

January 1998

Aspects of Health and Safety Performance. George Alcock

Firstly he dealt with measuring performance and said that it could be done at several levels in any organisation - Industry Group, Company, Plant, Department or Individuals. It could also address historic and present trends or, even, targets for reduction in the future!

Importantly, the purpose of the measurement should be defined in advance so that its nature and accuracy limits could be designed efficiently. The HSE gave some useful guidance on this subject in HSG 65, Successful Health and Safety Management, where they emphasise the need for **proactive indicators** such as numbers of management inspections carried out to pre-empt accidents before they happen!

The old managers adage "**What gets measured, Gets done!**" is just as true in Safety but, George added, you had to be careful that you didn't fall into the trap of "**What gets done, Gets measured!**". Sometimes, as well, good intentions were hi-jacked because what happens is "**What the Boss wants, Gets done!**" Another important principle was that Measurement must be an integral part of a planned **Improvement Culture**, not just a ploy to fool the Auditors.

George then introduced a little 'light relief' by showing us some interesting photographs of typical hazards spotted on site inspections and audits. He also showed some examples of good practices and said, by contrast, what a **good** impression they made!

He then went on to say that health and safety performance needs to be the subject of "**Continuous Improvement**", so that any techniques which are out-of-date and don't work any more can be remedied. Very often reality moved on and was very different to the conditions which "**Policy**" was designed to address!

Key Issues which needed to be addressed were:-

- Health & Safety organisation & arrangements
- Risk Assessment
- Manager & Supervisor training
- Accident Investigation
- Safe Systems of Work
- Workplace design and layout, including housekeeping.
- Audit & Inspection Programmes
- Significant Site Hazards
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Employee Training

Effective communication of findings is crucial to the whole programme. It must include positive feedback on the '**good**' measures and not just concentrate on negative issues, which seemed to be the 'traditional' approach of H&S Officers in the past. They must also be immediate so that they are closely associated with their origins. An informal feedback session to management is more effective than a formal presentation and a draft report allows the recipients to correct any errors

of detail which might, otherwise, detract from the effect of the final version. Suitable follow up action and sympathetic support with the implementation of the recommendations allows the reporter to become part of the solution.

There are several tools which are associated with this process:-

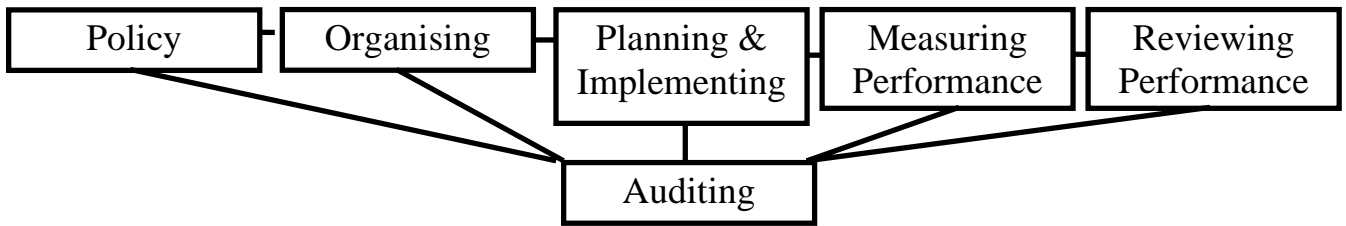
- **SWOT**
 - **S**trengths (Good Training & PPE)
 - **W**eaknesses (Poor Line Management ownership)
 - **O**pportunities (Strengthen Risk Assessment process)
 - **T**hreats (Lack of Resources, Major Accident Risk)
- **Planned Improvement Programmes**
- **Best Practice Visits - Internal & External**
- **Force Field Analysis**

George quoted HS(G) 65, Successful Health and Safety Management where the HSE offered the opinion:-

"The majority of accidents and incidents are not caused by careless workers, but by failures of control (either within the organisation or within the particular job) which are the

RESPONSIBILITY OF MANAGEMENT

From this he drew the obvious remedy that employers needed a systematic approach to safety management as illustrated by the 5 Steps to successful Health and Safety Management:-



This system is identical to the traditional analysis of the Management Tasks and should find some empathy with line managers. It is analogous to a Quality Management system and the two should be integrated to remove unnecessary paperwork, improve administrative practice and to remove barriers to improvement. Non-integration is likely to produce an adverse reaction.

Force Field Analysis is very useful in breaking down barriers to improvement and is conducted by a syndicate(s) of about six persons. The Syndicates identify the **Driving** (Existing or needed) and **Restraining** (Lacking/Inadequate) forces in selected activities. Then it brainstorms the remedial actions and prioritises them in terms benefits and relative ease/cost of implementation in order to devise an improvement programme. Ideally the syndicates will be drawn from all levels and parts of the organisation and will include managers as well as (say) Safety Representatives.

Key Specific actions arising out of a typical improvement programme would be:-

- Pro-Active and Reactive measures in all parts of the business, with full accountability.
- Health and Safety as a standard item on the Agenda of the Executive Committee.
- Health, Safety and Environmental measures in the annual budget.

George wound up the presentation with the thought that:-

**Good Health, Safety and Environmental
Management is ~~good~~ Business
essential**

Graham Cheary voiced some valuable comments on the subject of "What gets measured":-

- Accountability for any measures in the programme is essential because it guarantees quality and ensures that something actually gets done.
- TRENDS in performance are more useful than spot checks.
- Performance indicators are both symptoms and causes. Key issues have to be identified to achieve most effect.
- Force Field Analysis relied on quality of the source and used arrows (Not Bullet points) Working on a dynamic Median Line
- He congratulated George on the amount of material delivered after such short notice and suggested that the subject might be a suitable topic for some future conference.

As there were no other questions, the Chairman thanked George for his presentation and asked the members to join him in expressing their appreciation.