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Worker Training in the Supply Chain:

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

Introduction

Worker training is a cornerstone of effective risk management in any organisation. It ensures that employees have the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their jobs safely and efficiently.

Many companies only take into consideration their direct employees when training workers, but temporary and contract workers must also be included. Any worker on a company's property or job site must be sufficiently trained, and the responsibility for enforcing that training standard falls on the hiring company.

However, training temporary staff comes with significant challenges. Unlike full-time employees, contract workers often have limited onboarding periods. And yet, they are expected to perform complex tasks that demand in-depth knowledge of company policies, equipment usage and hazard mitigation. Without sufficient training, these workers pose risks to themselves, their colleagues, the organisation and the overall supply chain.

Worker training within supply chains is not merely a compliance requirement – it is a crucial component of risk management and operational success. The consequences of inadequate training can be severe, including workplace accidents, operational disruptions, legal liabilities, compliance penalties and reputational damage.

This white paper explores the complexities of worker training in supply chains, identifying key risks, challenges and best practices for organisations seeking to enhance safety and compliance. By understanding these elements and adopting strategic training approaches, businesses can protect their workforce, drive efficiency, reduce liability and strengthen their overall supply chain resilience.

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Section One:

Understanding the Complexities of Worker Training in Supply Chains

Contract worker training is essential

Although their roles are temporary, contract workers are often tasked with handling the same complex duties as permanent staff, requiring equal familiarity with company policies, equipment and safety protocols. Without adequate training, contract workers may pose significant risks to themselves, others on the job site and the overall operations. Those risks include accidents, injuries, operational disruptions, legal liability and project delays.

Unsafe acts or behaviour by contract workers threatens the safety of everyone on site, potentially leading to serious injury or death. Those tragic scenarios also have ripple effects downstream, often in the form of lawsuits, regulatory fines, reputational damage, equipment failure, project delays and operational disruption for the hiring company.

Key terminology related to worker training

The following list includes some essential terminology related to the topic of worker training:

Competency-Based Training

Worker training designed to build specific skills and knowledge required for particular job roles or tasks, to ensure that the worker is equipped with the precise competencies needed to perform a job effectively.

Compliance Training

Training focused on ensuring that employees understand and adhere to legal, regulatory and company policies related to ethics, safety and workplace conduct.

Safety Training

Instruction on practices, knowledge and procedures to maintain safety and reduce the risk of workplace accidents.

Learning Management System (LMS)

A digital platform used to create, manage and track employee training programmes, streamlining training administration and ensuring easy access to training materials.

Training Needs Analysis

A process used to identify gaps in employee skills and knowledge to determine the necessary training, ensuring that training is targeted, relevant and effective.

Training Matrix

A tool that outlines the required training and frequency for different job roles to help organise training programme efforts.

Onboarding or Induction Training

Initial training given to new contract workers to learn about the hiring company's policies, safety protocols, expectations and job duties.

Roles and responsibilities in worker training

Many organisational stakeholders contribute to a successful worker training programme, both for company employees and third-party contract or temp workers. The specific departments and job titles responsible for training may shift depending on the organisation, but the same five functions are typically fulfilled.

Executive Leadership

As with all risk management and safety initiatives, effective worker training programmes must start with executive leadership buy-in. Safety among employees and contract workers must be part of the company culture and expectations; otherwise, training programmes may not be prioritised.

Hiring/Procurement

- **Role:** Manage the hiring, vetting and onboarding processes for suppliers and contractors
- **Responsibility:** Finding qualified companies/workers, verifying credentials and training qualifications, and onboarding those contract workers
- **Owner:** Typically, Human Resources (HR) and/or Procurement

Training Drivers & Administrators

- **Role:** Design, implement, monitor and evaluate all worker training programmes
- **Responsibility:** Develop training materials, coordinate training sessions, align training with company standards and industry regulations, and ensure that all workers meet the required competency levels
- **Owner:** This role may be filled by several different departments as a collaborative effort involving HR, Training Managers, Health & Safety Officers, QHSE Professionals and Compliance Officers

Supervisors

- **Role:** Monitor worker performance and ensure that training is applied
- **Responsibility:** Supervise workers' day-to-day activities, enforce safety standards and procedures, assess training effectiveness and provide additional training as necessary
- **Owner:** Whoever supervises contract workers for the hiring company, which could be Project Managers, Site Managers and/or Contractor Supervisors

Workers

Finally, the workers are responsible for actively participating in training programmes, following safety protocols and applying the knowledge gained to their daily work.

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Common worker training challenges

Designing, managing, executing and overseeing contract worker training is an immense undertaking that naturally involves a variety of challenges and risks.

