

Leadership and worker involvement toolkit

Encouraging steel erectors to get involved in health and safety in Archbell Greenwood Structures (AGS) Ltd



Key successes:

- Site Observation Cards (SOCs) have proved a useful way of opening a dialogue with workers, increasing their awareness of safe and unsafe practices, and alerting management to risks on site.
- Involving workers in health and safety (H&S) has helped to improve site audits, reduce RIDDORs and serious injuries, and create a happier workforce.
- There is improved leadership across the business e.g. visibility on site, shared ownership of H&S and on-going professional development of supervisors.

Who are Archbell Greenwood Structures (AGS) Ltd?

- The company was established in 1994 as a steel fabricator.
- They predominantly carry out sub-contracted work for their principal client, William Hare, to erect steel structures for building development / refurbishment.
- It has a stable workforce of around 100 members of staff; most continuing employment from a young age.
- They have gained the British Standards Institution qualification for Quality Management Systems (ISO 9000).

Why AGS used the Leadership and Worker Involvement Toolkit (LWIT)

Health and safety (H&S) is considered a priority on site by all AGS employees. The company is strongly guided by its client's H&S philosophy that 'safer is more efficient' and is continually making improvements to its H&S practices.

"The people we do work for... safety is always put forward first and we... try to follow suit... it's always safety first, as simple as that." (Site Manager, July 2012)

Improvements over the past few years include: implementation of a 'stop work' (when considered unsafe) policy, development of a toolbox talk programme, introduction of a safety newsletter to communicate H&S issues to staff, involving workers in daily method statements and risk assessments to review tasks and potential risks, and more rigorous monitoring of staff training needs by management. While workers are encouraged by management to raise H&S concerns on an on-going basis (e.g. in toolbox talks, discussions when wage packs are handed out), it is often a challenge to get workers involved in H&S matters across the business. AGS used the LWIT (Leadership and Worker Involvement Toolkit) to:

Encourage more widespread worker involvement in H&S matters (beyond risk assessments/method statements), and push forwards a more deliberate policy of involvement across the company so that workers feel they are part of the solution and not just being told what to do.

HSE/HSL and William Hare supported AGS in using the toolkit over an 18 month period as part of a research programme looking at how the LWIT could support small construction companies.



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Which steps of the LWIT did AGS use and why?

■ Step 1 - The Health and Safety Diagnostic Tool (HSDT)

The Managing Director completed the HSDT at the outset of the research (July 2012) to understand how well developed the company's overall approach to H&S was. Results showed that whilst workers occasionally raise safety issues with management, there was further scope to engage the workforce, and thereby raising the profile and knowledge of safety and prevention of ill health across the business.

"It's... difficult to get engagement from people that don't ordinarily engage on matters of health [or] safety... without a lot of encouragement." (Managing Director, February 2013)

■ Step 4 (Key Tool) – The Leadership Check Tool (LCT)

The LCT was used to develop two charge hands (lead workers in a group of three workers operating a crane) to site supervisory roles by helping to identify their H&S training needs for managing H&S on site (e.g. Appointed Persons Course for cranes).

"We are using [the leadership tools in the LWIT] to bring on [charge hands] and give them the training necessary to lead their sites." (Managing Director, January 2013)

■ Step 7 (Key Tool) – Site Measurement Aid

Following the guidance contained in the Site Measurement Aid on ways to involve workers in H&S performance measurements, AGS implemented site observation cards (SOCs). These were used to encourage workers to report good and poor practice that they observe on site.

"We encourage dialogue [on H&S matters with workers]... internally it's the biggest challenge we've got... getting people to open the dialogue even if you're encouraging it... it's really what the cards are trying to do." (Managing Director, February 2013)

■ Steps 2, 3, 4 and 6 (Further Tools) – Information sheets on engaging workers in H&S

AGS selected four information sheets: 'Acting on worker engagement' (Step 2); 'Engaging your workers in risk management' (Step 3); 'Effective communication for toolbox talks, safety briefings and inductions' (Step 4); and 'Stop, Look, Assess, and Manage (SLAM) technique' (Step 6). These gave Site Supervisors tips on how to make toolbox talks more interactive.

"They are helpful because we don't have the wording anywhere else...specifically within our procedural systems. [Supervisors] are reading them...the way I know that is because when I go [to site] I see them stuck on the wall." (Administrative Clerk, January 2014)

How did AGS use SOC's to involve steel erectors in H&S matters?

