

February 2017 – changing role of a H&S professional



IOSH has commissioned research into the challenges facing the health and safety (H&S) profession and H&S practitioners; namely:

- The media image of 'elf & safety'
- Perceptions of risk by members of the public and how this relates to them as individuals
- The need for H&S professionals to balance economic considerations against the desire to protect the H&S of workers
- Disproportionate 'gold plating' of H&S to 'protect' individuals and organisations from prosecution balanced against the need to address H&S pro-actively, pragmatically and practically to add-value to the business

A summary of the research reports can be found [here](#).

What does the research mean for H&S professionals:

1. There is a need to empower workers to identify problems and solutions which work within legislative compliance boundaries
2. The traditional emphasis on paper-based process compliance (ie rules and procedures) will only achieve a level of H&S performance which will never be good enough to deliver acceptable H&S engagement and performance
3. A need to adapt to dynamic working environments to coach workers to facilitate engagement and problem-solving rather than focus on mapping processes to specific rules
4. Review personal development to facilitate H&S services through relevant competence and expertise as well as acting as a person who knows the relevant expert to call
5. Identify H&S priorities for their employers / clients / contractors to ensure the latest H&S knowledge and practices are implemented to maintain their reputation and licence to operate
6. Develop and maintain networks to ensure they do not become blinkered to new ideas and ways of working
7. Understand the challenges faced by business to embed lessons learned and corporate memory when the trend is for workers to be more transient and not spend 20, 30 or 40 years with one employer
8. Effective safety management will be achieved by ensuring workers focus on outcomes rather than procedural compliance. H&S professionals will need to encourage workers to take ownership and responsibility to identify the risks they face and think about the potential outcomes to ensure their method of work addresses the key issues. Encourage ownership by individuals to deliver great H&S performance rather than a culture of reliance on 'management' and process

The key message is that H&S professionals need to develop, adapt and change their 'modus operandi' to continue to deliver the desired outcomes in a proactive, efficient and effective manner.

Read more of my blogs [here](#).

The content of this article is intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter. Specialist advice should be sought about your specific circumstances.

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