



Removing Roadblocks to EHS Resources

Removing EHS Resource Roadblocks with Non-traditional Methods

Minimum Changes that Yield Maximum Effects

The Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) executive is the point person for the corporation when regulatory issues appear. Their days are occupied with the routine of corporate culture, travel, and email inboxes that extend to the horizon. Add to that their professional obligation to provide leadership and practical operational solutions to their employees. The workload can be handled, but, with dwindling resources, how can they prevent dwindling performance?

The following are several roadblocks every EHS executive has encountered at one time or another. The managers who breach these roadblocks are frequently the ones who, when they are in the cross hairs, can nimbly facilitate creative solutions. Their ideas may be new to the organization, but, upon closer scrutiny, they are really just *good management*.

1. Roadblock: The Boring Ten-Minute Safety Briefing

Your supervisors have great safety instincts, but they need help delivering their weekly ten-minute safety briefings in a way that engages and is retained by their employees.

Strategy: Enliven the briefings by using demonstrations, props, audience participation, and simple (candy) rewards for contributing. A trainer covered the supervisors' briefings for a few weeks. He spent 10 minutes planning a series of participative, ten-minute sessions. For example, he used a noisy chainsaw to demonstrate sound levels and how they are measured. Using a raw beef roast he demonstrated the cutting hazards of handling sheet steel and the effectiveness of cut-resistant armguards. The employees were amazed that a safety briefing did not have to be boring.

2. Roadblock: The Time Required to Walk the Floor

Your EHS coordinators are so busy with administrative tasks, they don't have time to do enough safety and environmental walkthroughs on the floor.

Strategy: By implementing a simple spreadsheet-based corrective action database, a safety specialist walked a plant at least daily. He entered data on an iPhone, transferred them to the spreadsheet, and emailed it to management daily. For less than one hour's daily investment, the project kept EHS issues visible, held assignees accountable, and provided a rich database for posting charts and analyzing trends.

3. Roadblock: Getting Ahead of Ergonomics Injuries

Your EHS coordinators are experts at safety and environmental management, but ergonomics is sometimes a lower priority. The result is your ergonomics program is less well documented and frequently too reactive, which increases your risk of OSHA 29 CFR 1910 General Duty Clause citations.

Strategy: Using NIOSH, CAL/OSHA, WISHA, and OSHA guidelines, an ergonomist/industrial engineer took a week to prepare a detailed management work instruction that created a plant's ergonomics program – with a twist. Instead of focusing on after-the-fact reactions to musculo-skeletal injuries, the procedure balanced the approach with a significant investment in risk assessment, detection, analysis, and engineering controls. Workstations, tools and tasks were improved as they were detected. Coupled with increased employee training and post-injury measures, the plant was poised to eliminate injuries before they occurred.

4. Roadblock: Administrative Overhead from Safety Committees

You have good safety committees, but it takes too much time to document and distribute minutes, track attendance, and publicize your results, so you don't get to take full credit for the great work they do.

Strategy: Working closely with HR and plant management, an advisor developed a charter and a set of spreadsheets that clearly spelled out the terms, rotated the entire workforce through, tracked attendance, and planned agendas for a safety committee. The meetings informed attendees about safety performance, included participative features such as group walkthroughs, and assigned safety tasks to members. With a small investment in an organizational infrastructure, the company demonstrated the depth of its commitment to actively promote its culture.



5. Roadblock: Onerous Legacy ISO 14001 EMS Procedures

Your ISO 14001 environmental management system (EMS) is very "mature". Because it was implemented well before the recession, it doesn't fit in with today's lean financial realities. You need a more effective system that uses fewer resources.

Strategy: Legacy EMSs don't have to be a millstone around an organization's neck. Reduce the paperwork required by Aspects and Impacts significance determination by abandoning pseudo-scientific scoring systems and adopting a criteria-based approach. The ISO standard does not specify how you do it, just that it must be effective. Reduce the time required for lengthy, expensive Management Review meetings by taking credit for the good management practices you do every day. Use the daily exposure your supervisors have to your employees as a way to prove their competency on environmental aspects. EMSs were always intended to help you manage, not to make you waste resources on cumbersome paper systems.

