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AFRICA INSTUTUE FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT STUDIES

ASSIGNMENTS TWO

1. Describe the management obligations in relation to occupational health and safety.

Occupational health and safety relates to health, safety and welfare issues in the workplace. Occupational health and safety includes the laws, standards and safety programs that aimed at making the workplace better for workers, coworkers, family members, customers and other stakeholders. Occupational health and safety obligations apply to everyone involved in an organization or business though much of the responsibilities for occupational health and safety ultimately rests with the employers. This responsibility is normally delegated to executive directors, senior managers, line managers, supervisors and employees. Each person’s authority and duty are clearly defined, documented and communicated to them. More importantly, each director in the organization board needs to accept their responsibilities in providing health and safety commitments and leadership by;

* Ensuring each members action and decisions at board level always reinforce the message in the organizations health and safety statement.
* Providing mismatch between individual board members attitudes, behaviors or belief in maintaining good occupational health and safety standards.

Management or senior executives of an organization must ensure that occupational health and safety obligations are met by familiaring themselves with the laws and following them because failure to meet occupational health and safety obligations means putting people`s health and lives at risks apart from breaking the law. Therefore, legally, senior managers /employers are required to provide and maintain a safe and healthy workplace for themselves and the workers, volunteers, customers and visitors. Occupational health and safety legislation requires senior executive to;

* Ensure safe system of work
* Ensure safe use and handling of goods and substances
* Provide information, instructions, training and supervision to workers to ensure they are safe
* Assess risks and implement appropriate measures for controlling them
* Report notifiable incidents to workplace healthy and safety
* Investigate incidents and take action to avoid having something similar happened again
* Provide workers compensation insurance
* Provide medical and first aid facilities
* Establish and maintain a health and safety programs
* Evaluate health and safety performance

1. Highlight the employee rights in relation to occupational health and safety.

Employee rights are a group of legal rights and claimed human rights having to do with labor relations between workers and their employers usually obtained under labor and employment law. In general, these rights debates have to do with negotiating workers’ pay, benefits, and safe working conditions. All employees have basic rights in the workplace, following are the basic rights of employees in the workplace;

* Right to refuse unsafe work. An employee can refuse work if he/she believe that the situation is unsafe to either himself/herself or his or her coworkers.
* Right to participate in workplace health and safety activities through health and safety committee or as a worker health and safety representative
* Right to know or the right to be informed about actual and potential dangers in the workplace.
* Right to receive information and training about workplace hazards, methods to prevent them and the occupational health and safety administration standards that apply to their workplace.
* Right receive records of work related injuries and illness
* Right to not be harassed or discriminated against or treated less favorably because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation or gender identity), national origin, disability, age or generic information (including family medical history).

1. Discuss the variety of safety programs that the HR managers can institute in an organization.

Human resources has a vital role in ensuring employee health and safety. Typically, human resources departments do not solely facilitate all components of employee wellbeing. As such, managers should utilize all resources possible to create and maintain health and safety standards for an organization, to further encourage and sustain employee health and safety in the workplace, human resource managers consider implementing these four practices.

* Establish open communication. A key component of maintaining employee trust is encouraging open communication on any and all health and safety issues observed. No employee should fear expressing concern or bringing light to an issue they believe interferes with the occupational health and safety goals of an organization.

To prevent a fear of communication, recruit and educate the best supervisors to encourage accessibility and interaction within each department. Develop a hiring process that heavily weighs a potential supervisors concern for the safety of themselves and those around them. Require human resources personnel to hold one on one meetings to actively check in with employees. An employee feeling hesitant to express concern to their direct manager may feel more comfortable speaking with human resources professionals. Address minor health and safety issues, such as a spreading illness or commute weather advisory via an organization wide notice or email.