Compliance Challenges

Worker training must satisfy many regulations and industry standards, and ensuring that the programme meets those requirements can be complex and time consuming. Non-compliance can result in legal penalties, fines and increased liability on the part of the hiring company.

Learning Styles & Adult Learning Principles

Research shows that adults learn differently from children[2], which means that effective adult training must take into consideration specific adult learning principles. Some examples include the fact that adults prefer to learn by doing, must understand the relevance of training, and like to self-direct their learning development. In addition, different people learn in different ways, whether visually (through reading and diagrams), audibly (through spoken instruction) or through hands-on training. Training programmes must be varied in their delivery and incorporate adult learning principles to be effective for all workers.

Quality & Consistency

Variability in the quality or frequency of training across different departments, worker types (employee vs contractor), job sites, languages or shifts can lead to uneven competency levels among workers. Without consistent training quality and frequency, the risk of accidents, errors and operational inefficiency increases.

Time & Resource Constraints

Balancing the allocation of time, budget and human resources for training programmes can be challenging for any organisation. Additionally, the company must be willing to commit the time required for the workers, knowing that the safety investment is worth pulling workers off the job temporarily for training. Insufficient training resources or a lack of training prioritisation can significantly reduce worker performance, safety and compliance.

Retention & Engagement

For training to work, the trainees must be engaged in the content and exposed thoroughly enough for long-term learning to take effect. Training leaders are challenged to make training programmes relevant and engaging for workers to promote learning retention. Cadence and frequency are additional keys to effective training outcomes. For instance, one training session may not be sufficient to teach a particular skill or protocol, especially if the worker rarely faces the hazard in question. Conversely, workers must also be reminded of proper procedures with repetitive tasks to ensure that comfortability with the task doesn't lead to dangerous shortcuts.

Continuous Evaluation & Improvement

Training programmes are never finished. Sites, regulations, client compliance standards and industry best practices can often change, meaning that training materials must be constantly updated and kept current to provide the correct information to trainees. Training must also be continually assessed to ensure that it is as effective as possible, requiring regular evaluation and refinement.

Contract worker training is critical but not easy

Contract worker training is essential to overall workplace safety and operational efficiency. The risks of inadequate training are significant, from legal liabilities to serious workplace accidents and operational disruptions. Creating an effective contract worker training programme involves many stakeholders, who must overcome several challenges and risks.

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Section Two:

Worker Training Risks in the Supply Chain

Creating and maintaining a successful contract worker training programme requires an understanding of key risks, their potential impacts, and strategies to mitigate them.

Risk 1: Incomplete or Inconsistent Training

A contract worker training programme aims to ensure that all workers are consistently and properly trained to conduct their work while following safety protocols and neutralising hazards. Incomplete training occurs when employees do not receive all the necessary information or skills required for their roles. This risk can manifest in multiple ways, including:

- Gaps in the training programme, such as insufficient coverage of critical topics
- Inconsistent training methods or content across departments, sites or regions, resulting in uneven worker skill levels
- Training that isn't tailored to specific roles, tasks and/or sites
- Workers not completing all assigned training

Regardless of the reason, insufficient or inconsistent training creates a hazardous work environment, where workers are more prone to errors or unsafe work practices due to a lack of knowledge or skill. Even just one insufficiently trained worker presents a risk to everyone else on the job site.

Mitigation strategies:

- **Conduct thorough needs assessments:** Regularly assess the training needs of different roles, and update the training programme to cover all essential areas.
- **Develop comprehensive training modules:** Ensure that training materials are complete and cover all necessary aspects of the job, including nuances in industry, site, location or task.
- **Implement follow-up assessments:** Use tests and evaluations to verify that employees have grasped the training content, and compare effectiveness among regions and locations.

