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PART 1: THE FIFTY-THOUSAND FOOT VIEW

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCING ISM



INTRODUCTION

"It is best to do things systematically, since we are only human, and disorder is our worst enemy."
Hesiod

These days, companies have more occupational health and safety program elements to choose from than ever before: audits, poster campaigns, hazard identification programs, engineering solutions, safety gear, behaviour based safety, etc. etc. etc. Right now, we have more components – more tools – in our safety arsenal than at any other time in history. Yet in most cases, accident rates remain high? Why?

The closer you look, the more obvious it becomes that most companies are overlooking one key principle in their safety programs:

Everything in Health and Safety is Connected!

A bunch of isolated elements does not equal effective safety management. Consider the human body. Along with a lot of other pieces, it has lungs, a heart, kidneys, and a digestive system. Scientists study these organs separately, and we think of them as independent entities. In fact, doctors build entire careers around treating just one organ.

Yet in reality, these organs are not independent at all. For example, the heart muscle depends on the lungs to deliver oxygenated blood, the digestive system to deliver food, and the kidneys to take away waste. Without these other organs, the greatest doctor in the world could not make your heart function normally. It would die.

Similarly, the lungs can't live without blood pumped by the heart, food from the digestive system, and waste removal services provided by the kidneys. And the kidneys need the heart, the lungs, and the digestive system. And the digestive system needs the heart, the

lungs, and the kidneys. Although we usually think of each of these organs in isolation, the truth is that they are completely interdependent. Each needs the others to live and thrive.

It's the same with OH&S: everything is connected. Yet we rush off after *elements*, as if doctoring our OH&S programs with that perfect individual piece will make our accident rates go away.

Of the available OH&S elements, many can be viewed as *a* key to safety, but none of them is *the* key. The real key, as I see it, is to fit some essential pieces together into an integrated whole—to create a unified theory of health and safety excellence, then use that theory to create OH&S systems that live and thrive.

That's what this book is all about.

The goal of this book is to do what nobody else is doing—pull back from the current focus on individual safety elements to present a unified fifty-thousand foot view of safety management. This book will show you:

- what the four crucial components of safety are
- why they're indispensable
- how they fit together into a unified whole
- four keys for applying them effectively

THE COMPONENTS OF INTEGRATED SAFETY

The four essential components of a successful safety management system are: company culture, accountability, work environment, and behaviour. These four components are as interdependent as the vital organs in a human body. Take any of them away, or fail to fully support them, and the system dies.

I've got news for you: your company already *has* all these components. You already have a safety culture, whether you manage it or not. You *have* an accountability system, whether you manage it or not. You *have* a work environment. And you *have* employee behaviour. The question is: do you *manage* these things? Because if you don't, any safety results you get, or don't get, are *totally random*. If you do not manage these four factors, then frankly, you're just running on luck.

Back in the 1980s, W. Edwards Deming, the father of quality control, told us that if a company doesn't manage its production, it will *need* a quality inspector to weed out the rejects. The same principle applies to safety: if you aren't managing your OH&S process, expect to see results you may not like.



This book will show you how to manage your OH&S results using an integrated safety management system that I call (strangely enough) Integrated Safety Management (ISM, pronounced to rhyme with “prism”).

ISM is the first major safety system to recognize that there are four essential components to an effective safety program, and that these four components *must* all be managed, and be working together, if a company’s safety system is to live and thrive. (Yes, I *am* going to beat you senseless with that concept, because without it the details will be meaningless.)

Reduced accident rates are possible. Healthy and Safe companies are possible. How do I know? Because it’s being done. There are organizations—not many, but some—that are getting excellent safety results. Much of this book is based on the observation and study of exactly what these companies do, and how they do it.

Your company can do it too. You just need to get unstuck from the ways that aren’t working, and find out what does work.

ISM works.

WELCOME TO THE IMPERIAL CHARIOT & LYRE CORPORATION (SEE COMPANY PROFILE, PG. XI)

The noon sun beat down mercilessly as Hans Preventicus hurried up the steps of the Imperial castle. Hans, the new Safety Officer at the Imperial Chariot and Lyre Corporation, had been unpacking at the Imperial Inn, when a breathless messenger had arrived and informed him that there had been an accident at IC&L, and that Emperor Thump required his services *now*.

So Hans had followed the messenger to the castle. Now, as he hurried up the castle steps behind the man, Hans reflected that not much had changed during the five years he'd been away in Crete, studying health and safety at the Academy of Integrated Safety Management.

In the Imperial Audience room, he found the Emperor throwing darts at a caricature of Oneuppicus, Emperor of the adjacent empire.

Hans knelt and kissed the Emperor's robe. "Exalted Emperor!" he said. "What happened?"

The Emperor flicked a dart into Oneuppicus' chin. "Hah! Ten points! Ten points for me! Happened? Oh yes. Happened! Ye Gods! A disaster. A worker fell into a dye vat."

"Is he all right?" Hans asked.