* Implement strict safety policies. Ideally, a workplace is completely hazard free. However, some trades such as ground construction and mechanical engineering, inherently involve precarious work and unstable environments. Employees not designated to work in certain high risk positions should be discouraged from entering hazardous zones or attempting jobs they are not certified to complete. Spread awareness by labelling unsafe environment, posting general warning signs and referencing the qualifications needed to enter various regions of a worksite. For corporate office environments that present less physical risk, identify all potential hazards early on and control minor dangerous mishaps such as broken glass or plumbing leaks.
* Coordinate with facility management. Similarly tp human resources, facilities departments play an important part in carrying out safety policies for business. By harmonizing occupational health and safety goals, human resources and facilities managers can better protect employees, human resources specialists are aware of the work environment and the unique risks that employees encounter under specific circumstances. Encourage facility managers to invest in products designed to prevent slip and fall accidents such as anti-slip safety mats, restroom handrails and entryway, umbrella bag, dispensers. In addition to promoting safety and hygine, these simple yet effective safety products cultivate a general sense of wellbeing in the workplace.
* Provide health and safety training. Implement required safety training programs for all employees. These programs should include first aid and emergency action plan training. Supply each work zone with first aid kits so small injuries can be quickly remedied. Hold fire and emergency drills as required by jurisdiction, also ensure these procedures are taken seriously and incite active engagement. Encourage employees to be responsible and take sick time when necessary without reprimand.

Conclusion

With safety standards in place a business can avoid potential lawsuits and other monetary loss. Further, an employee focused culture that emphasizes health and safety creates a positive environment for optimal job satisfaction, morale and productivity.

1. What are some of the barriers to successful implementation of occupational health and safety management in your organization? How can they be overcome?

It goes without saying that occupational health and safety management should be priority in an organization, a strong safety culture protects employees, equipment and organization as a whole. However, there are resistance or barriers encountered when developing or changing an organization`s safety process which includes;

* Role and responsibilities. Confusion or uncertainty over the roles and responsibility can lead to backlash when implementing a safety system, so it’s important to establish and uphold clear positions from the beginning, common situations that can lead to this might include not involving key stakeholders or unions, a lack of demonstrated commitment from leadership or not providing a channel for employee feedback

Create a safety team involving employees from all levels of management and designate specific employees from various roles. Make it easy from employees to contact and provide feedback to this team and liaison with outside stakeholders as needed. Organization leaders should be asked to help actively champion safety efforts and campaigns.

* Infrastructure. Building the right environment for a safety management system doesn’t happen overnight so it’s normal to experience bumps or setbacks as its adopted across an organization.

System and structure should be designed to support organizations teams and should not be afraid to grow or scale back as needed.

Also provide a clear transition plan and communicate updates and progress frequently, all plenty of time for change and recognize all positive developments (even small improvement).

* Training. Whether it’s making changes to an existing system or rolling out a new one, properly trained employees can become your best adavocates for your new safety culture. Be prepared to invest time and money in training and retaining your team members and allow them to use their expert knowledge to lead the success of a new safety management system.

Remember to account for the time it takes to train team members, change old habits, answer questions, and make adjustments, address any fears or frustrations as your employees are learning and sure their responsibilities are evenly distributed.

* Attitude. The attitude of an organization from top to bottom affects the success of a safety management system. A lack of trust or leaders who focus on the past, can frame any change as a negative, so it’s important to work together.

Organization leadership should be vocal supporters of safety program. Address any obstacles or misconceptions quickly. Also encourage employee feedback and conversation in a positive manner and highlight supporters at all levels.

Conclusion

Implementing an occupational health and safety process doesn’t have to be a drag. Remaining transparent and positive, communicating frequently and encouraging leadership to be strong advocates and supporters will go far in bringing the rest of the teams on board.

1. Discuss the nature and type of support to be accorded to people with disabilities.

People with disabilities in terms of the employment equity act the focus is on effect of disability on the person in relation to the working environment and not on the impairment. The act defined people with disabilities as people who have a long term recurring physical or mental impairment which substantially limits their prospects of entry into or advancement in employment. People with disabilities have an important role to play to make a positive contribution in the workplace. It is generally found that a person with disability develops into well-adjusted productive worker in an atmosphere of acceptance, cooperation and good will and persons with disabilities are less absent from work and they show great loyalty towards their organization. People with disabilities should be given the opportunity to enter the workforce, disability is a human right and development issue, meaning that people with disabilities should enjoy equal rights and responsibilities to other people.

