**No, ISNetworld Is Not the Devil (But We Do Understand Your Pain)**

Working with contractors sometimes the mere mention of the word “ISNetworld” tenses spines, incites red-faced rants and at the very least brings on an eye roll. Exasperated workers tasked with ISNetworld compliance trade war stories when the subject is brought up. So what is this ISNetworld thing and what has everyone so shook up?

ISNetworld is a contractor safety prequalification program. ISNetworld is one among a crop of other programs like it, including Avetta (formerly PICS), PEC Safety, Veriforce, Safety Management Inc., and others.

Safety prequalification programs give companies a means to ensure contractors have good safety programs, appropriate insurance coverage, trained workers and a good safety culture. This helps limit the risks and liabilities contractor accidents, injuries and OSHA fines can cause to the host site. Each company chooses a set of standards they need their contractors to comply with, and ISNetworld assigns a grading factor to how well those standards are being met.

**Elements of the Grade**

*Questionnaire*

Contractors are required to answer over 100 questions about their safety practices and procedures. The questionnaire is very detailed, driving home the importance of having a safety culture where processes and procedures are in place.

*Safety and Training Programs*

In addition to the questionnaire, your company will be graded on its safety programs and safety training. You will need to develop and follow a number of written programs, and you’ll be required to train your workers on certain topics as well.

*Safety Record*

You are required to report your injuries and illnesses on a quarterly basis and those numbers annually are compared to industry standards. For some clients, you’ll need to keep track of site-specific hours and incidents for you and your own subcontractors on a monthly basis. This is actually a good practice to help your company better track any issues or trends and make changes accordingly, and it makes annual reporting all the easier.

*Other Trends*

More and more we’re seeing companies are requiring contractors to upload individual employee drug and alcohol testing clearances, background checks, qualifications and training. Some companies require your employees take site-specific online training through the system.

**Lessons Learned – There Is a Silver Lining, We Promise**

iSi has been a member for over 10 years because we’re a contractor as well. Joining ISNetworld made us rethink our own internal safety program. While it was at times painful and very time consuming, the process completely changed our culture. The setup process and work to “get good grades” showed us what we were missing in our own programs and caused us to rethink the way we do things. Because we offer so many different kinds of services, we had extra tasks to complete so it took us that much longer. However, in the end, it completely changed our safety stats for the better and helped build a foundation for our safety leadership and employee participation programs.

One other benefit of going through the process was that it made going through all the other similar programs so much easier. As a contractor, we’ve seen a significant increase in client safety prequalification requirements. Because we have all of the processes, programs, and information already stored in one central place, answering questionnaires and producing attachments for other clients doesn’t take as long.

A third benefit was that it helped us to develop our own process to prequalify our contractors. We want to make sure we are working with good contractors too. Our subcontractors will be held to the same standards as we are by our clients, so we need to make sure they are able to measure up. From a risk standpoint, it’s good business to ensure you’re on the same page with your subcontractors.

From a competition standpoint it helps ensure the contractors that you’re bidding against are not able to cut corners on their safety programs in order to keep their prices lower. Being required to be compliant helps level the playing field.

**The Time Commitment**

For most companies, getting setup, developing and implementing processes, then keeping monthly and quarterly records can be a very time consuming process. This is where the frustration sets in. With the safety staff tied up in day-to-day tasks, sometimes these items are passed on to administrative personnel. That’s fine for some of the routine tasks, but often the programs need someone involved that has knowledge of the regulations and knowledge of what a company should or shouldn’t initially commit itself to. If you say you’re going to do something, or that you do something a certain way, you’re expected to follow that. Sometimes how you answer certain questions or even how you list your services can drastically affect your grade.

**Setup and Management**

iSi has learned the ins and outs of these programs and is helping a number of companies manage ISNetworld (and other program) compliance. Are you or your staff like the exasperated workers we mentioned at the beginning? If so, give us a call and let us work together to figure out how iSi can help alleviate your pain.