

A policy of continuous improvement must include plans to improve prevention and legal compliance. Aiming for and concentrating on a few key preventive improvements every year is your best chance of long term success. But the first step is deciding what to work on, and this can be done by means of a gap analysis. There are numerous ways to conduct a gap analysis, and here are some ideas:

1. Pull out your loss data, including accident statistics, environmental spills, near misses, and product quality defects. These are all examples of trailing indicators. Because history often repeats itself, trailing indicators are excellent predictors of future losses. A simple way to narrow down the most important issues is to create a histogram with the data. Plot each loss type against frequency of occurrence for the year and your biggest problems will jump off the page at you. Once the top two or three issues are identified, other techniques can be used to determine the root causes and determine means of prevention.
2. If you find that you don't have much loss data to analyze, then either you are very good, or you may have hidden problems. Proactive companies create data to track both problems and to celebrate positive trends. A lack of data can mean that opportunities for correcting issues and problems are not being acted upon, or that good performance is not being reinforced. A system for incident reporting, root cause analysis, and operational metrics may be an excellent choice for you to start the data flowing.
3. Leading indicators are those that aim to predict performance before losses occur. One type of leading indicator is derived from behavioural safety observations. They produce data on workplace risks without losses -- no one gets hurt, no equipment is damaged, and improvements can still be made. This is where the value of prevention and personnel involvement really begin to shine. Many companies pursue behavioural safety observations after they have built the backbone of their prevention programs so they can take performance to the next level.
4. A scaled down analysis to address high profile legal compliance requirements is to review your programs against new legislation. Have your safety and environmental programs been updated since the recent changes in legislation took effect? Significant changes have recently been made in the areas of confined space entry, noise exposure and prevention, emergency preparedness, spill prevention, spill reporting, fire safety, and fire prevention.



If you need help conducting a gap assessment in any of the above areas, or need some experienced hands-on help to kick off your prevention measures, please give us a call for a free consultation.