"He's rather, ah... but I'll let you find that out for yourself." The Emperor flicked another dart. "Stupid workers. Tenth accident this month! You'd think they'd learn."

"Tenth?" Hans said, appalled. "This month?"

"Tenth! Tenth! The Senate is up in arms! My WCB payments are through the roof! It's eating into the funds for my Imperial Birthday celebrations. Tell me," the Emperor said, gazing affectionately at himself in a hand-held, silver-and-gold accented mirror, "do I look forty-four? Honestly."

"Uh, no. But what about the accident? Accidents," Hans corrected himself.

"Hah! Mere piffle! I, your Emperor, have solved the problem."

"That's a relief," Hans said. "How?"

"I'll fire them all. All the workers. We'll get new ones. They'll have to be smarter than this bunch."

"Uh, Emperor," Hans said. "That may not be a good idea. You'll have retraining time and—"



“Your father, Preventicus Maximus, never objected when I fired anyone.” Thump struck a pose. “You’re *fired!!* Wasn’t that great?”

Hans nodded. “Yeah, well, dad was a pretty good Safety Officer, but he was a bit outdated in his thinking. You see, the National Safety Council just compiled some survey data on about twenty thousand people, and they concluded that careful personnel selection results in only a 3.7% reduction in accidents.”

The Emperor drew himself up to his full 5-foot 2-inch height. “I am the Emperor. I decide what’s true around here.”

Hans shook his head. “I don’t think you’d better fire those workers. It seems like there’s a lot more wrong around here than just —”

“Safety Officer?” The Emperor creased his toga delicately. “There is but one Emperor in this room. Would that be you or me?”

“But you can’t just expect...” Hans was going to say that you can’t expect things to be true just because you want them to be true, but he realized he was going to have to be a *lot* more careful than that if he wanted to keep this job. “You, Emperor,” he said. “That would be you. Esteemed and Immortal Emperor whom we all adore.”

“Adore. Yes, of course. I like that. You’re excused, this time. And no firings — yet! But I require Safety! Safety! Make it so!!!!!”

KEY MESSAGES IN THIS BOOK

“Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of intelligent effort.”

John Ruskin

Okay. Before we start sorting out the mess at Imperial Chariot & Lyre, we’re going to need a few basic principles. So let’s list what we know for sure about each of our four key components for safety. These principles are not things I made up; each one has been thoroughly investigated and proven in the real world. (If you don’t believe me, turn to the *Recommended Reading* list in Appendix 5, and start reading.)

Here’s what we know about our four key areas:

SAFE BEHAVIOUR

Human behaviour is motivated, therefore it can be managed. Over sixty years of clinical and field study of Human Behaviour has taught us how to manage it.

ACCOUNTABILITY

If you measure it, they’ll do it. If you add a reward, they’ll do it with commitment and enthusiasm.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Safe tools, equipment, materials, and environment have a *huge* impact on safety.

SAFETY CULTURE

'The way it is around here' really matters to safety. How you spend your time and money matters a LOT! How you demonstrate your values, by means of your actions, will speak volumes.

In this book, we'll bring all these principles together into an Integrated Safety Management system.

WHY DOES ISM WORK?

"You could do what I do if you did what I did."

F.M. Alexander

ISM works because it fits the current evidence regarding what helps make companies' safety excellent'. In particular:

- it identifies and integrates the components needed for effective safety management
- it creates a safety culture to establish norms for 'the way it is around here'
- it engages people and creates total employee involvement with a sense of accountability and ownership. Every employee—from hourly worker to CEO—is engaged by being made accountable for specific activities.
- it recognizes that taking care of the *physical* environment (plant, tools, etc) is vital in getting safety results
- it is activity based, so a company can do positive things about safety that are measurable, therefore manageable
- it builds true interdependence and caring among employees
- it increases communication, including the quality and frequency of safety discussions
- it gives the safety culture room to evolve and grow
- it uses your own evidence to tell you what is getting safety results for you and your company

Companies that manage their safety programs using the four integrated components of ISM are very safe. The evidence shows it.

WHAT EVIDENCE?

"Success leaves clues."

Stephen Covey

The evidence for ISM is in the accident rates of the literally thousands of companies I have worked with during thirty years in OH&S. I can walk into a company that I've never seen before, ask a few key questions about their OH&S program, and predict that company's safety performance with a very high degree of certainty.

Once you understand the concepts in this book, you'll see how that can be done. The prediction is based on a few simple parameters called 'leading indicators'. These leading indicators—*WHAT* a company is doing, and *HOW* those things are being done—will determine the company's trailing indicators—accident rates, number of lost days due to injury and illness, injury claims costs, etc. It's a simple case of cause and effect. You can't get much more evidence-based than that.

As you'll find out, I'm big on evidence. I use a lot of it to support the ideas in this book—which leads us to our next chapter. For you to really understand the evidence I'll be showing you, the first thing we need to do is take a quick tour through the history of safety. I'll try to make it insightful.