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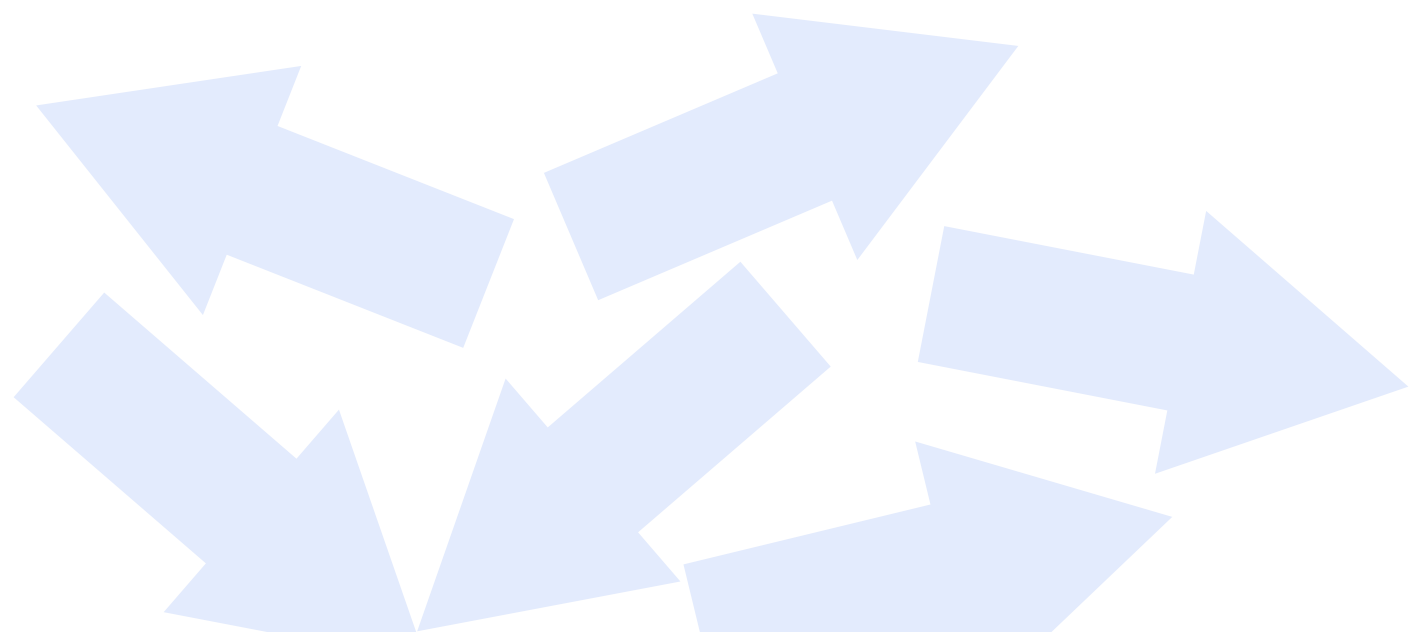
Risk 2: Outdated Training Content

Outdated training content refers to training materials that are no longer relevant due to changes on site or in regulations, technology or industry practices. A lack of resources often causes this risk and can lead to employees working with obsolete or incorrect information.

Beyond staying up to date with changing regulations, practices or hazards, it's also important to continually evaluate training programmes and improve them over time. The best training programmes are honed over time by measuring the effectiveness and success of different training methods and content.

Consequences of outdated training content can include regulatory non-compliance, increased liability, decreased training effectiveness and inadequately trained workers.

Mitigation strategies:

- **Regularly review and update training materials:** Schedule periodic reviews to ensure that training content is current and relevant.

- **Stay informed about industry changes:** Monitor industry developments and regulatory changes to update training programmes accordingly.

- **Engage subject-matter experts:** Collaborate with experts to ensure that training content reflects the latest best practices and standards.

- **Continually review and iterate:** Use worker feedback and evaluations to determine what is and isn't working to continually improve the training programme overall.

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## Risk 3: Poor Engagement and Participation

Poor engagement occurs when employees are not actively involved in the training process or don't fully participate in required training. This can occur due to several different factors, including:

- Uninteresting or seemingly irrelevant content

- Stale or ineffective delivery methods that don't take into consideration the existence of multiple learning styles or adult learning principles

- Language or cultural barriers

- Lack of worker interest or motivation, leading to low engagement or participation

Contract or temp workers may be more likely to lack engagement or interest in required training, as it is not tied directly to their full-time employer.

Mitigation strategies:

- **Use interactive training methods:** Incorporate simulations, role-playing and hands-on activities to make training more engaging. Adults typically learn best with hands-on learning and understanding exactly how the training relates to their job.

- **Solicit feedback:** Gather feedback from workers on training content and delivery methods to identify areas for improvement.

- **Incentivise participation:** Offer rewards or recognition for active participation and completion of training programmes.

- **Work with contractors and suppliers:** Partner with your contractors and suppliers to help them understand the training requirements for their workers. If the company knows that training is non-negotiable to work with you, they can motivate their workers to comply.

- **Eliminate language barriers:** Deliver training content in workers' native language when possible, and consider cultural differences when training in different regions

