Designing a Quality
Safety Management Plan

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Creating effective safety management templates is a skill we're renowned for, but ultimately, the productive use of them lies in your hands. What's more, adapting them to your unique circumstances will sometimes be necessary. This guide will help you do that, and if you have some other situation that needs templating, this article will help you there also.

You might say this is a template on creating and altering templates.

We will consider topics of 'purpose and currency', critical design questions and principles. These include:

- The need for purpose and currency;
- The five critical questions of template design; and
- Six overarching design principles.

Effective design principles include:

1. Constrained focus;
2. Adjustable rigidity;
3. Assisting understanding;
4. Considering events and consequences;
5. Effective framing;
6. The reduction of complexity;
7. Knowing what tools template users rely on; and
8. Speed and ease.

Template Effectiveness, Underwear and Mis-Matching Socks

A template is a best-practice guide. Like the 'getting-dressed' routine we engage in everyday: it is a structured procedure that has certain stages . Some of these features are absolute rules (such as, 'underwear first, trousers later') while others are negotiable principles (such as, 'mis-matching socks is not a good look' - though it may be culturally acceptable these days).

A template displays such features in a structured way.

You might disagree with the design of a template, and you might have good reason. For example, fashions change with time (e.g. sock trends) and if you're a superhero, the sequencing of underwear first might make you look silly at your next Superhero Convention.

But should you change the getting dressed template to accommodate this? Should you build in flexibility? If so, how should this be done? Should you have different templates, or have subroutines and options?

Obviously, we cannot answer each question in a way that accommodates your unique circumstances and needs. What we can do however, is empower you with principles to guide your decisions.

When is a Template Truly Effective?

When we decide to use a template, we are looking for a way to apply rules and principles in pursuit of certain goals. A template is effective when it:

1. Pursues particular goals in a particular and structured way;
2. Is easy to use;
3. Leads to conformity in method (whoever uses it);
4. Allows for variables and alterations in a structured way; and
5. Increases the predictability of the results.

Since we're in the realm of work health and safety, the stakes are high. We need to get it right! The legislation and variables make the task complex, yet by following best-practice principles, we develop templates that help keep your team alive and your compliance costs at a minimum.

THE NEED FOR PURPOSE AND CURRENCY

The Need for Purpose and Currency

In any great endeavour, it is a well accepted principle that you should begin with the end in mind. You also need to stay flexible; adjusting your methods as required by circumstances. Purpose and currency are the foundations of doing this effectively.

Establishing Purpose

In designing our WHS Management Plan template product, we have pursued clear goals. These include:

1. Assist our clients to gather needed data;
2. Ensure legislative compliance is achieved and significant factors are accommodated; and
3. Gather and present the relevant WHS management data.

In the field of information management, the difference between data and information is significant. Data is merely the pieces, whereas information is the presentation of those pieces in a meaningful way.

Without the right pieces, correctly placed and presented, the greatest template on the planet will become a useless jigsaw.

In our WHS Management Plan template, you will find very clear guidelines towards what data is required. We have done the legislative and structural homework for you, and all you need to do is fill in the blanks.

Presenting in a Pleasing, Compliant and Helpful Way

The way we present information follows fairly universal principles, but when we design OHS/WHS templates, we suggest and encourage user-friendly practices and routines.

Any communication template needs to keep in mind:

1. The people who are going to use it;
2. The subtle character traits and procedural preferences of those people;
3. The priority categories of information;
4. Trends and conventions about the presentation of particular information; and
5. What methods have historically proven effective (e.g. tables, lists, paragraphs etc.)

However, no presentation method will please everybody. The more important a user is, the more important it is to accommodate them. In the WHS Management Plan arena, we also ask how heavy is the consequence of miscommunication, and we respond accordingly in our design systems.

Our goal is to please the 'most important' people, comply where we should, and deliver as much as is possible and helpful to everyone else. This helps us achieve an overall effectiveness that continues to be well-received.

When you look at our WHS Management Plan templates you will find that the information is not only legislatively compliant, but is also logical, easy to read, yet also comprehensive and useful.

Ensuring Compliance Through Currency

Anybody who has worked in the occupational health and safety, or workplace health and safety environments knows that the legislation is both complex and onerous. It is also subject to constant change and if you do not stay abreast of those changes, the consequences can be daunting and costly.

When we created our WHS Management Plan template we needed to address this fact.

