12 Key Words for the Safety Professional

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Introduction

Waves of programs, processes, checklists, regulations and “silver bullets” have been introduced, tried and then we move on to something else. However, within each of these are pearls of wisdom for the safety professional. Organizations who know, speak and live these words are considered to be among the most successful. These words and traits are found in most all high performing units.

While each could be a full presentation in and of itself, this session will give a brief overview of the importance of these 12 words and how they are critical to high performing organizations. Participating individuals will leave with a personal scorecard indicating where their organization might be relative to these key elements.

12 Words

**Compliance:** A given, it’s the law. Yet, compliance is a minimum baseline and those in “perfect” compliance may not possess a safe workplace.

Rate Yourself:

5 – Your organization demonstrates performance beyond compliance and can document said efforts to any audit or compliance agency

3 – You are in total compliance and can document compliance efforts to any audit or compliance agency

1 – You do not meet one or more elements of compliance

**ACTION PLAN:**

**Business:** It is the real reason we exist and are employed. We must learn and understand the language of business rather than try to teach “them” the language of safety.

Rate Yourself:
5 – Your organization demonstrates that safety is integrated into the business and is managed the same as cost, schedule, productivity, quality, etc. Safety is given meaningful time on each business agenda.

3 – Your organization talks about safety frequently and it is usually the first thing one an agenda though discussed only briefly. Management attention is given only when there are issues.

1 – Your organization does not treat or manage safety as a business element. It is treated like a necessary evil and a must do because of compliance issues.

**ACTION PLAN:**

**People:** People make the world go round. Business depends on its people to thrive, grow and prosper. They are truly a most important asset and must be treated as such.

Rate Yourself:

5 – Your organization demonstrates that people are truly its greatest asset and that all projects are done with and through the continual coordination with all levels of employees.

3 – Your organization turns on its people face when needed. The primary driver within the organization is production.

1 – Your organization treats and utilizes people as tools; good for only specific jobs and when one wears out we can get another.

**ACTION PLAN:**

**Personal:** No matter what the regulation, business or concept, nothing will make sense or move forward unless each and every individual within the organization can personalize and internalize it.

Rate Yourself:

5 – Your organization demonstrates personal compassion. Each member of the organization at all levels can actively demonstrate a personal caring and commitment to the safety of all employees.

3 – Your organization speaks kindly about the people, sometimes recognizes them but yet these are not everyday examples of personal commitment to safety.

1 – Your organization talks a good game but in crunch time people take a back seat and it is all about production, schedule, delivery, cost, etc.

**ACTION PLAN:**

**System:** It’s not about the program (which has a beginning, middle and end), it’s all about the system, which is continual and ever improving.
Rate Yourself:

5 – Your organization demonstrates total integration of safety into its operating system. Safety is run and managed in a systemic method just as any other element of the business.

3 – Your organization has an SHE Management System that runs in conjunction with existing business systems and sometime competes with other systems for attention.

1 – Your organization has a safety program with no system. New initiatives are being introduced frequently and have no seeming lasting value.

**ACTION PLAN:**

**Leadership:** What are the active, visible elements of leadership exhibited by both the named and silent leaders within the organization.

Rate Yourself:

5 – Your organization leaders demonstrate the same effective leadership qualities for safety as they do for the rest of the business. They would have no problem identifying the last three things they did to enhance the safety effort.

3 – Your leaders are sporadic. They give lip service to safety and are around to lend moral support, yet are not the true drivers of safety.

1 – Your leaders think safety is a royal pain, a compliance nightmare and nothing but one big regulatory burden.

**ACTION PLAN:**

**Management:** What is being done on a daily basis to plan, organize, control and evaluate the performance of the system. What management style is exhibited and what drives this.

Rate Yourself:

5 – Your organization demonstrates performance and can readily show and defend its plan for safety performance improvement. Safety is part of the overall organization strategic plan.

3 – Your organization swings like chimes in the wind. Paying attention when the winds are howling yet silent when things are calm.

1 – Your organization has designated you to be in charge of safety so as to keep them out of trouble. Safety is totally your responsibility.

**ACTION PLAN:**

**Risks:** What are the real and perceived risks within the business. Are the hazards and associated risked identified and eliminated or controlled to the highest degree possible.
Rate Yourself:

5 – Your organization identifies the SHE hazards associated with all business elements and has a methodology for risk ranking these for elimination, control or mediation.

3 – Your organization identifies hazards, yet little is done to clarify or contemplate the risk associated with these hazards.

1 – Your organizational mindset is that this is a risky business, people get hurt doing stupid things and there is nothing we can do to fix stupid.

**ACTION PLAN:**

**Error:** We are all subject to error and mistakes. Do we have methodologies to identify opportunity for error and processes in place to either eliminate the error or reduce the relevant consequences?

**Design:** How does design play a part within the overall business? Is it done on-the-fly or within a structured, forward-looking process.

Rate Yourself:

5 – Your organization welcomes reports and feedback relative to employee errors and mistakes. There is no fear of admitting ones shortcomings for the benefit of the process and others.

3 – Your organization has a near miss program, yet employees may be hesitant to report same because of reprisal or inaction.

1 – Your organization does not tolerate mistakes and those who make them are disciplined or terminated.

**ACTION PLAN:**

**Metrics:** The age-old question of how do we measure performance. Is there realization that we will never eliminate the lagging indicators? What are true leading indicators and if properly utilized, do they ensure safety?

Rate Yourself:

5 – Your organization measures visible activities and considers injuries and illnesses a result rather than a metric. All levels of employees can list several activities that they are personally held accountable for which continually improve the safety of the organization.

3 – Your organization is using near miss and behavior observation data as determinants of success.

1 – Your organization measures only OSHA rates and workers compensation rates to determine the effectiveness of the safety effort.
**ACTION PLAN:**

**Results:** What gets measured, gets done. What is defined as a good result. Are results injury based or process oriented.

Rate Yourself:

5 – Your organization demonstrates good performance results in positive terms looking at what is being done to improve, how any improvement is linked to the system and what drivers will produce the greatest results. Safety is the result of everybody’s effort, not just the job of the safety engineer.

3 – Your organization looks at several other items other than injuries and illness as a measure of success.

1 – Your organization’s results are based solely on recordable, lost time, severity and experience modification rates.