

implementation

IHSA health and safety management perspective

How effective are we?

The responsibility for health and safety in any organization may seem like a daunting task. The size of the workforce and the nature of the work being done certainly dictate what is required. The higher the risk associated with an activity, the more specialized the work procedures should be.

In today's fast-paced environment, it is important that whatever is being implemented be effective—whether it is a new training program, safe work procedures, or job planning aids. Research has shown that without successful implementation, we probably aren't being as effective as we think.

Implementation science studies methods for improving the uptake, implementation, and translation of research findings into routine and common practices. The best data shows that the following methods, when used alone, produce only 5 to 20 per cent of the intended benefits.¹

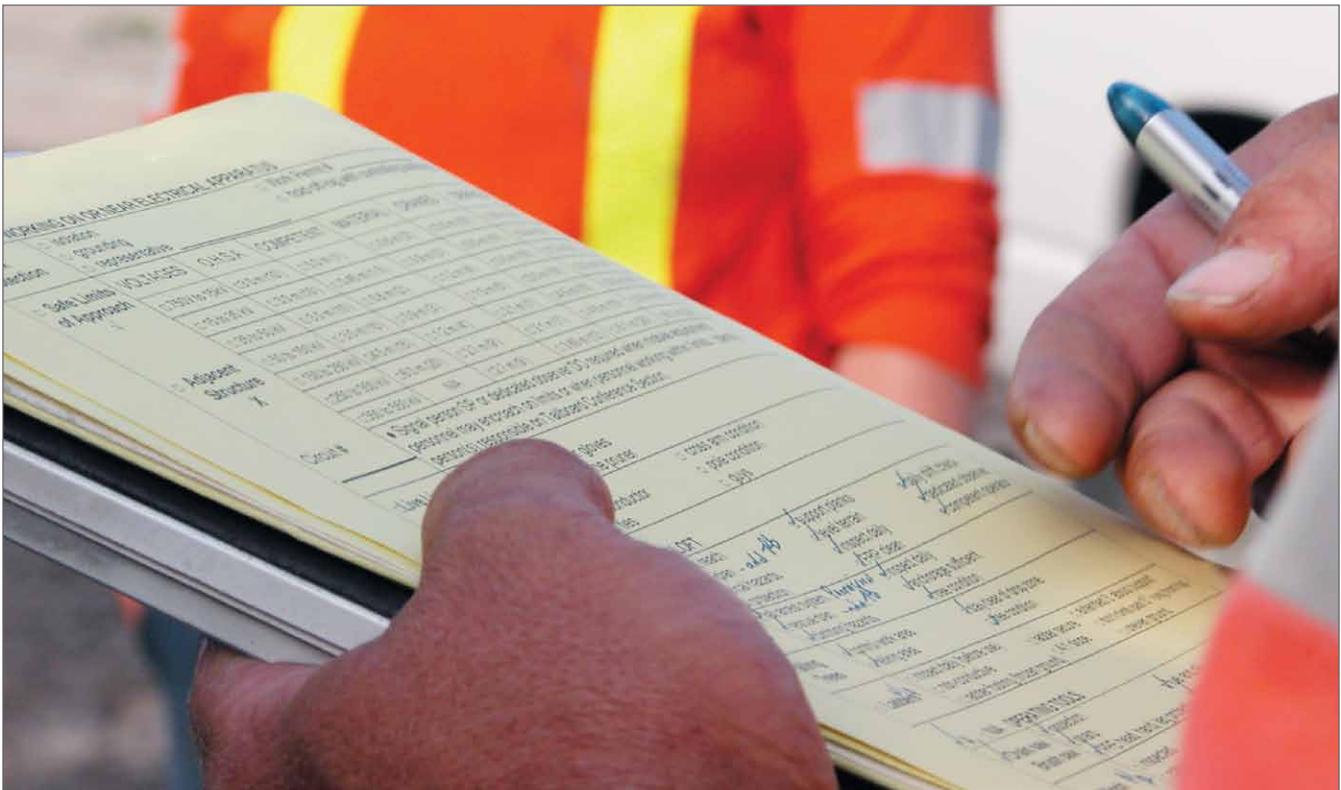
- Diffusion or dissemination of information
- Training
- Laws, mandates, and regulations
- Funding and incentives
- Organizational change or reorganization

The figures are low because often what is adopted is not done accurately or is not sustained for long enough or is not adopted on a large enough scale. Without effective implementation, even programs with strong evidence to support them will likely fail in the real world (see table).

		IMPLEMENTATION	
		Effective	Not effective
INTERVENTION	Effective	Good outcomes	Inconsistent. Not sustainable. Poor outcomes.
	Not effective	Poor outcomes	Poor outcomes. Sometimes harmful.

The Institute for Work & Health conducted a systematic review of the effectiveness of occupational health and safety management systems in 2005. Although they could not make conclusive recommendations for or against occupational health and safety management systems, the best evidence available showed that occupational health and safety management systems had consistently positive effects in workplaces. What is known is that that occupational health and safety management systems are more proactive than other occupational health and safety systems, they are better integrated internally, and they incorporate more elements of evaluation and continual improvement. Evidence would suggest that occupational health and safety management systems are effective workplace interventions. That is assuming that they have been implemented as intended. One way to ensure effective implementation is to have an implementation team. The team should

¹Dean L. Fixsen and Karen A. Blase, "Evidence-based programs: A failed experiment or the future of human services?" presentation, Blueprints Conference, San Antonio: 2012.



consist of at least three people (preferably four or five) with the expertise to promote effective, efficient, and sustainable implementation. The team should report directly to executive management. Teams are sustainable because they tolerate turnover and allow for simultaneous multi-level interventions throughout the organization. A team is able to work with staff throughout the organization and create readiness for whatever it is that you are trying to implement—health and safety management system or otherwise. Innovative practices won't likely fare well in existing organizational structures and systems. Existing systems need to change to support the effectiveness of the innovation. Investing in implementation

capacity up front will produce greater benefits down the road.

IHSA has developed an internal implementation team to ensure effective implementation of a health and safety management system. The team includes representatives from all departments and reports directly to the executive. An important requirement of any health and safety management system and a strong internal responsibility system is worker involvement. Implementation teams are a way to increase involvement while ensuring effective implementation.

Source: Lynda Robson et al, *The Effectiveness of Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems: A Systematic Review*, Toronto: Institute for Work & Health, 2005.

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