



SAFETY LEADERSHIP AND  
**ENGAGEMENT**

HOW ARE YOU DRIVING SAFETY CULTURE SUCCESS?

**EHS Daily Advisor**

## **ABOUT THE SAFETY LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT SURVEY**

Our Safety Leadership and Engagement Survey sponsored by Avetta® was launched in July 2019, and by the time the survey closed approximately one month later, 557 environmental, health, and safety (EHS) professionals had shared their insights into how their companies are promoting safety culture through strong leadership and positive employee engagement.

We at Avetta and the *EHS Daily Advisor* Research Team would like to extend our thanks to all of the professionals who chose to participate in the survey, and also to our readers for their interest in strengthening employee engagement and improving safety culture companywide.

All percentages in the following report have been rounded to the nearest whole percent. If you have any questions or comments about the survey, its data, or the report, please let us know via e-mail at [media@simplifycompliance.com](mailto:media@simplifycompliance.com).

## **ABOUT AVETTA**

Avetta connects global organizations with more than 90,000 qualified suppliers, contractors, and vendors across 125+ countries. We support the continued growth of supply chains through trusted contractor prequalification, safety audits, monitoring, and more. With real results in reducing TRIR, our highly configurable solutions elevate safety and sustainability in every workplace.

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## CURRENT TRENDS IN CULTURE

**75%** of survey participants would rate their organization's safety culture as either good or excellent, and **74%** said that they believed their employees would also rate their safety culture as good or excellent.

A smaller percentage of respondents (**63%**) rated the level of trust between management, supervisors, and employees at their organizations as good or excellent.

When asked what the top 3 challenges are in building safety culture, respondents highlighted the following issues:

1. Engaging and motivating employees (**50%**)
2. Balancing production pressures with safety efforts (**46%**)
3. Getting supervisor cooperation (**29%**)

Other cultural challenges that were of significant concern to survey takers were:

- Providing effective training (**25%**)
- Employee unwillingness to follow rules (**25%**)
- Getting support from C-suite or upper management (**19%**)
- Measuring safety performance (**16%**)



## CURRENT TRENDS IN CULTURE

We next asked respondents to give us a picture of their safety cultures by indicating the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements about the state of safety at their organizations. See how they responded in the chart below—how would your responses compare?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Safety is a core value throughout my organization.	<b>45%</b>	42%	11%	2%
Safety is one of many competing priorities in my organization.	29%	<b>51%</b>	16%	4%
I have the tools and/or resources I need to be an effective safety leader in my workplace.	31%	<b>49%</b>	17%	4%
Safety rules and policies are clear to employees, and there are clear and consistently enforced disciplinary actions for employees who do not follow them.	20%	<b>45%</b>	31%	4%
Company executives at my organization perceive safety as an expense to be minimized.	10%	29%	<b>43%</b>	18%
Company executives at my organization understand that investing in safety saves money by preventing more costly expenses such as OSHA citations and workers' compensation claims.	35%	<b>46%</b>	15%	4%
Company executives at my organization believe that safety supports productivity and profit goals rather than competing with them.	29%	<b>48%</b>	19%	3%
Managers and supervisors lead by example when it comes to safety in my organization.	21%	<b>52%</b>	23%	4%
Supervisors are fully supportive of safety efforts and play an active role in ensuring that their teams work safely.	22%	<b>49%</b>	25%	3%
Employees resent safety efforts and see them as an obstacle to doing their jobs.	6%	24%	<b>49%</b>	21%
Employees generally comply with safety rules and policies but primarily view workplace safety as "someone else's job."	7%	<b>47%</b>	37%	9%
Employees take full ownership of safety at all levels and will go above and beyond to ensure that the workplace is safe for everyone.	12%	<b>41%</b>	<b>41%</b>	7%
My organization provides effective safety training to its employees, from staff level through upper management.	26%	<b>47%</b>	24%	4%

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



It was noteworthy that over one-half of participants on the previous page agreed or strongly agreed that employees generally comply with safety rules and policies, but view workplace safety as “someone else’s job.” This speaks to a key component of safety culture—*employee engagement*.

While **18%** of participants indicated that employees had minimal or no involvement with their organizations’ safety programs, nearly one-half (**49%**) said that there was some employee involvement, and one-third (**33%**) said that there was a great deal of employee involvement.

The **top 5** ways that employees participate in safety programs at respondents’ organizations are:

- 1** Receive training: **88%**
- 2** Attend safety meetings/toolbox talks: **86%**
- 3** Report hazards: **80%**
- 4** Conduct equipment inspections: **63%**
- 5** Serve on safety committee: **60%**

**32%** of participants said that a lack of time for employees to participate in safety efforts was the greatest challenge or barrier to employee engagement in safety at their organizations. Other engagement challenges of note were:

- Employees do not view safety as a core part of their job duties: **16%**
- Lack of trust between employees and management: **11%**
- Employees view safety as a barrier to productivity: **10%**



## PROACTIVE VS. REACTIVE CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Safety professionals continue to realize that a proactive stance is necessary for a strong safety culture. **41%** of respondents characterize their safety culture as “more proactive” or “completely proactive,” while **18%** rated their culture as more or completely reactive. **40%** of survey participants assessed that their safety culture is somewhere in between proactive and reactive.

