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# How Does Recognition Improve Safety (and Your Bottom Line)?

FINDINGS FROM A GALLUP-WORKHUMAN STUDY





Safety is a critical metric but not just for obvious reasons. Maintaining a safe work environment is about more than protecting your employees and means of production – it also has a direct connection to your bottom line.

Work injuries cost \$171 billion per year. That includes wage and productivity losses, medical expenses, employers' uninsured costs, and more. It's clear that safety incidents have a notable burden on organizations – and hinder business profitability. There's one possible solution for that: employee recognition.

Employee recognition is also tied to business outcomes, largely due to its positive impact on engagement.

When employees are disengaged, there is 37% higher absenteeism, 49% more accidents, and 60% more errors and defects.

Starting to see the connection? A more engaged workforce makes for a safer workplace. Let's dig into how recognition can improve both safety and your bottom line.

# How recognition influences safety



Recognition fosters appreciation, trust, and goodwill among employees. With these traits as cultural pillars, your employees will have a greater sense of collective responsibility for one another. Stronger social bonds among teammates mean employees are more likely to do things the right way because they care and have a sense of investment in the work they do.

A strong culture of recognition reinforces the idea that how we work is just as important as the results we achieve. Careful work is usually higher quality work, directly impacting safety outcomes and overall production quality.

In fact, there is an 82% lower recordable injury rate for plants with strong cultures of social recognition.

People also feel more seen when they are recognized. When employees feel valued in this way, they tend to put more care into their work because they know that their efforts won't go unnoticed. When efforts in both quality and safety get recognized, the cycle is further reinforced and the culture of safety takes hold.

# A quantifiable impact



Safety incidents can be a serious drain on organizations. Every year, work injuries cost U.S. businesses \$163.9B. In 2020, 99 million days of work were lost due to work-related injuries. What's more, injured workers can find it difficult to participate in ordinary daily life, including personal care, household chores, or family activities.

In short: Safety is critical to the wellbeing of your organization.


Recognition has a direct correlation with safety incidents.

Based on Workhuman's research with Gallup, we found that if the median organization in Gallup's database doubled the number of employees who strongly agree that they received recognition for doing good work in the last seven days, they could experience a 22% decrease in safety incidents. This would result in an estimated cost savings of \$2,807,200 per 10,000 employees.

**Cost savings on reduced workplace safety incidents after doubling the percentage of employees who have received recognition or praise for good work in the last seven days.**

Industry	Safety incident rate per 100 employees	10,000-employee company	
		Number fewer safety incidents	Cost savings
Overall	2.9	63.80	\$2,807,200
Manufacturing	3.3	72.60	\$3,194,400
Construction	2.5	55.00	\$2,420,000
Hospitals	6.1	134.20	\$5,904,800
Professional & Business Services	1.4	30.80	\$1,355,200

Safety incidents per 100 employees were calculated based on BLS data on total recordable non-fatal occupational injuries and illnesses. Results assume the typical cost of an organization per non-fatal medically consulted injury is \$44,000 based on available data from the National Safety Council and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The cost savings estimate for 10,000 person Professional and Business Services organizations were revised on April 3,2023, to correct an overestimation of cost savings.

A photograph of two industrial workers in a factory setting. They are wearing red hard hats, safety glasses, and orange high-visibility vests over dark blue work clothes. They are kneeling on the floor, looking at a large, curved metal component of a turbine or engine. One worker is holding a clipboard and pointing at it, while the other looks on. The background shows more of the industrial machinery.

According to Workhuman data,  
**manufacturing plants that gave the fewest safety incentives had five times higher injury rates** than plants with the most comprehensive safety incentive programs.

So, how can you use recognition to your advantage to increase safety?

# How to use recognition to increase safety



A safety incentive program, also known as a safety reward program, is a formal workplace safety initiative that focuses on rewarding safety-conscious behavior at work.

These programs convey that the organization values safety, while the incentives promote buy-in amongst employees. And the incentives don't just compel employees to establish and maintain a safe work environment. They also serve as an educational tool to help employees better understand safety standards so they can readily meet and even exceed them.

This kind of proactive recognition helps reward the behavior that contributes to higher safety standards, rather than merely recognizing the result.

Implementing a program like this can reduce safety incidents, increase employee engagement, and reinforce and increase compliance.



With proactive recognition, leaders acknowledge and reward desirable behaviors – such as reporting potential hazards and near-misses – before an accident can occur. By promoting vigilance and protective outlooks, they can prevent injuries instead of having to respond to them.

**Ready to take advantage of these benefits? Learn more about how recognition impacts your bottom line with our [report](#).**

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