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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:

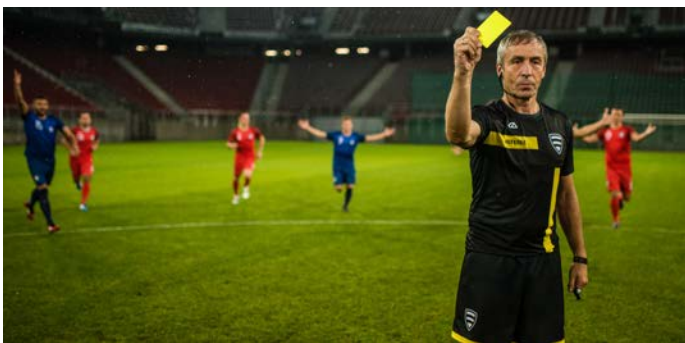
- Simplifying Targets and Objectives
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## Simplifying Targets and Objectives

The language from sport has permeated our national culture; terms from cricket, tennis and various codes of football have crept into our everyday language.

We often "let things go through to the keeper", "ace" a presentation to the boss, get shown "the red card" or "flick pass" an issue to some else's department.

This sporting vernacular gives us an ideal opportunity to present a parallel discussion of targets, objectives and performance indicators that can resonate with workers and help safety professionals achieve buy-in.



To simply explore this target-setting process with an example from rugby league's State of Origin, the team's ultimate goal is to win the series, and in order to achieve this goal a number of milestones or objectives have to be established, monitored and met.

The indicators used to dissect the match-day performance vary and include positive and negative indicators (including both teams' offense and defence), for example:

Positive indicators:

- Points scored
- Attacking metres gained
- Completion rates
- Tackles made
- Possession %

Negative indicators:

- Penalties given away for poor on-field discipline
- Unforced errors
- Missed tackles
- Tries conceded

Now to parallel this process within a safety context.

An organisation's health and safety goal is often expressed along the lines of having a safe workplace or Zeroharm or reducing incidents. This is the long-term goal. How we achieve that needs to be broken down into





manageable and achievable objectives and targets at each relevant function and level within the organisation. This means translating the overall goal into daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly actions or activities; things that can be easily measured, and, if achieved, meet the overall goal of a safer workplace.

Too often, key measurables that organisations focus on relate to injuries; whether it be Lost Time, Total Recordable, Medical Treatment. Whilst there needs to be attention given to injuries, they are not a measure of success. They are in fact, the opposite of the desired outcome, or put another way, the absence of injuries is the desired outcome. To focus exclusively on the negative indicator of injury statistics is to miss the opportunity of considering positive indicators that will have an impact on actually reducing injuries and promoting a safer workplace.

Measuring and placing a focus on injuries alone is like a team focussing solely on preventing goals (or runs) scored against them. This is in fact, only half the story.

A manager may not know how to 'reduce injuries,' but will certainly know how to go about key health and safety activities, such as; holding safety meetings, completing workplace inspections, ensuring staff are trained, and ensuring reported hazards are actioned. If these health and safety activities are identified, implemented and monitored, this will have impact on the overall goal of a safer workplace. These types of activities, then, become the health and safety objectives and targets.

It is always better to start with the *smart* objectives with emphasis on the *simple*. Too many organisations have complex metrics by which they measure health and safety, to the extent that the average employee does not

fully understand them and, more importantly, does not buy in to them or 'live' them.

With the start of a new financial year, it is a good time to review your health and safety objectives and to refine them to a few simple lead/positive and lag/negative indicators that can be accepted by the whole organisation and successfully measure the overall status of health and safety.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for assistance with reviewing your WHS targets and objectives or your overall WHSMS.

## 'Digging trenches' in Management Systems

Trench warfare, especially from WWI, involved a harsh and unforgiving environment where often the lives of troops depended on the location and quality of the trench they happened to be in.

There are some interesting parallels between trench warfare and the implementation of management systems.

During the height of WWI, the average soldier was less preoccupied with strategy and military objectives than he was about surviving the day. It was the role of senior officers to determine strategy, and then to ensure this strategy was translated into operational imperatives. Part of planning involved digging of strategically and tactically placed trenches. Technological advances in weaponry during WWI meant that that whilst trenches were initially viewed as temporary defensive structures, they became an integral part of each army's strategy and were part of the long-term war. The placement of



trenches became critical to winning battles and ultimately winning the war. However, to the soldier on the ground, digging a trench was a largely thought-free activity just enabling him to get through one more day.



All too often when reviewing or auditing a management system, whether it be health and safety, quality, environment or risk, one gets the impression that whilst there may be a significant amount of 'trench digging' taking place, there is often lack of overall direction from management.

This results in people working hard, and often doing their job well – digging their trench well – but potentially without a master plan or goal in mind. The 'trench' might be in the wrong place and or not be to the correct specifications.

While a trench system was intended to assist in the achievement of strategic objectives it also had to provide for the semi-permanent living arrangements of soldiers, and the overarching objective could easily be forgotten in the daily struggle. Similarly, with business management systems, the intended end result can be

lost in organisational bureaucracy over time. This translates to workers undertaking tasks that seem important but have little bearing on the end goal. This is especially often the case with older management systems that have been through many iterations and audits, where great ideas have been added and no one has stepped back and asked if the management system is achieving what it set out to achieve.

The objective of any management system audit is to assess whether the management system continues to meet the organisation's own requirements, relevant Standard and industry code requirements (if applicable), and legislative requirements, and to assess whether the system is effectively implemented and maintained.

An audit should then be looking at the management system as a whole, assessing whether the 'digging' that is being undertaken is in alignment with the organisation's overall goals and strategies.

Management system audits should not be aimed at simply finding gaps that all too often are filled with additional or more complex documentation; rather they should look at the system from an holistic perspective to assess whether it is 'going in the right direction.'

Are your workers 'digging trenches' in the right direction? Do your audits focus on the key areas that they should, or do they simply find gaps? Does your management system make provision for a meaningful and effective management review?

Please [contact QRMC](#) for independent management system audits or an objective review to determine whether your management system is achieving its intended goals.

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