

Z10 Management Leadership and Employee Participation

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Introduction

Early memories often wander back to lessons. I recall my dad teaching me how to hit a baseball. He showed me what to do and how to do it first. After that, he practiced with me. The same process repeated itself as I learned other skills and techniques in different areas—sports, music, math, human relations, and other management. As I grew older and began organized activities, coaches and teachers continued those activities. For me, it was a process of continual improvement, which went on through adulthood and continues even today. Learning and improving are continuous processes. We seek to do better each day. It is sometimes a trial-and-error process, but it all involves learning from our experiences. Of course, a more productive and less painful approach is learning from the experiences of others. It is helpful to have guidelines and instructions for especially difficult and/or critical tasks. It is also helpful to know the best way to manage those tasks, to have a list of best practices for them—especially those tasks that require guidance to avoid fines, illnesses, injuries, or even death—before we begin. The ANSI/AIHA Z10, *Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems* standard (Z10), attempts to provide that list of best practices. It is designed to give management a working guide for establishing, maintaining, and continuously improving the safety practice. For those already involved in an effective, ongoing effort, Z10 can help improve the process. Those with incomplete or ineffective safety practices can use Z10 for a completely new start. Start-up companies, or those with no practice at all, will find Z10 an invaluable tool for getting started.

The consequences of failure in managing a safety program are high, so the Z10 standard lays out an effective approach. The standard does not provide all the answers, but rather provides a broad overview of the best practices, useful in implementing, maintaining and improving the safety program. Among those practices are requirements for “Management Leadership and Employee Participation.” Z10 uses “recognized management principles” as its basis. Of course, the question may arise as to whether management principles are universal; whether the same concepts that work in one environment are equally appropriate in another. The traditional response to that question is “yes,” but there are exceptions. As you read this paper, keep in mind that people are different; therefore, employees are different. Different employees respond to the same stimuli in different ways. In any case there are generally accepted ways to do things. Z10 addresses those ways. This paper will do the same in a step-by-step format.

How to Proceed

“The purpose of the standard is to provide employers an effective tool for continual improvement of their occupational health and safety performance.” The key phrase in the stated *purpose is “continual improvement.”* The standard is designed to provide you and your organization with a methodology that will make your company better, that is, healthier and safer, every day, every week, every month, and every year. The approach is one of “Plan-Do-Check-Act” and repeat. There is a continuous cycle of planning and reviewing so that any processes put into place or actions taken are carefully thought out before they are implemented; they are implemented; and then they are checked. It is a classic case of “controlling,” an essential management function. It involves planning your actions based on standards, whether the standard is Z10, 1910 CFR, or something else; implementing and operationalizing your plan (this is done through risk control and loss reduction activities); monitoring your operations or comparing them against the standards; and making corrections based on the difference between observations and what is actually occurring.

Understand the Standards

The first step in this process is gaining an understanding of the standards—knowing what is expected in order to be effective. In Z10, Section 4, “Management Leadership and Employee Participation,” outlines those standards or expectations. The expectations are as follows:

Establish an Occupational Safety and Health Management System OHSMS

Without going into details of the standard and risking violation of copyright laws, I suggest the following:

1. Management must establish a written document containing endorsement and policy as the foundation for the OHSMS. The policy will establish a “system of expected behavior.” Management shall *never* waiver from this policy. Exceptions will not be made. If the policy ever needs to be changed, change it, but if it is good policy, then it is always enforced. The Chief Operating Officer (CEO) and his staff are ultimately responsible for safety and enforcing all policies related to safety. Once established, management should promulgate and insist on conformance to all parts of the policy. As the policy is developed, consult with employees on its formulation and execution. This is where the employee buy-in and participation begin. If an effective policy already exists, involve employees in its review. Listen to and accept suggestions for improvement. Sometimes, adherence to a policy is easier and more agreeable if the employees have been personally involved in its development. The concept is to establish a viable, consistent, and operational safety culture that works.
2. Establish committees centered on departments, work processes, or tasks. At the same time, establish committees using a vertical slice of the organization. Have representation from different levels, but choose your members carefully. Vertical-slice committees have a tendency to move in the direction desired by those who have more formal power in the organization. As you organize the committees, think of all the ways each can be involved in the safety processes. They can participate in inspections, audits, investigations, follow-ups on near-misses, job hazard analyses, training and other tasks germane to the safety function. Involve as many employees as possible on the committees and keep the committees involved in the safety processes. They should be especially concerned with establishing policies and procedures regarding safety and working safely. This will require their reviewing existing regulations, policies and procedures available from other, similar companies or industry organizations, and the ongoing operations of the company. The key here is to involve as many employees as possible at the grass roots, non-

