



**TRAINING AND
EVENTS FROM**



Health and Safety Leadership Excellence

A course book for the NEBOSH HSE Certificate
in Health and Safety Leadership Excellence



Certificate

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Foreword



Health and safety is a key performance measure within successful and forward-thinking organisations. Effective leaders understand that health and safety is not just a moral imperative, but also contributes to the achievement of objectives across the organisational spectrum covering finance, operations, compliance and governance.

Productivity improvements, competitive advantage, talent retention and effective risk management are just a few of the things which flow from strong organisational health and safety performance and culture.

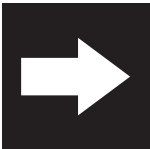
Whether it is finance, marketing, human resources, or health and safety, leaders should always seek to develop their high-level understanding within each component part of their organisation in order to monitor and positively influence overall performance. This book follows the syllabus for the NEBOSH HSE Certificate in Health and Safety Leadership Excellence which is designed to support both leaders and aspiring leaders in gaining core understanding of how their behaviours and responsibilities directly impact on health and safety management.

A guide to the symbols used in this course book



Activity

Carry out an activity to reinforce what you have just learned.



Example

Real or imagined scenarios that give context to points made in the text.



Key Terms

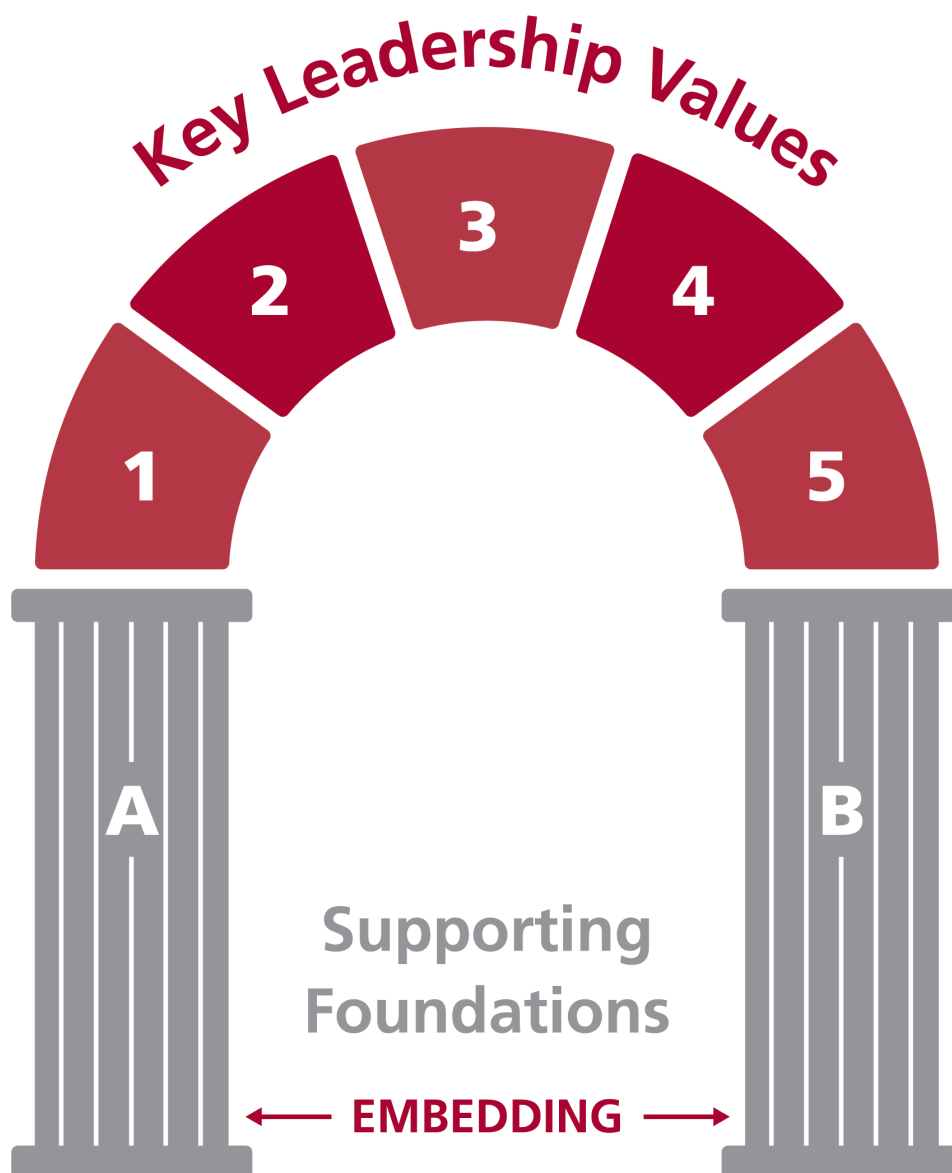
Definitions of key terminology.



Assessment Activity

This symbol indicates that part of the assessment is to be undertaken. This must be done individually and not as part of a group activity. The accredited Learning Partner will advise on the time to be allocated for each part of the assessment.

The HSE's five leadership values



The key leadership values are:

- 1 Building and promoting a shared H&S vision
- 2 Being considerate and responsive
- 3 Providing support and recognition
- 4 Promoting fairness and trust in relationships with others
- 5 Encouraging improvement, innovation and learning

The supporting foundations are:

- a Involvement / communication
- b Effective role modelling

Wherever you see this diagram it indicates that one of the five leadership values will be discussed and assessed.

Element 1

The foundations of health and safety leadership

This Element will explore the reasons for good health and safety leadership, why a health and safety vision is important to an organisation and the benefits that good health and safety leadership can bring to an organisation. To further highlight these areas we will then look at the specific moral, legal and business arguments for good health and safety leadership. Here we will be looking at the level of penalties that organisations and individuals can expect to see should health and safety legislation be breached. The Element will conclude with a look at how leaders can gain assurance that their organisation is managing health and safety well and finally, the impact of good health and safety leadership on organisational health and safety culture.

