



## Article

# Help your C-suite show the value of EHS&S

There is no shortage of challenges facing EHS&S (environmental, health, safety, and sustainability) professionals today. Just staying compliant is no longer enough, and social media is presenting serious threats to brand reputation.

However, many EHS&S professionals I talk to identify a different challenge: Communicating to other parts of the organization how EHS&S can add value to the company's bottom line. Many firms look at EHS&S as a cost, not as something that can actually *help* the organization's financials.

EHS&S risk management can protect the bottom line. So, what's the problem? Why isn't everyone on board?

While it starts with communication, it's more than that. Communication is what weaves EHS&S into an organization's everyday culture. Those in the C-suite can promote the idea and lead the cultural change while EHS&S practitioners provide them with the information they need to illustrate the far-reaching value of EHS&S risk management.

To partner with leaders in the C-suite who will champion your EHS&S message and start this cultural shift, it's crucial to speak the right language.

Why it's hard to get buy-in: The EHS&S identity crisis

One of the biggest roadblocks holding back EHS&S efforts within organizations is that EHS&S can often have an

identity crisis. There's sometimes confusion about the actual role of "the EHS&S person."

The EHS&S role varies from company to company. Sometimes there's a whole team dedicated to EHS&S or just one individual. Organizations have put the EHS&S role(s) within security, operations, legal, and even [human resources](#). It's no wonder that others are confused about not only what we do, but how what we do impacts the company.

No matter what your title or department, and no matter where you are in relation to a "seat at the table," the one thing all EHS&S professionals can do is learn to speak the C-suite language. And the C-suite language is mostly about the numbers. Show them the results. Show them how a solid EHS&S risk management plan impacts the bottom line.

Start with the "easy" stuff. Show how much non-compliance costs [beyond fines and stopped production](#). Show them how, these days, [non-compliance can hurt a company's brand reputation](#), which can impact financial performance.

Make it about them

Instead of focusing on the C-suite understanding you, concentrate on providing evidence to illustrate the positive impact a robust EHS&S risk management program can have on the bottom line. Only then can they effectively advocate for EHS&S to the rest of the organization.

Show why EHS&S risk management needs to go *beyond compliance using facts*.

Talk about concepts like ROI, cost-benefit analysis, and how improving efficiencies to improve revenue makes sense to the busy decision-makers. Managing EHS&S risks can also indirectly save money by avoiding very public incidents that can impact a company's share value or create a negative customer perception that results in loss of market share.

Benefits of leading with EHS&S

Leaders guide an organization's culture, deliberately or not. If leadership isn't making EHS&S a priority, neither will anyone else in the company. Without leaders supporting — and *showing* support — for EHS&S initiatives, organizations aren't going to get to that ideal spot where EHS&S concepts are woven into a company's culture. When leaders speak of and act on the importance of reporting incidents to keep everyone safe, or how it's crucial to create partnerships with other companies dedicated to sustainability, everyone listens.

Once EHS&S is a core value, not a task, people in all areas will:

- Listen more to others and develop transparent communication
- Know that the safe decision is the best decision
- Feel comfortable to own and share responsibilities

What's your EHS&S communication roadblock?

No matter where in the organization your company places EHS&S, risk management professionals continue to struggle with communicating the importance of making EHS&S a core value. The good news is that, while it seems challenging at times, helping decision-makers communicate the bottom-line benefits of EHS&S to the organization is a matter of presenting compelling information in the right way. And this is possible for everything from non-compliance fines to brand protection.

Not sure how to do that in your current circumstances? You're not alone. We've dealt with just about every hurdle through the years. Feel free to [email me](#) and chat about a few quick things you can do to make headway — and make

your job a little easier.