



IRWIN'S Consulting Approach

IRWIN'S Safety approaches safety consulting projects in a way that ensure that its' clients production needs are properly balanced with its OHS needs. We find that the law of diminishing returns applies as much to investment in organizational health and safety as other areas of a business, and by applying this methodology we are able to make the largest impact in the early phases of a project. When we are hired for a project, our project managers understand that scope fulfillment, schedule and cost accuracy, and quality production relate not only to our scope of work but also to our client's production and maintenance needs.

What do you have?

Whether developing an HSMS, revamping job hazard assessments, building a confined space or fall protection program, or conducting hygiene sampling, our first step is to assess what our clients have – documentation, equipment, culture, etc. – to allow us build out a modular plan that rolls out high-impact changes early on in the project. Generally, our consultants' first step in answering this question is to build out a documentation request that will give them an understanding of the facility or company, its unique needs, and the current status of the work we are hired to perform.

What's the culture?

Safety culture is guided by documentation, but management, worker, and contractor buy-in is a separate measure from documentation analysis. Strong safety culture is dependent on strong documentation, but it is only through work site observation and discussion with managers, employees and contractors that we can assess current state of the culture. Our next step is to conduct interviews at the facility or company we have been hired to assist. This includes a representative sample of managers, supervisors, and employees. During these interviews, which occur at the worksite, our consultants also conduct an observation of the worksite, including production, processing, and administrative activities.

Where can we focus our efforts to make the largest impact up front?

With document review, worksite observation, and interviews complete, we now have a general picture of the activities a company performs and its culture. We take this qualitative data and measure it against a baseline for the client's objectives – these vary widely, and can include legislative requirements, domestic standards such as COR, international standards such as ISO, internal KPIs or standards, or some mixture of these – to provide a quantitative ranking using an impact-benefit methodology. This allows us to develop suggestions for management or executives.

Is our gap analysis correct in its placement of priority?

OHS initiatives require buy-in of top management in order to effectively integrate with or change existing workplace activities or culture. With our quantitative analysis in hand, our next step is to present our focus to management, ensuring we have their buy-in. This gives management a chance to voice concerns or changes with our analysis – such as a company realizing they are not prepared to use a certain standard as a baseline for development, or a corporate initiative which changes the immediate focus of a facility. During this presentation, we finalize priorities based on our gap analysis and client management observations.

Build a plan

This is the step where we build a plan – encompassing scope management, assignment of personnel with the appropriate level of expertise to perform the work, assignment of equipment resource needs, development of a schedule, and build a budget. It is here where our approach is unique. Our strong network of consultants allows for us to re-assign experts to the job based on the management priorities identified in the previous step. If our consultant is not well-versed in a specific topic, we provide them the support through our network to address the client's unique challenge. The consultant who performs the gap analysis may often have additional consultants assigned to the project with diversity of expertise and experience – to ensure our clients do not pay for consulting "learning curves".



Execute the plan

Large organizations need to take little steps in order to enact change, with a fluid action plan in place the consultant will work with our client representative to implement the items on a priority-based method. It's easy to build a lab model of how a workplace should address safety in its activities. The hard part is subjecting that model to a real-life environment. Organizational change occurs slowly, and if we are hired to make significant developments, we don't want to overwhelm the people affected by these changes – sure as rolling them out all at once will. In order to avoid this, we test the waters by rolling out modular changes. This allows us to work with management to observe impact of these changes, and pivot our project management plan where necessary to ensure the work we complete is being adopted into the culture and not negatively impacting production.

Monitor Progress

Once all changes have been rolled out, depending on the work scope, we set regular intervals to follow up with our clients. This could be as simple as a phone call, or it could take us through this entire process once again to conduct regular audits or to meet a new standard. We want to make sure our clients are happy with the work we perform, and that it has had the desired impact.