



CASE STUDY

Australia Post

Achieved a dramatic reduction in injuries through leadership development and coaching.

Situation

Australia Post is a national organization of more than 30,000 employees and contractors that provides letter and parcel postal services throughout Australia. Over the last 15 years, Australia Post has broadened its product and service range and invested in major technology-based infrastructure programs. Today, it operates in three core areas:

1. Letters and associated services
2. Retail merchandise, financial and agency services
3. Parcels, logistics and fulfilment services

When Australia Post started their journey with DEKRA in 2013, they were experiencing large numbers of frontline operator injuries. In addition to the obvious transport and logistics exposures associated with van and trucking operations, approximately 5,000 delivery officers use motorbikes to deliver letters and small parcels around the country. The letter-delivery portion of the business was experiencing very high incident rates with many of these incidents in the highest incident categories, driven, in part, by a 200-year cultural history of delivering mail, no matter what it takes. The relatively new CEO at the time was determined to address this situation.

Solution

Australia Post chose DEKRA as their partner in safety to build and deliver a safety leadership program – initially to a set of sites around the country where Australia Post trainers would learn how to co-facilitate, and eventually become self-sufficient, in delivering the program enterprise-wide.

The co-facilitation model was designed to enable Australia Post to significantly increase employee participation rates across the organization whilst still supporting the internal delivery model through ongoing internal trainer calibration and development delivered side-by-side with DEKRA consultants.

The conceptual framework for the safety leadership program linked three simple but powerful concepts:



This learning process required leaders to understand their own responsibility for, and impact on, the culture of their operation. Leader and supervisor skill acquisition was focused primarily on high quality conversations with frontline employees about the potential for reducing exposure in their allocated daily tasks and building awareness that this set of behaviours would act as a key lever for cultural and performance improvement.

Attendance at Safety In Action™ Conferences

in 2013, 2015 and 2016 – the cohorts for each of these groups have progressed from key senior leaders to include a wider representation of leadership levels and functions, including operational Facility Managers

Phase 1

(post-2013 SIA): Designed and delivered a successful pilot program of workshops across four sites in four states to site leadership and team leaders as a proof of concept. Content was focused on foundations in leadership, culture, exposure and high-quality safety interactions.

Phase 2

(2014): Built on pilot content and included a design enhancement involving leadership assessments (Leadership Diagnostic Instrument / Safety Mirror – risk profile), and field coaching. DEKRA commenced this phase by delivering to 10 facilities.

Phase 3

(2014-5): For Australia Post to have a sustainable delivery model, a Train-the-Trainer approach was taken to upskill both L&D and operational people to self-deliver the program. It started with classroom training and co-facilitation methodology for 12 facilities in mid-2014. In 2015 internal resources were supported by DEKRA to deliver the program to a further 24 “catchment” regions. A review process was also created in 2015 to measure outcomes for the organization. The year 2016 saw Australia Post take full ownership of the delivery of Safety Leadership.

The safety leadership program was aimed at transforming Australia Post’s safety culture and reducing work related injuries and associated costs.

Australia Post’s safety leadership strategy has evolved over the last three years. The enterprise functions that have been directly involved are Motorcycle delivery, Parcel delivery, Van operations, Truck operations (up to B-double), and Retail operations. Through a collaborative effort, key milestones have included:

Via a partnership approach

with internal trainers, a separate program was developed in 2013 specifically targeting the highest risk role in the enterprise - Postal Delivery Officers(PDO) on motorcycles. This focused on the critical behaviours that impact exposure for a PDO, and awareness about the limitations of the brain, mindset and preferences and how they impact personal safety.

Australia Post introduced Jim Spigener,

DEKRA’s Chief Client Officer, to the organization in 2015. Jim had previously conducted exclusive workshops with the Australia Post participants at the SIA conferences. His visit reinforced and reconnected leaders with their personal values and commitment to safety through Leading From Within. In 2016, Australia Post decided to take the next step in embedding a stronger focus on exposure recognition and management throughout all layers of leader and frontline personnel by embarking on an education program using the same co-facilitation model with DEKRA.

On the basis of the very positive results achieved,

Australia Post Executive leadership has since undertaken a national rollout of the development program.

Results

The following outcomes have been partly or wholly attributed to the safety leadership program:

1. By the end of 2015, the incidence of lost-time injuries across all sites was 43 per cent lower than four years before.
2. During the full approximate 30-month duration of this project, the LTIFR and All-Injury Frequency Rate (AIFR) have both reduced by more than 50%.
3. Australia Post's national employee perception survey showed an eight-percentage point improvement in the safety component of employee engagement.
4. Safety is now a key performance indicator on the Executive Scorecard, with a progressive shift away from lagging metrics and the inclusion of leading indicators in site performance scorecards.
5. Frontline leaders have dramatically stepped up the frequency and quality of safety interactions.
6. Leaders have embedded basic behavioural science into their incident-investigation processes, and are now looking at broader cultural and operational factors to understand why incidents occur.
7. In relation to safety, the language of "exposure recognition and reduction" has begun to overtake the concept of risk management as a more useful approach to reducing harm to employees.
8. Leaders have become cognisant of the distinction between serious or fatal exposure potential, and those exposures with much lower consequence potential.
9. In many areas of the business, the shift in safety culture has been proven to correlate strongly with positive change in operational efficiency and productivity.

At a Glance:

- Australia Post is an organization of more than 30,000 employees and contractors that delivers letters and parcels throughout Australia.
- It partnered with DEKRA to reduce work-related injuries and associated costs by training leaders and supervisors in safety leadership skills.
- They in turn engaged frontline employees in identifying and reducing exposures in their daily tasks and building a set of behaviors that would bring about cultural and performance improvement.
- As a result, injury rates dropped more than 50% after 30 months and "exposure recognition and reduction" has replaced "risk management" as the prevailing approach to reducing accidents and injuries.

The Australia Post CEO's focus on a values-driven approach to leading safety has seen a substantial decrease in the number of people being injured in the workplace. This comes at a time of major change for the organization, both internally and with the integration of Startrack (a freight and logistic provider) into the enterprise, as well as major restructuring of the Mail Network. Significant and well-publicized losses have given way to a return to profitability. In addition, this time span has, remarkably, also seen an increase in employee engagement, which the Managing Director attributes to the Safety Leadership initiative.