* Removing barriers. Many barriers such as widespread ignorance and stereotypes have caused people with disabilities to be unfairly discriminated against in the society and in employment, for these reasons, people with disabilities are designated group in terms of the employment equity act 1998. The technology advancement have removed many obstacles for disabled people in their aspiration to pursue the carrier of their choice. Many visually, hearing and physically impaired persons have excel in the field of computer technology, blind and partially sighted lawyers are now a reality due to computer development.
* Confidentiality and disclosure. All people have the right to privacy and therefore, no person is obliged to inform their employers of the disability or impairment. However, should the impact of the disability be such that reasonable accommodation is needed, it will be the advantage of the employee to disclose his/her disability
* Reasonable accommodation. All designated employers should reasonably accommodate the needs of the people with disabilities. This is both a non-discrimination and an affirmative action requirements. The aim of the accommodation is to enable the persons to perform the essential functions of the job refers to modifications or alterations to the way a job is normally performed should make it possible for a suitably qualified person with disability to perform as everyone else. The type of reasonable accommodation required would depend on the job and its essential functions, the work environment and the person’s specific impairment. Reasonable measures may include;
* Making the workplace more accessible according to the person’s needs. For example the removal of physical barriers, existing facilities can be adapted to make them accessible for example building a ramp to ensure wheelchair access and making toilet accessible, lifts must be equipped with specific numbering for blind persons very often, the only minor adjustments are necessary to make a disabled persons workplace accessible and to ensure that he/she is independent employee.
* Access to information and technology is very important. This include adapting the existing or acquiring new equipment for example computer hardware and software, visually impaired persons may require voice input/output software or magnifying software. Excellent hearing aids are available on the market today that will increase a hearing impaired person’s ability to communicate.

If the job requires action to be taken in response to a signal or sign and the relevant sense is impaired foe example vision the signal maybe converted for another sense and a bell sound maybe used instead likewise, in the case of hearing impaired persons a bell sound can be replaced with signal light flasher. This modifications are usually easily incorporated in OR added to existing machines.

* Reorganizing workstations to ensure that people with disabilities can work effectively for example adjusting work schedules if necessary.
* Changing training and assessment materials and process for example providing training materials on request in electronics format, braille or on tape for people with visual disabilities.
* Medical and psychometric assessment. Medical and psychological testing should comply with the requirements of the employment equity act and must be relevant and appropriate to the work for which the person is being tested. Psychometric tests must be administered that are valid and reliable, can be applied fairly to all workers and us not biased against any worker or group. Medical testing to determine the health status of the person should only be carried out after the employer has established that the person is competent to perform the essential job functions. If you are required to undergo psychometric testing, enquire about the different purposes for which you will be tested and request the necessary accommodation to enable you be tested.
* Health and safety. According to health and safety act, the employer mud provide and maintain a working environment that is safe to all employees and the needs of employees with disabilities must be included. Evaluation procedures should take into account any specific or additional measures to ensure that employee with disability is safely evacuated from a building or worksite during emergency.
* Retention. The employer is required to ensure the retention of existing staff with disabilities through rehabilitation, training or any other appropriate measures. Where an existing employee becomes disabled, the employer must ensure that the employee remain in his or her job before considering alternatives. For example redeployment based on operational requirements, the employer must give objectives, consideration to requests from employees with disabilities for reduced, part time or alternative duties.
* Workers compensation. An employee may sustain a partial, temporary or permanent disability in the course of his or her employment and may require assistance from the employer to assess compensation. Such an employee maybe entitled to compensation in terms of the compensation for occupational injuries and diseases act 1993. The main objective of the compensation fund is to provide for compensation for disablement caused by occupational injuries and diseases sustained or contracted by workers during the cause of their work or for death resulting from such injuries or diseases.