insight
QRMC NEWSLETTER

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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:

- "All hours" expectations and stress
- Managing WHS risks for OS operations
- Turning uncertainty into opportunity

"All hours" expectations and stress

In the modern 24-7 world where smart phones and home internet connections facilitate a constant connection to the workplace, employers need to take greater care of the stress impact on workers and the work-life balance.

The ability to work from home provides valuable flexibility for many workers and workplaces. However, the failure to maintain appropriate separation between work life and home life can contribute to a range of negative outcomes for both workers and their employer, as outlined in our article "Tackle workaholism for healthier employees" in issue 49 of *Insight*. Whether real or perceived, feeling pressure from the organisation to be immediately responsive to calls and emails out-of-hours is bad for workers, their families, and ultimately the organisation, when productivity is impacted and low morale sets in.

To maintain a healthy workforce and minimise turnover, employers and PCBUs should actively investigate the customs and practices in the workplace relating to out-of-hours work-related communications and the associated expectations, and take action where these are contributing to an unhealthy workplace culture.

It's best if the policy and expectations of the organisation relating to out-of-hours work and communications are spelled out formally and communicated to all workers. This should include ground rules for what level of emergency might trigger an attempt to contact a worker after hours or while on leave. However, it is critical that the written policy is backed up by senior management behaviour, modelling and reinforcing the agreed rules; for example, not sending or replying to emails out-of-hours. Workers will soon realise that the stated expectations for a realistic and healthy work-life balance

are not genuine if they continue to receive work-related emails sent late at night.

Recognising that most workers need boundaries between their work and home lives, and actively setting these boundaries and ground rules, can help to ensure your workforce stays healthy and productive.

Please contact QRMC for more information.

Managing WHS risks for OS operations

Many of us watch the news from overseas detailing the latest conflict, natural disaster, health emergency or other crisis with interest but no real connection. The situation is vastly different for workers (and their PCBUs and WHS support professionals) when the organisation has operations and/or employees travelling in the affected area.

People-based WHS risk for organisations with international operations is a significant risk needing to be recognised and managed. An event impacting on an overseas worker implicates not only the worker and their family and colleagues, but also has legal ramifications for the PCBU responsible for providing a safe work environment.

WHS risks which would be straightforward to manage in Australia can be considerably more complex in an overseas context. The availability of local emergency services and government agencies to assist can be vastly different from the Australian experience. Local laws, infrastructure, work practices/culture and training can all vary enormously with implications for both the consequence and likelihood of a WHS risk to workers.

Fully understanding what local resources exist and can be called upon is critical. Following this, implementation of a simple and well-rehearsed process for the management of the incident is required, ensuring that the relevant workers are aware of the requirements and trained in using the procedure. The procedure should also be regularly tested, and updated as required for changing business and local conditions.

Please contact QRMC for more information.

Turning uncertainty into opportunity

The majority of risk management programs are defensive by nature. They are focussed on identifying the risks that might impact on the organisation's business objectives and either mitigating the impact or reducing the probability of an event occurring.

However, an holistic approach to risk management also utilises the process to maximise exploitation of opportunities. This recognises that uncertainty might result either in a negative or a positive impact.

During times of uncertainty, or when an event occurs which challenges or threatens the organisation's business objectives, a mature risk management program will facilitate the exploration of any opportunities which might arise from the situation.

This can be achieved through taking the time to consider whether there is a positive side or opportunity to the identified risk, rather than rushing in with a preconceived notion of needing to control or remove the risk.

Some risks are clearly negative in their consequences and unlikely to have an upside. However, some uncertain situations, if exploited, can result in exceeding targets and objectives, i.e. provide opportunity. For example, changes in the market in which the organisation sells its goods or services might result in a loss of market share (downside) but might also open up new opportunities to enlarge the product and/or customer base (upside).

Taking time to identify the potential upside of risks which can be exploited, and not only the negative impacts which need to be controlled, can provide organisations with the opportunity to not only protect their business objectives, but to exceed them.

Please contact QRMC for more information.