

Contractor Management: How to Secure Safety Buy-in



Demand for safety in the workplace has never been higher. In the wake of high-profile accidents and increasing regulation, companies are under immense pressure to create and maintain a safe work environment. This pressure trickles down to all levels of the organization, from upper management to employees to contractors. While most companies have focused on internal safety measures, such as employee training and safety protocols, it is just as important to ensure safety with external contractors.

However, there's only so much you can do without ensuring that everyone involved is on the same page as you. Whether it's contractors, internal employees, or the suppliers you work with, achieving safety buy-in is the first step in ensuring a long-lasting and productive workplace.

The buy-in of safety or lack thereof is a crucial objective that you must address on all fronts. Assuming that your organization has internally covered all its bases by securing buy-in from both your upper management and employees, this article will cover the topic of how you can secure it with your external contractors as well. Through this, we will go over a comprehensive four-step process in which you can ensure safety at every step of the way.

Contractor Prequalification:

It is essential to eliminate all unqualified workers before taking on any additional contractor safety measures. If a contractor does not seem proactive in updating their credentials and other relevant information, it's likely that they won't be proactive in ensuring safety either. Prequalification will give you an idea of which contractors have their requirements in order and will also

let you assess their historical safety record. By looking at a few performance indicators, you can gain a good understanding of how they will contribute to the overall safety buy-in at your workplace. In order to create a safe and productive workplace, it is essential that you have insight on who you let into your workplace and how they perform.

Listed below are a few safety performance indicators that you can request from your contractors in the preparation of your work:

Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR):

All companies in the United States are required to bookkeep and report all incidents. If you're in the market to hire a contractor, that's a great requirement to have by your side. The Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR) is a lagging indicator developed by OSHA that is used to quantify a company's safety record in comparison to others in the same industry. The TRIR rate varies depending on the industry, but it is generally accepted that the contractor with the lower TRIR rate is the safer choice. A lower rate usually signifies a higher internal safety buy-in, it demonstrates that employees and their management are on the same page when it comes to safety and conduct operations in an appropriate manner that is compliant with the requirements of their industry.

Experience Modification Rate (EMR):

The Experience Modification Rate (EMR) is a safety statistic that looks at a company's accident history. The higher the number of accidents a company has had, the higher their insurance premium rates will be. For organizations that are planning to hire an external contractor to work on their site, the EMR can be a useful tool in assessing the level of liability that would be taken on by hiring a certain vendor. Higher liability usually signifies lower likelihood of efficient safety buy-in. When looking at this number you can infer that a company with a higher EMR rate has not bought into safety at their own company, and likely won't at yours either. Furthermore, this becomes a multi-layered issue when it is perpetrated by both management and employee levels.

Days Away from Work, Restricted, or Transferred (DART):

DART provides a comprehensive overview of how many workers are having their productivity affected by workplace injuries. By showing how many workers are missing work, getting transferred to other job functions, or otherwise face some type of job restriction, DART makes it easier to identify potential areas of improvement in workplace safety. In addition, DART can help to assess the financial impact of workplace injuries, and can be used to help evaluate the

efficacy of safety initiatives. By providing a wide scope of the relationship between incidents and safety management of a company, this metric can make or break your decision to work with a certain vendor.

Once you've done everything you can in the onboarding process to ensure that you work with contractors who will contribute to the overall safety buy-in at your workplace, the next step is to ensure that it does happen through onsite operations. To complete this start by defining your safety expectations, monitoring contractor safety performance, and implementing tools to help you tie all your efforts together.

Define Safety Expectations:

As the leader of safety at your organization, it is on you to ensure that you have explicitly laid out the company's expectations for all to follow, especially new contractors. Not only must you define your safety expectations, but you must also communicate them and ensure that your workforce understands what they are.

Monitor Performance:

Even if you have achieved safety buy-in during your early stages of working with external vendors, slip ups along the way are inevitable. As the hosting organization, it is your responsibility to maintain a constant pulse on contractor safety performance. Contractors may suffer an impact to their performance due to factors such as low morale, complacency, repetitiveness, or pace of work. It's important to face those challenges head on to ensure maintained safety buy-in by all parties involved. To make matters easier, organizations often implement contractor management software to tie together their safety program so they can always keep a close eye on their contractors.

Key Takeaways:

- The demand for safety requires you to attain safety buy-in at all levels.
- Contractor buy-in signifies essential external buy-in.
- You can achieve safety through means of contractor prequalification, and looking at lagging and leading indicators such as EMR, TRIR, and DART.
- After overcoming the initial hurdles of safety buy-in, an organization's responsibility is to upkeep safety and encourage continued performance through audits and evaluations.

Source: Contractor Compliance

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