Strong majorities of the response pool also indicated that top-level leadership has positive safety culture habits at their organizations.

**88%** indicated that company executives want to be kept informed of the status of safety initiatives and made aware of incidents and near misses promptly.

**74%** said that safety-related issues are considered at high-level meetings on a regular basis, not just after some bad event (e.g., OSHA citation, employee injury or fatality, or property damage incident).

**83%** reported that after a mishap, the primary aim of top management is to identify the failed system defenses and improve them, rather than seeking to place blame on particular individuals.

## QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE SAFETY LEADER

There are many qualities that are admirable in effective safety leaders, but we asked our survey respondents to identify the **top 3** most important ones.

1. Effective communication skills (**66%**)
2. Knowledge of safety regulations and best practices (**65%**)
3. Ability to relate to workers and understand their concerns (**61%**)



Other safety leadership qualities that were deemed valuable by large portions of our participants were:

- Willingness to lead by example: **44%**
- Listening skills: **31%**
- Honesty: **20%**

Two leadership qualities that our survey found to be less important were likeability and/or approachability (**9%**) and ability to project authority (**3%**).





## COMMUNICATION

**31%** of respondents said that their front-line employees are highly informed about the status of safety programs and initiatives within their companies, while **51%** described their employees as moderately informed of safety efforts. **16%** reported that their workforce is underinformed with regard to safety programs, and **2%** said that employees were not informed at all.

The **top 5** communication methods participants use to impart safety information to employees are:

1. Periodic safety meetings: **81%**
2. Bulletin board notices: **67%**
3. Posters and signage: **62%**
4. E-mail: **62%**
5. Safety committee updates: **55%**

## SAFETY METRICS



The **top 10** specific metrics used by respondents to assess the strength of their safety cultures are:

1. Injury and illness rates: **67%**
2. Lost workdays: **51%**
3. Number of hazards reported by employees: **49%**
4. Employee training frequency: **47%**
5. **(TIE)** Workers' compensation claims and/or premiums **and** Employee training completion rates: **both 39%**
6. Quality of incident investigations: **38%**
7. Time to complete corrective actions: **34%**
8. Employee perception surveys: **33%**
9. Number of job hazard analyses completed: **26%**
10. Number and/or frequency of disciplinary actions for unsafe behaviors: **21%**

The majority of survey participants (**56%**) use a mix of leading and lagging indicators in order to track safety performance at their organizations. **23%** use mostly or all *lagging* indicators to measure safety, and **14%** use mostly or all *leading* indicators.

However, **8%** of those polled don't measure safety performance at all.



## WHO RESPONDED?



The 557 participants in the Safety Leadership and Engagement Survey work in a variety of job positions, the largest share of whom **(45%)** are Safety or EHS managers. A further **15%** of respondents are directors of Safety or EHS, **15%** are staff-level employees, and **8%** are frontline supervisors. The remaining **17%** of the response pool was made up of EHS executives; executives, directors, or managers of departments outside of the EHS function (such as human resources); and consultants/contractors.

**43%** of respondents work at organizations that employ 500 or more employees, while **24%** reported from smaller companies of 99 or fewer employees. The remainder of the response pool work at businesses that employ between 100 and 499 workers.

The top industry represented in the survey

was manufacturing, which made up **31%** of the response pool. Other industries with a strong presence in the Safety Leadership and Engagement Survey included construction **(18%)**; government/public administration and oil & gas **(both 6%)**; utilities **(5%)**; and chemical production and health care **(both 4%)**.

A large portion of the respondents **(14%)** specified other industries of which they are a part, including:

- Wastewater and landfill management
- Shipyard, ship repair, or maritime transportation
- Farm cooperative, fisheries, or other agriculture
- Pharmaceuticals



# The Pathway to a Sustainable Supply Chain

## About Avetta

Avetta delivers a SaaS-based platform that mitigates the unseen risks of outsourcing, fostering sustainable growth throughout the supply chain. Through a proven vetting and evaluation process, Avetta is able to create dependable connections between clients, vendors and contractors. With real results in reducing incidents, our highly configurable solutions elevate safety and sustainability in workplaces around the world.

## Centralize Core Values

Change starts from within, and global supply chains are no different. Make the commitment internally to **source ethically and sustainably** with every business decision.

## Find Like-Minded Partners

Your supply chain is only as strong as it's weakest link. **Reduce your vulnerability** by only working with contractors who hold the same safety and sustainability values as you.

## Trust but Verify

You are responsible for the incidents in your supply chain, regardless of the cause: employee or contractor. **Trust your suppliers but verify** with real-time contractor management solutions.

## Grow to New Heights

Eliminate unnecessary expenses and instead put that capital to work in new projects. **Avetta clients average an ROI between 265% and 350%** and a reduction in administrative costs of 75%.



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