

## The future of safety excellence



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What is required to be good at safety evolves over time, but what it takes to be truly excellent is a more dynamic, moving target. Here are seven trends to monitor:

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**Excellence will be reframed** – New metrics that describe strategy and methodology will become prescriptive process indicators for leaders, and common practice metrics will become the guiding and reinforcing metrics for workers. Both groups will realize the temporary lack of accidents is not the real measure of excellence and will strive to learn what produced lower accident rates and how to repeat the results year to year

**From programs to strategy** – Strategy will align thinking and decision-making in the field and help leaders better select and de-select the programs they use. The heritage safety programs that have sapped resources without producing results will either be revised or dropped.

**Leaders will actually lead safety** – Organizational leaders will still need to delegate the busy work of safety but will not delegate the development of the strategy or the highest levels of safety leadership. Leaders will take responsibility for setting the strategic direction of safety efforts and ensuring they can peacefully coexist with the business strategy.

**Grunt to guardian to guru** – Safety professionals will be pushed out of the daily grunt work of safety and become true safety managers. As safety becomes a line responsibility, line people will become more and more competent at managing safety. The safety professional will need to become a resource and subject-matter expert advising rather than directing safety efforts.

**New kind of safety consultant** – Consultants will need to be less specialists and more generalists, less scientists and more technologists and corporate problem-solvers, less sellers of programs and more developers of strategies and programs to fit those strategies. The new consulting will require more business acumen and basic organizational design expertise. Of course, there will always be a need for basic safety consultants that help organizations get from bad to good, but the consultants helping organizations get from good to great will change significantly.

**Safety programs will change focus** – Programs will change from a focus on control to a focus on marketing. Safety training will strive for engagement as well as knowledge transfer. Off-the-shelf programs will have a harder time truly meeting workers' needs, creating meaningful engagement and adding value to a strategic direction. Programs will be more often custom-created than universally marketed. The goal of safety programs will evolve from only impacting lagging indicators to truly adding value.

**Safety metrics will focus on value** – As safety programs seek to add value, safety metrics will seek to measure the value added. The initial metrics will be quantity metrics (how much value was added?) but will evolve to quality metrics as well (how effectively and efficiently was value added?). The one-dimensional metrics of lagging indicators will give way to two-dimensional metrics of leading and lagging indicators. The correlation and causation relationships between leading and lagging indicators will begin to emerge as algorithms that develop cause-and effect analysis and result in a truly three-dimensional model of what it takes to create excellent safety performance - what Deming would have called “profound knowledge” of the safety excellence process.

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