As with the rest of our templates, when you purchase them you are automatically entered into our databases to receive notifications of relevant changes and newer versions. Needless to say, the implementation of those changes remains your responsibility.

Essentially, we are committed to clients, as well as the higher purpose goals of worker safety and business viability.

Neither a business nor a worker will last long if workplace health and safety factors are not addressed with a constant view to remaining both current and compliant with relevant changes. If it changes, there is usually a good reason.

PART 2

THE FIVE CRITICAL QUESTIONS OF TEMPLATE DESIGN

The Five Critical Questions of Template Design

With a clear purpose established and a commitment to remaining current with critical changes to laws and regulations, we can begin the process of design.

We will focus on five critical questions:

1. What is the purpose of the template?
2. What features should we accommodate?
3. What relationships exists between those features?
4. What changes might take place?
5. How do we design in response to all this?

The Purpose is Safety Management

Identifying the essence and goals of a WHS Management document is essentially the process of complying with legislation and satisfying our customer's needs. We've already addressed this issue.

What Features are Relevant to WHS Management?

In the second question, we identify not only what compliance officials need to see, but also the input fields that influence the report, and the frontline workers who must implement the resulting policies and procedures.

In our WHS Management Plan, features we have decided should be present and prominent include:

1 WHS Inductions - general induction, site inductions and training.
2. WHS Reporting - Safe Work Method Statements (SWMS), hazard identification and controls, WHS inspections, meetings and audit records
3. Incident and Injury Management - procedure, report forms and investigation.

What Relationships Exist?

This question, and the next, are the often forgotten aspects of template design. The greatest challenge with templates is designing a Management Plan framework that will work for varied clients and in highly varied locations. In order to achieve this we've had to ensure our templates accommodate information relationships.

These are some of the people-relationship questions that need to be considered, and these also need to be accommodated within the data fields and processes of the template:

1. Who talks to who?
2. How, when and where do they typically do this?
3. What data and information is exchanged?
4. What needs to be recorded?
5. What needs to be actioned?
6. Who has accountability for these processes?

All of these questions impact upon the relationships between fields and topics within a template.

There are also data flow-on effects to consider. Consider a simple example:

> *You're packing for the Annual Superhero Convention. Being a Super-Template-Creator, you previously created a 'Packing for Travel' template.*
> *It has input fields like, 'Number of days away?', 'Expected temperature?', 'Swimming pool present?" 'Days in normal clothes?', 'Days in Superhero garb' and 'Kryptonite served at mealtimes? (Yes/No)'.*
> *This template has output fields that include, 'Number of red undies to pack,' (your outfit is a bit Superman like), 'Pack swimmers? (Yes/no)', and 'Do I need to tell them my special dietary needs? (Yes / No).*
> *See the connections?*

What Changes Should be Accommodated?

What happens in your workplace influences what happens in your documents, and vice-a-versa. Some features and aspects remain relatively permanent, while others can vary significantly.

For example, our **WHS Management Plan** template presents the Hazard Reporting and Risk Management Process in a way that is designed to facilitate ease of access and use. Serious thought needs to be put into this process.

How Should Your Design Accommodate All the Above?

Essentially, you need to balance the need for structure against the potential need for flexibility.

Our challenge, and your pleasure, is that we have done this for you. By weighing the relative permanence and relationships of each template element we have done the hard yards for you.

In the final question we focus not on the problem, but on the result. If you're designing or adjusting a template you should maintain a similar focus.
We ensure our template design accommodates the many potential data variances (or input differences) that might exist. You should too!

Is All This Really Achievable?

After thousands of sales and consistently positive feedback, it is our confident belief that we are achieving our goals.

That is not to say we have arrived, or that we can rest. WHS Management legislation always changes, and the industry does not have static needs. For this reason, we continue to apply good design principles and actively watch for relevant changes in legislation, the industry or trends.

If you adjust our templates, keep this in mind. Also, remain attentive to any email updates you receive from us. They could be very significant!

DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN OHS MANAGEMENT PLANS

Design Principles in OHS Management Plans

The 'OHS/WHS' compliance minefield exists largely due to the familiarity; people easily forget the obvious and skip over the routine. Systems are needed because familiarity easily breeds laziness and error. When designing templates, we have to guard ourselves against the same tendencies.

How Do We Do this?