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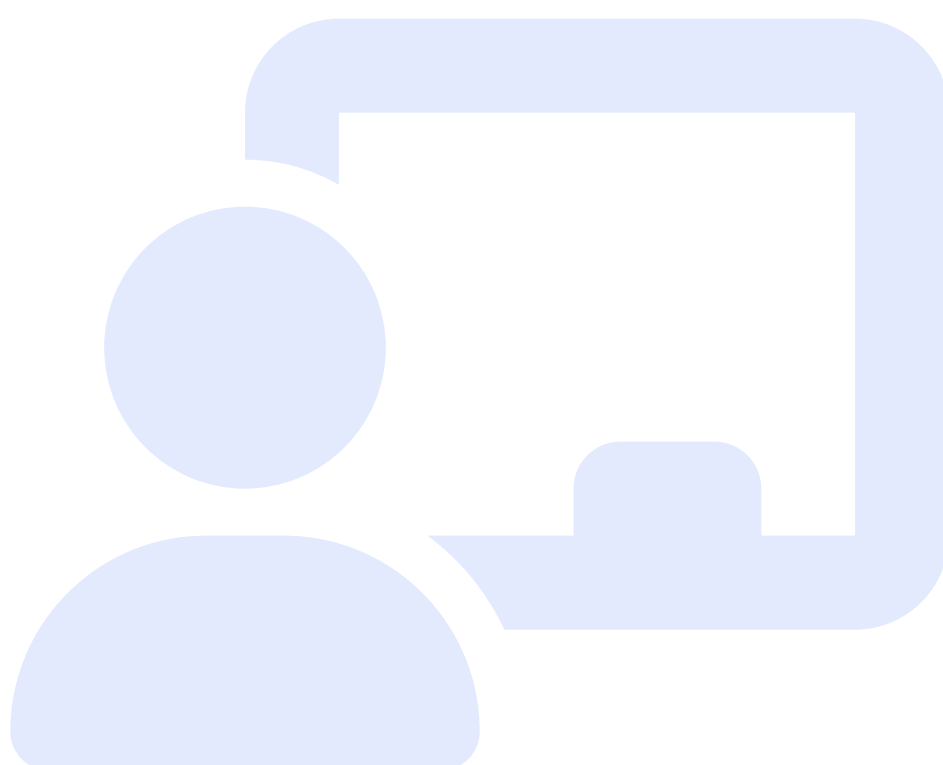
Risk 4: Inadequate Evaluation and Follow-Up

Simply having a training programme is insufficient if it doesn't yield the desired results. Without proper evaluation, it is challenging to determine whether the training has achieved its objectives, and impossible to make data-driven improvements to the programme.

Inadequate evaluation can be due to a lack of resources or technology gaps, such as an outdated (or non-existent) learning management system. A programme may also have some evaluation methods but lack a comprehensive approach that measures long-term retention and impact.

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Implement Evaluation Tools:** Use assessments, surveys and performance metrics to evaluate training effectiveness, both immediately after training and over time to ensure retention.

- **Conduct regular follow-ups:** Schedule follow-up sessions to review training outcomes and address any issues or gaps.

- **Analyse training data:** Use data and analytics to measure the impact of training on the job and identify areas for improvement.

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Risk 5: Compliance and Regulatory Concerns

Compliance and regulatory risks arise when training programmes are not aligned with legal and industry requirements. Most countries have a regulatory body that governs occupational health and safety (such as OSHA[3] in the United States or EU-OSHA[4] in the European Union), and there are strict rules for how companies must ensure workplace safety for all workers, whether they are employees or contractors.

Many industries also require specific certifications or training programmes, such as those governed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO)[5]. Failure to comply with government or industry requirements can result in legal penalties, increased liability, operational disruptions and reputational damage.

Mitigation strategies:

- **Stay up to date with regulations:** Keep abreast of relevant laws and regulations affecting training requirements.

- **Ensure compliance:** Design training programmes to meet all legal and regulatory standards.

- **Document compliance efforts:** Maintain detailed records of training activities and compliance efforts for audit purposes.

Risk 6: Worker Complacency

The last risk we'll examine is worker complacency, which occurs when workers become overconfident or too comfortable with repetitive tasks. This can lead to them ignoring safety protocols, taking dangerous shortcuts or becoming less vigilant about hazards.

Although the worker has been trained on proper procedures and safety protocols, it's easy to fall into a comfortable routine that deviates from that training over time as confidence grows. This mentality can be extremely dangerous in the workplace and cause accidents and injuries.

Mitigation strategies:

- **Provide refresher training:** Regularly schedule safety and skills refresher training to remind workers of safety protocols and proper job procedures.

- **Emphasise accountability:** Build a culture where safety is a shared responsibility and where workers hold each other accountable.

- **Encourage near-miss reporting:** To promote active risk awareness and provide additional training to address those hazards, encourage all workers to report near misses or potential hazards without fear of punishment.

Know the risks to maximise training effectiveness

Worker training is a vital aspect of risk management, but it comes with its own set of challenges and risks. By understanding these specific risks and implementing effective mitigation strategies, organisations can enhance the effectiveness of their training programmes, ensure compliance, and foster a safer and more competent workforce. Prioritise comprehensive, up-to-date and engaging training methods to address these risks and achieve your training goals.

