Bridging the Competence Gap in Technical HS&E

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Abstract

The demands on technical HS&E professionals have never been so high. Regulators are requiring more formal demonstration that HS&E risks are being properly controlled. Companies are applying new technologies and operating in progressively more harsh and hazardous environments. HS&E standards are constantly improving and evolving to meet the expectations of the many stakeholders.

Technical HS&E is a relatively new profession. There are very few university undergraduate degrees in HS&E risk management and fewer still post-graduate courses. Unlike mature disciplines such as civil or chemical engineering, there is no effective ‘fast track’ way of bringing new HS&E risk management professionals into major hazard industries.

Getting it wrong is expensive. Poor risk assessment practices can result in unidentified, unmitigated or overstated risks. Poor awareness by managers can result in ineffective leadership. Getting it wrong not only affects the bottom line, but it also adversely affects the culture. Organizations with ‘home-grown’ development programs for their HS&E risk management professionals are more likely to benefit from better risk-informed decisions.

This paper describes, by way of a case study, an approach to developing a competent technical HS&E professional. This approach aims to bridge the competence gap utilizing:

1. Up-to-date learning methods with the practical experience of applying risk management techniques in the real-world.
2. Formal assessments leading to post-graduate qualifications and continuous professional development awards.
3. Flexible programs that meet client-specific needs in terms of the selected modules, delivery locations, schedule, level of assessment, case studies and coursework.
4. Regulatory, industry and technology-specific modules supplemented with opportunities for real industry experience.