

Business Brief

Solving the CEO's Safety Dilemma

Today's Chief Executive Officers are increasingly focusing on governance in their businesses, and have become adept at putting in place systems that protect themselves and their companies against a multitude of risks including financial, operational and occupational hazards. As the scope of legislation grows, the CEO is faced with a significant challenge to ensure that the company complies with all the provisions of the relevant Acts.

Who is accountable for safety on the ground?

The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act of 1993 was promulgated to regulate and ensure safety standards in hazardous environments. The OHS Act is very specific in its requirement that there is a single person (usually the CEO) who is accountable for the implementation of the Act. Even though the CEO can delegate duties to any person in the company (Section 16.2), ultimate accountability and legal liability rests with the CEO.

However CEO's find themselves in a precarious position. While the responsibility is theirs, it is most often artisans and plant personnel who are exposed to safety related risks and who have to make daily decisions and judgments on safe practices in the workplace. If people in the plants make the wrong judgment, accidents can happen leading to injury or even fatalities. Thus CEO's are required to minimize the risk of accidents by ensuring that these day to day decisions (which are out of his/her direct control) are taken correctly.



By implementing IntelliPERMIT™, the CEO can delegate safety related decisions with the confidence of knowing that best practice procedures are being universally followed as evidenced by secure, auditable records.

Some of the tools available to management to achieve this goal include established management systems (e.g. ISO14000), management and training of staff and contractors, modifications to processes, plant and equipment in order to engineer out hazards etc.. Aligned with all of these activities should be a strong safety culture, which allows good delegated decisions to be taken on the plant within a strong and supportive system of management control.

Mitigating safety risks through a Permit-to-work system

In industry, over the years, several procedures have been established to regulate abnormal and hazardous work. These established practices ensure that the principles of the Act are implemented at each and every instance where hazardous work takes place. One of the main procedures in this whole process is the preparation, issue, execution and closure of a permit to work (or clearance). Commonly this is a paper based system which has limited scope for external monitoring for compliance and is vulnerable to inconsistent application by the operating staff due to differing levels of skill, training and supervision.



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An intelligent software solution that enables 100% compliance

IntelliPERMIT™ by ApplyIT (Pty) Ltd is a computer based system that allows employers to regulate hazardous activities and by capturing organisational best practice, ensures that safety procedures are consistently followed regardless of the skill level of the staff involved. A comprehensive audit trail is maintained in the system and unauthorised changes are prevented. The system combines the rigour of a well designed and flexible IT system with the practical elements of day to day operations. IntelliPERMIT™ is designed in accordance with both management system principles and the requirements of legislation. For example IntelliPERMIT™ includes an exception reporting mechanism that allows management to investigate deviations from set procedures and thereby continuously improve procedures and rules for safe work.

IntelliPERMIT™ has been extensively proven in a number of industrial environments and gives management additional assurance that everything reasonably practical is being done to ensure the safety of people working in these hazardous environments. Recent improvements include a finger print scanning system that validates permit issuers and receivers thereby ensuring that only persons who have been suitably trained and approved can use the system.

By implementing IntelliPERMIT™, the CEO can delegate safety related decisions to the appropriate level within the organisation with the confidence of knowing that best practice procedures are being universally followed as evidenced by secure, auditable records. The value of IntelliPERMIT™ extends far beyond the simple replacement of paper with an electronic system, it addresses the key elements of culture, governance and accountability and gives the CEO a unique tool to ensure that his legal and leadership obligations around operational safety have been demonstrably addressed.

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