

"Cookie Cutter" Vs Company Developed and Implemented Safety Programs

When it comes to company health and safety programs there are truly no two exactly the same. Sure the "cookie cutter" off the self-buy on the fly programs are sadly everywhere, but they are only the same if so applied. Most often companies squeak through tenders and pre-qualification process by tick off a few boxes and uploading a skeletal copy of their said program. Many have never even read what they say they have in place. It is no wonder companies are facing high fines and legal fees tiring to defend a due diligent defense. Many falter and are left embarrassed on cross examination on their own policies and procedures. While skinning the bid we get the work sure, but what was cut or not considered during the tendering process to achieve this, the answer in many cases is sadly safety.

Safety must be treated as a priority to your company's financial security as well as for the protection of all workers and less as an "expendable commodity" to be traded back and forth. Most companies (not all) prefer directly hiring their Project Managers, Project Coordinators, and Site Superintendents. However, they sub or hire via unions and employment agencies for labors, carpenters, erectors, masons, electrical and mechanical etc. This is all so common with many safety positions. There is nothing wrong with that, however many employers sub (parts) out and tend to think that's it. I hired this person to do site inspections and they are now responsible for my business, really?

In today's market we live in an electronic age, business has changed drastically. Word of mouth is spoken in the tap of a key board, meetings are done via phone conferences and skype. Your company image is paramount. Construction clients are attuned to the liabilities they face in relation to health and safety on their projects. They comb through pre-qualifying applications shifting the companies that have processes in place for the protection of their workers, therefor the projects and the customer. They load contracts with clauses about health and safety compliance and responsibility, it's all very important to have these documents signed sealed and delivered, but what happens now.

Having a company specific "Health and Safety Management System" that is designed and implemented on a daily basis will give your company that extra ability to shine through the pack and can showcase your company as a reliable and safe one to work with. This is where COR comes into play. COR stands for "Certificate of Recognition". Meaning you are awarded a COR certificate only when you have an implemented program that meets the COR requirements and has been tested and audited. In the resent years we have seen a great push towards COR certifications even from the Ministry of Labour. Buyers of construction are tired of pre-qualifying 3rd party safety companies charging a lot of money to basically have a data-based system full of uploaded documents from constructors and sub-trades, with no proof that these programs are implemented within the company. COR has been in Canada for over 20 years but not all provinces have enforced it as a pre-requisite. Ontario is now seeing this begin in the GTA primarily to start, but it will reach all areas rapidly. We are seeing

more and more organizations releasing dated for COR compliance and many companies not able to qualify for jobs that were previously available to them as they have not obtained COR status. The push has come from the Customer/Client front in efforts to reduce incidents and penalties they can also face when people they hire to run their projects fail to meet minimum legal requirements, and workers are injured or killed doing what we all do, working to make ends meet.

So where do you start? The IHSA.ca website has all the information and courses available to learn about the COR process and to get registered. But the 4 courses alone may not equip you with the 3 "D's" Developing, Doing and Documenting your "Health and Safety Management System" this has to be driven from the top to the bottom of your company. It's not about buying into a data program that has little to no effect on the program if the program doesn't truly exist. We can be offered all the help, resources and training in the world, but if the top management level of your company don't walk the walk, it falls flat. What I am seeing over and over again is companies registering for COR and then sending the cheapest hourly person with often the least experience in the safety field to take the classes and then be expected to magically produce and implement 19 elements of health and safety when back at work. This is not the way to obtain COR and when they fail the process the company seems to blame the program and not themselves.

Many companies are just too small to have someone that works solely for their company, and there are many highly trained and independent health and safety professionals and companies to fill this market. But if you're truly looking at the big picture, make sure you're getting your "bang for your buck". You know and understand what parts you're contracting out and what still lays in your company's lap. At the end of the day you will be heavily relying on this person (and others) should your company have an incident that hurts a worker. Keeping track of transient staff may not always be the easiest in time of need, especially when chargers can be laid up until 1 year of the incident. It is very important to know that in Ontario you must have an internal auditor assigned that works directly as an employee. This person must complete all the classes BUT can be assisted or mentored by an outside safety professional or organization. But no not be fooled into thinking they can award you COR, only the IHSA is authorized in Ontario to do this.

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