

HSE Data Management Issues

By Tony Freeborn

When dealing with a large amount of information, there is only one thing more frustrating than not being able to manage it - **not being able to make sense of it**. A wealth of information is of little use to anyone if it is difficult to access, inconsistent, or both.

For example, if a safety manager needs a very specific report, perhaps a summary of all injuries over the past 10 years categorised by part of body, it could take weeks or even months to assemble the information. The data might be spread across disparate information systems in other countries, districts, or cities. The incident reports, if not properly recorded, could also contain inconsistencies that would make any trend analysis very difficult and time consuming.



Furthermore, most companies do not use a single system to manage and track their information on an enterprise-wide level. While each department usually has a system that accommodates their specific requirements, interdepartmental communication and sharing of data is rarely a streamlined process when it needs to happen. Consequently, even if each department is functioning properly, there is room for inefficiency in communication and operation to impact the company as a whole.

Many times, legitimate but poorly monitored personal injury claims can turn into extremely expensive and unnecessary payouts. Recent statistics have indicated that two out of three 'injured' workers are in fact no longer injured at all, but are instead enjoying an extended vacation with more than full pay. Productivity drains like these take a significant toll on any workforce, and can actually contribute to higher incident rates. The overextension of human resources often results in rushed and careless actions due to time constraints. Accidents are more likely to happen in this kind of environment.

Over the past 20 years, an increasing number of companies have opted for a different approach to data management. These companies have moved towards an **Integrated Information Management System (IIMS)** that shares information between their different departments and locations. With integrated data management, they are better able to identify trends and lagging sites, generate reports, implement corrective actions, and modify behaviors. One company reported that the new system allows their employees to "focus on the issues, rather than guessing at what they are".

There are many HSE information management systems available that can perform similar data management within different departments, but many of



these are developed by IT specialist with out any Safety input, as a consequence they are frequently installed but then not used by the Health and Safety Department. Medgate provides an HSE management system that has been designed by Safety, Occupational Hygiene and Medical professionals. When implemented, information is shared across departments and locations, giving each access to as much or as little information as required. If a company does not require the whole application, it can choose the individual modules it

needs. The information is still shared in the same way, and additional modules can be added later as the need arises.

IIMS must interface with HR systems like SAP and Peoplesoft, laboratories, and medical testing equipment like fit testers and audiometers. Consequently, HR departments do not need to change their workflows after the IIMS is implemented, and information can be instantly transferred from testing equipment and laboratories directly into the application.

Data integration also allows for automatic form completion. The software will auto-populate sections of forms and reports that would otherwise require manual and repetitive data entry. It can also send automatic e-mails to managers and supervisors at a user-defined interval when approval is required for an incident report. These automation features allow employees to concentrate on performing their job functions, freeing them from the administrative burdens of repetitive email notifications and redundant data entry.

As companies continue to develop the networks necessary to survive in a global economy, data management is becoming an increasingly important aspect of best practice, especially when dealing with HSE information. Accordingly, the use of an IIMS can streamline workflows, consolidate and manage data, cut costs, boost productivity, and maintain a healthier and safer workforce.

More information on Medgate's IIMS can be found at www.medgate.com. Or contact Tony Freeborn at +441252844314. E-MAIL tfreeborn@medgate.com