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

Contractor Safety Management (Pt 3)

In our previous edition of Insight, we ran Part 2 of our look into *Contractor Safety Management* and focused on the safety aspects associated with the middle stages of the Contractor Management Lifecycle – *Contractor Engagement* and *Onsite Contractor Management*. In the final instalment of this series, this edition will wrap up some aspects associated with the *Onsite Contractor Management* stage and then examine the final stage involving the *Post-Works Contractor Safety Assessment*. Our aim throughout this whole series has been to provide some useful information to assist your organisation with its WHS governance approach for contractors throughout the Contractor Management Lifecycle.
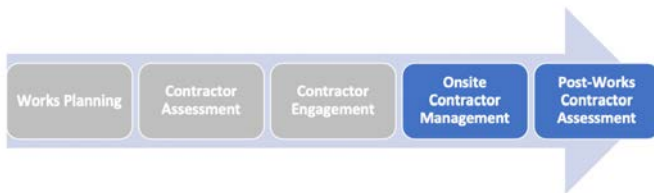
Onsite Contractor Management Stage

In our previous edition we focused on two core WHS governance activities for this stage – *Supervision of the Contractor* and *Verification of the Contractor's work via WHS inspections against documented safe work procedures*. Another key governance item for managing Contractors is how WHS events such as hazards, near-hits and incidents are reported, investigated and actioned to prevent recurrence.

The Site Induction is one channel for communicating your organisation's requirements for reporting of WHS events. Specific clauses within the Contract Agreement are another tool to ensure these requirements are understood. Almost all organisations these days have a culture of transparency and truth in reporting when it comes to reporting WHS incidents, however where the rubber hits the road is in what happens next and how effectively reported hazards, near-hits and incidents are investigated and actioned.

To assist here, it is beneficial to have a clear line of responsibility for these critical follow up activities, and as we have stated previously, a risk-based approach provides a prudent starting point. For WHS events where the risk is low or moderate, typically the Contractor owns the responsibility to follow up, investigate and report any findings to the Client. This allows the Contractor to demonstrate that their WHS management system is working effectively, as well as sharing any outcomes and learnings that may have a wider application across both organisations. Conversely, for WHS events where the risk is high or extreme, the Client may find it in their interests to own the follow up and investigation activities. This way, the Client has greater visibility, influence and control of the WHS event, especially where the event has occurred on their work site.

Post-Works Contractor Assessment

The final stage of the Contractor Management Lifecycle from a WHS perspective is to conduct an assessment of the contractor's WHS performance over the duration of the works. There are a number of performance factors to consider. The ultimate aim however, is to determine whether your organisation will accept working with a particular contractor again in the future. These are some of the performance factors for consideration:

- Has the Contractor met all their WHS key performance indicators?
- Did the Contractor have any notifiable WHS incidents during the works?
- Were there any reported observations of unsafe behaviour by the Contractor's workers?
- Was the outcome of Contractor WHS inspections good or poor?

- Were identified issues and non-compliances managed effectively and closed out in a timely manner?

Your organisation's risk tolerance level will determine the extent to which you will or won't accept a Contractor's WHS performance. Bear in mind however, should poor WHS performance by a Contractor continue to be accepted on your work site, it could leave your organisation exposed in the event of a repeated or similar event. As the client, you should be able to demonstrate that you have a system in place that assesses Contractor WHS performance and considers the outcomes for future work engagements.

This now completes our series of articles on Contractor Safety Management. Engaging and managing contractors is not an exact science. There are many tasks a Client must undertake to ensure its Contractors meet their and your WHS performance requirements. The key ingredients for success here are in the planning for the work, identifying WHS hazards and issues upfront, having a Contractor assessment program in place, and importantly, applying a robust governance approach that not only monitors your Contractor's WHS performance, but also guides you to intervene and address occasions where this does not meet your organisation's risk tolerance.

Please contact QRMC for more information.

Workplace Culture (Part 1)

The word "culture" is thrown around a lot these days, particularly when it comes to the workplace environment. We often hear reference to workplace culture as a contributing or underlying factor in safety-related incidents but what does this really mean and how does the culture of an organisation contribute to its overall performance?

The Miriam Webster Dictionary defines *culture* as it relates to a business, as "*a way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organisation*". Clearly then, culture is about people, what they think and do, how they behave and what is important to them – i.e. their *values*. In the context of the workplace, this can be translated to:

A) *The way the people within an organisation (or within a Division/Department of the organisation) proactively and reactively act to internal and external stimulus.* One example of this could be that workers are encouraged to report all safety incidents as these are recognised as opportunities for learning and to prevent recurrence rather than to apportion blame.
B) *Which behaviours are accepted, and which are not.* An example of this might be a site that has a mandatory requirement to wear hearing protection when using grinding equipment but where some workers choose not to wear this and the requirement is not enforced.
C) *What deliverables are determined to be important.* For example, where an organisation prioritises production over safety talking about how many widgets have to be made in the hour and how efficiently these need to be turned out, and then either neglects to talk about safety or relegates it to a passing comment like 'work safe guys!'

From the three examples above, an organisation's culture can either positively or negatively impact its overall safety performance. But how? Thousands of books have been written on this subject but in short, the core link between culture and performance is in how *engaged* workers are with the organisation. What drives this engagement can be decidedly varied and is different from person to person. Of course, there are factors like pay and workplace conditions, how stressful or busy the role is (or isn't), how an individual relates to their work group, how much control and flexibility they have over their work and even how well they get on with their direct boss. However, there is a commonality between the worker's level of engagement and how strongly (or not) an individual's personal *values* align with those of the organisation, and also how *valued* they feel their work is by the organisation.

For many, equality and justice are personal values. Where these are not present at a workplace, many people find it challenging to support the organisation's objectives. How engaged are these individuals likely to be? What sort of workplace culture does this drive? Additionally, if a worker feels

that their contributions and outputs are not valued (i.e. recognised or appreciated) by the organisation, they are also less likely to be engaged with the organisation and unlikely to want to contribute to the organisation's success.

The good news is that the reverse is also true. A workplace where people are recognised for their contributions and where their personal values align with that of their organisation are more likely to have a higher level of engagement and desire to contribute to that organisation's success. Why? Because they work in an environment in which this is encouraged and supported. Engaged people want to come to work, want to do their work safely and want to contribute to a workplace and safety culture that reflects their own values and beliefs.

We will continue this discussion in 2022 in Part 2 of this series, where we will look at some of the key activities that organisations can implement to foster worker engagement with safety and how this leads to a positive workplace safety culture where people feel valued and where their attitudes, beliefs and contributions are embraced.

Please contact QRMC for more information.

Holiday wishes

This edition of Insight is the final for 2021. The first edition in the New Year will be issued in February 2022.

QRMC Risk Management Pty Ltd will be closing over the Christmas period, from close of business Friday 17 December, reopening Monday 10 January 2022.

QRMC wishes all our clients, supporters and readers a relaxing, happy and safe holiday season. We look forward to your company in the New Year!