5 Steps of Contractor Screening by Robert Thompson

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What if I told you that contractor screening was simple?

Would you be more likely to implement a few pre-emptive measures, to potentially save millions of dollars? Nearly 6.5 million people work at approximately 252,000 construction sites on any given day across the United States [1].

It should be no surprise that effective contractor screening at these sites can result in a reduction of incidents. Itâ€™s not enough to assume contractors are safe.

Avoid Accidents.

Take scaffolding as a perfect example, OSHA lists scaffolding as the top fall hazard craft with 4,500 injuries and 50 fatalities a year [2]. Itâ€™s closely followed by fall protection, excavations and ladders. Interestingly enough, many of the solutions that OSHA defines to avoid these fall hazards, can be performed with effective contractor screening. Prequalification ensures that the right equipment is used and precautions taken, to avoid accidents.

Itâ€™s Your Responsibility

If you work with a supplier or contractor workforce it is your responsibility to screen that team. Unfortunately, all too often, companies let things slide by excusing the behavior, â€œIâ€™ve been working with John for 15 years; I know heâ€™s safe.â€• This simply should not happen.

How many of us, if we knew that an accident could happen, would at least want to check to ensure that the contractors that weâ€™re using have a safety manual and plan in place, at minimum?

Five Easy Steps

Oftentimes companies donâ€™t conduct a thorough annual check on a contractorâ€™s safety program, du to the amount of administrative time required to do it.

While it isnâ€™t the greatest reason to avoid processes we should all follow, it does happen. Thatâ€™s wh weâ€™ve decided to put together a quick list of simple contractor screening steps you can take, to avoid accidents.

A Closer Look

Letâ€™s take a look at these five steps to contractor screening and see how easy it is to get started.

1. Establish Criteria- Clearly state the expectations you have for contractors:

a. Communicate safety expectations before awarding any contracts.

b. Hold regular safety meetings, share that contractor safety is a top priority.

2. Evaluate Contractors- Study qualitative and quantitative measures:

a. Objective Criteria- Should include EMR, TRIR, LWCR and fatalities.

b. Subjective Criteria- Work history, written policies, past performance.

3. Select Workforce- Determine your formal selection criteria:

a. Ensure that you look at all facets, not just cost, and be strong in selection.

b. Help contractors become preferred vendors and strengthen relationships.

4. Monitor Annually- Audit and monitor the work as it is being completed:

a. Record safety evaluations and keep them on file.

b. Establish re-evaluation criteria and collect annually updated information.

5. Create a Database- The best way to manage data is to use a database:

a. Share the database with all necessary users on a constant basis.

b. Functionality is maximized when a consortium is used to manage the data.

The payoff of implementing these simple contractor screening steps is essential and quantifiable. Establishing solid criteria to evaluate, monitor, and select your database will result in reduced risk, high-quality contractors, and cost savings for both you and your suppliers.

Create Awareness

Creating contractor awareness of your new contractor screening program is also easy. Memberships in safety organizations like OSHAâ€™s Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) www.osha.gov/dcsp/vpp is designed to help you implement contractor screening, safety and health management systems.

Contractor screening can also be implemented on a wider scale, using a third-party organization or consortium to help handle contractor and supplier prequalification. These organizations will collect data on your supply chain, track insurance to ensure the proper levels of coverage and audit high-risk contractors before allowing outside work teams on-site. These consortiums track compliance history, consistency in regulatory standards and create an internet database to track contractor data. With so many options for assistance and the five steps above, contractor screening is both simple to implement and easy to follow. Start implementing a program today.

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Robert B Thompson is a Senior Manager with over 17 years of experience in multiple aspects of the risk management field. His working experiences range from technical health and safety auditing, HAZMAT instruction, security assessments, facility licensing, critical incident investigations to legislative interpretation and advocacy. Author currently holds the designations of Canadian Registered Safety Professional (CRSP). Robert B Thompson is expert writer of a vendor screening and ca vendor audit.

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