

SAFETY MANAGEMENT: THE PROXY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS



By Collin Pullar, President, Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association

Companies around the globe that have grown into long-term, successful investments for shareholders consistently demonstrate patterns in the development of their successes related to overall organizational performance and safety management. The two areas seem to be inextricably linked at times, regardless of the nature of the company or its size. Whether they belong to the mining, manufacturing, or construction industry, or employ thousands of workers, or just a few dozen, successful businesses seem to have a way of effectively managing safety and increasing productivity in the process. Often discussed in business circles, these patterns are not a secret; however, they can be difficult to

achieve for businesses that experience extended periods of struggle.

During the 2015 Saskatchewan Health & Safety Leadership Charter event – a province-wide initiative aimed at increasing the profile of health, safety, and injury prevention through public commitments from organizational leaders – I had the privilege of listening to three guest speakers who are prominent leaders in the Saskatchewan construction, manufacturing, and mining industries. As they spoke about their experiences with safety management, it was striking to hear their candid and unbridled comments about their journeys as executives managing safety, and in turn, highly successful enterprises. It became apparent that the value of safety and managing safe work practices was not just a socially responsible endeavour but also a strategic business investment benefitting shareholders and the organization as a whole. As I sat there and listened, it became apparent that there were three very distinct keys to the success of these companies in the areas of safety management:

1. Demonstrated Leadership Commitment: Success in any business endeavor demands demonstrated leadership commitment. It's never enough for a company to simply put

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out an edict that they are going to be better at something. Senior leaders must be very open and public with their leadership team that change is needed, and that personal unwavering commitments must be made to see it through.

2. Development of Knowledge and Expertise: Success requires the development of knowledge and expertise at all levels. How could you be successful in something you know little about? The successful businesses are the ones who received quality training, guidance and advice, at minimum. The leadership in their companies know the value of gaining knowledge and integrating that expertise with whatever they were trying to accomplish. The most successful companies made sure that the field-level team, the management team, and the executive all knew what they needed to do on a day-to-day basis in order to be successful. Everybody in their company had a vested interest, and therefore learned firsthand what they needed to contribute to their success.

3. Employee Engagement: Long-term successful businesses capitalize on employee engagement. This is not a big secret but something many business leaders do struggle with. A 2014 *Forbes* magazine article indicates “many companies still operate as though employees are expendable,” which

is a major contributor to employee disengagement. The leaders of companies I listened to that day worked at being just the opposite. They realized quickly that they could not afford to lose skilled employee productivity to injury or a lack of engagement. They deliberately asked their employees to be a part of the solutions for making their business and safety program more successful. I recall an executive from one of the largest construction companies in Saskatoon mentioning his ability to attract better talent because they were known for making safety a central priority.

These industry leaders have worked hard in these three areas in order to be able to turn safety management into their strategic advantage; proving that safety management in itself is a great proxy for successful management and a dedication to high-performance.

Collin Pullar is the President of the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association, an industry-driven and funded enterprise with over 9,000 member companies in Saskatchewan. Its mission is to provide high-quality safety training and advice to construction employers and employees that will lead to reduced human and financial losses associated with injuries. 🏢



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