

Safety leadership in small business

Why is good safety leadership important to small business?

Small business owners have a vital role to play when it comes to safety leadership and promoting a strong safety culture in their organisation. When workers see importance being placed on working safely, they are more likely to be motivated to follow safety procedures and raise safety issues.

By supporting and encouraging positive work health and safety practices, a better safety culture will develop over time. A positive safety culture can help small business owners avoid costly incidents and injuries, minimise productivity disruptions and reduce overheads.

Where to start

To develop a positive safety culture in your business, you need to show strong safety leadership. Depending on the health and safety issue and what's going on in your business, you may need to show different types of leadership actions and behaviours.

This document provides a range of simple and immediate leadership practices you can put in place to build a positive safety culture in your business.

Use these checklists to identify the key safety leadership issues for your business and create a plan of action. Start by selecting five priority actions to put in place in your business. When you've completed these actions, choose additional ones – and so on until you've put in place as many of the points as possible.

Actions

Commit to safety

Be clear that you are serious about work health and safety through your personal and business practices. Your commitment to safety can be clearly shown by spending the time, money and resources needed to provide a safe and healthy working environment.

Business practices	Leader practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Have a clear safety policy and make it visible to staff and visitors. <input type="checkbox"/> Include your staff when planning ways to raise the importance of safety in your business. <input type="checkbox"/> Understand the safety risks in your business and do something about them. <input type="checkbox"/> Formally demonstrate your focus on safety by featuring it on your website or social media page. <input type="checkbox"/> Put up WHS signs, posters or a noticeboard, or have a safety suggestion box. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Personally decide to make safety as important as any other part of your business. <input type="checkbox"/> Explain to others why safety is important to you and your business. <input type="checkbox"/> Show enthusiasm and interest for good health and safety outcomes. <input type="checkbox"/> Walk around your business, talk to staff and find out what the biggest safety issues are. <input type="checkbox"/> Be ready to act on safety issues when they are raised, and explain your actions.

Get involved

When supervisors and managers are actively involved in safety, workers are more likely to raise safety issues and follow safe work procedures. You can help improve everyone's attitude to work health and safety by leading by example in your business.

Business practices	Leader practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Set goals for the safe work environment you want in your business (including behaviours and attitudes) and regularly check progress against these goals. <input type="checkbox"/> Put in place systems for safety issues to be communicated, both from your workers up to you and from you down to your workers. <input type="checkbox"/> Include information about the safety communications system in your business documentation e.g. planning and inductions. <input type="checkbox"/> Formally communicate your focus on safety to everyone involved in your business via email and meetings. <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure any supervisors in your business are consulted on safety, and that they all apply the same approach when supervising safety practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate the importance of safety in different ways so everyone can understand the message e.g. through talks, emails, posters and demonstrations. <input type="checkbox"/> Give regular feedback about the safety practices in your workplace and help improve them. <input type="checkbox"/> Lead by example – show your workers how you expect them to behave: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> wear personal protective equipment <input type="checkbox"/> follow safe work procedures <input type="checkbox"/> participate in safety training. <input type="checkbox"/> Hold regular toolbox talks about safety. <input type="checkbox"/> Help with identifying hazards and developing safe work procedures.

Encourage participation

You can improve the safety culture in your workplace by encouraging others to get on board with your approach towards work health and safety. This can include the way you speak about safety, respond to safety issues and involve others in thinking about and acting upon safety issues.

Business practices	Leader practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule regular paid time for workers to talk about and act on health and safety issues. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> developing safe work procedures <input type="checkbox"/> maintaining tools and equipment <input type="checkbox"/> making changes to workplace layout that improve safety <input type="checkbox"/> refreshing their knowledge of good safety practices. <input type="checkbox"/> Have different ways to reward and recognise good health and safety practices e.g. spoken and written encouragement and opportunities for promotion. <input type="checkbox"/> Have a formal way of quickly and easily raising and resolving safety issues e.g. a form or email template. <input type="checkbox"/> Inform new staff of the health and safety practices and procedures you have in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make time to attend and actively contribute to your business' safety management practices. <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly reward your workers' WHS contributions and give prompt feedback on safety issues. <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to your managers and staff about safety: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Walk around your business and speak to your staff about safety. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for input on planned equipment or machinery purchases. <input type="checkbox"/> Check in on safety once business changes have occurred. <input type="checkbox"/> Act on feedback, or give reasons why you didn't. <input type="checkbox"/> Promote an open, positive environment to dealing with health and safety concerns.

Make work health and safety (WHS) part of your business

Make work health and safety a regular part of running your business. Including WHS in your standard processes can improve normal standard practice for everyone involved in your business.

Business practices	Leader practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Include WHS when you allocate responsibilities to people in your business, and follow up on their progress. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide resources to manage WHS risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure workers have the right equipment and training to carry out their tasks safely. <input type="checkbox"/> Allocate time to check that safety related activities, such as reviewing procedures and pre-start checks, are being done. <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure all staff, including supervisors, are sufficiently trained and competent. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider WHS at the same time as you are making other business decisions such as purchasing equipment or <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> engaging sub-contractors. <input type="checkbox"/> Include WHS in your induction for new workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss safety with your managers or staff as part of a regular performance review. <input type="checkbox"/> Review your budget and make sure money allocated for safety has been spent on safety, and that the amount you allocate to safety is appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/> Hold you staff and contractors accountable for safety performance. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask staff to explain safety protocols to you and check whether or not they are easy to follow. <input type="checkbox"/> Be present for new worker inductions or important team updates relating to safe work practices.

Review your performance

Once you have set things in place to achieve good work health and safety management and culture in your business, you will need to regularly check your systems and activities to make sure your improvements are maintained.

Business practices	Leadership practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Document the WHS risks in your business, and review your documents regularly. <input type="checkbox"/> Check that control measures are implemented and working as planned. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek advice as needed from WHS professionals about how to best manage health and safety risks. <input type="checkbox"/> Review your safety performance and issues reports, and act on any emerging trends. <input type="checkbox"/> Include safety in your business planning and make sure you consider safety during times of change for your business. <input type="checkbox"/> Join your regulator's or employer association's safety network or leadership program and learn from others who are facing the same safety issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be aware of what is happening on the ground, including activities carried out internally or by contractors. <input type="checkbox"/> Share relevant WHS data and information with your workers. <input type="checkbox"/> Address any health and safety problems when they are identified following your review. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage your workers to report incidents and near misses – and learn from these. <input type="checkbox"/> Take a personal interest in staying up to date to date on safety issues relevant to your business.