



Transforming EHS Management with Mobile Technology

What got us to where we are today will not get us to where we want to be tomorrow.

Decades of awareness building, training, and record keeping for Environment, Health and Safety (EHS) management activities – spearheaded by private and public enterprises and prodded along by governments – have got us to where we are today. These efforts have moved us incrementally along a path over the past four decades from literally dozens of deaths per day in the US alone to a quarter of this number today. They have taken us to a place where companies are required to track their negative impact on the environment and are encouraged to minimize this impact where possible.

However, to advance this progress further requires a breakthrough. If we doubled the number of safety meetings, checklists and regulations, would we cut workplace fatalities in half again? Could we remove the workplace injury and fatality threat entirely? Likely not. At some point, these investments have diminishing returns. Our efforts cannot rely on the limited effectiveness of appealing to morality or believing that the answer lies in larger budgets for doing more of the same.

To drastically change outcomes, we need to look beyond traditional EHS approaches. New mobile technology offers hope to us in getting there. For EHS programs, we can re-evaluate who they are built for and what they focus on delivering. For EHS professionals, we can re-think their roles entirely. New technology allows them to shift from being the focal point of initiatives towards being *social enablers of environmental and safety-oriented cultures*.

Communicating Safety Messages to Today's Workforce

As many EHS professionals have already observed, general safety meetings in traditional classroom settings are inferior ways of creating behavioral change. Is someone who skipped formal schooling, or has been out of a classroom setting for many years, or struggles with English as a second language going to effectively absorb information in this setting? Efforts to improve safety performance need to focus on better communication, not necessarily more information.

How about Millennials? Mobile technology has become a gathering place for the new generation of workers, and it is where people are increasingly going to communicate and, yes, to learn. You can't expect to be able to force people to learn effectively in the way you want them to learn. To reach this cohort, you will need to consider that information, advice, and direction may need to be served up in bite-size pieces, on a mobile device, at the relevant time and place.

Consider how mobile makes it possible to gamify workplace training. If the game's mission is to identify workplace hazards and report them through an easy – dare we say “fun” – mobile application, you can achieve two important outcomes: One, the obvious, hazards are more comprehensively catalogued. Two, less obvious but perhaps more importantly, workers will attune to what can go wrong and when.

The fact that labor forces continue to age overall and that older adults are increasingly working longer does not diminish the importance of mobile technology strategies. In many respects, it necessitates it. The older cohort is often disproportionately represented in jobs that take workers farthest away from the physical environments associated with traditional teaching and learning methods. Therefore, we need mobile strategies that ensure EHS messages can be easily accessed and understood by workers of all ages and experience levels, wherever they may work.

Delivering on the Last Mile

Environmental, health and safety programs represent a classic “Last Mile” problem for companies. Large-scale EHS efforts are obstructed not by a lack of strategic focus and effort but rather because the final beneficiaries can be tough to reach and engage. Everyone understands that ensuring EHS performance is neither a project nor a one-time engagement. To be effective, these efforts need to be ongoing and pervasive parts of the day-to-day corporate culture that reach everyone.

Mobile technology that amplifies and extends the reach of information can help us overcome the Last Mile conundrum in order to better communicate with employees.

Today mobile technology is being leveraged in many areas of enterprise management programs. It is time for EHS professionals to step up and demand access to this technology. Mobile technology and other “always on, always there” communication channels create a unique opportunity to drive engagement throughout an entire organization. Combined with new organizational thinking, this technology can drive the seismic shift needed to bring us to our goals.

Learn about how
Intelex solutions can help
your organization

A laptop computer is shown on a wooden desk, displaying a dashboard with various data visualizations including bar charts, line graphs, and pie charts. The dashboard is titled 'INTELEX' and has a navigation menu at the top. A glass of water is visible to the left of the laptop.
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