
Evolution of Corporate Motivations and Strategies in Occupational Safety and Health: A Comprehensive Analysis

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Abstract:

Corporate motivations towards enhancing occupational safety and health standards have evolved over time, undergoing a profound change in understanding the importance of workers' well-being. This led to a cultural shift as companies began to see employees' safety and health as major asset and source of value and wealth.

In this context, our article aims to explain and analyze the historical evolution of corporate motivations to allow for a deeper understanding of the significance of occupational safety and health as an essential component of successful business strategies and corporate social responsibility, as companies have increasingly adopted comprehensive occupational safety and health programs to achieve sustainability and build trust with their human resources and local communities.

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1. Introduction:

Throughout history, occupational safety and health have been crucial pillars for ensuring the well-being and safety of workers in various industries. With increasing challenges and risks in work environments, it has become necessary to enhance occupational safety and health standards to ensure a safe and sustainable work environment. In this context, the importance of these standards lies in its the reduction of accident and injury rates, which contributes to enhancing productivity and efficiency in work environment. The development of occupational safety and health standards has not been random; it is the result of multiple motivations, including social and economic pressures, government regulations, and technological advancements.

As the global market shifts towards sustainable development and corporate social responsibility, occupational safety and health have become an integral part of successful business strategies. Thus, understanding the evolution of corporate motivations towards occupational safety and health sheds the light on significant transformations in the relationship between companies and their employees, highlighting the importance of adopting a work culture that considers occupational safety and health as top priority for achieving success and sustainability.

This study focuses on analyzing and interpreting the driving factors that have historically motivated companies to enhance occupational safety and health standards and how these motivations have evolved over time. While the main motivations initially focused on responding to external pressures such as regulations and laws, they later evolved to include internal motivations such as the desire to improve efficiency and productivity, enhance the company public image, and increase market competitiveness.

1.1. Study Question:

From the above, the following central question arises: **How have corporate motivations to enhance occupational safety and health standards evolved over time, and what is the impact of these motivations on occupational safety and health strategies and programs?**

1.2. Sub-questions:

To answer this central question, the following sub-questions are asked to break down the problem and study it from different angles:

- What are the main historical stages in the development of occupational safety and health standards?
- What factors have driven companies to improve occupational safety and health standards at each historical stage?
- What programs and strategies have companies adopted in response to these motivations?
- How have technological advancements affected occupational safety and health strategies and programs?

- How can occupational safety and health standards be improved in the future based on past experiences and developments?

1.3. Hypotheses: To answer the study question, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- The historical evolution of occupational safety and health standards and motivations is closely linked to the development of government regulations and the economic and social motivations of companies.
- Companies that adopt advanced occupational safety and health strategies and programs achieve lower accident and injury rates compared to those that do not adhere to these standards.
- Modern technological advancements contribute to improving the effectiveness of occupational safety and health programs.
- Past experiences and historical developments provide a strong foundation for improving occupational safety and health standards in the future.

1.4. Study Objectives: The primary objectives of this study are to:

- Analyze the historical development of occupational safety and health standards;
- Identify the driving factors for companies adopting occupational safety and health standards;
- Evaluate the impact of government regulations on corporate motivations;
- Analyze the programs and strategies adopted by companies in response to each change in motivations;
- Explore the impact of technological advancements on occupational safety and health standards;
- Provide recommendations for improving occupational safety and health standards in the future.

1.5. Methodology:

This study relies on a descriptive-analytical method, utilizing a variety of sources such as books, research studies, journals, and published reports, among others. These sources will be analyzed scientifically and methodologically to answer the study hypotheses.

2. Concept of Occupational Safety and Health:

Occupational safety and health is a comprehensive concept that refers to the efforts made to maintain the safety and health of individuals in the workplace. It encompasses a wide range of activities and practices aimed at providing a safe and healthy work environment and reducing the risks of injuries and occupational diseases. Below are various definitions from major international organizations and bodies regarding the concept of occupational safety and health:

2.1 World Health Organization (WHO):

Occupational safety and health is a set of activities aimed at protecting workers from work-related hazards, including injuries and occupational diseases, through risk analysis, assessment, control, and promoting the overall work environment. (WHO, Occupational health)

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2.2 International Labour Organization (ILO):

Occupational safety and health encompass all security, health, social, and psychological aspects of workers in the workplace, with a focus on preventing injuries and occupational diseases and promoting general health and well-being. (ILO, 2020)

2.3 European Union:

"Occupational health and safety include all aspects related to the health, safety, and well-being of workers in the workplace, including the prevention of accidents, injuries, and occupational diseases, and providing a safe and healthy work environment." (EU, 2017)

In summary, definitions of occupational safety and health share the importance of going beyond merely preventing accidents and injuries to include promoting the general health and well-being of workers in a safe and healthy work environment.

