

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:

- The right safety professional
- Rebuilding reputations
- Business Continuity and response plans

The right safety professional

Most organisations seeking to hire a new safety professional for a role in the organisation give considerable thought to the educational and qualification requirements of the role.

The position is considered from the perspectives of the safety qualifications and experience that would be required to achieve a good outcome for the organisation.

However, a critical factor which is frequently overlooked is how the approach and attitude of the candidate will fit with the culture and goals of the organisation.

A good safety culture can be either created, supported, or ruined by the attitude of the organisation's safety leader(s).

For example, a safety professional with an authoritarian approach, on a crusade to achieve compliance, will in all likelihood put workers off-side and have an adverse effect on the overall levels of compliance. Being passionate about safety is a good thing, but being a tyrant about it is counter-productive.

Similarly, the safety culture can be made cynical and distrustful as a result of regular mismatches between what the safety professionals say to workers and what



actually happens across the organisation – that is, when they only “talk the talk” and don’t “walk the walk”.

The predominant ‘Australian culture’ influences workers’ attitudes on health and safety in that they generally don’t comply with the safety requirements of their organisation because they are told to – they comply because they

understand why they're being asked to do so. While a range of factors inter-relate in this process, the overriding issue is one of trust; workers and managers trust what the safety professional is telling them, it makes sense, and based on experiencing consistent positive interactions with the safety professional, there is no reason to doubt their intentions.

The "people skills" of safety professionals are therefore critical to the development of trust and the development of positive safety culture. In addition to a comprehensive technical understanding of the WHS field, they must:

- be able to engage effectually with workers at all levels of the organisation
- have excellent communication skills
- have the ability to consult and listen to workers' concerns and suggestions.

The attainment of a Cert IV in OHS, for example, or the ability to develop a safety form does not make a safety professional – the organisational fit of the *person* is key.

To achieve the best outcomes for your workplace, when next developing the position description and selection criteria for a safety professional, consideration needs to be given to the personal attributes and attitudes of the candidate in addition to their safety experience and qualifications.

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

Rebuilding reputations

An organisation's reputation amongst its clients or customers, and in the marketplace in general, can be one of its most valuable assets.

However, reputation may not be explicitly recognised in the organisation's risk management program, and as a result key risks to the business objectives may be overlooked.

Suffering a business interruption or crisis of any sort which impacts on the normal delivery of the organisation's services/goods will have a subsequent reputational impact, either negative or positive. The 2012 Brisbane floods, and various organisations' responses to it, highlighted this issue locally. Depending on the type of organisation, there are many other crisis events which can have serious reputational impacts.

Clearly, prevention is better than cure, and these issues should be considered during normal risk management processes and controls put in place for the identified risks.

However, it is also useful to consider strategies for the restoration of reputation after a crisis has been suffered.



Such strategies include:

1. **Achieve closure** – ensure that the crisis which produced the reputational damage is appropriately, and transparently, resolved. This will involve detailed investigation (potentially by a third party if warranted) and publication of the outcomes (including details of what happened, causes, and corrective and preventative measures taken).
2. **Avoid a repeat performance** – the organisation will need time to recover from the reputational damage, and a second crisis following on from the first (whether from the same or other causes) will scupper the recovery. Therefore, immediately review the risk register and undertake a fresh risk identification exercise to ensure that no risks with reputational impacts have been overlooked, and that appropriate mitigation is in place.
3. **Learn from the event** – review all systems, procedures and plans and implement improvements based on the learnings stemming from the investigation.
4. **Demonstrate learnings** – be open and positive in your communications while accepting responsibility. Show your clients/customers and other affected parties that there is a genuine effort to improve operations and prevent any similar events in future. Communicating quickly and effectively during and immediately after an event avoids rumours and builds confidence amongst stakeholders. Look for opportunities to use the learnings from negative event as a catalyst for growth.

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

Business Continuity and response plans

The response components of an organisation's business continuity management program are the elements most critical to the organisation's successful negotiation of a business interruption event, but also the most vulnerable to failure.



Typically there is a vast difference between the theoretical response on paper, and the actions actually taken during a crisis, especially if the plans have not been tested using a realistic scenario.

Even the best tested and validated plans may not anticipate all contingencies, but if validated by a testing process they will certainly work better to minimise the impact of the incident on the organisation, and achieve faster recovery times.

Methods to maximise the effectiveness of incident response plans include:

1. **Understand your potential incidents** – be aware of the different scale of business impacts posed by foreseeable and realistic business interruption events, and set in place standards and processes for who needs to be involved in the response, and the necessary timescales for response and recovery, based on the severity of the incident and the criticality of the required service.
2. **Define and communicate roles, responsibilities and authorities** – everyone in the organisation needs to know the part they are to play in responding to a business interruption event, and know it without having to refer to written plans. Define and document these details, then inform and train all personnel.

Also ensure that induction and regular refresher programs are in place.

3. **Test and check** – run a realistic test based on a scenario which is relevant to the organisation's operations, and don't forget to throw in a few unexpected factors like the hypothetical absence of a critical team member.
4. **Continually improve** – review the business continuity plans and training programs based on the outcomes of the test exercise, and schedule regular tests and reviews so that plans are continually updated and improved. This should include re-examining the assumptions regarding expected business impacts, which may change over time.

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

QRMC Risk Management Pty Ltd © 2015

The material contained in this publication is in the nature of general comment only and neither purports, nor is intended, to be advice on any particular matter. No reader should act on the basis of any matter contained in this publication without considering and, if necessary, taking appropriate professional advice regarding their own particular circumstances.