



WHITE PAPER

6 Steps to Build **Leadership Buy-in** **for EHS Technology**

The reduction in workplace injuries within the United States over the past 50+ years is a testament to the effectiveness of increased regulations and a shift in culture around workplace health and safety. **One of the many things pushing workplace safety forward over the past decade in particular is the implementation of technology.** Whether your company focuses on workplace health and safety, EHS (environmental, health and safety), ESG (environment, social and governance) or all of the above, it boils down to making your workplace, workers, and the community safer and healthier.

Technology has ingrained itself in all aspects of our lives and improved them in countless ways. At work, cloud-based software, online training, mobile apps, wearables, sensors, and employee monitoring allow workers to do their jobs more efficiently while reducing the likelihood of injury. These innovations continue to positively impact the safety and health of millions of workers around the globe.

New solutions are removing persistent pain points that have plagued health and safety for years by reducing risk, giving insight into data, providing better training, and spurring faster emergency response. For example, things like training, a common point of frustration for many organizations, have now moved online and provide access to high-quality, consistent content from anywhere in the world.

The world's leading organizations already know the benefits of safety and are continuously looking for ways to innovate. Unfortunately, safety is not the highest priority in many organizations, and sometimes does not even have a budget. The [2022 Workplace Safety Training Survey](#) from Safety and Health Magazine reveals that 56% of companies spend less than \$25,000 annually, and 21% spend less than \$5,000 on safety each year, **even though a survey of executives from Liberty Mutual in 2018 revealed that every \$1 spent on safety returns \$3-5.**



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Small or nonexistent budgets aren't the only issue. Executives often fail to see that proactive health and safety measures give their organizations a competitive advantage. This can be important in a competitive job market when employers struggle to fill open roles and employees are looking at more than pay when choosing their next job. This lack of understanding is a huge roadblock to progress when you consider they are the ones who can write the checks to fund investment in safety technology that can help push a company's safety performance to the next level.

Convincing management to invest in safety can be a big hurdle, especially if you're new in your role, you don't have access to leadership, they don't know the impact of your work, or if your organization doesn't have a dedicated safety budget. **Still, it's achievable if EHS professionals can convince executives of the value of a strategic investment in safety technologies.** To do so, they must take a new approach and learn the language of the C-suite, build relationships across the organization, and show how improving safety serves the organization's larger goals. This guide will help you convince senior leadership to make the right investments in workplace health and safety initiatives and technology.



Six Steps for Building Senior Leadership Buy-In:

1. Identify what leaders care about.
2. Show the financial side of safety.
3. Show examples of success.
4. Show existing risk.
5. Have a clear plan.
6. Close the deal.

Step

1

Identify What Leaders Care About

In most organizations, leadership bases their decisions on financial objectives like shareholder return and revenue growth. Leaders must make difficult decisions daily while balancing three competing priorities within their organization. Those priorities are safety, productivity, and quality. Executives make decisions affecting the proportion of those priorities, perhaps increasing productivity by asking the workforce to work mandatory overtime, which may decrease product quality and create more operational risk. Yet, this is the decision-making framework business leaders consider when working to meet financial objectives.

No matter the balance of priorities or financial objectives, one thing never changes: each company has a finite pool of resources that they must make tough decisions on how to distribute. So how do you convince management to give you some of that?

The most effective EHS professionals don't try to force safety on their coworkers. They don't rule with an iron fist; **they attempt to convince others why they should want to be safe.** They identify the individual's values and priorities, and speak towards that. Every day they sell the concept of safety.



Keep this idea in mind when attempting to convince management to invest in safety technology. **You are selling an idea, a concept, so you first need to identify what that person truly cares about and what moves them to make a decision.** Unfortunately, many EHS professionals fail in this regard because they attempt to sell safety with injury statistics and sad stories.

These serve their place, but when you're talking to people whose day revolves around money and how to make more for an organization, you are not speaking to them on their terms. Therefore, to effectively sell safety to executives, you must start to shape safety investment not as a moral obligation but as an intelligent business decision.

Before you pitch senior leadership on specific investments in safety, **you must get them to understand the broader concept that safety serves their priorities.** Unfortunately, the reality is that many executives won't see how safety helps them achieve their goals, especially productivity and quality, so you must convince them.