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate the importance of health and safety leadership excellence
- Recognise indicators that can provide assurance to leadership teams that health and safety is being managed effectively
- Model good leadership to positively influence health and safety culture

1.1 Reasons for health and safety leadership, organisational health and safety vision and benefits of excellent health and safety leadership

What is health and safety leadership?



Key Term

Leadership can be defined as the process of understanding people's motivations and leveraging them to achieve a common goal.¹

A debate has long existed about the differences between 'Management' and 'Leadership' across a wider spectrum than health and safety; sometimes it is difficult to determine what these differences might be. However, in the area of health and safety we can draw some clear distinctions about these terms.

It is perfectly possible, and hopefully probable, that a health and safety manager will also be a leader in health and safety. However, this does not mean that a health and safety leader automatically 'manages' the day-to-day functions of organisational health and safety or has ultimate responsibility for them.

When we start to examine the different styles of leadership it will become clear that leadership can come from many places and is not exclusively a 'top down' process. It can be, of course, but leadership is mainly about the ability to 'take people with you' and this skill can be present at all levels. It is, therefore, important that a good health and safety leader will not only have the necessary technical knowledge and skills, but that they also have 'soft skills' such as an open approachable personality, emotional intelligence, and empathy.

Effective health and safety performance comes from the top; members of the board have both collective and individual responsibility for health and safety. Leaders need to examine their own behaviours, both individually and collectively and, where they see that they fall short, to change what they do to become more effective leaders in health and safety.

It is important that leaders take action because:

- protecting the health and safety of workers or members of the public who may be affected by workplace activities is an essential part of risk management and must be led by senior leaders/boards;
- failure to include health and safety as a key business risk in board decisions can have catastrophic results. Many high-profile safety cases over the years have been rooted in failures of leadership; and
- health and safety law places duties on organisations and employers, and directors can be personally liable when these duties are breached: members of the board have both collective and individual responsibility for health and safety.²



Activity

When you are working with a good health and safety leader, what makes you think that they are good? How do they exhibit the qualities of a good health and safety leader?

The reasons for, and benefits of, effective health and safety leadership

The reasons for, and benefits of, good health and safety leadership should be self-evident in any organisation; however, it is unfortunately not always the case.

The sad but true fact is that many organisations only get to learn the true cost of poor health and safety after an incident has occurred. Many high-profile incidents trace their root causes back to failures of leadership at the very top and many result not just in high penalties, but cause the business to collapse due to irreparable reputation damage.

Dame Judith Hackitt, the past Chair of HSE.

If organisations do not regulate themselves, things are likely to go wrong and this is when the regulator will get involved. Investors want to know that they are investing in a well-led/run organisation that performs well. Customers expect organisations to evidence good health and safety performance; there are many companies who will not include organisations in their supply chain who cannot evidence good health and safety management.

An organisation's reputation can be built over many years but it can be destroyed in seconds. Any adverse incidents will have a major impact on all stakeholder interactions which may affect productivity, investment and sales and which may also result in regulatory action..

Even if health and safety law did not exist, there are still sound business reasons for investing in good health and safety. If health and safety is not managed well by its leaders, and things do go wrong, this will have a massive effect on the organisation. As well as the financial (business) reasons, which we will discuss in more detail later, it could mean that the business is unable to continue trading; this will, obviously, have a major impact on workers and other stakeholders.

In the UK, there is a well-established health and safety regulatory system. Companies and individuals can, therefore, face serious consequences when health and safety leadership falls short of what is required. Sanctions include fines, imprisonment and disqualification.



Activity

What do you think the reasons and business benefits are for effective health and safety leadership?

The following case studies from the HSE show what can happen with poor and good leadership.



Examples

The HSE has highlighted a number of examples of weak health and safety leadership. One such case is where a worker at a recycling firm was fatally injured when the machinery that he had been maintaining was not properly isolated and started up unexpectedly.

Commenting on the case, HSE's investigating principal inspector said, "Evidence showed that the director chose not to follow the advice of his health and safety adviser and instead adopted a complacent attitude, allowing the standards in his business to fall".

The HSE and police investigation revealed that there was no safe system of work for maintenance and that instruction, training and supervision were inadequate. As a result, the company director was convicted of manslaughter and received a 12-month custodial sentence.³

Conversely, the HSE offers the example of British Sugar as a case study in the benefits to be gained by organisations through robust health and safety leadership.

The HSE says British Sugar had historically had an excellent safety record but in 2003 there were three fatalities at the company. Although health and safety had always been a business priority, the company recognised that a change in focus was needed. This included:

- the CEO assigning health and safety responsibilities to all directors;
- creating effective working partnerships with workers, trade unions and others;
- overseeing a behavioural change programme; and
- annual health and safety targets, and initiatives to meet these.






The results of the leadership-led changes included a two-thirds reduction in both lost times and minor injury frequency rates over a 10-year period, as well as much greater understanding by directors of health and safety risks.⁴

Health and Safety Leadership Excellence follows the syllabus for the NEBOSH HSE Certificate in Health and Safety Leadership Excellence. It provides the knowledge you need to help you gain the qualification.

The book contains includes practical activities, examples, case studies and definitions for key terminology, and can be used as part of your studies.

Health and Safety Leadership Excellence should help health and safety leaders understand their responsibilities (moral, legal and business) and their leadership style, as well as giving pointers on building relationships with the workforce. HSE and NEBOSH hope that this book will also become a valuable reference source once the leader is back in the workplace.

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