There are 8 design principles we will consider. These include:

1. Constrained focus: or keeping your eyes on the prize.
2. Adjustable rigidity: or knowing what to hold loosely, and what to hold tightly.
3. Assisting understanding: by applying instructional and communication principles.
4. Considering events and consequences: recognising the relationships.
5. Effective framing: to restrict and guide data use.
6. The reduction of complexity: making it as simple as effectively possible.
7. Knowing what tools template users use: for practicality sake.
8. Speed and ease: because time is money.

OHS Management Requires Constrained Focus

As soon as a template is created a constraint (or limitation) is introduced. Specific data is required in specific locations. There is nothing casual about this process.

Merely creating boxes for information, or fields for data to be entered into is NOT what we do. Our templates mediate legislative, compliance and information needs for your business. Our templates do this in a way that helps you identify and solve problems, again and again.

Achieving Adjustable Rigidity

We needed to design a structure that allowed for variations, yet also provided enough boundaries to ensure the process was kept effective. Where templates are concerned, there is an unavoidable need for adjustable rigidity!

To do this, we needed to apply the rest of the principles, but we also needed to look at OHS Management situations and data from different perspectives. Sometimes these were similar to what you might encounter, in other places they were not.

We call these deliberate changes of perspective, 'snapshots'; or frameworks through which we view each issue. Every location and process within a worksite has a potentially limitless number of snapshots.

Think of it this way. If you were to hand a camera to your 10-year-old son and ask him to photograph as many things as he can see from as many angles as possible, you begin to get

an idea of what role snapshots play in our design process.

Both WHS and OHS Management Plan templates have been designed to accommodate a vast array of management planning factors, while at the same time, not overwhelming you with unneeded repetition.

Just as you might delete 80% of the images your son captured, so too must a template designer eliminate repetitive or superfluous snapshots. Templates must be focused and efficient. This is a challenge! Ironically, discussing the design principles behind template design is not easy to do either.

When a template has many 'snapshot' options, we select what we believe is the most effective perspective to work from, and design from the strength of that standpoint.

A good template effectively says to your ten year old, as you hand him the camera, "Shoot 5 photos from the front gate at different levels of zoom with your back to the gate, then take 50 more photos, including 3 of each piece of equipment, 3 of each team member and when you do so, whenever you can, take the photo with the sun to your back."

A good template guides your outcome by accommodating reality.

A good management plan template brings predictability to your data input, and this brings predictability to results. Our OHS management template delivers this, and when dealing with the potential complexities of safety planning and management, that sort of adjustable rigidity is essential.

Assisting Understanding

Experience and client feedback has been positive: our OHS Management Plan product really does help safety management information be managed, translated and expressed.

It is being understood and applied effectively.

Goal achieved; but it wasn't by accident.

For example, one routinely experienced design question is whether or not to represent an object in isolation, or with another object alongside. An example can be found in our OHS Management Plan template solution.

In this situation, we chose to represent OHS Monitoring and OHS Auditing within close proximity to each other, as there was a significant relationship between them. At first glance this may seem obvious, but there has been thought behind the presentation.

Considering Events (and Consequences)

The OHS events that take place on your work site are the primary drivers behind the need for WHS and OHS templates. They can be potentially fatal, and even when safety is taken care of, these remain an ever present factor in your operations. Event consideration is significant!

In template design, events need to accommodate a variety of possibilities: These include, but are not limited to:

1. Who is taking action;
2. What they are doing;
3. Who and what they are influencing;
4. What communications are required; and
5. What flow on consequences must be planned.

Events also have causality and sub-event potential. In other words, an action may cause another event to take place, or an action may be part of a larger event. Of course a third potential also exists, that an action both causes an event and is part of another. We hope you can appreciate the potential complexity.

An example of this, is where in our OHS Management Plan product, the event of an injury typically results in first aid taking place. Similarly, the event of an injury is also part of the larger incident and injury investigation event.

Effective Framing

How do you frame input and output fields effectively whilst reducing complexity without removing meaning?

The answer:
It isn't simple, and all the issues we've already discussed will influence the outcome.

Effectiveness requires detail, meaning requires information, and yet reducing complexity means some detail and information must be omitted or presented in a compromised manner.

When clients use our templates, we want them to easily identify and enter needed data, and also have a sense of how this data will present itself in the end. We also want to minimise the amount of data processing and decision-making necessary.

But how do we decide what data is needed and how it is gathered?

In our Construction Safety Plan template, for example, we identified Risk Management as being critically important. Other issues, such as Site Safety Rules, have been given a less prominent position and are less defined, giving you more room for flexibility in choosing your words. Other information has been left out altogether.