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Step 2

Show the Financial Side of Safety

In most C-suites, injury reduction doesn't rank as high of a priority as reducing costs, increasing productivity, and attracting and retaining talent.

Nor are executives likely to have the same deep understanding of safety concepts as an EHS professional. Therefore, it is essential to translate the importance of safety for them. **Show them how investing in safety can reduce workplace injury and illness costs, increase productivity, and improve employee morale and retention.** Here are some of the key points to discuss:



- Reduced Operational Costs
- Increased Productivity
- Improved Employee Morale
- Improved Employee Retention
- Better Organizational Health
- Fewer Fines and Penalties

Reduced operational costs: An established workplace health and safety program can help an organization avoid the costs associated with workplace injuries and illnesses, such as wage and productivity losses, administrative and medical expenses, and insurance deductibles and premiums. **These expenses amount to as much as \$171 billion annually in the U.S. alone.**

Increased productivity: Some leaders operate under the misconception that robust safety measures hurt productivity. However, a recent [Occupational Health Science study](#) confirms that a safer workplace leads to more productive employees, and an unsafe workplace is a sign of [poor management](#).

Improved employee morale: Employees in potentially hazardous work environments experience considerable stress. However, **in workplace cultures where safety is a priority, that stress is reduced or eliminated, and employees can focus on the quality of their work.**

Improved employee retention:

According to a recent [Science Direct study](#), working conditions significantly impact people's health and well-being. As a result, they directly influence business outcomes. For example, organizations with unsafe conditions can see more employee absences, higher turnover, lower productivity, and increased healthcare costs.

Better organizational health: [McKinsey & Company research](#) reveals a strong relationship between organizational health and safety. Companies with good safety records outperform their counterparts on all nine outcomes related to organizational health. These businesses also show higher levels of innovation and learning.

Fewer fines and penalties:

Organizations that don't comply with federal safety standards can face steep [penalties](#). **The fines for safety violations start at \$1,036 per violation and can reach \$145,027 for willful or repeated violations.**

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Step 3

Show Examples of Success

Even though safety technology and its benefits are widely known within many industries, the idea may feel new and unproven to certain members of management. When trying new things, people often need to see success before they are willing to try it. That's why companies publish case studies; it's a way of saying, if it worked for them, it could work for you too. Use that same approach in your conversations with management - show them how its helped others.

Take McDonald's, one of the world's most recognizable brands. McDonald's Australia, which employs more than 100,000 people, took a proactive approach to workplace safety. Working with HSI, the McDonald's team replaced its paper-based incident reporting system with a fully automated reporting platform.

The new system made it easier for employees to flag safety issues. It also allowed managers to see and respond to feedback quickly. Even more important, information that had previously remained siloed at individual locations now reached leaders throughout the company.

The results? **Employee safety reports increased 500%, and McDonald's used the data to implement vital new safety measures and training.** You can read more about McDonald's Australia's experience with HSI [here](#).



- Replaced paper-based incident reporting system with fully automated platform
- Made issue-flagging and feedback-response easier
- **Results: employee safety reports increased 500% and new measures and training were implemented**

You also want to point out both the calculable and the additional intangible, or harder to measure, benefits. [Harmon Construction](#) is one of the largest commercial construction glaziers in the U.S., with 17 locations and more than 1,000 employees. After implementing an EHS system for near misses and incidents, **they found that their incidents fell to 25% of what they once were. OSHA indicates the average cost of each incident is \$1,100.**

So, what were Harmon's successes?

Incidents fell:

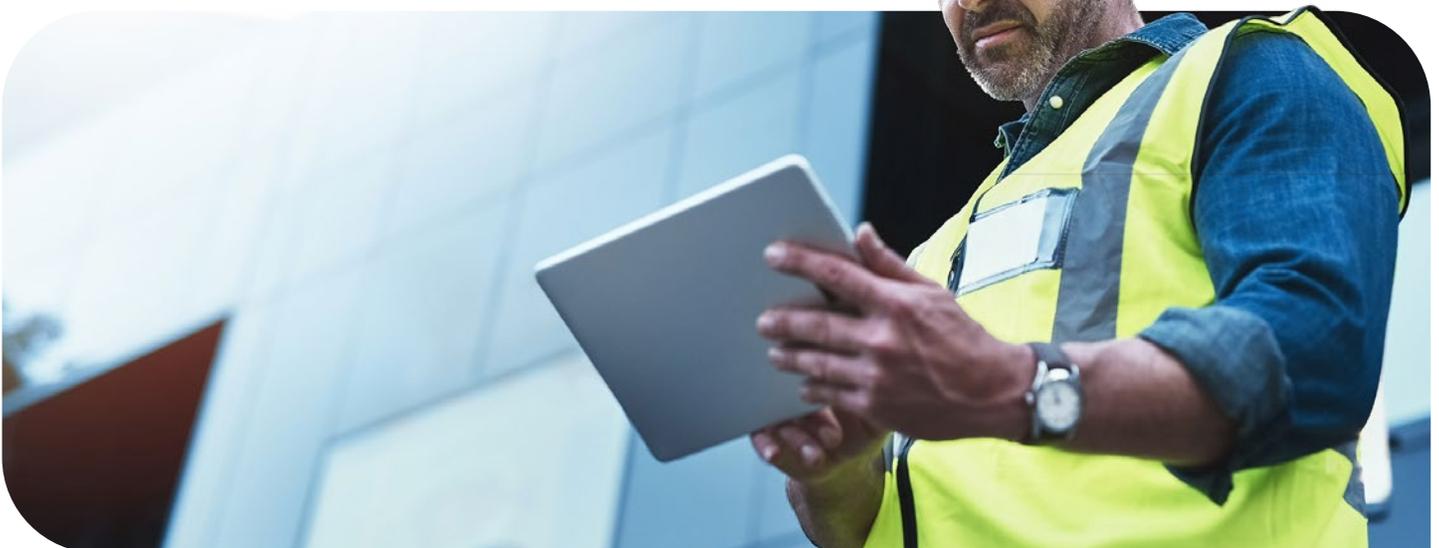
25%

Average cost per incident per OSHA:

\$1,100

Calculable: If there were previously 200 incidents, the total cost would be \$220,000. Reducing that by three quarters realizes Harmon a savings of \$165,000 each year.

Intangible: A decrease in the incident management rate allowed Harmon to compete for bids they were previously excluded from due to compliance policies, leading to more business each year.



Step

4

Show Existing Risk

If a company hasn't experienced a major workplace accident in a while, it's easy for them to slip into a false sense of security around their safety performance. Unfortunately, senior management is often so busy they can rarely find time to talk directly to employees doing the day-to-day work, missing the opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge of workplace risks. This absence results in an incomplete view of the health and safety risks within the organization, but strong data can help enlighten them to the reality of things.

Many risks lurk in the shadows and capturing them during the audit and inspection process is essential to demonstrate to management the hazards confronting the workforce. You must show executives the number of accidents, injuries, near misses, and other hazards found and fixed.

Measurement is essential to securing buy-in for safety initiatives. Senior leaders need to see the areas of risk that can negatively impact the organization—track performance metrics or events wherever you can. This can give you excellent ammunition to make your point on why investment in new safety technology is needed.



Evaluate your company's current program and demonstrate its strengths and weaknesses to management. For example, poor safety performance is commonly reactive with a compulsory mindset where employees and management show disinterest in safety until there is a negative consequence, like a workplace injury or a regulatory penalty.

In contrast, a strong workplace health and safety program has employees as proactive safety advocates. In these programs, safety is the top consideration each day, and it is the personal responsibility of each employee. Certain practices help create that atmosphere, like regular safety committee meetings and team-focused hazard abatement.

The top organizations worldwide are not simply happy with compliance; they are pushing past that baseline and striving for safety excellence because they have seen its benefits. **As a result, companies that want to compete must stop viewing essential regulatory compliance as the goal and view it as the minimum.**