SOCs were the key initiative used by the company over the 18 month research programme to involve workers in H&S matters, and to facilitate conversations about H&S between management and workers on an on-going basis. Figure 1 summarises this process.

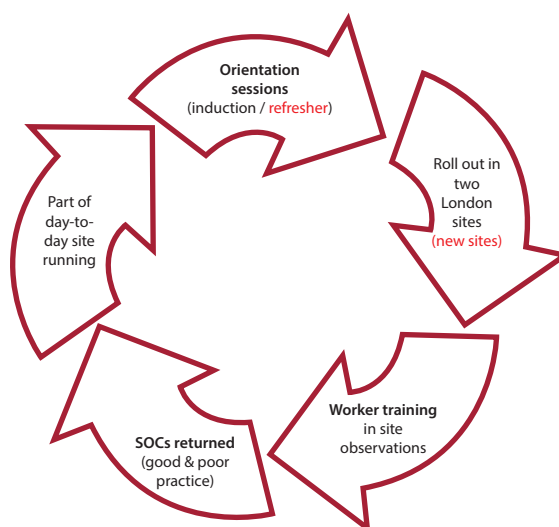


Figure 1. Roll out of Site Observation Cards (SOCs) in AGS

Orientation sessions (October, 2012): The Managing Director and Administrative Clerk ran orientation sessions on two London sites to familiarise the workforce with the SOC process. Charge hands and site supervisors were given responsibility for looking after blank SOC's.

Roll out to smaller sites (by February 2013): The roll out of the SOC's to other, smaller sites was a gradual process initiated when charge hands and site supervisors moved across to these sites. As part of the process, two operatives (working towards charge hand level) were trained in site observations (e.g. attending training by the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board), which has helped with delivery of the SOC's on sites.

Part of the day-to-day running of sites: Within six months of the orientation sessions, the SOC's had become integral to the way of working on sites, with around 100 cards completed per quarter (an average of one a day). The information sheets from Step 4 of the LWIT on leadership and communication skills provided some helpful tips for guiding senior management with the roll out process. This included:

- Increasing the visibility of senior management on site following the orientation sessions, and using this opportunity to reiterate the importance of completing the SOC's and to discuss some of the issues raised by workers.
- Getting the main contractor on board. The SOC process has had better uptake on London sites where the client actively encouraged their completion.
- Scheduling weekly/fortnightly meetings between the Administrative Clerk and a new co-director responsible for H&S (appointed six months into the research). H&S is covered as a topic in these meetings, focussing on matters that have arisen in the previous week or two and on the implications for staff training needs.



Briefly describe the safe/unsafe act

What action necessary or has been taken?

- a) Thanked for good work etc.
- b) Corrected there and then
- c) Explained safe system of work and got agreement to work to it
- d) Training required/arranged
- e) Stopped task and raise with Supervisor/Manager

Reaction of person commended or at risk:

Positive Negative

Area: _____ **Date:** _____

Figure 1. Roll out of Site Observation Cards (SOCs) in AGS

HARE
STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS

Observation

Name of Observer _____

✓ Tick a category for the safe/unsafe action observed

Safe	Unsafe
<input type="checkbox"/> Safe body position	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Tools & machinery	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Overhead hazards	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Falls, slips, trips	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifting loads (slinging & handling)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Plant & vehicle movements	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

CARRYING OUT A BEHAVIOURAL OBSERVATION AND DISCUSSION

"NO OBSERVATION WITHOUT CONVERSATION"

Be a "Role model". Ensure you are acting in the manner you would expect others to act in and wearing all the mandatory PPE at all times.

When you approach a person, introduce yourself to them and let them know that you are carrying out a workplace observation/discussion (you may already know that person, however you can inform them what you are doing). Everyone will have had the "orientation", so they will understand what you are talking about.

Do not stand observing from a distance and writing down anything you see that is wrong and walk away without speaking to them!

Remember "NO OBSERVATION WITHOUT CONVERSATION"

Speak to the person how you would like to be spoken to, in a courteous and open manner.

Look for the "Positive" or "Good" they are doing first and praise or at least acknowledge the good work. If there is more than one positive (there usually is), then save it until the end!

"Ask" them what they are doing (it may be obvious, but let them explain).