Section Three:

Six Best Practices for Managing Worker Training Risks

The most effective worker training programmes incorporate industry-standard best practices that range from executive buy-in to flexible training methods to regular evaluation and iteration.

1. Set the tone from the top

The success of any worker training programme begins with leadership. An effective worker training programme requires substantial resources and an organisational safety mindset. Without commitment from executive leadership, training initiatives often lack the necessary support and resources to succeed. This buy-in ensures that training programmes are valued, prioritised and adequately funded across the organisation.

Leadership's role goes beyond simply approving training budgets. A company must foster a culture of safety, accountability and hazard awareness. Workers should feel empowered to report hazards, safety concerns and near-miss incidents without fear of retribution. Leadership needs to model this behaviour by reinforcing the message that safety is a core value and that raising concerns is encouraged rather than penalised.

To achieve this, safety protocols should be non-negotiable, and all workers must consistently use personal protective equipment (PPE) when required. By establishing this culture from the top down, the entire organisation will be aligned on the importance of worker training as a critical risk management tool.

This expectation should be communicated in advance when working with contract workers, and the partnership should be contingent on workers completing the required training and following all safety protocols.

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2. Develop a thorough and tailored training plan

A thorough training programme begins with a well-structured training plan. This plan should outline the specific training requirements for each role, ensuring that both employees and contract workers are prepared to handle their job responsibilities safely. Comprehensive training involves covering essential competencies, safety protocols and compliance issues.

Training plans should also address site-specific concerns, including local regulations and unique safety hazards related to specific industries or locations. For example, contract workers at a chemical plant might need specific hazardous materials training that differs from that provided to general manufacturing workers.

Importantly, training shouldn't be a one-off event. Refresher courses should be incorporated into the plan to ensure that key skills and knowledge are reinforced over time. Workers are more likely to retain critical safety information if they're reminded of it[6] multiple times, especially if they face certain hazards infrequently.

To mitigate risks further, assessments should follow each training session to confirm that workers understand the material. Establishing a clear, organised schedule for these refresher courses and evaluations will help ensure that training remains top-of-mind for all workers.

3. Regularly audit and update training materials

One of the most significant risks to worker safety is using outdated training materials. If training content doesn't keep pace with evolving regulations, site conditions or industry practices, workers may be left unprepared for the hazards they face. This is especially important for industries where regulations and best practices are rapidly changing, such as construction, healthcare and energy.

It is critical to schedule periodic reviews of training content to ensure its relevance and accuracy. Any changes in regulations, industry standards or site conditions should prompt updates to the training materials. For example, if new technology is introduced at a worksite, workers must be trained to use it safely.

Training should also be reviewed and updated regularly based on worker safety performance. Training that does not have the desired outcomes should be adjusted to become more effective, using observation and direct worker feedback.

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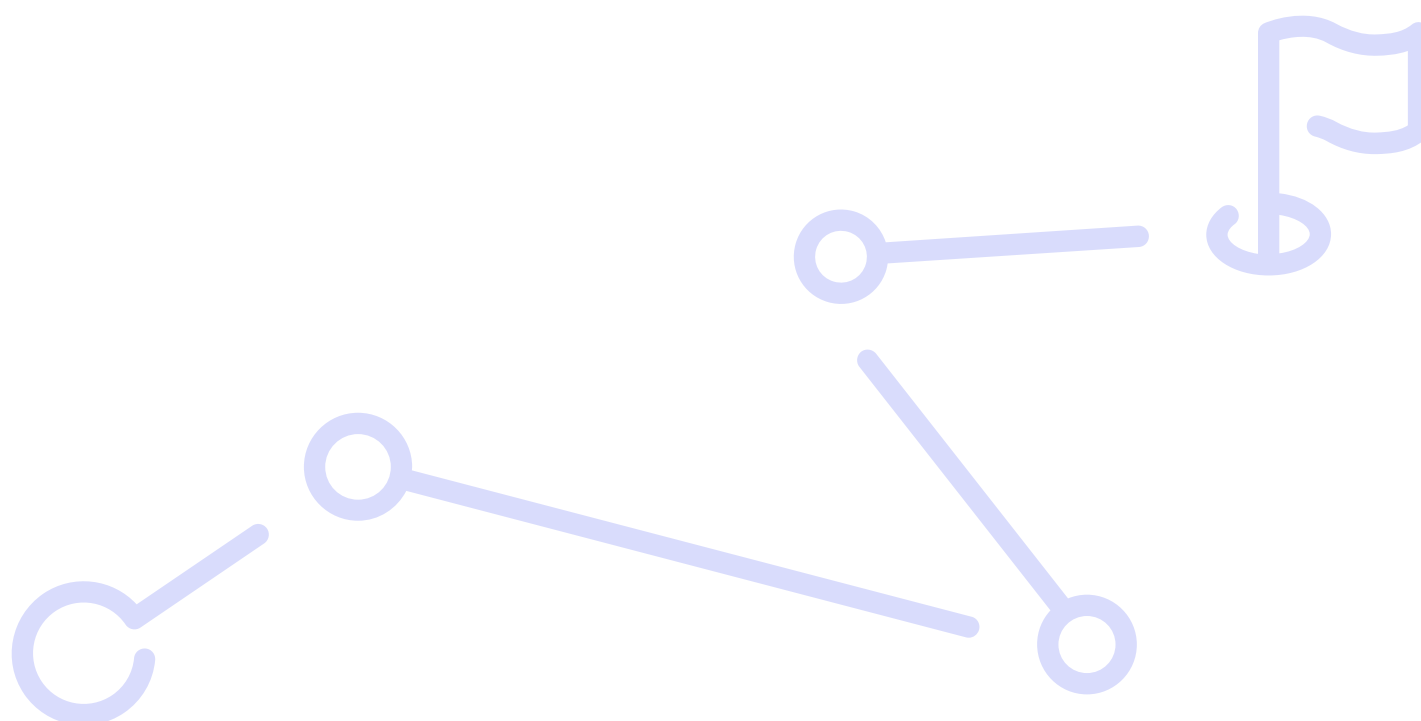
4. Implement interactive training methods

