

Client leadership on health and safety

A good practice guidance document produced by CIC for professionals to actively engage with clients on health and safety leadership.



The Construction Industry Council (CIC) was established in 1988 with five founder members. Since then it has grown in size and influence to become the largest pan-industry body concerned with all aspects of the built environment.

CIC a non-profit making body set up as a Company Limited by Guarantee.

Today, CIC occupies a unique role within the UK construction industry. Its members represent over 500,000 professionals working for, and in association with, the construction industry and more than 25,000 construction firms. It is the representative forum for the industry's professional bodies, research organisations and specialist trade associations.

The breadth and depth of its membership means that CIC is the only single body able to speak with authority on the diverse issues connected with construction without being constrained by the self-interest of any particular sector of the industry.

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1. Introduction



As professionals we are in a key position to influence clients' leadership on health and safety, which is an important aspect of risk management on any project.

This guidance has been produced to assist you in your dialogue with clients. For maximum benefit engagement needs to be as early as possible. This document also includes real life examples which demonstrates the benefits of leading on health and safety.

2. Why does client health and safety leadership matter?



The overall success of a project is dependent on how effectively the client leads on health and safety.

There are clearly defined legal obligations, which are key drivers, but there are also moral obligations with respect to all those working on the project to ensure their well being. This also makes good business sense. It is therefore important that clients appreciate this concept and understand their commitment and their expected contribution to the health and safety leadership on the project.

Securing upfront commitment and proactively leading health and safety will aid the successful delivery of a project. It has been proven that implementing a sensible and proportionate risk management strategy will assist in a transparent delivery process.

A well planned risk management strategy will help deliver a cost effective and innovative project. It will establish good practice that can be adopted on future projects and aid a successful and safe delivery.

Health and safety is an integral part of any risk management strategy and for maximum benefit consideration must be given at concept/feasibility stage.

Key drivers

We recognise that all projects have significant challenges and if we adopt a risk management strategy, with clear leadership, there can be major cost benefits.

One of the key drivers for our clients is cost, and in order to secure a successful cost effective delivery of a project, then management of health and safety cannot be ignored. This is why health and safety is an integral part of any risk management strategy and for maximum benefit consideration must be given at concept / feasibility stage.

The benefits of good health and safety management system may not be self evident, often health and safety risks are intangible until something goes wrong. Proactive leadership has proven to significantly reduce these risks.

One of the indirect benefits is that people wish to be associated with a successful project. Stakeholder perception (including the public and enforcing authorities) and positive publicity will inspire all those associated with the project and assist in the successful delivery.

Direct benefits to the project can include:

- Reduced number of lost time accidents
- Improved reporting of minor accidents, incidents and near misses
- Timeliness of delivery and quality of product
- Improved resource management
- Innovative solutions
- Enhanced visibility and transparency of processes
- Improved overall project performance
- Opportunity to capture lessons learned
- Integrated project team involving all parties, leading to improved communication and cooperation
- Improved management of all risks
- Clearly identifiable project goals and successes

Indirect benefits to the project include:

- Association with success
- Enhance reputation
- Attract future sponsors and customers
- Reduced insurance costs

