

Lack of leadership is a key challenge to creating a safety culture

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Nearly a quarter of health and safety professionals (23%) say a lack of leadership support is their biggest barrier to embedding a strong safety culture amongst its employees, according to new findings by [WorkNest](#).

Fostering an effective health and safety culture, in which individuals have the correct attitudes, values and patterns of behaviour, is now seen as of equal importance to physical safety systems.

However, this recent research suggests that those at the top aren't always leading the charge to embed the best principles.

The findings come in the wake of the latest HSE statistics for 2023/24, which highlight the urgent need for bosses to take a more active role in promoting workplace safety, as stagnant figures suggest more improvements could be made.

Nick Wilson, Director of Health and Safety Services at WorkNest, said: "Investigations into high-profile health and safety disasters have shown that a poor safety culture can be a significant factor in accidents. Negative attitudes and behaviours from leadership will filter down to employees and encourage apathy and risk-taking behaviour. Therefore, it's imperative that executives and senior bosses understand the importance of actively promoting safety principles and are shown how to demonstrate it to employees."

To support senior leaders, WorkNest outlines seven actionable strategies for health and safety leaders to share with board members and executives to improve safety culture:

- Empower the board to set the direction for effective health and safety management

- Establish a health and safety policy that is much more than a document and box-ticking exercise
- Ensure board members lead on the communication of health and safety duties and benefits throughout the organisation
- Have health and safety appearing regularly on the agenda for board meetings
- Appoint a board member as the health and safety 'champion'
- Set clear targets to define what the board is seeking to achieve
- Appoint a non-executive director to scrutinise and challenge practices

Lack of leadership support was the second biggest barrier to improving safety culture, only narrowly beaten by disengagement of staff (at 31% finding this the biggest barrier). Other common barriers cited include limited training resources and a general resistance to change within an organisation.

WorkNest provides health and safety services to organisations, helping them to remain compliant and create a safer working environment. They surveyed over 300 health and safety professionals in November 2024.

For more information visit <https://worknest.com/health-and-safety/>