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# Key considerations in creating and implementing your health and safety management system

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What should your organisation be looking for when selecting a health and safety (H&S) management system?

It's easy for companies to get hung up trying to determine how complex their H&S management system needs to be. Does it need to have all the bells and whistles and be as comprehensive as possible to deliver legal protection?

Or are you a small to medium enterprise, with no real requirement for a complex system?

Whatever the size of your company, or the industry you work in, or the degree of compliance you require, you should always focus on the output of any system you're evaluating from the end user viewpoint. Even a complex system needs to be easy to implement and use.

A system that focuses on simplicity and is sustainable for your health and safety culture, size, complexity and risk profile will deliver the best safety outcomes for your organisation.

There are numerous H&S management system models available, such as OHSAS 18001 and HSG65. All are underpinned by a simple PDCA philosophy: Plan, Do, Check, Act.

The question is, which system is right for your business?

A H&S management system is not designed to legally protect an individual director or Board. It exists to save lives, stop incidents, prevent injuries and minimise losses that might be sustained from inefficiently managing H&S. The Board's legal protection comes as a side effect.

## Safety systems and standards

After many years of debate, discussion and compromise a new ISO Safety Management standard is reported to be ready for launch in early 2017: **ISO45001** – Occupational health and safety. Should we all jump on the ISO45001 bandwagon and collectively spend millions of dollars designing and implementing this new standard? Your decision will dictate your organisation's future H&S path.

ISO standards can be very effective and useful; but how you answer depends on what you want to achieve. What is your end goal and how large and complex is your operation?

There are clear similarities between the new safety standard, the quality ISO standard ISO9001 and the environmental ISO standard ISO14001. This is simply because the intricacies of a management system should be similar, with only the subject being managed changing. The ideal solution is to have all your management systems integrated but this takes complexity to another level entirely.

Choosing not to integrate your management systems does not mean that H&S should be separate from your company's operations. It needs to be embedded in what each and every employee does to deliver success.





Obtaining ISO45001 certification is an option. But provided that your management system conforms to the PDCA philosophy and the structure of: Policy, Organize, Plan, Implement, Measure, Audit & Review, it should deliver the healthy and safe working environment you require.

### Doing it right

Your business cannot succeed if you're delivering the wrong product or service at the wrong time, to the wrong customer and to a standard of quality that leaves much to be desired. Success comes from repeatedly delivering in the right way, and for it to be right, it needs to be safe. So health and safety can simply be viewed, in many cases, as doing the job right.

The key is how to define what you mean as 'right'. The Board knows that the outcome of doing it 'right' is more profits, lower cost base, improved market share, improved efficiencies, less downtime, reduced turnover in staff and less waste, incidents and losses. But can a director really expect to know the amount of detail necessary to keep informed of how this is achieved in every aspect of the business?

In a small business, the answer can realistically be 'Yes'. The director can be hands on and involved in each aspect of the business and be a key decision maker in all decisions. As the organization grows this becomes far more difficult and eventually impossible. A managerial structure and governance is needed in order to achieve this.

### The challenge to deliver

The [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#) clearly emphasises the management of risk and the responsibility of a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) to any person that the organisation affects or influences. The law provides a framework for businesses to determine the best method to comply. A PCBU can be a company, contractor, self-employed or sole trader.

To comply with the law, you first need to determine your organisation's health and safety policy, i.e. what you are committing your organisation to deliver in H&S. It is important that you ensure you can deliver what you commit to. Secondly you need to ensure you have the appropriate resources, structured in the right way to deliver on your objectives. That doesn't necessarily mean dedicated H&S staff. For smaller businesses health and safety can form part of existing managers' responsibilities, provided it delivers on your commitment.

Risk assessment is fundamental to determining whether the process or activity you are requiring employees or others to carry out is reasonable in relation to the level of health and safety risk. It has been universally accepted that the workers who lost their lives in the Pike River tragedy were exposed to risks far above what could be considered reasonable, and this provided the impetus to introduce the new law.

How does a director decide what is reasonable for activities in the workplace that he or she may not even be aware of? The key is to create a risk assessment process, which must involve the people that are conducting the activities or work in areas exposed to the hazards. With a small amount of education and tuition in the fundamentals of hazard identification, risk and the principle of control measures, those closest to the activity are the best risk assessors you could ever ask for. And since they are already on the payroll, you'll save money on expensive consultants.

Having a mentor or tutor to conduct the training helps keep participants focused on the risk assessment process. But who is better placed to communicate the hazards they face every day than those who live the risk? That's right: your workforce.

