

The Business of Safety

ASSE offers a variety of resources and tools designed to help us better communicate the value of the SH&E profession.

We all know and believe that safety is good business. Yet, for many years, despite an identified need to demonstrate the value of safety in business terms, we had little information and only a few anecdotal stories to support the concept.

To address this need, ASSE established the Business of Safety Committee (BOSC) in 2004. The committee immediately began to collect and disseminate information through its website, found at www.asse.org/bosc. Since then, the resources housed on the site have grown exponentially. Topics include impact of safety, corporate social responsibility, good corporate governance, management perspective, performance metrics and SH&E staffing. I encourage you to bookmark the website and visit it often.

In addition, the Society offers many professional development opportunities to help ASSE members increase their knowledge in the business arena. For example, the annual conference features an Executive Summit that brings together a panel of corporate executives who share their thoughts on how SH&E professionals can influence management. Courses at SeminarFest and safety management symposia explore related topics as do articles published in *PS*.

All of these resources are designed to help us better communicate the value of the SH&E profession, which is critical to our continued success. As I wrote in "Time to Transform: Assessing the Future of the Safety Profession" (*PS*, November 2002), "SH&E practitioners who are problem solvers, have multiple skills and demonstrate results woven into the organization's financial goals will be viewed by the corporation as a valuable asset." ASSE has the resources to help you educate management and demonstrate that supporting SH&E efforts is a sound investment. I urge you to take advantage of these resources.

Beyond these many resources, however, more can be done. That's why BOSC is focusing on two initiatives:

- 1) LinkedIn. In summer 2010, BOSC launched a LinkedIn group. It is becoming an excellent forum for exchanging ideas and information regarding business of safety

topics. We anticipate that this forum will continue to mature over time.

- 2) Social responsibility. SH&E professionals' jobs are morphing again as social responsibility emerges. The draft ISO 26000 standard, Guidance on Social Responsibility, was released in mid-2010. BOSC members are reviewing it to determine how it will affect the SH&E profession. Their goal is to provide members with strategies and methodologies for addressing social responsibility and sustainability, as both disciplines provide an opportunity for us to demonstrate our value.

In related efforts, ASSE is exploring opportunities to engage with the Business Roundtable, an organization comprised of Fortune 500 executives, on topics such as return on investment, sustainability and risk assessment. In addition, the ASSE Foundation Research Committee has issued a request for proposals on topics relevant to the business of safety, and BOSC plans to deliver a webinar and is collecting topic ideas through LinkedIn.

Academia is addressing the business side of safety as well. For example, Oakland University's Occupational Safety and Health Program has partnered with the university's School of Business Administration to offer an M.S. in Safety Management. This program incorporates a solid foundation of core M.B.A. courses to help students develop management, analytical and communication skills, all of which are essential to helping business leaders recognize SH&E programs as a critical business need. The application of business skills, combined with safety-related case studies in risk assessment, loss control, risk management, and safety program planning, administration and management prepare future professionals to compete in today's multifaceted workplace.

ASSE will continue to explore opportunities to help SH&E professionals make sound management decisions as they facilitate workplace safety in a cost-effective way. Safety is good business.



Darryl C. Hill

"Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through argument, debate and doubt, to offer a solution everybody can understand."

—Colin Powell

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