3. Stages of the Evolution of Occupational Safety and Health Functions and Programs:

The function and programs of occupational safety and health have undergone significant and successive developments over time through various historical stages, with concepts and practices in this field evolving in response to social, economic, and technological changes. The following are the main stages of the historical evolution of occupational safety and health functions and programs: (Press, 2000, pp. 105-110)

3.1 Ancient and Medieval Periods:

During this stage, concerns about health and safety in the workplace were limited, and preventive measures were weak. Industrial operations were typically limited to handcrafts and agriculture, with no specific legal guidance to protect workers.

3.2 Industrial Revolution and the Rise of the Labor Movement:

With the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century, work accidents and injuries increased due to harsh working conditions and the lack of preventive measures. The labor movement began to influence laws and legislation to protect workers' rights and improve working conditions.

3.3 Twentieth Century and the Emergence of Labor Legislation:

During this stage, many countries adopted legislation and laws to protect workers and ensure their safety and health in the workplace. The establishment of government bodies specializing in occupational health and safety, such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in the United States and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in the United Kingdom, was a significant step in this development.

3.4 Twenty-First Century and Technological Advancement:

With technological advancement and the development of production processes and expansion in the industrial and service sectors, the challenges facing occupational health and safety increased. Companies began adopting a comprehensive approach to health and safety, including using modern technology to assess risks and improve preventive measures.

3.5 Moving Towards a Culture of Occupational Health and Safety:

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on building a health and safety culture in the workplace. Companies have come to realize that investing in health and safety yields benefits through increased productivity, reduced costs, and enhanced company reputation. (Reese, 2008, p. 326)

In general, the function and programs of occupational health and safety have evolved significantly over time and continue to evolve and adapt to new challenges in the current work environment.

4. Historical Evolution of Corporate Motivations for Adopting and Enhancing Occupational Safety and Health Programs:

Corporate motivations for adopting and enhancing occupational safety and health programs have evolved over time through various historical stages (Seppo, Toivo, & Kari, 2014, p. 7). This evolution can be summarized as follows:

4.1. First Stage: Dominance of Productivity and Humanitarian Motivations:

In ancient times, workers faced very difficult working environments that relied primarily on physical effort and primitive tools, which directly exposed them to significant risks and injuries. Additionally, companies largely ignored occupational safety and health issues, focusing primarily on productivity and profit without regard for workers' health and safety. This left workers vulnerable to hazards without sufficient knowledge of preventive measures and proper emergency responses. Consequently, workplace accidents were very common and often fatal during this period, and the lack of data and documentation made it difficult to assess the scope of these accidents and address them effectively. Overall, working conditions in ancient periods were extremely difficult and hazardous, characterized by an almost total absence of occupational safety and health programs, with some limited exceptions based on two main motivations. The first and most important motivation was productivity, aimed at maintaining productivity and avoiding work stoppages due to injuries and accidents, which would result in significant losses. Additionally, there were social and religious pressures influencing corporate behavior, as societies valued caring for individuals and their safety, and religious directives encouraged treating workers humanely and respectfully. Although humanitarian considerations were not the primary motivation for adopting occupational safety and health programs in ancient times, they played a significant role alongside economic factors in improving working conditions and workers' safety, albeit in a limited way.

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4.2. Second Stage: Emergence of Legal and Legislative Motivations:

The emergence of legal labor legislation marked a significant turning point in the history of occupational safety and health programs, leading to fundamental shifts in organizations' approach to workers' health and safety. This emergence of legal legislation can be highlighted through several aspects:

- **Enhancing Commitment and Responsibility:** By establishing laws that set specific standards for occupational safety and health, organizations became legally obligated to follow these standards and provide a safe and healthy work environment for workers. Consequently, organizations assumed greater responsibility for their employees' safety and were compelled to take the necessary measures to comply with the legislation.
- **Increasing Awareness and Education:** The presence of legal legislation significantly contributed to raising awareness about the importance of occupational health and safety among organizational members. They became aware of their rights and duties under these laws, making employees more aware of the importance of complying with occupational health and safety policies and procedures.
- **Improving the Work Environment:** Under legal legislation, organizations are responsible for improving the work environment to provide a safe and healthy workplace. This involves providing appropriate training, protective equipment, implementing good work practices, and conducting regular medical check-ups.
- **Reducing Risks and Costs:** Compliance with legal legislation helped reduce workplace accidents and occupational injuries, directly leading to a reduction in the costs associated with injuries and illnesses in the workplace, particularly in terms of productivity losses.

