



Finding money and budgeting for health and safety

Managing health and safety at work is an important part of good business management, yet it is often seen as a “cost” rather than adding value to a business. Although some initiatives require little or no capital expenditure, the effective management of health and safety at work does require money to be spent. In this article [Jo Kitney](#), Director of [Kitney Occupational Health and Safety](#), explains the importance of making good business decisions on spending and gives some considerations for finding money for health and safety.

Budgeting for health and safety

Health and safety legislation is very clear in the requirement to manage hazards and risks and meet obligations. While taking action for health and safety is essential, it is naive to think employers are going to spend money on anything that is not justified. Using legal obligations as a base, every business will manage its health and safety differently — some invest in health and safety management, some integrate health and safety into quality, environment and the wider business management, some go beyond compliance and promote health and wellness, while others do very little and then react when accidents happen.

Any money spent on a business is an investment from which there must be return and money for health and safety must be seen in this same light. That is not to say that money should not be spent, more that the aims should be understood and budgets allocated accordingly.

In its simplest form, budgeting means deciding what actions or outcomes are needed, the approach that will be taken and making money available for this. This would ideally happen as part of the organisation’s business planning and budget cycle with the expenditure approved and then monitored. Health and safety budgets will typically include costs of personnel, personal protective equipment, training courses, fire and emergency equipment, and servicing of equipment, etc. In addition, money may be needed to deal with issues that arise from time to time.

Goals, targets and plans

Setting goals and targets for health and safety is important in budget setting as it ensures a clear understanding of what the future should look like, what actions need to be taken and the resources needed for this. A lack of resources (and the right type of resources) is a common reason for health and safety goals and action plans not being met.

A health and safety plan should systematically address risk areas and provide for the actions needed for health and safety. It should be linked to the organisation’s business and plan and answer the following questions.

- What do we want to achieve?
- Where are we now?
- What do we need to do?
- What do we need to make this happen?
- Who will be responsible and when will actions be taken?

The decision on whether budget will be provided for health and safety may not be clear-cut, with decision making sometimes objective (or above the line) as well as values-based (below the line). Both of these matter in finding money and budgeting for health and safety.

“Above the line” resourcing for health and safety

Resourcing to meet obligations

The first step in finding money is to recognise health and safety obligations. Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974 establishes the general duties of employers and persons in control of workplaces, which will require resources for these to be met. Understanding the duties, how these will be met and who is the duty holder is the starting point in determining actions and the budget needed for health and safety at work. The decision on whether the budget is made available will fall to management.

Beyond compliance

Going beyond compliance can help move health and safety from a “have to do” into a part of the way the business thinks and behaves. Linking health and safety to areas such as recruitment and fitness for work, working environment, health and well-being helps to establish it within other important parts of business management. The benefits of this include increased staff retention, reduction in injury and improved performance.

Business cases

A further way to find money for health and safety is to establish where the investment will not only meet obligations, but also contribute to the wider business goals: “a return on investment”. Businesses need to make a profit to survive and business cases are a common way to present information to management on the costs as well as the gains of taking action. Wherever possible, benefits should be wider than just meeting obligations and include tangible returns, such as preventing incidents and reducing lost time injury frequency rates, and intangibles such as improving reputation, employee morale and reducing down-time. Risk assessment provides a good foundation for a business case, but must be supported by business-oriented information that resonates with managers and decision makers.

Putting a good business case together involves working with others and should be looked at from as many angles as possible. This will help to inform the costs and benefits and add credibility to the information provided. It is fair to say that those who do their homework, identify aims, costs and gains and speak the language of business are more likely to attract funding and resources for health and safety initiatives.

“Below the line” resourcing for health and safety

Values, beliefs and attitudes

Meeting health and safety obligations is a moral as well as legal obligation; however, the values and beliefs of decision makers can be the difference between health and safety being funded, or not. There can be differences in values and beliefs between individuals, between organisations and even within organisations, with decisions influenced by how decision makers (ie employers and business managers) think and feel.

Finding money for health and safety will often mean looking below the line and establishing the organisation’s value base. This is particularly so when requests for funding and business cases are rejected (or even left unanswered). It can be difficult to do, but there are times when below the line aspects of health and safety management have to be challenged, to ensure that those making decisions are aware of the implications of their decisions (or lack of decision) for the organisation, as well as themselves personally.

Priorities may change, but values should be constant. So elevating health and safety to a value and not just a priority can ensure that it becomes part of the company's conscience and thus an intrinsic part of management behaviour and budgeting.

External sources of funding

As well as looking for money for health and safety within a business, it is worth looking for external sources of funding. There are a range of external sources of support and grants for health and safety, such as CITB funding for safety training, the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health's Research Fund, and vocational qualifications including health and safety. Linking action plans to external funding can gain attention and support from within the business.

Further information

RR367 A Review of Safety Culture and Safety Climate Literature for the Development of the Safety Culture Inspection Toolkit, HSE, 2005.

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