Worker engagement is a cornerstone of effective training. Using interactive training methods helps keep workers focused and invested in the content they are learning. Simulations, role-playing and hands-on activities are far more engaging than lectures or reading materials, especially for adult learners.

Adult learning principles show that adults learn best by doing and that training needs to be directly relevant to their work. For example, providing workers with real-world scenarios that they might face on the job and allowing them to practise in a controlled environment improves knowledge retention.

Flexibility in training methods is also essential. Different people learn differently – some are visual learners, others learn best by listening, and some prefer hands-on experience. Companies should offer various training formats to cater for these diverse learning styles. For instance, video demonstrations may work well for visual learners, while hands-on exercises can engage kinaesthetic learners.

Language barriers can also undermine training effectiveness, particularly with contract workers, who may speak different languages. Offering training in multiple languages and accounting for cultural differences will ensure that all workers can participate fully in the training process.

5. Evaluate and monitor training effectiveness

Even the best-designed training programme can't succeed if its effectiveness isn't regularly evaluated. It is essential to track whether training programmes achieve their goals, by using assessments, worker feedback and performance metrics.

Quick feedback mechanisms, such as quizzes or hands-on skill tests immediately after training sessions, can ensure that workers grasp the material and provide an instant opportunity for reinforcement if necessary. Evaluations should also continue after the training through periodic check-ins to monitor long-term retention and application of skills on the job.

Tracking training outcomes can also lead to identifying gaps in the programme. If certain teams or sites are underperforming in safety or compliance, it might signal that the training in those areas isn't sufficient. Regularly comparing results across different regions or departments can reveal where additional training or adjustments are needed.
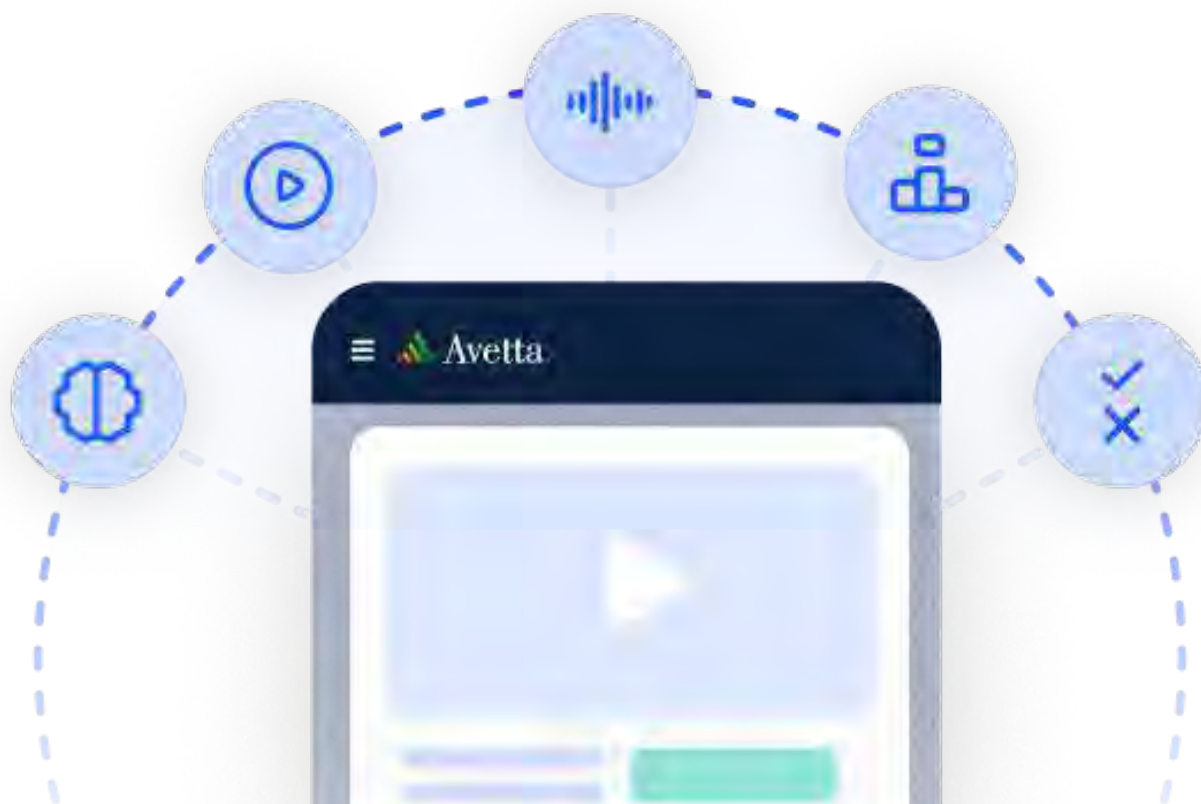
6. Leverage technology to streamline training

