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## BEST PRACTICES GUIDELINE:



### **Risk Assessment: Looking Back and Moving Forward**



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# Looking Back and Moving Forward

## RISK

It's something companies and their employees encounter daily. How they approach risk can mean the difference between a safe work environment and serious injuries and fatalities. (SIFs). **ASPASA** wants to ensure that the industry it supports is a safe industry.

How risk is viewed by both safety professionals and business executives has evolved over time, and in recent years become more of a focus for improving safety performance. For many decades in occupational safety and health, business around the world were more focused on regulatory compliance than managing risks. As time went on and illnesses, injuries and fatalities metrics plateaued, it was clear that something needed to change in order to achieve real progress.

People began to see that they were meeting compliance requirements in most cases and performance wasn't improving, so something else was needed.

In the late 1990's and early 2000's, organisations throughout the world began to shift toward a more risk-based decision-making to improve overall safety performance and reduced incidents of SIFs.

This was coupled with the fact that regulators in certain regions began adopting more risk-based approaches.

Faced with constrained resources and economic challenges, organizations realized that a risk-based approach is more practical from a business standpoint as well.

Employing a risk-based strategy provides the opportunity to leverage business performance and allows companies to put money, efforts and resources toward the greatest risks.

A risk-based strategy serves many purposes, the foremost of which is identifying potential hazards and risks associated with an operation so that proper controls can be put in place.



Once the risk is understood, organisations can develop a number of options for mitigating or eliminating hazards and risks. Safety professionals can play a key role in the process if they are able to facilitate the analysis and identify practical solutions. The **ASPASA** Health and Safety legal compliance audit assists with pointing out risks in the workplace.

A properly designed risk assessment will also effectively communicate to decision-makers the impact these risks could have on the companies, both from a safety standpoint and on the bottom line.



Although progress has been made among safety professionals and business executives in utilizing risk-based decision-making, many are still along the continuum of maturity from compliance to improved performance through risk assessment. To this day, the level of expertise about risk assessment and how risk is viewed varies. This is where **ASPASA** comes in, within a day the whole situation is summarised.

The way a company applies risk assessment may differ, but the concepts remain the same. If businesses apply risk assessment concepts consistently and systematically, they can begin to improve their safety performance and, in turn, their business performance.

Although many safety professionals are comfortable with and adept at assessing and calculating risks, the challenge lies in effectively communicating those risks to executives and decision-makers within their organizations.

Moving forward, the next step is to help safety professionals better communicate the results of risk assessments and help business people see why having these tools will add value to the business. If you can put risk in terms of rands, that's the easiest metric to use to convince executives to address those risks.

While individuals in these positions may not need to know the details of how to conduct a risk assessment, make calculations and apply the concepts, they do need to understand how the information was acquired, what to do with the output and what the outcome will be.



**ASPASA** believes it's important for executives to understand why having a safety professional in the organization who is skilled at applying these concepts is a real benefit to them. Safety professionals are not just there for compliance, they add to the bottom line.

Kind regards,



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