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MEDIA RELEASE

Employees getting serious about OHS, new study finds

Businesses that fail to make Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) training a priority put their employer brand at risk, with new research revealing that safety is top of mind among Australian employees.

The *WorkPro Safety Survey* of over 560 candidates of Australian recruitment agencies found that safety messages are hitting home, with an overwhelming majority (99%) of respondents who believe that OHS training is very important to them and therefore critical to their safety at work.

A further 87 per cent are keen to receive induction information about safe and fair work practices, including their rights and obligations when starting a new job.

However, employees tasked with multiple inductions per year, such as contract workers, *are* more likely to develop 'induction fatigue', the survey confirmed- supporting recent labour hire research by Monash University.

Tania Evans, Business Manager of WorkPro, an online induction solution designed for the recruitment industry, said the research overturns a common view held by employers and recruiters that OHS training is seen as a 'waste of time' or a 'boring' exercise by candidates.

"It's a relief to see that employees are in fact taking their safety seriously and putting more pressure on both agency and host employers to make a genuine commitment to OHS training before being placed in a new role," Ms Evans said.

She adds that the powerful WorkSafe awareness-raising campaigns of recent years have clearly hit their mark.

"There's clearly a two-fold risk for recruitment agencies who fail to meet WorkCover OHS training standards- it's not just about putting employees' safety in jeopardy or facing hefty fines; employee satisfaction and the reputation of the industry are also at stake," Ms Evans said.

"This research demonstrates that employees will no longer tolerate their safety being compromised. As the momentum for embedding safe work practices gathers, the recruitment industry must act together to set a benchmark on best practices OHS training," she said.

The survey questioned an even sample of blue-collar and white-collar candidates from recruitment agencies across Australia to help what is now a \$16 billion industry¹ better understand candidate sentiment towards OHS inductions.

The research also aimed to confirm whether contracting staff, who are frequently changing work sites, are affected by 'induction fatigue', as a result of having to complete multiple inductions.

Induction fatigue

Ms Evans said the survey proved the common theory that the more inductions a candidate does, the more likely they are to develop induction fatigue and the less likely they are to take in and be able to recall the information.

"There was a strong correlation between candidates who have done over three inductions in the past 12 months (24%) and those who indicated signs of induction fatigue (18%)," Ms Evans said.

"Providing candidates with a once-off induction, followed by a refresher, is actually a more effective way of ensuring knowledge transfer," she said.

A recent Labour Hire Research Report by Monash University, supports this and found that induction fatigue, or, "the inattention through boredom or perceptions of irrelevance that workers may exhibit when they attend repeated inductions...is closely related to the question of knowledge transfer".

Similarly, the report found that workers simply 'switch off' if they perceive the induction to exceed what is required for OHS in a specific workplace.

Knowledge transfer

While candidates have a desire to learn about safe work practices, they also demand a greater sense of autonomy and flexibility when it comes to choosing how they want to receive OHS information.

The survey revealed respondents were divided on their preferences for how they like to receive information about safety, the majority reflecting a preference to read the information (47%); either at their own pace (32%) or with the addition of an audio voice over (15%). Alternatively, 28 per cent prefer to watch an audio visual presentation and 26 per cent prefer face to face instruction.

Ms Evans said employers should tailor induction training delivery methods to candidates' individual preferences, particularly in an era where the new generation of candidates expects the freedom to 'choose' their means of communication.

"But more importantly, in a labour short market where we're trying to boost workforce participation, we need to embrace multimedia forms of learning and provide options for people with a broad range of learning needs. For example, people with a visual impairment should be provided an audio option," she said.

¹ *RCSA Quarterly Member Survey August 2006*

“It makes sense for the recruitment industry to be using technology which allows the flexibility for various learning styles. Systems such as WorkPro provide safety training and inductions to suit job-specific roles as well as appealing to return to work mums or people from rural areas who can induct themselves remotely.

“Since WorkPro was originally built to cater for the on-hire sector of the recruitment industry, candidate information and assessment scores can be stored on a centralised system for future access and use by potential employers, providing employers with a solution to induction fatigue and reducing the risk of injury or liability,” she concluded.

For more information about WorkPro please visit www.workpro.com.au.

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About WorkPro:

WorkPro is an online Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) induction solution designed specifically for the recruitment and on-hire industry. WorkPro streamlines the safety compliance process for employers and candidates, by creating, storing, sharing and managing their personal information and induction assessment results in a centralised, on-line system that can be made accessible to each new employer.

WorkPro's induction modules have been developed to meet WorkSafe legislative requirements, and are tailored to meet industry-specific and role-specific needs.

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