

Insight aims to provide useful information, links and tips in the areas of Risk Management, Occupational Health and Safety, Business Continuity Management, and other areas relating to management systems and corporate governance.

This issue:

- Make your WHS training work
- The management of reputational risk
- Effective WHS governance

Make your WHS training work

Poor or non-existent WHS training is often noted as a contributing factor to workplace injuries and deaths during court cases in Australia and around the world. Frequently, the individual injured or killed is found not to have not received the training required for the task being performed at the time of the incident.

Providing appropriate and timely WHS training to workers is a critical part of ensuring compliance with the legislative requirements and demonstrating the “reasonably practicable” control of WHS risks; that is, undertaking what is reasonably able to be done in relation to ensure the health and safety of workers. However, all too often the image shown above represents what workers perceive of mandated WHS training sessions: boredom and irrelevance.

To maximise the potential for your WHS training to be effective in protecting workers and meeting legislative obligations, QRMC recommends consideration of the following points:

- **Conduct a needs assessment** – don’t assume the current status quo with regards to worker skills and training is fine. Review and consult with workers to see what training they have undertaken and what needs to be in place, and plan the targeting and timing of the WHS training.



- **Source or develop materials** – make sure the WHS training materials are appropriate to both the training goals and the target participants. Develop different materials as required for the various ‘categories’ of workers (e.g. managers, supervisors, employees, and those facing specific hazards). Ensure that the materials address a range of learning styles (i.e. auditory or listening, visual or watching, and kinaesthetic-tactile or doing).
- **Conduct a pilot delivery** – test the WHS training materials with a representative sample of workers and seek frank feedback in order to refine the WHS training materials to maximise effectiveness.

- **Roll out the program** – deliver the training program to all workers and keep accurate records of attendance. Ensure workers are engaged by utilising real workplace examples, drawing out participants' experience and knowledge, using interactive activities etc.
- **Evaluate effectiveness** – ask all participants to complete appropriate assessments after training to determine comprehension (and preferably again at a distance in time to check retention). Look for changes in employee behaviour in line with the messages conveyed during training.
- **Plan for refresher training** – ensure a program is in place to provide the training to new workers, and plan and deliver refresher training to all workers at appropriate intervals based on the associated level of risk.

WHS training undertaken in this considered way can position an organisation to meet its WHS duties.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

There are two primary components to the effective management of organisational reputation risk. The first is preventative – making sure that the risk management systems are in place to identify and manage risks to the organisation which may have a reputational consequence. The second is reactive – being ready to appropriately handle the organisation's response in the event that an incident occurs with reputational repercussions.



The management of reputational risk

An organisation's public reputation is often critical to the accomplishment of its business goals. Whether measured by the stock performance of a listed company, the buying decisions of the business's customers, or the trust levels of a government agency's constituents, every type of organisation relies on its reputation to remain successful. The advent of social media and the 24 hour news cycle added to the complexity of reputational risk, due to the speed with which a negative perception can now be spread.

One of the overlooked aspects in the preventative phase of reputational risk management is accurately determining which of the organisation's identified potential risks may have an impact on reputation. This can be a complex assessment due to the fact that stakeholders' perceptions are coloured by their expectations of the organisation. (For example, the corruption of a senior government official may be viewed with more alarm than that of a commercial business officer, due to the general public's higher expectations of tax-payer funded government departments compared to private sector operations.) Carrying out an audit of the organisational risk register with reputational



consequences in mind is a first step towards addressing this shortfall.

When it comes to the reactive phase of reputational risk management, many organisations find themselves stumbling into a public relations catastrophe without having prepared for it in any meaningful way. Given the speed with which news and rumour spreads, taking a day to agree on an appropriate reaction and message can cost an organisation dearly, as can the failure to manage the external communication of the organisation's response via a single authorised channel. A well-developed and implemented business continuity program comes into its own in this context, specifically via the identification and training of emergency decision makers and spokesperson(s) for the organisation in the event of a crisis.

Some organisations are lucky enough never to experience a serious threat to their reputation during their organisational lifetimes. However, rather than blindly hoping for this outcome, all organisations are better served by developing and implementing best practice risk management and business continuity management programs.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

Effective WHS governance

It is important for Company Officers to regularly remind themselves of their duties, under WHS Legislation, to fulfil their due diligence requirements when overseeing the governance of health and safety for their organisation. Whilst not dismissing operational details, a



'big picture' overview is essential to keep organisational health and safety activities on the right track over time and as the organisation changes or matures.

An easy four-step reminder can assist Officers to ensure their oversight activities are appropriate:

1. **Structure and vision** – determine organisational policy and structure for WHS leadership across the organisation. This includes high-level strategy and forward planning, including the setting of WHS targets and objectives.
2. **Implementation** – provide sufficient resources to enable the management of WHS to reflect industry best practice, and then ensure it is being implemented, not only documented.
3. **Monitoring** – develop brief and open reporting requirements to monitor the organisation's WHS performance against the vision and targets set in step 1. Check from time to time that information is being reported accurately and not white-washed as it moves up the command chain.
4. **Continuous improvement** – regular reviews and updates of the WHS management system are required to achieve continuous improvement of the system, and should include occasional external reviewers to provide objectivity and new ideas.

Company Officers can benefit from taking a step back from day-to-day and operational activities to assess their undertakings against this list and refresh their vision for the organisation's WHS management.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

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