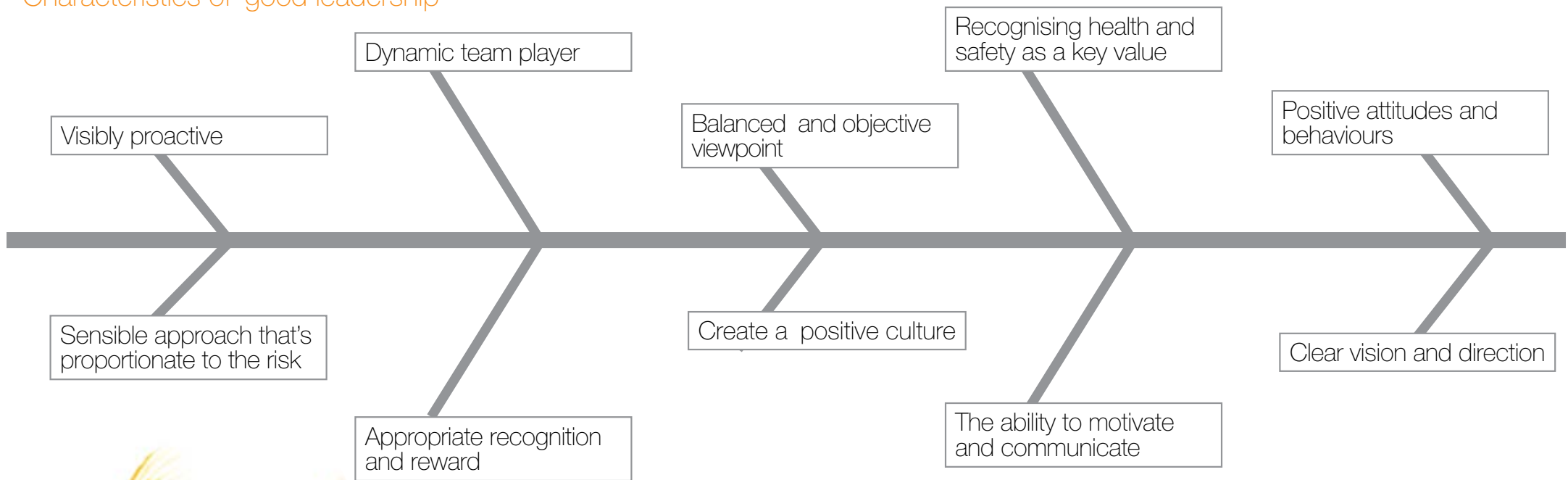
3. Visible leadership

Visible leadership allows everyone within the project to clearly understand the clients vision, values and expectations, displaying positive attitudes and behaviours towards health and safety.

The fishbone diagram below shows the characteristics of good health and safety leadership.

One of the key facets of a successful project is committed, visible, proactive and personable leadership.

Characteristics of good leadership



Challenges to good leadership

- Number of contractor and sub-contractors
- Changes in personnel during project
- The length of the supply chain
- Cultural differences between companies
- General attitudes can be difficult to change
- Costs associated with safer methods
- Problems with data collection
- Lack of consistency on engaging contractors
- Difficult sharing and learning between sites
- Negative perception towards health and safety

4. Phases of the project

Projects normally progress through the key stages identified below. Under each heading are the key factors to be considered which will assist in your discussions with the client to reinforce their leadership role.

1. Concept Stage

Client to lead on:

- Clear scope and definition
- Single and shared vision and values to create the right culture
- Identify the drivers (time, cost, delivery, quality etc)
- Consider procurement approach such as partnering
- Defining key objectives & goals
- Integrated team approach
- Identify key stakeholders
- Risk profile, including identifying ownership and accountability
- Consider historical health and safety, environmental factors and planning restraints

2. Planning Stage

Client to lead on:

- Integrate health and safety within the programme
- Define roles and responsibility as well as key expectations for health and safety
- Set policy and standards
- Understand the impact of procurement on health and safety
- Develop the risk management plan, including existing health and safety hazards i.e. asbestos
- Encourage good practice and innovation
- Set project-specific targets
- Consider impact on neighbours and public and actively engage

Expectations of supply chain(s):

- Identify the potential for adverse events as part of emergency planning

3. Design Stage

Client to lead on:

- Early engagement with contractors and potential occupants/FM providers
- Integrated reporting and meeting structure
- Project review including stakeholders

Expectations of supply chain(s):

- Red, Amber, Green (RAG) designer list
- Identify significant risks on drawings
- Innovative design review
- Develop future cleaning and maintenance strategies
- Early development of integrated health and safety files, and asset management systems

4. Construction (or refurbishment) Stage

Client to lead on:

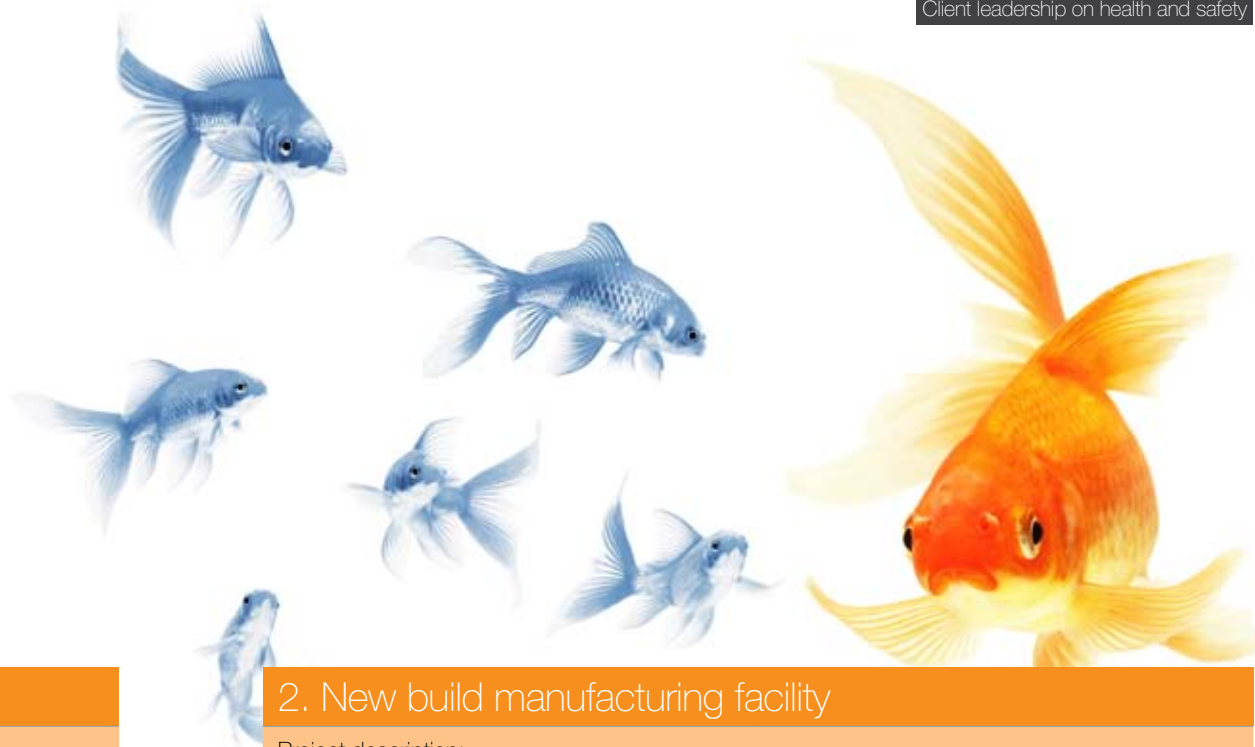
- Proactive monitoring and review
 - Director safety tours
 - Leading as well as lagging indicators
 - Independent audit/review
 - Safety observations
- Capturing and encouraging innovative solutions
- Ongoing consultation and communication with stakeholders and neighbours

Expectations of supply chain(s):

- Influencing and engaging with both contractors and sub contractors
- Proactive and effective supervision
- Development and implementation of project specific standards
 - Competency including training
 - Induction
 - Site rules
 - Occupational health
 - Workforce consultation
 - Welfare arrangements
 - Accident, incident and near miss reporting and investigation
 - Monitoring and reporting requirements
 - Meeting structure

5. Examples of client leadership

The following examples demonstrate client safety leadership can have a positive impact on any size or type of project:



1. Office refurbishment project

Project description:

The refurbishment of a medium size office.

Leadership actions:

Leadership started at the tender process by providing clear expectations on safety standards required on the project. This involved:

- Checking all site personnel had the right competencies
- Provision of PPE
- Appropriate site induction
- The requirement that all accidents / incidents were reported and investigated

Being part of the tender process, the potential principal contractors then fully understood that having a good safety culture on site is important to deliver a successful project, and could budget for safer methods such as using scaffold.

Leadership was then reinforced during refurbishment works. The client visited site on a regular basis to discuss programme and issues, and health and safety was an integral part of these discussions. Where there was a need to change a method of work the first question was 'how can we do this safely?' Safety was the first item on the agenda at the weekly site meetings, which gave an opportunity to discuss any accidents / incidents or any other safety concerns, as well as an ongoing review of health and safety for the upcoming programme of works.