manager/non-supervisory levels. Groups should have clear direction and be told any constraints under which they will be working. It is critical that the rules don't change midstream. If there are budgetary, legal, or existing policy constraints, they should know those constraints before they pursue their respective charge. Involve the committees in the writing of new policies and the review of existing policies. Those closest to the work are often in the best position to review it and to provide relevant feedback in how it is reviewed. Ensure that regular meetings and participation by all committees occurs. This may be accomplished by integrating the committee mission into the routine workday. For example, a departmental committee is charged with developing a safety checklist and checking the department against standards prior to each workday. Members of work teams observe one another's work and make suggestions relative to safe work practices. Management must give the work teams the authority, responsibility, and resources necessary to improve the system. This may come in terms of advisory authority only when it comes to adopting new policy. When it comes to daily practice of safety, these teams may be given budgets and physical resources to assure this happens.

Top Management Assumes Responsibility

Make certain the buck stops with top management. Top management is responsible for implementation and accomplishment of all safe work practices and maintenance of the safety culture. It is the job of management to assure all component parts of the safety and health program are in place, and that the program is integrated into the organization. Carefully assign roles and responsibilities for safety. The role of the safety practitioner is primarily one of monitoring the system and advising management. The role of management is one of implementation. They adopt all appropriate practices, assign responsibilities for those practices, and enforce adoption of them on the part of all employees. Management must assure input is received from all employees, including the safety professional, but management assumes all responsibility for carrying out the policies and assuring that all employees adhere to them. This requires effective communication and promotion of policies; evaluation and rewarding of employees based somewhat on safety criteria; and an effective, progressive disciplinary system to be applied when employees don't follow the safety rules. It is critical that management assures a safety system is in place, fully integrated into the employee network, but management always maintains full responsibility for safety. When something doesn't work well, the question becomes, what can management do differently to assure this and similar incidents do not happen in the future. Look for and regularly review safe work practices.

Continuous Improvement Is Key

Create a series of mechanisms to assure regular review and improvement of all safety systems and the overall safety culture. The historical tool used for this exercise is the safety audit. A key consideration is an understanding of how the audit differs from an inspection. An *inspection* is simply an observation of whether the safety items are in place and according to standard. For example, all machine guards are in place and working during the operation of any machine or all fire extinguishers are fully charged and operational. During an inspection, the inspector typically responds to the point of inspection as a "yes" or "no." It either is or isn't safe. The guards are or are not in place. The extinguishers are or are not operational. Inspections take place on a regular basis. They are scheduled and unscheduled, but critical for an effective safety operation. Inspections provide a great opportunity for employee involvement. Employees can inspect their own work areas and those of others. Employees can use checklists to assure that critical safeguards are in place. They can do the same for any job.

Job safety analyses (JSAs) are a variation of inspections, wherein employees break down a job into specific steps, identify the hazards associated with each step, and select measures to reduce or eliminate the potential hazards. Before beginning a process, the JSA is reviewed to

assure that all appropriate steps are followed and that appropriate safety measures are in place. The JSA can provide a checklist for a given job and thereby serve as an inspection. Employees who do the specific job should be actively involved in the development of the JSAs.