Overall, legal labor legislation provided a legal framework that enhanced organizations' commitment to improve the work environment and protect their employees' health and safety. By taking these laws seriously, organizations achieved higher levels of occupational safety and health in the workplace.

4.3. Third Stage: Financial Motivations:

Financial motivations, particularly related to competition and the fear of legal penalties and compensations, have played a significant role in promoting the idea of organizations adopting occupational health and safety programs. This can be analyzed in detail through the following points:

- **Legal and Judicial Costs:** Companies that do not comply with occupational health and safety requirements face enormous legal and judicial costs. When work accidents or occupational injuries occur due to safety violations, companies may face lawsuits resulting in substantial compensation payments to injured workers or their families. Additionally, legal authorities may impose financial penalties on companies that violate occupational health and safety legislation, which negatively affects the company's profits and weakens its market position.

- **Financial Pressure from Competition:** In a highly competitive business environment, companies must maintain their competitiveness by motivating workers and attracting customers and investors. Thus, many companies have placed occupational health and safety at the core of their operations to maintain their market share and position in the community.
- **Costs of Accidents and Occupational Injuries:** Companies incur enormous costs due to accidents and occupational injuries, including medical treatment costs, compensations, and indirect costs such as loss of productivity and high insurance costs. By improving occupational health and safety programs, companies can reduce these enormous costs and enhance the financial sustainability of their operations.

In general, financial motivations related to competition and the fear of legal penalties and compensations play a crucial role in promoting the adoption of occupational health and safety programs. They compel companies to prioritize these issues and allocate the necessary resources to ensure compliance and the safety and health of workers in the workplace.

4.4. Stage Four: Media Considerations (Corporate Reputation):

Media considerations have played a significant role in the adoption of occupational health and safety programs by organizations, as they contribute in building a positive image of the company and enhancing trust and respect among employees, customers, and the community at large. Effective and transparent communication about the company efforts in occupational health and safety is vital in achieving business success and continuity. It contributes to building a positive image of the company and enhancing its reputation in the market. By effectively and transparently communicating with its employees and the external public, the organization presents itself as a responsible entity that places great importance on the safety and health of its employees and community. This enables the organization to achieve the following advantages:

- **Enhancing Trust and Comfort:** Transparent and open communication about the company efforts in occupational health and safety is essential for building trust and comfort among employees and customers. When employees feel that the company cares about their safety and health, they become more comfortable and assured in the work environment, which strengthens the team and motivates them to perform better.
- **Attracting and Retaining Talent:** Being in a safe and healthy work environment is a crucial factor in attracting new talent and retaining them within the organization. Companies that adopt strong and effective occupational health and safety programs are more attractive to talented employees who seek a work environment that cares about their well-being and safety.
- **Reputation and Respect in the Market:** Commitment to occupational health and safety programs reflects the company desire for excellence and social responsibility. By highlighting its efforts in this field, the organization

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gains respect and appreciation from customers and business partners, which enhances its reputation and contributes to its future success.

4.5. Stage Five: Focusing on Human Resources as a Source of Wealth and Success:

Contemporary considerations have significantly contributed to the promotion and development of occupational health and safety programs, as they have proven the critical and pivotal role that human resources play in the success of the company. This has led to the belief that investing in the health and safety of employees is a strategic investment that greatly impacts the company's performance and achievement of its institutional goals.

- **Human Resources as Invaluable Wealth:** Currently, human resources are considered the primary wealth of any organization, as they are the ones who manage operations and contribute to achieve goals and develop the company. Therefore, organizations must care for the health and safety of their employees and provide a safe work environment to maintain this wealth and enhance its performance.
- **The Relationship Between Employee Health and Company Performance:** There is a direct relationship between employee health and safety and company performance. Employees who feel comfortable and safe in the work environment are more productive and efficient. Thus, occupational health and safety programs contribute in enhancing the company performance and achieving its success.
- **Attracting and Retaining Talent:** Occupational health and safety programs are crucial for attracting and retaining talent within the organization. Employees prefer to work in a safe and healthy environment that cares about their well-being and health, and they are willing to stay with the company that provides this environment.

