

ARE WE RUNNING A COMPLIANCE PROGRAM... OR A MANAGEMENT SYSTEM?



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Practical leadership messaging to help you connect safety, accountability, and business performance.

Are We Running a Compliance Checklist... or a Performance Driving Management System?

Audience: Supervisors, Foremen, Senior Managers

Delivered by: Owner / CEO / Safety Manager

Purpose: Reinforce business excellence, discipline, and leadership around safety, performance, and profit

Length: ~15-20 minutes

Today, we need to talk about how we are running this business. Not just how we are managing safety paperwork, and not just whether we can pass an audit. The real question is whether we are running a compliance-driven program or a true management system. That difference matters, because it affects far more than safety. It affects **production, quality, cost, accountability, and profitability.**

Many companies believe safety problems happen because **workers make mistakes.** That is often the first conclusion people jump to when something goes wrong. But in reality, most problems are **caused by the systems behind the work.** The deeper issue is whether leadership created clear expectations, trained those expectations properly, and reinforced them consistently.

W. Edwards Deming said it this way: "Only 15% of a company's problems can be controlled by individual employees... while 85% can be controlled only by the management system."

That means our safety results, production results, quality, and profitability are largely driven by the system we build.

Let's make this interactive: When something goes wrong on one of our jobs, what is our first reaction? Is it to ask, "Who did this? Or is it to ask, "What in our system allowed this to happen?"

Think about the last two mistakes you saw:

Did we blame the worker first? Or did we step back and examine the system?

A **true management system** gives us structure. It ensures we:

1. set clear standards
2. communicate and train effectively
3. coach and enforce expectations, and measure performance so we can correct issues early.

When standards are clear, behaviour becomes consistent. When behaviour becomes consistent, performance becomes predictable.

A compliance program may satisfy a requirement however consistency can be difficult. A management system strengthens the entire business.

The same failures that cause injuries also cause rework, downtime, insurance increases, stop-work orders, and lost contracts.

Where in your area do we tend to blame the worker first? Is it PPE? housekeeping? equipment? procedures?

Pick one example. Now ask: How are we setting the standard? How are we training the standard? How are we enforcing the standard?

If any of those are weak, the system is weak. Think about one high-risk task in your operation.

Is the standard clearly set?

Are workers trained effectively?

Are supervisors coaching and enforcing it?

Can we prove it?

If we can, it's an employee issue. And we need to deal with it on an employee level.

If not, that is a system gap. And we need to correct at the management system level.

Action Steps:

1. Identify two areas where we blame the worker first.
2. Review them:
 - Where is the standard set?
 - How is it trained?
 - How is it enforced?
3. Fix one system gap immediately.

Are we relying on memory and effort through constantly repeating ourselves? Or do we have a system that sets our team up for success makes the right way simply “how business is done around here”?

Bottom Line: Compliance is the floor. A management system drives performance.

We do not leave performance to chance. We build systems that drive results.

We don't rise to the level of our good intentions. We fall to the level of our management systems.