6. Roadblock: The Unknowns of a Safety Management System

You have a good safety record and a working safety program, but you know growth will require you to organize your program into a Safety Management System (SMS) such as OSHA SHARP or OHSAS 18001.

Strategy: By investing in a simple but systematic assessment and tracking system you can identify the elements that regulators and registrars expect in a safety management system. Armed with a plan, your staff and you can implement your program, step-by-step, on an explicit schedule. With the cooperation of your regulator, use their inspections to plan the most efficient path to corrective action resolution and certification in the SMS. By merely organizing actions you would take anyway, the entire process can be a sound investment that reduces your cost of compliance every year.

7. Roadblock: The Effort Required to Conduct Routine Emergency Drills

Your emergency safety and environmental drills are effective, but they really take a lot of administrative effort. It makes it hard to conduct as many as you would like.

Strategy: Think of your drills as another activity that is won or lost by a wise investment in management. By applying the same planning of tasks, times, and people to drill management that you apply to other operations, they will recede in their apparent complexity. Plants who follow this approach have explicit schedules, procedures, signage, documentation, assessment, feedback, and corrective actions. These factors all contribute to the continual improvement of the drills, their fidelity and the reduction of risk.

8. Roadblock: To Standardize or Not to Standardize?

Although your plants benefit from their autonomy, some key elements of your EHS operation really need to be standardized across the corporation.

Strategy: An external analyst who reviewed a corporate EHS operation quickly identified those areas that were inconsistent across plants, those that were consistent, and those areas where it didn't matter. Error rate calculation, incident management procedures, procurement of PPE, and audit procedures are among the many candidates an organization should consider for standardization. Although it varies from company to company, a hard look at your EHS practices can reap significant risk reductions. Other invisible, but enormously important benefits also accrue. They include team building, communication, cross training, transfer of knowledge, coverage for attrition, professional development, performance assessment, senior management communication, and recruitment activities.



9. Roadblock: Keeping Lockout / Tagout (LOTO) Postings Current

You have a great set of laminated LOTO postings on all your equipment, but every time there's an upgrade, expansion or move, they are out of date. Even something simple like LOTO procedures can suck up a lot of your EHS staff's time.

Strategy: A dynamic, easily modified digital system of LOTO postings can be integrated with your LOTO work instructions and training plans. You save time maintaining all three systems because they share components. Maintaining the postings on the floor can be simplified by the prudent choice of plastic document containers. Sometimes lamination just slows you down. Stick to an 8.5 x 11 format documentation and posting system to expedite printing, standardize procedures, and reduce the space required on the equipment.



Contact Con Underwood Consulting, LLC to discuss ways we can help you overcome these and other management roadblocks.

We specialize in mid-term, high impact projects, like those listed above. With our advisors, you can reinforce your staff when emphasis is needed in EHS areas. We have earned our clients' trust by delivering high-powered, measurable work products that they manage with explicit schedules and statements of work. Our combination of a disciplined work ethic and competitive rates makes a strong business case for our clients' loyalty.



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Con Underwood's consultation in HSE management, project management and human factors engineering has boosted business performance and human productivity and cut accident rates in a broad array of design and manufacturing organizations. His career spans thirty years of innovation in advanced manned systems including crew systems design for NASA's International Space Station, commercial aviation and FAA certification at Boeing and Delta Airlines. His accomplishments include managing the development of award-winning CAD human engineering tools, revolutionary mapping tools for the energy industry, and progressive safety and environmental management systems. He has built award-winning technical teams in small and large business environments. He devises enlightened approaches for compliance with current human-machine interface requirements. In addition to engineering classroom instruction he has trained hundreds of manufacturing and utility employees in the automation of manual tasks, safety, environmental, and ISO compliance. His investigations of industrial safety incidents drive down accident rates, triggering insightful procedure revisions, relevant employee re-training and discerning corrective design solutions. Con holds a Master of Science degree in Industrial and Systems Engineering with a specialty in Human Engineering and Ergonomics from The Georgia Institute of Technology. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Design from The Georgia Institute of Technology.