In general, contemporary considerations related to the increasing importance of human resources as wealth and a source of success have contributed to organizations adopting occupational health and safety programs. These programs are considered a strategic investment that leads to achieving institutional goals and sustainable business success.

5. Key Strategies for Occupational Safety and Health in Contemporary Organizations:

Occupational safety and health strategies encompass a range of measures and practices aimed at enhancing work place health and safety while minimizing potential risks that could negatively impact workers. In this regard, these strategies have rapidly evolved in contemporary business organizations. We will attempt to highlight the most important types of these strategies and their features according to the historical development previously discussed. (Oxford, 2013, p. 415)

5.1 Stage one: Regulatory Systems and Policies (19th Century - Early 20th Century):

5.1.1 Development of Basic Policies:

At this stage, organizations primarily focused on developing basic policies to identify major hazards such as industrial accidents. The policies at that time were not as comprehensive as they are today, but they laid the foundation for future standards. For example, at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, textile factories in England began to implement basic policies to reduce accidents caused by heavy machinery, such as providing safety covers on machines. (Bluma & Rainhorn, 2016, p. 91)

5.1.2 Policy Updates:

During this phase, many organizations began revising their policies to keep up with legislative changes, such as those enacted by the British Factory Act of 1833, which introduced some initial measures to protect workers. For example, in the United States, the Mine Safety Act of 1910 was one of the first laws to set safety standards in the mining industry. (Stranks, 2006, p. 03)

5.2 Stage Two: Training and Development (Mid 20th Century - 1970s):

5.2.1 Worker Training:

Over time, organizations began developing basic training programs for workers on how to handle equipment and potential hazards. For instance, in the 1950s, automobile manufacturing companies in the United States started training workers on the safe use of heavy machinery following an increase in machine-related accidents. (Grieco, Murry, & Yurukoglu, 2024, pp. 1201-1253)

5.2.2 Emergency Simulations (Emergency Training):

The concept of emergency simulations evolved to include practical drills on how to handle emergencies such as fires or explosions. By the 1970s, major factories, such as chemical plants, began conducting regular drills to manage chemical spills. (Broder & Tucker, 2011, p. 07)

5.3 Stage Three: Risk Control Measures (1980s - 1990s):

5.3.1 Risk Assessment:

Risk assessment became a standard practice in organizations, where systematic evaluations to identify hazards and develop control measures were conducted. Starting in the 1980s, large construction companies in Europe adopted a risk assessment system that involved identifying risks and developing procedures to mitigate them. (Bahr, 2014, p. 06)

5.3.2 Implementation of Control Measures:

Efforts were focused on improving the work environment by implementing control measures to reduce risks, including enhancing workplace design and providing new safety equipment. For example, in the early 1990s, technology companies began integrating advanced ventilation systems to improve air quality in research

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laboratories. (Loader, 2002, p. 73)

5.4 Stage Four: Equipment and Technology (New Millennium - 2010):

5.4.1 Use of Advanced Safety Equipment:

This stage saw the emergence of advanced personal protective equipment, including helmets and protective masks, to reduce risks. For instance, at the beginning of the new millennium, big companies started using advanced helmets with integrated communication systems for protection and coordination in hazardous environments. (Altamura, Inchingolo, Mevoli, & Boccadoro, 2019, p. 86)

5.4.2 Modern Technologies:

There was significant expansion in the reliance on technology in occupational safety and health, with advanced technologies like sensors being introduced to monitor environmental conditions and measure potential risks. For example, starting in 2010, many well-known companies began using remote sensing technology to monitor gas leaks in large industrial facilities. (Garg, 2024, p. 479)

5.5 Stage Five: Performance Monitoring and Auditing (2010 - Present):

5.5.1 Performance Monitoring:

This stage focused on evaluating the effectiveness of safety programs through regular monitoring and assessment to ensure objectives are being met. In recent years, major companies like tech firms have started tracking and analyzing accident data to improve safety strategies. (Leveson, 2004, pp. 237-270)

5.5.2 Conducting Audits:

The primary focus was on internal and external auditing by conducting regular audits to ensure compliance with safety standards and providing reports to improve performance. Companies like Boeing have adopted regular external audits to ensure compliance with the latest safety standards in production lines. (National Research Council, 1998, p. 37)

