



FOCUS ARTICLE

Behaviour-Based Safety Starts at Induction

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An effective induction programme does more than check a box or provide a map of the premises. It should be viewed for what it is—where work begins—and given the requisite attention. In fact, a well-designed induction programme supports an organisation’s goals, providing a framework and a platform to express the values that permeate everyday operations.

Viewing Your Induction Programme for New Employees as an Opportunity

As Plato noted more than two thousand years ago, “The beginning is the most important part of the work.” Recognising that your induction programme is the beginning of work for every new member of your team, and not “merely” a preliminary or peripheral exercise, is crucial, especially in high hazard industries where safe behaviour is of existential importance. The induction programme is where you can begin to communicate your expectations and let individuals know what they can expect from you. Incorporating behaviour-based safety concepts demonstrates your dedication to safety, lays a strong foundation and creates a platform and point of reference for life in the company. It would be a mistake to miss this opportunity by downplaying the role of an effective induction

programme. Because it is so fundamental to maintaining a robust safety culture, it makes sense to revisit and reflect on how you are making use of the singular occasion that induction represents.

What Makes a Good Induction Programme?

There is no foolproof formula or series of universal steps for an effective induction programme. This is because every organisation is different, and if there is a rule to follow here, it is that a good induction programme is an outgrowth of the organisation itself, faithfully reflecting its values and culture. Indeed, the company’s vision or mission statement should be expressed at the outset, including all the key concepts that, in a mature company culture, will be repeated and demonstrated on a daily basis.

In terms of structure, of course it is smart to avoid excess, taking care not to allow the induction to run too long or too short, flounder in the abstract or overload new employees with more information than they can effectively process. It is helpful to consider the means of delivery as well, whether information is communicated in person, on-line, or otherwise, but these details should be dictated by the organisation's goals and the particular context. What must be recognised universally, however, is that induction programmes deserve due attention, both in their form and content, so that employers can take advantage of this invaluable moment to lay the groundwork for future performance.

Integrating Behaviour-Based Safety Concepts

In addition to making sure the company's values and mission statement top the agenda, it is helpful to consider four elements of **behaviour-based safety** when designing a new induction programme or reflecting on or revamping an existing one. First, a strong approach to behaviour-based safety begins with creating clear guidelines around expectations. When an organisation is involved in strengthening its commitment to safety, this is typically accomplished by establishing an Inventory of Critical Behaviours (ICB), for example, or identifying Life Saving Rules (LSR) based on the processes and hazards specific to that company. These expectations around safe behaviours should also be communicated clearly to those joining the company during the induction programme, together with the rationale. This is a good opportunity to practice transparency, citing concrete examples to illustrate the consequences of unsafe behaviours.

Another behaviour-based element to incorporate relates to how data is gathered to ensure that safety standards are upheld. Here the new hire learns from the very start what he or she can expect, whether it's peer-to-peer observations, leadership walkabouts, inspections, verifications or some other method or combination of methods. Not only will the inductee know what to expect during the first days and weeks on the job, sharing this information also serves to highlight the importance of safety as a value in the organisation.

Closely related to data gathering in behaviour-based safety approaches is feedback. During induction, new employees should learn that they will not only receive feedback, but are expected to generate it as well by sharing what they observe. Right away the channels are opened for two-way communication, and a point of reference is established for that future moment when the employee has critical information to share and can recall that providing feedback is encouraged and valued in the company.

The final step in behaviour-based safety is action. After expectations are set, monitoring is in place and feedback is shared, momentum will be lost if nothing is undertaken. It is especially effective during the induction programme to share concrete examples of situations where specific actions resolved issues or removed barriers to safety that had come to light through the observation and feedback process. This provides proof that a well-designed system is in place and functioning and also reinforces the message of transparency. It gives the new employee confidence that the organisation is not in the business of covering up or ignoring problems and that feedback is not only welcome but leads to improvement.

An Effective Induction Programme Is Only the Beginning

The power generated by a strong start needs to be harnessed and cultivated in order to be ultimately effective. The themes, values, behaviours and processes highlighted in the induction programme must be part of everyday, on the job reality. When new employees encounter evidence of life saving rules and critical behaviours being lived by their colleagues in the days and weeks following the induction; when they undergo observation training and take part in gathering data themselves, just as the induction foresaw; when they experience the positive consequences of providing feedback and see change occur in response, they develop trust in the organisation and will be more engaged, motivated and productive.

Beginnings are important, and **DEKRA's Induction Plus® workshop** can support companies ready to commit to an effective induction programme, one that reinforces behaviour-based safety measures and serves as a touchstone for a healthy company culture.

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