Technology plays an essential role in modern training programmes. Learning Management Systems (LMS)[7] can make delivering and tracking training easier, especially for large companies with diverse workforces. An LMS centralises training content, making it more accessible to workers, particularly contract workers, who may not be on site daily.

An LMS also allows companies to track worker progress and manage training records more efficiently. These systems automatically document whether a worker has completed the required training and help ensure compliance with regulations by maintaining a digital record of training history.

With all data in one place, evaluating training effectiveness, comparing performance across different sites and identifying trends becomes much easier. It also allows training administrators to quickly provide workers with the most up-to-date content, even remotely if necessary.

A proactive approach to worker training risks

Managing worker training risks involves more than just complying with regulatory requirements. It's about creating a proactive, dynamic training programme that prepares both employees and contract workers for the real-world risks they face. From leadership buy-in to developing comprehensive training plans, regularly updating content, implementing engaging methods and leveraging technology, organisations can significantly reduce risk through proactive worker training programmes while improving safety and efficiency.

Training is an ongoing effort that requires constant attention and refinement. However, by following these best practices, companies can ensure that their workforce is well prepared, compliant and safe, minimising risks to both workers and operations.

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Conclusion

Effective contract worker training is not just a compliance requirement – it is a critical component of workplace safety, operational efficiency and risk management. Inadequate training can lead to severe consequences, including workplace injuries, legal liabilities, regulatory fines and operational disruptions. Organisations must recognise the importance of a structured, consistent and engaging training programme to mitigate these risks and ensure that all permanent or temporary workers are well prepared to perform their roles safely and efficiently.

To achieve a successful training programme, organisations must implement best practices such as securing leadership buy-in, tailoring training to specific job roles and site conditions, continuously updating training content, and utilising interactive and engaging training methods. Additionally, ongoing evaluation and monitoring of training effectiveness is essential to ensure continuous improvement. By proactively addressing training challenges and prioritising comprehensive education for all workers, businesses can foster a safer, more compliant and more productive working environment. Investing in high-quality contract worker training is an investment in the long-term success and resilience of any organisation's supply chain and overall operations.
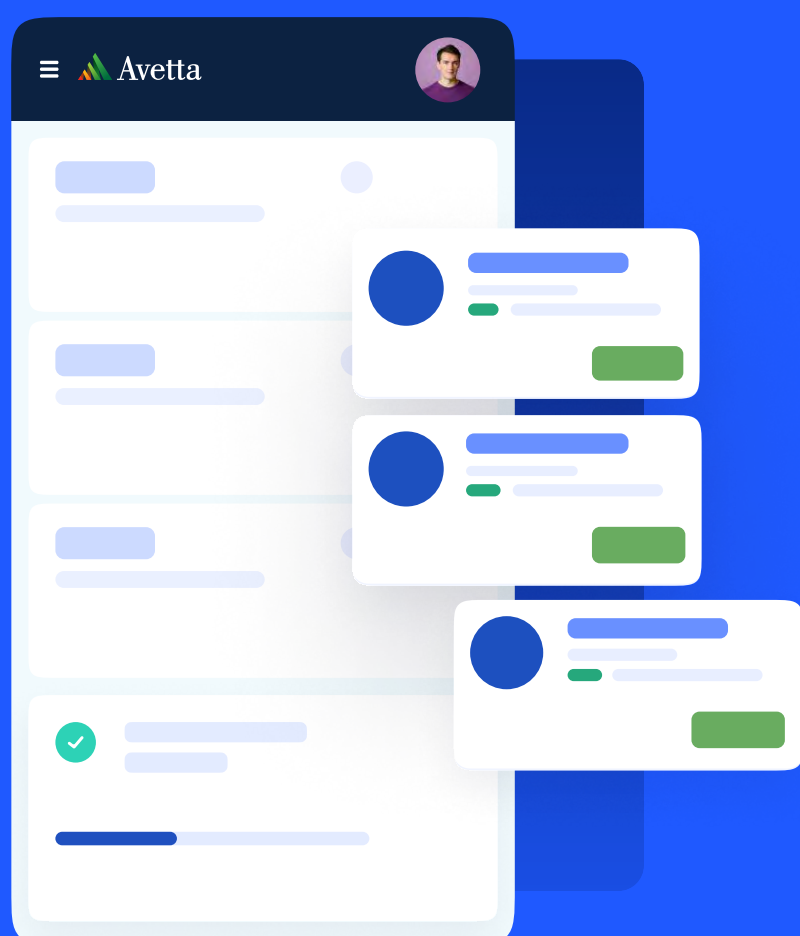
Avetta is a SaaS company providing supplier risk management solutions that couple technology with knowledge and expertise to drive impact. Avetta's platform is trusted by over 130,000 suppliers in over 120 countries.

