

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:

- What is 'good communication'?
- Link between WHS Management Review and Due Diligence
- ISO 45001 Update

What is 'good communication'?

Communication definitely means different things to different people, and hundreds of books have been written exploring the differences in the way we communicate with each other. Theorists propose differing approaches to communication are required based on gender, culture, education and a range of other variables.

In the workplace, 'good communication' is vital ... but how do we define it, so that we know how to achieve it?

As a working definition, consider 'good communication' to be *"the effective and efficient transfer and receipt of the right amount of information, at the right time, via the right medium"*. Then the components of achieving that can be identified. Points to consider include:

- While the effectiveness of the communication process is impacted by a range of influences, the core process is underpinned by the 'message' (i.e. the content) and the medium (i.e. the way it is delivered).
- Communication 'sinks in' best when the message is personal, so poetic license may need to be taken to tailor the safety message so it becomes strongly relevant to target individuals.



- Communication must be conducted so that the right amount of information is presented, adopting the inherent understanding that 'less-is-more', with key snippets repeated and reinforced, and repeated and reinforced.
- The communications need to be positive in every sense of the word; constructive quality with an upbeat message that reinforces the right way of doing things.
- The delivery mode must be suitable, and while face-to-face discussions are optimal, operational / logistical demands would often inhibit this, so other channels that are appropriate to both the message and the targets need to be identified.

- Deliver the communications early in the workday when the level of receptiveness is high, and the level of distraction is low.
- Be aware that currently our attention spans and our recall / retention rates are plummeting (studies have shown that communications delivered via electronic media have less than 20% recall in some areas). Advertisers know this, and that is why we see the same adverts again and again (and again).
- Lastly, the principle of communication is often misunderstood to be a one-way street, but for the communication to be effective there needs to be a return message, some sort of acknowledgement (verbal, non-verbal, written or even a 'thumbs-up' emoji). This acknowledgement needs to be fostered and sought out – e.g. during a toolbox talk, throw out some verification questions to confirm that key information has been retained.

So, to wrap-up, the key take-aways to implement in your workplace are 'tailor the message', with 'less is more' 'positively framed', and then repeat and repeat.

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

Link between WHS Management Review and Due Diligence

In [Insight issue 83](#) we described methods of optimising the management review process.

In addition to ensuring that the management review achieves systems improvements, and meeting the compliance requirement of the relevant management system standards, there are also benefits to be gained by the organisation's Officers.

An Officer is defined by the *Corporations Act* as:

- (a) a partner in the partnership if the entity is a partnership; or
- (b) an office holder of the unincorporated association if the entity is an unincorporated association; or
- (c) a person:
 - (i) who makes, or participates in making, decisions that affect the whole, or a substantial part, of the business of the entity; or
 - (ii) who has the capacity to affect significantly the entity's financial standing.

This is a broad definition and will include a lot of people who probably don't realise that they're formally Officers for their organisation. And it means that the due diligence requirements for Officers need to be fulfilled by those people.

Here is where the WHS management review comes in.

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* s.27 imposes a specific duty on Officers to exercise due diligence to be proactive in ensuring that their organisation meets its work health and safety obligations.



As advised by WorkCover Queensland's [guide to due diligence](#), Officers need to be able to show that they have taken reasonable steps to:

- acquire and update their knowledge of health and safety matters;
- understand the operations being carried out by the person conducting the business or undertaking in which they are employed, and the hazards and risks associated with the operations;
- ensure that the person conducting the business or undertaking has, and uses, appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise health and safety risks arising from work being done;
- ensure that the person conducting the business or undertaking has appropriate processes in place to receive and respond promptly to information regarding incidents, hazards and risks;
- ensure that the person conducting the business or undertaking has, and uses, processes for complying with duties or obligations under the WHS Act; and
- ensure there is a system in place that records and provides evidence of the above.

The WHS management review meeting, as described in [Insight issue 83](#), should be held with Senior Management (Officers). By attending such a meeting, these Officers would fulfil many of their due diligence requirements as detailed in the WHS Act.

As mentioned in our previous *Insight* article, it is imperative that a record of management review meetings is retained. Such a record would help to demonstrate Officers' due diligence requirements have been fulfilled.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information or assistance in developing your management review processes.

ISO 45001 Update

As announced in [Insight issue 82](#) the new international standard ISO 45001 *Occupational health and safety management systems* has been finalised, and the final version was [released in March](#).



As we discussed in our previous article, there are similarities between the underlying principles of ISO 45001 and the harmonised Australian Work Health & Safety legislation.

The new ISO 45001 appears to be a better tool for managing risk and improving OHS performance. Continuous improvement should be far greater with an ISO 45001-compliant system.

However, it is important to keep in mind that at this stage AS/NZS 4801:2001 has not changed and remains the current industry standard in Australia. It is premature to speculate as to whether ISO 45001 will be adopted in Australia as a replacement of the current industry standard, and [Standards Australia](#) has reminded Australian organisations that AS/NZS 4801:2001 is the relevant standard in Australia.

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

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