the roadmap for implementation. These stakeholders include key safety professionals, managers, specific divisions—anyone that is instrumental in executing the action plans. Here is what you can do:

**PAVE THE WAY FOR THE ROADMAP** - After the findings and recommendations have been shared, we are still not to the roadmap stage. There could be challenges or existing initiatives that have yet to be identified and that might create obstacles for implementation. Getting the right people involved and clearing the path forward will provide a strong foundation for putting the recommendations into practice.
INVOLVE TANGENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS - To build upon pre-existing networks and systems within the organization, reach out to union leaders, IT personnel, training and development teams, and others who will play an important role in implementing the process.
DEVELOP THE ROADMAP

A roadmap for safety improvement is a plan that outlines the path to the organization’s safety objective and the actionable steps required to achieve that goal. For smaller companies a one-year plan might be all that is needed, but larger organizations often need three to five years, or more. What’s important is that each organization define a roadmap that addresses its unique needs, and fits in with who it is, where it currently stands, and where it wants to be.

BUILD UPON EXISTING INITIATIVES - Some initiatives and programs can undermine safety improvement and should be curtailed. But many are beneficial and can be leveraged. Tapping into programs that are working well can provide an immediate pathway to success.

IDENTIFY STRATEGIC WINS - Buy-in is critical. By identifying areas with the greatest exposure and immediately applying safety methods and tools to minimize exposure, you can reduce injuries while highlighting the effectiveness of the campaign.
7
MANAGE THE EXECUTION

Your safety roadmap needs to be realistic, clearly defined, and actionable. A plan that is vague, doesn’t delineate concrete actions, or overcommits with its goals sends the message that leaders don’t care about safety. Take the time to execute the roadmap effectively, not just to assure success but also so your people know you care about their safety.

**PROVIDE RESOURCES** - At each step of the process make sure you have all necessary elements in place and ensure full adoption before moving forward. For every task, staff it, fund it, provide everything it needs to flourish. This will show the organization’s value for safety.

**MONITOR PROGRESS** - Establish a balanced dashboard of metrics that monitors safety performance and the effectiveness of the change plan—which becomes leading measures of performance. Predictive data allows leaders to get ahead of incidents and focus on prevention.
LEAD THE CULTURE

Leaders need to be more than just engaged in the process, they need to be steadfast in their support. When senior leaders show they are serious about safety and are fully committed to creating meaningful and lasting change, they inspire others to follow. At every stage of assessment and roadmap development, leadership need to be involved. And when implementation begins, they need to be at the forefront, championing of the cultural shift.

UNDERSTAND CULTURE CHALLENGES - Leaders need to understand the culture of their organization. For some this may mean setting aside deeply formed notions about what the culture is as opposed to what it is imagined to be. Leadership teams effective at changing culture talk about it daily, and they consider it in their decision making.
ADDRESS SAFETY LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS - Most leaders are open to feedback and eager to learn where and how they can improve. What often gets overlooked are leadership capabilities specific to safety. Identify gaps leaders have in managing safety and work to close those simultaneously with leadership behaviors in general.
START YOUR JOURNEY

For more information about safety strategy and other core elements of great safety performance improvement, give us a call or visit us at www.dekra-insight.com.

DEKRA Insight represents the collective expertise of our legacy businesses, each an institution in safety.