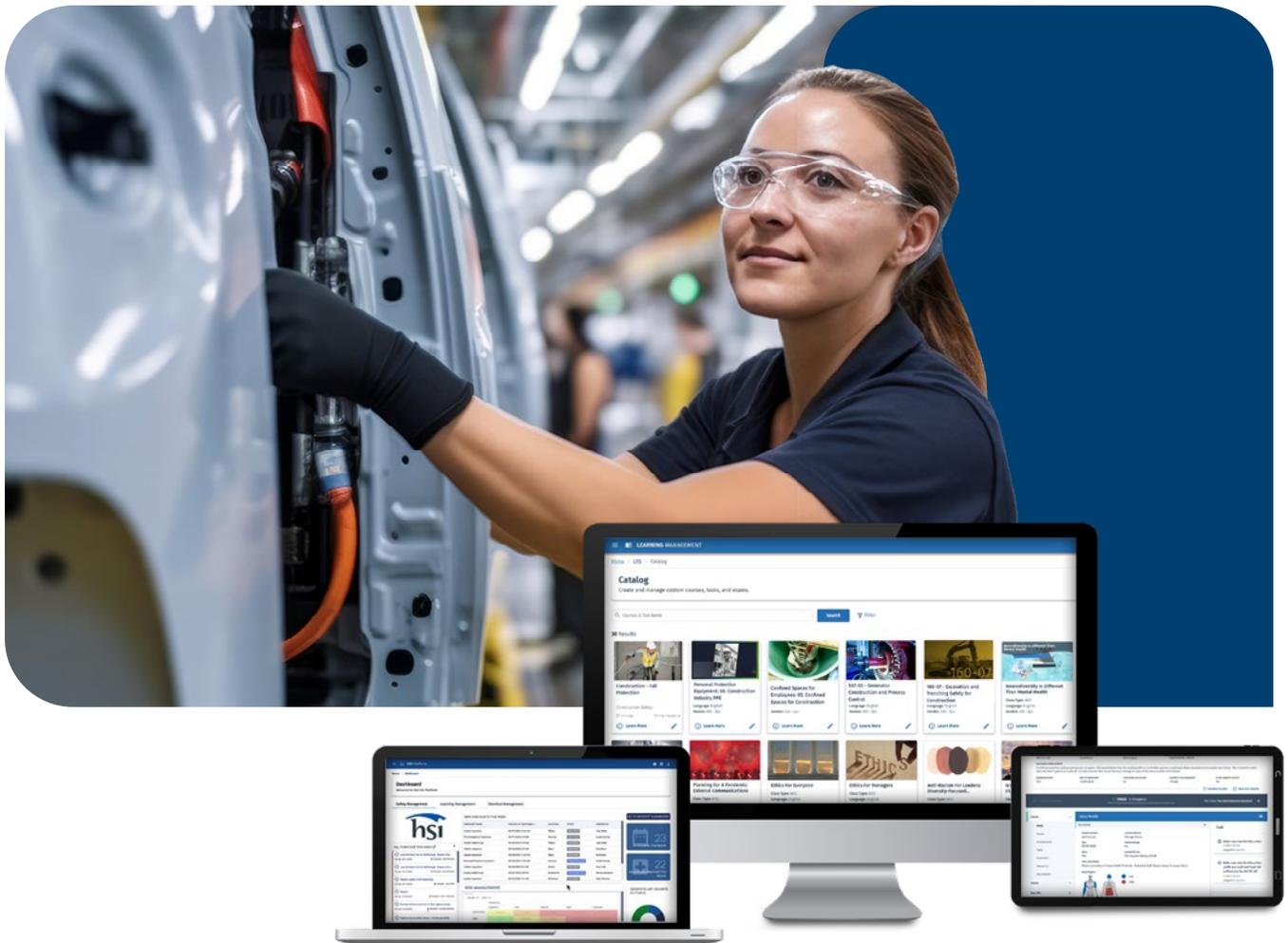
For example, training is a common area where many organizations are severely lacking regarding safety. Many companies only attempt to achieve training minimums without understanding that good training is the backbone of an effective workplace health and safety program. Unfortunately, this results in low-quality training that lacks student engagement and misses its intended purpose. An example of "low-quality" training is the stereotypical safety video from the 80s, often still on VHS tape, shown at new hire orientation. **This type of safety training, all too often found today at many worksites, is only memorable due to how out of date it is, not because of the safety information contained within.**



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Online training is changing that. **Its anytime, anywhere accessibility means online training is more versatile than traditional live training, allowing organizations to move forward faster and safer.** Moreover, with the growing complexity and global reach of high-risk enterprises, from mining to manufacturing and construction to welding, online training can meet diverse, systemic training needs, with courses for nearly every discipline.