Audits are set up to determine whether or not the systems are in place and appropriate to assure a safe and healthful working environment. Normally audit items are assembled and audits are conducted by a team of experts and those knowledgeable about the workings of the particular operation. A typical audit team may consist of managers in a given operation, a safety professional, even representatives from other, similar companies. Audits also offer another opportunity for employee involvement. The team determines the key points to be considered. A typical point to be audited might address the following, "Management ensures that employees and authorized representatives have the necessary resources to participate in the planning of the OHSMS." The audit team would evaluate this statement, using a Likert Scale of 1-5. A "1" would indicate that no assurance is in place. A "5" would indicate complete assurance is in place, and all tools necessary to do the job are operational. The audit would be conducted periodically and the audit team would indicate opportunities to improve the system based upon areas where the evaluation indicated that less than a "5" is appropriate. Once an appropriate audit tool in a given area is developed, ideally, this evaluation of the overall safety system is ongoing, so that constant improvements can be made in the safety system. For example, during Month 1 of the year, the planning process is evaluated, and a report is made. The company responds by attempting to make the improvements suggested. The process is repeated in Month 2 by considering another aspect of the system, such as "implementation." Periodically, the team repeats the evaluation of planning and the loop continues.

Another approach is to consider various departments or operations. Operations might be considered from a safety perspective. For example, in Month 1, fire operations are evaluated. In Month 2, the emphasis moves to ergonomics, and so on. Periodically, the process is repeated. The instrument itself is constantly undergoing evaluation and evolution, and processes, technologies, and management techniques change.

Correct the Hazards

The key to any effective safety program is correcting the hazards, risks and system deficiencies on a proactive basis. These problems should be anticipated and corrections should be made before a problem manifests itself in terms of an accident. This sometimes occurs in the long-term, somewhat laborious task of identifying program deficiencies, determining corrective actions, and aiming resources toward overall, continuous improvement of the system. When hazards creating an immediate threat are identified, they should be corrected at once. In any case, a steady system of continuous and periodic improvement must take place. Not only are inspections and audits critical parts of that process, but other tools can be used to aid in the overall program.

Companies may also rely on near-miss reports, unplanned inspections (rotating responsibilities), employee interviews involving incident recall or accident imaging, planned job/task observation, group meetings, records reviews (i.e., OSHA 300, first-aid, insurance, and workers' compensation reports), new process reviews, and periodic process reviews. All of these tools have been successfully used to identify hazards and potential hazards on a proactive basis. Integration of these tools into the ongoing, continuous process improvement loop can be an invaluable part of the overall process. When hazards or potential hazards are identified, carefully consider the options available to your company. Of course, the standard approaches include engineering the hazard away. If that is unsuccessful, the implementation of administrative controls is attempted next. The last opportunity for correction is the utilization of personal protective equipment (PPE). The above approaches are always used in the same sequence—

engineering, then administrative, then PPE as a last resort. Sometimes overlooked are approaches such as contracting the work to another firm or attempting to eliminate a step or process altogether. This should become the first priority.

Establish Objectives

As your company progresses through the above processes, appropriate safety objectives should continue to emerge. Build a list of those objectives and have target dates for accomplishments. All objectives will support the expected behavior and the overall safety culture. Some continuous improvement objectives will be ongoing, but components of those objectives can be met along the way. Don't establish objectives that are impossible to meet. A periodic review of all objectives and the person responsible for accomplishing each should take place. If performance is less than on-target with the original plan, there are only four options: the goal is too ambitious, the plan for accomplishment is insufficient, the plan is not being worked properly, or the target date is off. Something should be adjusted so that objectives are met. If all of the above are appropriate, then the actions will conform to the plans.

Summary and Conclusion

ANSI/AIHA Z10 standard provides strong guidance for managing a quality safety and health program. This paper has only touched on some of the highlights of the process. A thorough review of the standard and all of its recommendations is highly encouraged. A step-by-step review of Z10 will provide insight into how to establish appropriate Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems for your own organization, based upon acceptable management practices and standards. It will offer a list of tools for comparing actual performance of the safety program to the objectives established in the system and for taking corrective action. Most importantly, it will offer guidance in the ongoing, continuous improvement process necessary to reduce and eventually eliminate many the costly hazards that exist and may come to exist in your workplace. It will help you establish a system of expected behavior and a strong safety culture. Study the standard and implement the standard. Your company will be safer.

Bibliography

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