5.6 Stage Six: Emergency Procedures and Integrated Response (Present):

5.6.1 Integrated Emergency Plans:

This stage is characterized by a general trend toward developing comprehensive emergency plans that anticipate and outline scenarios for all possible situations with regular updates. For example, international airlines have detailed emergency plans that include various scenarios such as airplane incidents and medical emergencies. (Kwon, Kwon, & Cheung, 2020, pp. 11-25)

5.6.2 Emergency Response Teams:

The focus was on forming and establishing specialized and trained emergency response teams to handle complex emergencies. For instance, major energy companies like Shell have specialized emergency response

teams to deal with oil spills, explosions, etc.(Ness, 2006, pp. 76-78)

5.7 Stage Seven: Communication and Education (Present):

5.7.1 Effective Communication:

This trend focuses on utilizing modern communication channels and diverse communication methods to disseminate safety information, such as text messages, apps, and internal announcements. For example, tech companies use mobile apps for instant communication with employees about safety warnings and emergency procedures. (Narváez, Urgilés, Filho, & Guerrero, 2023, p. 442)

5.7.2 Continuous Education:

Emphasis is placed on organizing regular workshops to raise awareness about new topics in occupational safety and health. For example, major contemporary health companies organize monthly workshops on topics like stress management, mental health, and work-life balance. (Kumar, 2024, p. 187)

5.8 Stage Eight: Encouraging Commitment (Present):

5.8.1 Reward Programs:

These programs include safety incentives by offering rewards to employees who demonstrate significant commitment to safety. For instance, Many innovative companies offers financial rewards to teams that maintain accident-free records over a certain period. (Umer, 2023)

5.8.2 Performance Recognition:

This involves recognizing the efforts of employees who contribute to improving safety within the organization through material and moral awards and publicly acknowledging them to all employees. For example, large service sector companies like the World Bank honor employees who excel in promoting a culture of safety during annual celebrations. (Tait & Walker, 2000, pp. 243-251)

This historical division reflects the evolution of occupational safety and health mechanisms from basic beginnings to advanced practices and modern technologies adopted by contemporary organizations to ensure a safe and healthy work environment.

6. Conclusion:

From the dawn of the industrial age to the present, companies have witnessed significant shifts in their thinking and practices regarding occupational safety and health. These shifts have been influenced by economic, legal, and social factors, leading to a considerable evolution in the approach taken by companies towards this vital issue.

In ancient times, corporate motivations towards occupational safety and health were limited, primarily revolving around productivity and avoiding work stoppages due to accidents. With the development of labor

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legislation in the twentieth century, companies began to adopt occupational safety and health programs to meet legal requirements and avoid penalties.

With the economic and technological advancements in recent decades, companies have moved beyond merely complying with legal regulations to understanding that investing in occupational safety and health brings long-term benefits. Thus, they have adopted a more holistic and strategic approach that includes improving the work environment, providing training and awareness, and developing a safety culture within the institution.

Today, companies view occupational safety and health not only as a social and legal responsibility but also as a long-term investment in their most valuable resource and source of success. Successful companies integrate occupational safety and health into their strategies, as this contributes to improving productivity, quality of work, and building a positive reputation.

In this context, some important recommendations can be provided to organizational leaders to promote occupational safety and health as a strategic choice aimed at achieving organizational goals and leveraging human resources:

- ✓ Organizational leaders should adopt a comprehensive approach that integrates occupational safety and health into business goals and organizational strategies.
- ✓ Leaders must have the ability to foster an open culture and active participation among employees regarding occupational safety and health by encouraging open dialogue and welcoming suggestions and feedback on how to improve safety and health programs.
- ✓ Organizational leaders should provide continuous training and development for employees in the field of occupational safety and health, equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve organizational goals in this area.
- ✓ Leaders should enhance effective supervision and follow-up to ensure the proper and continuous implementation of safety and health policies and procedures, applying appropriate penalties to violators.
- ✓ Leaders should encourage and reward creative, safe, and healthy initiatives taken by employees through rewards, promotions, and public recognition.
- ✓ Organizational leaders should continuously evaluate performance and analyze data related to occupational safety and health, using this data to make strategic decisions that enhance safety and health within the organization.
- ✓ Investing in modern technology by utilizing advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things to monitor work environments and early detection of potential risks.

- ✓ Protective tools: investing in the development and improvement of personal protective equipment and technical tools to ensure effective protection for workers.
- ✓ Enhancing the organizational culture of companies.
- ✓ Improving the work environment by focusing on risk assessment and designing safe workspaces that consider the physical and psychological well-being of workers, thereby contributing to reducing accidents and injuries.

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