The client taking on active leadership role meant that everyone knew it was important to them. The outcome was the principal contractor implemented improvements such as permit to work system for use of ladders, and a yellow / red card system for not wearing PPE. There were also sensible practical discussions how to do work safely. The end result was a refurbishment delivered on time and on budget with a good safety record.

2. New build manufacturing facility

Project description:

A medium size new build of a manufacturing facility.

Leadership actions:

In this particular example, the client used an integrated team approach to achieve multiple benefits. The client set up this integrated team, led by themselves and included designers, the principal contractor, and the whole of the supply chain.

Co-located offices were used to ensure the whole project team were working together and able to attend plan-do-review meetings, which were actively and visibly lead by the client.

This focussed approach ensured that design decisions were discussed by the whole team and that any proposed changes to design or programme were considered by the whole team and not in isolation.

As well as added safety benefits, it was reported at one meeting that the programme was nearly three months ahead of schedule. This produced benefits not only for the client but for all involved. As the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) like to say "Good health is good business".

3. Major construction project

Project description:

Major construction project including feasibility, civil and structural work, mechanical and electrical.

Leadership actions:

This major construction project was an example of a project where strong and committed leadership led to an improved safety performance. It was reported that the safety performance was four times better than the industry norm. Leadership action taken included:

- Clearly publicising the values behind safety standards and procedures through posters, newsletters, and the repetition of goals such as everyone going home safely at night
- Demonstration of senior management commitment to the values through visible actions achieved through coaching sessions
- A cultural change initiative, which involved all levels of management in training events and in challenging current attitudes

The importance of leadership was highlighted using the client's philosophy of engagement from the top and the belief that the highest standard of safety that managers can obtain is the one they demonstrate.

An integrated team approach was adopted whereby the client also took on the role of the principal contractor, and as such, had a hands-on management role. It is appreciated that some clients will not want to take this approach but many of the actions which this client implemented have much in common with the partnering approach. They developed bespoke safety procedures with the contractors and established a "shared responsibility and ownership for health and safety across the whole site".

This client also developed their own standards and it was made clear in their safety policy statement that they expected certain standards from all parties involved. These standards were followed by all designers, contractors and their supply chain. By defining their standards, their aim is to be industry-leading.

A specific Red Amber Green (RAG) list was developed for the project for designers to use. In this way the client influenced the standards achieved. Other clients are now adopting this approach. The use of prefabrication and modularisation were sought at every opportunity. This included testing products and processes off site to establish the best approach.

This client also required the supply chain to visit site as part of their own behavioural initiatives. It was noted that when a number of potentially serious incidents occurred, a personal communication was issued from the client CEO directly to all the supply chain companies for action to be taken.

Leadership is far more than fine words produced in a corporate statement, leaders must be able to show that those on the shop floor recognise and follow that lead.

Sir Bill Callaghan, Former Chair of HSC

Outcome of client leadership

As a result of applying good practice as outlined in the examples the following benefits have been identified:

- Reduced number of serious accidents, and a reduction in the Accident Frequency Rate (AFR)
- Reduce number of serious incidents, such as cable strikes
- Lower absence days reported from all parties involved in the project
- Increase in near miss reporting
- Increased awareness of unsafe behaviour on site
- Innovation by supply chain identifying safer methods
- Health and safety is integrated with good overall performance
- Increased level of compliance
- Developing a positive safety culture
- Reduced risk (safety in design and lean construction)
- Improved literacy for non-English speaking workers
- Development of a safety forum
- Successful delivery of projects (on time and on budget)

Information on the benefits of good client leadership, including further guidance, case studies, and using KPIs can be found on the Construction Clients' Group (CCG) website: www.constructingexcellence.org.uk/sectorforums/constructionclientsgroup

Further information can also be found on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website: www.hse.gov.uk



Contact Details:

Construction Industry Council
26 Store Street
London
WC1E 7BT
Tel: +44 20 7399 7400
www.cic.org.uk



ARUP

ATKINS

Halcrow

Mott MacDonald