



KEY CHALLENGES FACING TODAY'S SAFETY LEADERS

10 Trends From ASSP's Corporate Listening Tour
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AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

Working together for a safer, stronger future.®



ASSP conducted a corporate listening tour in Q1 2022 as a way to strengthen corporate relationships and better understand the ongoing safety challenges facing leaders and their organizations.

ASSP interviewed 18 corporate leaders representing diverse company profiles, including small, medium and large employers across sectors including manufacturing, construction, energy, logistics and service industries. Conversations

were led by ASSP CEO Jennifer McNelly, supported by Mariam Thomas, marketing analyst.

Findings are organized over a timeline of urgency for action or impact: 1) immediate focus (now); 2) mid-term focus (on the list but not the top); and 3) long-term focus (aspiration for action). This organization helps focus ASSP investment into new products and services that are likely to deliver the greatest value to companies and the professionals we serve.

IMMEDIATE FOCUS: SAFETY MUST ADAPT TO A CHANGING WORLD

1. DISASTER PREPAREDNESS. Continued disaster preparedness and response linked to climate change, the disruption in supply chains and the ongoing response to the pandemic.

- Companies are experiencing the constant stress of unplanned disruption.
- Most companies have been successful in disaster response, but the constant nature of response and the frequency is increasing. There is also concern about non-routine situations that create additional risks.
- The impact increases organizational expectations of OSH professionals, including questions on accountability with remote work and evolving safety risks (e.g., ergonomics, well-being, DEI).
- Some also expressed concern about the negative impact these situations have on the perceptions of safety with the workforce. In some companies, safety = COVID.

2. INCREASE IN SEVERE INJURIES AND FATALITIES.

COVID-19 has impacted incidence rates in companies.

- Executives expressed concern that the basic “blocking and tackling” of safety has not been managed. Several are getting back to the basics of safety.
- In several instances, executives indicated that although incidents have decreased, the severity of incidents is increasing.
- With the sustained impact of change driven by COVID, the well-being, engagement and culture of companies and their actions over the past two years is impacting safety (profit vs. people).

3. CHANGING WORKFORCE. Throughout the pandemic, labor shortages have increased and negatively impacted workforce planning.

- Pandemic-related worker shortages are further affected by factors such as the aging workforce, increasing wages and skills shortages. This impacts knowledge transfer and experience level of the workforce and safety professionals.
- As new reports have indicated, workers are departing as part of “the great resignation.” This also affects and where and when work happens. Overall, the workforce experience is changing and that presents new risks.
- Shifting jobs and new roles in retail and some service industries, the increase in the “last mile” driver is creating greater risk.
- New skill sets will be required from employees when moving from manual to automated workplaces. Although companies will need few workers, those workers will require advanced skill sets.
- Workforce shortages are accelerating automation within some companies. Increased automation will necessitate more prevention through design programs.
- New interactions with automation shifting to handle some customer interactions creates new risk.

4. RECRUITING. Recruiting occupational safety and health talent remains a challenge.

- When recruiting, most companies continue to focus on experience and fit.
- Most companies continue to use personal networks, recruiters, schools with safety programs, and rely on in-house development programs
- Several companies are reevaluating work design (i.e., benefits, scheduling, location) to meet market demands of the workforce.

- Human resource/talent departments in large organizations often lack understanding of the safety professional's role and miss the mark with recruiting.
- Several companies included the need for diversity, equity and inclusion in their input on recruiting and building the next generation of safety leaders.

5. BUSINESS SKILLS. The need for OSH professionals to understand and speak the language of business continues to be a concern.

- Understanding how safety impacts business priorities continues to be important to companies.
- Specific to analytics, OSH professionals need to know how to triangulate the data.

6. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT. Companies are shifting learning and development expectations for OSH professionals. This includes an expectation of just-in-time and virtual training. Expectations of "free" education have also increased.

- Learning pathways based on customer journeys are important. Companies expect a more custom approach to support the development of team members.
- Application of a learning pathway across multiple tracks: 1) new OSH professional; 2) emerging leader who might be in a development program and should understand safety; 3) upskilling and reskilling OSH team members; and 4) safety training for the workforce.
- Increased need for just-in-time training for career growth and to address real-time challenges of OSH professionals.
- Some companies believe virtual training has been and will continue to be effective. For others, the need for in-person training is important. In some cases, companies are returning to in-person training when the training requires interaction and strategic engagement of team members.

MID-TERM AND LONG-TERM FOCUS: WORKPLACE COMPLEXITY IMPACTS SAFETY

7. PACE OF CHANGE. Some companies acknowledge the accelerated pace of change and that this pace will continue. This creates new safety risks for companies.

- Continued digitalization (IOT, Mfg. 4.0) with the analytics for data digital.
- Crossover between physical and digital worlds.

8. DATA ANALYTICS AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION. Many companies continue to build capacity and capability for data-driven decision-making.

- Develop more predictive analytics for safety.
- Achieve stronger adoptions of cutting-edge technologies.
- Continue to develop tools and resources that support the connected worker.
- Build resilience and agility that can weather current and future disruptions.

- Address lack of rationalization in data platforms (e.g., SAP, AWS). Some companies requested support from ASSP to identify or prequalify service providers.

9. REGULATORY CLIMATE. Regulatory and legislative concerns surfaced this year.

- Regulatory and legislative efforts linked to heat stress are a key concern.
- Executives noted OSHA's increased activity and the COVID emergency temporary standard in particular.
- Make support for responding to OSHA easier for small employers (one-stop shop).

10. LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND CORPORATE REPORTING. This topic emerged for the first time this year. The impact of the Financial Accountability Standards Board and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) was identified as a key trend impacting safety and the profession.

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK ON ADVANCING THE OSH PROFESSION

- **NEED FOR STRONGER ALIGNMENT ACROSS SAFETY ORGANIZATIONS.** Too many providers in the market is forcing companies with limited resources to make choices on engagement. ASSP, BCSP and AIHA should explore how to decrease competition and increase value delivery for professionals and the companies they support.
- **SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS.** Small business executives in manufacturing and construction expressed a need for help. Executives recognize the need for best practices but do not have access to the same tools and resources as mid- or large-size companies.