Also, because the quality of traditional classroom instruction heavily depends on the instructor's skill, charisma, and materials, the ability to deliver a consistent training experience for workplace health and safety programs is one of the online training's stronger appeals. **Longer compliance training can be taken when it's more convenient for the worker, and micro-learning allows for quick refreshers and continuous education.** In addition, each workforce member receives the same critical safety training, so target objectives are never in question.



Step

5

Have a Clear Plan

Once you've convinced management of the importance of safety technology and why your organization needs it, you must present a clear implementation plan. That means capturing a clear idea of your workers' safety needs, determining the best delivery method for your organization, and knowing the anticipated cost of the safety initiatives. It also means connecting your plan to the company's operational and financial goals.

The implementation needs to be intentional and solve a specific, significant problem. Do your research and prep work. Create an executive summary or business case document that provides information related to goals, objectives, tactics, timelines, outcomes, and means of measurement. **Your plan should align with what you know to be the business' goals and priorities.** Also, be prepared to show a demo of the intended technology to management; they will want to see it with their own eyes.

How can you ensure the conversations go as well as possible? Follow these practical steps:



- Create low-pressure opportunities to talk.
- Keep data points handy.
- Don't talk about compliance.

Create low-pressure opportunities to talk: Don't relegate workplace health and safety to high-stakes conversations. Instead, **create opportunities to highlight the benefits of safety technology by meeting one-on-one with leaders and other team members and hosting "brown bag" sessions on workplace health and safety topics.** The more people at your organization, at all levels, that you engage with on the topic of workplace health and safety, the more EHS becomes a priority for your organization and incorporated into the corporate culture.

Keep data points handy: Always be prepared with evidence that backs up your position. Have the critical data points at the ready that connect executive priorities to safety priorities.

Don't talk about compliance: That language can suggest to executives that safety means meeting some minimal standards at the lowest cost possible. Instead, **change the conversation from compliance to investing in workplace health and safety to benefit the organization.**



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Step 6

Close the Deal

Finally, as any salesperson knows, you must ask for the sale. This part can be difficult or even stressful for those who have never done it. A good tactic is to ask a question to the decision-makers:

When do you expect finances to allow us to invest in safety technology?

I want to move in this direction – can we budget to bring our safety training online?

When is the right time to make this strategic organizational investment in workplace health and safety culture?

This is good for the company, and you get it, so what do I need to do to help make this happen?

How can I help you make the case if you need to – do you need more information?

I'd like you to support me in transitioning our workplace health and safety program online. Will you help me do this by approving this investment?

What if I told you we could save (x amount of operational dollars) and improve workplace culture?

Remember to follow up on these conversations and clarify that implementing a new safety technology is your priority and how it benefits them and the organization.



It's Worth It

Workplace health and safety is not something to separate, isolate, or treat differently; safety must be a topic of all business decisions because it significantly impacts organizational goals. Workplace health and safety is an integral part of the overall health of a company; that's the consistent theme you must communicate to leadership.

Also, if your organization is having these conversations about safety innovation, it is a good bet that the competition is also. This is an appealing argument for competitive leaders who value vision; if you're not moving forward, you will eventually be left behind. Failing to incorporate safety technology means failing to keep pace with the times.

Getting executives to understand this fact is time-consuming and challenging – but it's essential to build a strong workplace health and safety culture. Yes, workplace safety involves saving lives, protecting employees' health, and avoiding liability issues. But when an organization embraces safety and innovation, the change also improves productivity, engagement, and profitability.

Thankfully, changing management attitudes about safety technology is possible if you adapt how you communicate and show how workplace health and safety benefits the entire company. After all, workplace health and safety are the foundations of success.

About HSI



HSI is your single-source partner for EHS, Compliance, and Professional Development solutions. HSI provides integrated e-learning content, training solutions, and cloud-based software designed to enable your business to improve safety, operations, and employee development. Across all industries, HSI helps safety managers, and technical employees, human resources, first responders, and operational leaders train and develop their workforce, keep workers safe, and meet regulatory and operational compliance requirements. HSI's focus is on training, software, and services for safety and compliance, workforce development, industrial skills, and emergency care. HSI is a unique partner that offers a suite of cloud-based software solutions including learning management, safety management, chemical SDS management, and more, integrated with content and training so businesses can not only monitor and manage multiple workflows in one system, but train employees via one partner.

For more information, visit [hsi.com](https://www.hsi.com)