It's important to understand that where workers have been involved in determining the controls and rules designed to keep them safe, they are more generally accepting of adopting them. The worst scenario is forcing a rule on a worker when they don't understand why it is needed and don't necessarily agree with it. That can lead to that rule being followed only when someone in management is present, or worse, sitting on a shelf or in an unread rule book until someone is injured and the investigation wants to know why the employee was not following it. The way the work is actually done becomes Custom and Practice.



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### How to operationalise processes and controls effectively

I said before that H&S should not be separated from operations. No one wants to read one set of instructions on how to do the job and an additional set of rules on how to keep themselves safe. They want to read and adopt one - and that will be the one that provides them with the knowledge they need to do their job. So it's essential to integrate the controls for hazards into your mainstream operational instructions, which link back to risk assessment.

In the same way, H&S needs to be owned by the operations, it cannot be a separate subject, or managed independently. If you hear the statement "The health and safety person can do that" it's a sure sign the business has failed to deliver a true H&S culture, with true ownership at all levels of the operational chain of command.

An organisation's risk assessment process determines the controls necessary to manage risk and to embed that in its operational processes and procedures.

It is also important to be smart about writing procedures and ensure they're suitable for the people they're aimed at. Increasingly, people are used to consuming information digitally and on social media, in bite-sized chunks. Creating long-winded policies and procedures is a waste of time because the people that need to read, understand, adopt them won't bother. Keep procedures short, to the point, appealing to the eye, and interesting. A picture is worth a thousand words. People are also more likely to retain information if they have fun learning it. Why is it that you can't remember what you were taught at school, but when an old favorite tune comes on the radio which you have not heard for many years, you can sing along without a mistake? The difference is simply fun.

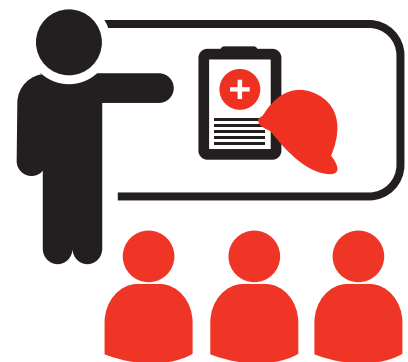
To help the message get through, target information on H&S procedures to those who need it. Broadcasting information about new procedures to the entire workforce can be detrimental.

### Assuring competency standards

It is not enough to present staff with a new procedure and ask them to adopt it. It is also not enough to train them and then believe they have the knowledge and aptitude required to fulfill it. The key lies in assuring competency, which comes from a blend of knowledge and skill, obtained through experience and training. Most of what an employee is taught during a classroom training course will be quickly forgotten. Team members are much more likely to retain knowledge by being shown and then doing the task themselves - and even more likely if they are being taught by a colleague, particular a peer.

#### A simple competency process can be described as:

1. train staff,
2. show them,
3. let them try it,
4. correct and encourage,
5. let them practice,
6. remind them when they forget,
7. encourage them when they err,
8. confirm competency





### Ensure your systems are delivering

It is quite normal for people not to enjoy being assessed or judged on their performance. However auditing and reviews are key aspects of any management system, providing assurance to the organisation that the system is delivering as it was designed to. Avoid making audits too formal so that they initiate fear in the auditee. Make it clear that the purpose of the audit is to identify continual improvements, not to apportion blame for shortfalls. If your H&S management system is not delivering to the required standard, the audit process needs to identify the root causes.

### TOP TEN TIPS TO DESIGN YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

1. Ensure your H&S policy reflects what you can actually deliver.
2. Know the relevant laws and keep on the right side.
3. Involve staff in the risk assessment process.
4. Keep your processes and procedures simple and imaginative to ensure adoption.
5. Assure competency and not just knowledge.
6. Continually improve by learning from a strong H&S reporting culture.
7. Ensure robust two-way communication with your staff.
8. Demonstrate H&S leadership from the top in everything you do or say.
9. Ensure audits are positive experiences and can be acted on.
10. Regularly review your H&S systems, strategy and plans to keep them relevant.

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### ABOUT EROAD

EROAD modernises road charging and compliance for road transport by replacing paper-based systems with easy-to-use electronic systems. The company is headquartered in Auckland, New Zealand, and listed on the New Zealand Exchange (NZX). Its US business is based in Portland, Oregon, serving customers with vehicles operating in every US mainland state, growing outward in concentration from the Northwest. In 2009 EROAD introduced the world's first nationwide electronic road user charging (ERUC) system in New Zealand and, in 2017, more than 50% of heavy transport RUC is expected to be collected electronically, representing a rapid transition to e-commerce on a voluntary, industry-led basis, due to the cost-savings and benefits to customers. EROAD is also a leading provider of health and safety compliance services, including vehicle management and driver behaviour and performance measures.