



SAFETY2BUSINESS

WHY HAVING A PROPER HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IS YOUR BEST NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION



It's New Year already and, hopefully, after a few days off, you have managed to get some rest and clear your head from the things that made you feel tired and anxious in 2016. In keeping with tradition, you might already be wondering which New Year's resolution to stick with. Apart from the new "healthier" you which is probably going to last for a week or so, you might want to pick something that will eventually pay off in the longer term. If you are an employer and would like to operate your business better then we've got something for you the potential of which is often underestimated.

You already know that taking a systematic approach to management makes operating your business both easier and more effective. However, to be successful you should never limit your attention and priorities to the demands of your business only. Remember the old saying that **"Your staff are your greatest asset"**? There's one more by Donn Carr which says that **"People work for people- they do not work for businesses."** If you put both of these quotes into a single sentence you will soon realise that in order to have a prosperous business you should take care of the people who develop it. You do that by restlessly and religiously looking after their wellbeing and health and safety. That is the best all-year-round gift which you can give your employees. But first things first...

WHAT IS A HSMS?

By definition a health and safety management system is **"the means by which an organisation controls risk through the management process."** Consequently, a HSMS aims to eliminate or at least reduce the hazards posing health and safety risks within your organisation and cut down the subsequent costs which are not only financial. Now guess who is responsible for bringing that into place? (**Hint:** Employers are legally responsible for assessing reasonably foreseeable risks and putting in place the necessary control measures so far as is reasonably practicable.)

KEY PARTS OF A HSMS

There is a simple principle that gives the basics of a good HSMS which, in fact, can be used for the overall management of your business too. The **Deming or Shewhart Cycle** links 4 actions (**Plan, Check, Act, Do**) which, through leadership and continual improvement, should benefit your organisational efforts in terms of health and safety. We have created an illustration with the key elements (*Figure 1*) to give you a better picture of the actual process:



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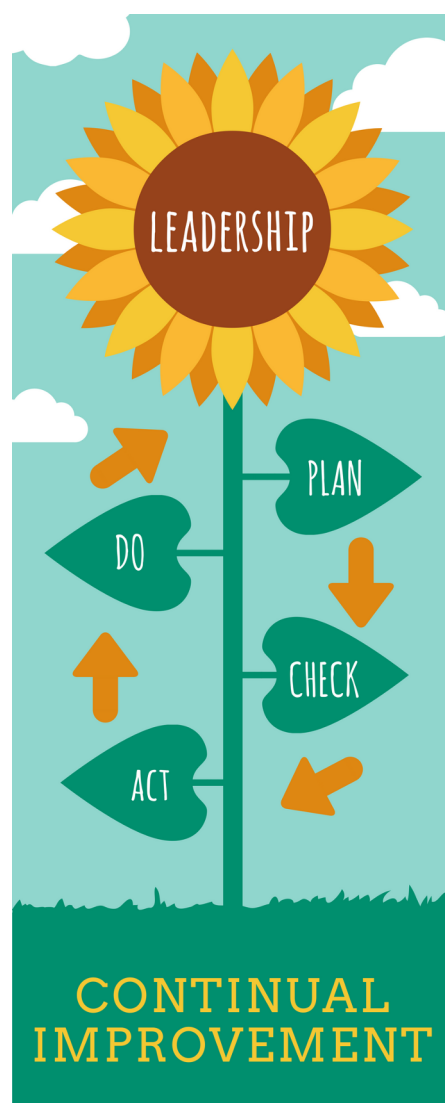


Figure 1

KEY BENEFITS OF HAVING A HSMS

The key benefits of introducing a HSMS to the overall strategy of your business are equally advantageous for your organisation and for your staff. We have listed 5 for you which we believe are top on the ladder:

- **Complying with the Law**- as a duty holder you are not only responsible for the health and safety and well-being of your working bees... When an accident occurs you are also held **accountable** for the consequences regardless their severity.
- **A great tool to deliver your health and safety policy**- the Law says that if you have more than 5 employees you should have a written health and safety policy. A HSMS helps you create one in a more organised and easier to follow manner.
- **Improved business risk management**- you might think that identifying risks is a matter of checking and acting accordingly but as soon as you start doing the job you will find out that it requires a lot of planning and profiling too. After collecting your data you will need to implement various action plans, measure and review your performance. You can only learn how to eliminate or reduce the risks by having an agreed and effective structure to follow. A HSMS is exactly this.
- **Having this extra competitive edge**- We already mentioned that when an accident happens it is not just the financial loss that is going to hit your organisation. If you own a big business you may feel comfortable to cover the costs of a personal injury claim, fee for intervention, increased insurance premiums, accident investigation and replacement labour (*Remember that your business insurance won't cover the costs of criminal fines and prosecution*).



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Think about the injured workers, their pain and suffering and the effect this has on their families, friends and co-workers. When a serious accident happens word-of-mouth is your worst enemy. Once the local (or even national) media gets hold of what has happened, it won't matter whether you are a SME or a large multinational company. You will lose reputation at the spur of the moment and your clients, staff, contractors and local community will turn backs on you which will cost you a lot more than the legislative fines.

You would be surprised that most of the workplace accidents are due to lack of a proper health and safety strategy. Get your organisation at the front of this and be a better employer and businessman than your competitors. Your staff, clients, contractors and the locals will notice and guess what? People work for people and when they know that you care about their wellbeing they will surely care about yours, too. Bingo!!! That's your bonus competitive edge that you never really thought about!

• **Cost-effective solution providing synergy with your overall organisational management-** No matter how brilliant your marketing and PR teams are when the worst happens they won't be able to miraculously turn you into the good guy. If you forget about your organisational roles hierarchy for a minute and try to analyse who is doing what within your organisation and who is responsible for its success, you will soon realise that your business is a collective achievement. It is you who pushes all of the action buttons but it is your staff who are actually getting things done. You can't expect progress if you break down your business into sectors and invest only into the ones you consider profitable. One does not go without the other so if you have an overall business strategy you should have one specifically for your staff, too. Where better to start than with your employees' health and safety?

DEVELOPING A WINNING STRATEGY

To be successful your HSMS has to be actually yours. In other words, it should match your particular organisational needs and its distinctive management approach. You can't just use your best buddy's construction company HSMS and expect it to work miracles for your hospitality business. You need to adapt all of your business systems to your own organisational culture and goals in order for it to be sustainable and worthwhile.

Having a HSMS will help you understand how to assess reasonably foreseeable risks and what control measures to put in place in order to reduce risks down to the lowest reasonably practicable level. It will also guide you when to and when not to act as well as when you might need some professional assistance.

To put it in a nutshell, all of the above would never work if you did not link each element of your winning strategy together. The only way to build this special bond is to get everyone involved into the process from start to finish and then again and again. Remember, this is all about continual improvement so the cycle never stops spinning. Workplaces and staff change so will your health and safety procedures. It is through revision and renovation that you make your health and safety management strategy a success!