Visit **Avetta.com** to learn more about our supplier pre-qualification solutions.

Appendix:
Additional Contract Worker Training Resources

Industry Resources

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) – Training Requirements: OSHA's guidelines on training requirements for various industries

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work: EU-OSHA provides resources on, and promotes, health and safety in workplaces in Europe.

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety: The CCOHS compiles resources on Canadian health and safety regulations, strategies for promoting workplace safety, and more.

Health and Safety Executive: HSE is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety, and provides information and resources promoting worker safety.

Safe Work Australia: This organisation offers abundant resources on Australian safety regulations, safety hazards, work-related injuries, and more.

ISO 45001: Learn about the international standard that specifies requirements for occupational health and safety for organisations.

National Safety Council (NSC) – Training Resources: NSC provides resources and best practices for workplace safety training.

American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP): ASSP offers various educational resources and training programmes.

Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM): SHRM provides insights into effective training and development practices.

5 Best Practices to Accelerate Contractor Safety: This EHS Today article offers strategies to ensure contract worker safety, including training.

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Appendix:
Additional Contract Worker Training Resources

More from Avetta

Workplace Safety 101: This guide shares safety terminology, regulations, industry standards and other recommendations that should be covered in worker safety training.

OSHA at 50: This report explores the history of OSHA and its efforts to improve workplace safety and health – past, present and future.

The Indispensability of Workplace Incident Investigations in Creating Safer Workplaces: This white paper discusses workplace safety, incidents and incident investigations, and offers recommendations on how to train the workforce to create safer workplaces.

Four Strategies for Building a Strong Safety Culture: In this guide, learn key strategies for organisations, and especially executive leadership, to create and maintain a strong safety culture.

Advancing Your Workplace Safety Program: This on-demand webinar, co-authored by Canadian Occupational Safety, offers strategies to elevate workplace safety and worker training.

Where's Your Risk?: This on-demand webinar explores the importance of contract worker training, the dangers of untrained workers, and strategies for effective worker training.

Avetta Worker Training Solutions: This overview of Avetta's suite of worker training solutions includes qualification configuration, site access management and our Learning Management System (LMS).

Avetta Client Case Studies with Worker Training:

Yancoal: An Australian mining company uses Avetta to manage worker training and track worker qualifications throughout its large operations

Building Material Company: This American company vastly streamlined the training and management of 1,500 contract workers to ensure that they were trained and evaluated before reaching the job site.

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References

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[2] Source: 10 Simple Principles of Adult Learning;
https://www.wgu.edu/blog/adult-learning-theories-principles2004.html

[3] Source: Occupational Safety and Health Administration;
https://www.osha.gov/

[4] Source: European Agency for Safety and Health at Work;
https://osha.europa.eu/en

[5] Source: ISO: Global Standards for Trusted Goods and Services;
https://www.iso.org/home.html

[6] Source: How to Overcome Safety Complacency in the Workplace;
https://www.ehstoday.com/training-and-engagement/article/21213341/how-to-overcome-safety-complacency-in-the-workplace

[7] Source: Elevate Worker Management and Worksite Safety;
https://www.avetta.com/clients/solutions/health-and-safety/worker-management

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