Safety Climate Tool steering group rules of engagement

Why do you need a steering group?

The process for improving your safety culture begins during the Foundation stage. This is the period when you can begin to build trust and gain the co-operation of your workforce. This will help you initiate change further down the line. You do this by bringing together a group of people from all levels of your workforce who will meet on an equal basis. This group will demonstrate that your organisation is moving from consultation towards engagement. They can also influence others in the organisation about the importance of understanding the safety climate in your organisation.

Who should be on your steering group?

Depending on the size of your organisation you should aim to have no more than eight people in the group.

Apart from yourself, the group should consist of:

- Someone from senior management who can make decisions about resources.
- A representative from the union(s) or a worker representative.
- A middle manager, supervisor or team leader.
- Two volunteers from the workforce.

As human beings we're more likely to respond to 'people like us'. You can use this to your advantage by seeking your workforce volunteers among your younger demographic and from those who've been in your organisation the longest. This is because younger people are more vulnerable to accidents because they take more risks, and people who've been in a job for years can become complacent. This will help you reach those groups among whom improving your safety culture can make a difference.

Roles and responsibilities

Your steering group members should be volunteers. They should be:

- Prepared to listen to what others have to say and not be afraid to ask questions.
- Able to communicate appropriately at all levels.
- Aware of others.
- The 'go to' people who, regardless of seniority, are influential and respected. This can apply just as much to someone from the shop floor with limited responsibility as it does to a senior manager.

When setting up your steering group, you need to be aware that differences in role and responsibility can affect the decisions that the lower-status members are able to make.

A process known as 'groupthink' can occur when the group wants unity and agreement. This often means that they may go along with the views of the person with the strongest personality; they may not be willing to explore the pros and cons of alternative decisions. Sometimes, where there is a personal relationship between members of the group, any disagreement can be unconsciously viewed negatively as a withdrawal of friendship and respect. All this can greatly affect the dynamic of the steering group and what you're trying to achieve.

To overcome groupthink you need to set five ground rules:

1. The chair should ensure that everyone has their say.

2. Tell everyone in the group that one of the group's objectives is to air doubts and objections.

3. The chair should remain impartial so the group doesn't just go along with what the chair would like to happen.

4. Only one person may speak at any time.

5. Don't make any decisions until everyone has voiced their opinions.

The following are suggested descriptions for each role.

Project champion

- Represents the project at board level and updates them on progress.
- Ensures the project has the resources it needs.
- Manages the expectations of others.
- Facilitates the steering group.
- Negotiates with managers to get release time for the workforce to complete the survey.
- Keeps the momentum of the project going.
- After the survey, identifies and agrees appropriate interventions for inclusion in the action plan.

Project manager

- Develops a project plan to ensure success both before and after the survey.
- Organises the meetings.
- Keeps a record to show what decisions are made so lessons can be learnt later.
- Keeps the survey and related activities on schedule within the resources allocated.
- After the survey, identifies and agrees appropriate interventions for inclusion in the action plan.

Communications lead

- Develops a communications plan.
- Identifies different ways of engaging with the workforce.
- Writes briefing notes for managers and supervisors, information for the intranet and the CEO's statement for the survey.
- Ensures posters and flyers are placed appropriately for maximum effect.
- After the survey, identifies and agrees appropriate interventions for inclusion in the action plan.

Day-to-day champion

- Encourages co-workers to participate in the survey.
- Identifies and encourages others to become informal champions.
- Uses their experience to support the communications lead in reaching the workforce through written, electronic and face-to-face communications.
- Acts as a decision maker on the steering group.
- After the survey, identifies and agrees appropriate interventions for inclusion in the action plan.

Template for representatives

Type of representative(s)	Name(s)	Department
Senior management		
Middle management/supervisor		
Union		
Workforce		

Template for roles

Role	Name	Department
Chair		
Project champion		
Project manager		
Communications lead		
Day-to-day champions		