Were we to accommodate every construction element within the template, it would turn into a multi-volume manual, rather than an effective workplace safety tool.

The Reduction of Complexity

Construction Safety is a complex and multifaceted issue. We cannot escape the complexity of the legislation and the ever changing nature of regulations and client's costs. However, there are some things we can do.

Two design principles are at play here. 'Similarity' and 'proximity'.

The principle of 'similarity' says that similar topics and data should be grouped or separated based on what is helpful to the document's goals. The idea is that a template user should not have to look too far to find information, especially where 'Item A' relates closely to 'Item B'. This means that:

1. Where data looks like other data, but it is actually different, it should be intentionally separated by some sort of graphical tool, such as a chart or page separation.
2. Where data does not look equivalent, but in reality is, it should be presented in a way that this alikeness is made known. In our Construction Safety Plan template, for example, we group Hazard Reporting and Risk Assessment together for this reason.

Sometimes information is not intuitively connected, yet it is still useful for a particular purpose when grouped or presented together. This is where the principle of 'proximity' comes into play: if displaying two items close to each other helps the overall purpose of the document, even if they seem unrelated, then they should be.

The classic example of this is the creation of summary or quick reference sheets, such as you see in our flow charts. When it comes to something as important as fast and efficient dealing with Construction WHS factors, assisting speed and ease of use through proximity is a good practice.

If the decision is made to present information as a group, or reduce complexity, presenting

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by use of pairs, short strings, lists or tables can be a good approach.

At Occupational Safety Solutions we use tables frequently, and we do this with deliberate intention. You can see this principle in action in the way we present safety plan information within our Construction Safety template solution.

While complexity in WHS and especially Construction Safety is unavoidable, minimisation of complexity where possible is a desirable and worthwhile goal.

Knowing What Tools Template Users Use

When we talk about tools in this situation, we are talking about tools used by your workers, the construction plant in use on your site, and the tools (software) being used when the template is being resourced.

We have intentionally chosen Microsoft Word processing software, as it seems to be the most prominent software used in the construction office environment. When you purchase our templates, you should not have to purchase additional software, nor should you have to struggle with unnecessarily complex systems.

We believe our Construction Safety Manual template solution is a prime example of this principle at work.

When you open the Construction Safety template, you will find that information has been presented within MSWord using font formatting, data gathering and tables. If you are comfortable using Microsoft Word (and you will not need to be an expert), you will also be comfortable with the template.

Speed and Ease

For the same reason that we chose Microsoft Word as our delivery platform, we also, as a result of following our other design principles, achieved a product which can be quickly used and easily understood.

We've already mentioned a variety of principles implemented in our designs, and if the journey has interested you and you'd like to look deeper, see the end of this document for suggestions.

Conclusion

We have journeyed together to consider principles of template design. We have recognised the need for purpose and currency, considered five critical questions of template design and looked at the application of six design principles.

The goals were to empower your decision regarding template purchases, as well as assist you with principles that help you alter templates as necessary, or create your own where appropriate.

Sure, construction safety will forever be a complex and challenging topic, and satisfying the legislative OHS/WHS can be both expensive, frustrating and exhausting - yet, this is why we exist!

This is why our templates are so powerful. This is why we consistently receive such positive feedback!

We have reduced the complexity and presented you with a solution that is easy to understand and quick to complete. This is exactly what the Construction Safety Manual template delivers, as do all of our OHS / WHS templates.

If our Construction Safety Manual product, or any other product for that matter is of interest to you, please do not hesitate to ask any questions you have. You can reach us on 1800 304 336 and we look forward to providing you with the same level of professional assistance that we have become known for.

Looking for more?

For those who would like some more substantial information to chew on, these three sources may prove helpful. They employ, comment on or teach the principles we mention here to varying degrees.

"Using Design Principles to Make ODS Template Decisions"
By Helen Smith and Susan Myers
RTI International, Research Triangle Park, NC (2013)
http://support.sas.com/resources/papers/proceedings13/369-2013.pdf

"Principles of Template Design"
By Jerry Hobbs and David Israel
http://www.aclweb.org/anthology/H94-1032

"Seven Principles of Great Template Design in InDesign"
By Gabriel Powell
Adobe Press. (Feb 12, 2009)
http://www.adobepress.com/articles/article.asp?p=1324232

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