

Leading Workplace Safety and Health – The Six Key Leadership Attributes

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Introduction

- Leadership by senior management in workplace safety and health (WSH) is crucial to foster a positive and conducive work environment for Vision Zero, where all injuries and ill health arising from work are preventable.
- Leaders set the tone for the safety and health culture of the organisation and play an influential role in raising WSH capabilities of the workforce. For a successful journey towards the vision of WSH excellence at workplaces, leadership is of paramount importance.
- This study aimed to identify the attributes and behaviours exemplified by an effective leader in enhancing WSH performance in organisations.

Methodology

Identify WSH leadership principles, values, characteristics and actions

Identification of patterns and themes

First cut on identified attributes

Attributes coded and clustered into themes

Attributes probed to establish and clarify themes

Themes identified

Literature review

- 68 research articles, academic journals and leading WSH publications analysed using inductive thematic analysis to identify the possible attributes of an effective WSH leader

Identification of patterns and themes

- By means of identification of patterns, inductive thematic analysis allows for themes to be directly developed along with descriptions

First cut on identified attributes

- Ideas, specific discussions and possible patterns captured

Attributes coded and clustered into themes

- Data reduction: Leadership principles, values, characteristics and actions coded and clustered into themes and related sub-themes

Attributes probed to establish and clarify themes

- Individual themes across various data sources probed to establish and clarify identified themes

Themes identified

- Revision and confirmation - definitions and consensus on descriptors for each of the attributes were clarified and established

Key Findings

- Necessary skills and knowledge
- Awareness of the WSH situation facing the organisation
- Effective leadership skills and styles unique to the situation and context

Having a vision

- Having a Vision where all injuries and ill health arising from work are preventable – **Vision Zero**
- Charting the direction
- Communicate and inspire the rest to the vision

Having personal mastery

Being a role model

- Exhibiting consistency
- Holding high levels of personal accountability
- Living the WSH values through words and actions (walk the talk)

Six Key WSH Leadership Attributes

Personally involved

Demonstrating commitment

- Allocating resources
- Setting WSH goals and policies, establishing effective WSH management systems and processes
- Monitoring and reviewing WSH performance

Engaging the organisation

- Visible WSH leadership
- Walk the ground
- Participating in WSH initiatives / events

- Engage and communicate with employees and other stakeholders on WSH
- Establish initiatives and structures which allow **employees at all levels** to participate
- Secure ownership

Conclusion and Study Implication

- Study findings revealed the six key attributes of an effective WSH Leader. Leaders set the tone for the safety and health culture of the organisation, decide on the importance of WSH relative to other business outcomes and establish goals and initiatives to inspire WSH commitment across all levels of the organisation.
- This knowledge provides a strong basis in our engagement activities with leaders through our existing WSH programs and in the development of new programs to develop the WSH leadership of our business leaders to nurture the growth of more and better WSH leaders.