

## HOW TO FIND WORKPLACE SAFETY CHAMPIONS

Workplace safety champions are the beating heart of a strong health and safety culture. They are people who are passionate about safety, take an active role on safety committees or lead by example among their peers.

Anyone can be a workplace safety champion—at one organization it might be a housekeeping staff member who is skilled at supporting safe behavior, and at another it could be a nursing director who pushes additional safety training.

It's incredibly difficult to replicate their keen awareness, insight and enthusiasm for safety. But it's possible to spot people who could be the next safety champion if they only had a little additional encouragement.

No two workplace safety champions are identical. But almost every single one of them has at least one standout quality that helps them excel. Here are some of those qualities to look for when trying to identify potential workplace safety champions.

### **They lead by example**

Looking out for the safety of others and adjusting their own behavior to inspire a change is one of the hallmarks of a health and safety champion. Champions don't tout the importance of safety to others only to apply a different set of rules to themselves. The pride they take in being safe can influence others to feel the same.

Even entry-level employees can lead the way with their enthusiasm, inspiring confidence and helping develop a healthy safety culture. And safety champions in a leadership position will know that workers are more likely to take safety seriously if their top managers regularly show up to training and follow the rules just like everyone else. It helps build an understanding that safety applies to everyone and those in charge are not above anyone else. After all, they're all in it together.

### **They're safe 24/7**

A world-class safety system requires a 24/7 approach and safety champions are pioneers in this regard. They are natural motivators, treating their personal safety with deep respect whether they're in the middle of a task at work or enjoying time off with their family. They recognize that injuries can happen at any time.

They wear the appropriate PPE consistently, report damaged equipment, respond quickly when they see a resident or staff member needs assistance, and take care wherever they are located, whether a resident's room, or in the kitchen, or in a gathering space. They take the same careful approach to safety when they're off the job too, whether they're on the road with their family or

working on a DIY project over the weekend. By sharing this attitude with their team, they increase their peers' view of health and safety.

These individuals participate in workplace training regularly and do their best to extend their knowledge to others, improving overall performance on the job and awareness outside of the workplace. They are superstars who demonstrate concern for their own well-being and the well-being of their peers, regardless of whether they're at work, at home or on the road.

### **They start safety conversations**

For conversations to affect change, first they must occur, and safety champions are often the ones leading the discussion. They bring up problems and work hard on trying to resolve them, showing their dedication to safety improvements. They are always open to discussing safety issues and growing awareness. They lead or actively participate in conversations, helping foster an open safety culture that welcomes input and rewards questions. Even if they're not overly talkative, they truly commit to communications regarding safety.

### **They take initiative**

Safety champions in higher positions will create safety policies that guarantee every employee receives proper orientation and training. They will also ensure that regular safety visits are scheduled, and training is updated as needed.

Moreover, whether they're management or staff, they will have the courage to endorse practices that reinforce a culture of safety and make sure the rules are followed. When they witness bad habits, they will bring it up and try to influence positive change.

### **They are willing to learn and engage with new ideas**

New discoveries, new research and new equipment continuously build and shape an organization's safety culture. Safety champions are open to new ideas and new discoveries. If there is a chance to improve the safety of their team, they will be excited to try it. Sure, sometimes implementing something new might take a lot of effort, but in the end, the possible improvement to everyone's safety is worth the work.

### **They recognize the human factors that prevent compliance**

A person's state of mind greatly influences their compliance with health and safety; champions seek to better understand these factors and address them in order to reduce errors and improve decision making. Rushing, fatigue, frustration and complacency are often just as responsible for injuries as the hazards themselves, and champions will encourage their team to take breaks, slow down, and take the safest route at all times. They will also provide training and support so

that employees have the skills required to identify and deal with human factors in real time. For a safety champion, safety is the most important aspect of the workplace.

### **They are encouraging**

Finally, as much as a champion will bring issues to attention, they will also celebrate their coworkers' successes, thank them for being mindful, and when in a supervisory position, reward their employees for being perceptive and taking care of the communal well-being of the workplace.

The first step to creating a strong culture of safety is to notice those who are doing a good job; through them, you can create improvements and build upon existing structures. It's also prudent to reward these champions accordingly, which will encourage them to continue promoting workplace safety.

Adapted from [SafeStart.com](https://www.safe-start.com)