"Ask" them "What is difficult or awkward/what they struggle to do" (this is often something they will not be doing or taking a short cut).

What happens with the information collected from the SOC's?

■ Analysis of all SOC's received

All SOC's are analysed by William Hare on a monthly basis and results are sent to senior management in AGS. The analysis enables senior management to drill down into the data further and explore aspects that show a high number of reports. The most common safety risks reported relate to 'slips, trips and housekeeping' with around 20-30% of comments focusing on workers' own work areas (e.g. 'keeping his compound tidy'). This shows that workers are more aware of potential slip and trip hazards (which is a top safety risk for the company) and are flagging these up to management. The most commonly reported work category is 'lifting and slinging', which reflects typical work activities on site.

■ An example of where an issue raised by workers was acted on by management

Analysis showed a high number of reports for the 'other' category relating to PPE use (October/November 2013). When explored further, it became apparent that a number of workers were getting cuts on their hands due to working on a project where unpainted steelwork was predominant. As a result, management purchased hand protection with greater durability and therefore a higher degree of protection against cuts.

What challenges did AGS encounter along the way?

■ A decline in completed SOC's after the first week of roll out

The company noted a decrease in the number of SOC's completed following the first week of their roll out (November/December, 2012) with only one card being completed on average each week. The initial orientation sessions were worker-focused and did not include all supervisors. As such, the Managing Director spoke to all site supervisors, reiterating the importance of the SOC's and reminding them of their responsibility to encourage their completion on site.

*"[The Managing Director] addressed that problem, getting the supervisors on board."
(Administrative Clerk, January 2013)*

The Managing Director also spoke to workers during his site visits to reassure them that it is okay to say that something is unsafe.

"To begin with [during] that first week nearly everyone did it, then nothing more towards the end of 2012... it's really been [the Managing Director] pushing people to say, it's ok to say it's unsafe." (Administrative Clerk, January 2013)

■ Getting the workforce to spot hazards other than 'slips, trips and housekeeping'

Management consider that 'slips, trips and housekeeping' are the most commonly cited category on SOC's because they are easier to spot. The company plans to address this issue through refresher orientation sessions, reminding workers of the importance of being vigilant to the range of hazards on site (e.g. manual handling).

■ Getting workers to report poor H&S practices to management

Analysis of the SOC's generally shows that good reports far outweigh reports of poor H&S practice (approximately three quarter of all reports reflect good practice observed on site). Furthermore, observations of poor practice tend to be from site supervisors. These findings, along with anecdotal evidence from Site Managers, suggest that there is a reluctance amongst workers to report their workmates when they see them behaving in an unsafe way.

*"[Workers] don't like saying bad things about their own work mates. We do get some negative ones, but they're not always directed at our own company... nobody wants to hear bad news, but it's good to make improvements."
(Site Manager, January 2014)*

Senior management recognise the need to reiterate 'no blame' messages and reassure workers that *"it's ok to do it; you're not going to get done for highlighting anything"* (Administrative Clerk, January 2013). This will form part of the planned refresher orientation sessions. Management will also use these sessions to gather workers' feedback on the SOC's, in particular, whether they perceive the cards to be a useful way of voicing their safety concerns.

"While the site observation cards have encouraged some workers to become more engaged with H&S, this process will take time to embed." (Managing Director, February 2013)

How did the LWIT help AGS to encourage more widespread worker involvement in H&S matters?

“It’s still difficult and it’s still not easy to involve the workers because...they’re not comfortable normally talking about the work...but the more you do it, the easier it gets.” (Managing Director, January 2014)

■ SOCs encourage an interface with workers directly

Senior and middle management have noticed that workers are more engaged in H&S since introducing SOCs on site. Workers seem willing to make management aware of safe and unsafe practices either through completing SOCs or speaking to site supervisors about their observations. Workers are starting to question whether work is safe to undertake rather than this being the sole responsibility of the Site Supervisor (e.g. this was evident by an increase in the number of phone calls being made by charge hands to supervisors).

“We know that they are...doing these cards themselves and all we can take from that is that they are putting the effort in.” (Administrative Clerk, January 2013)

■ The style of delivery of toolbox talks has changed from ‘being told’ to ‘being involved’

The information sheet ‘Effective communication in toolbox talks’ (Step 4) provides useful tips on different ways to deliver toolbox talks and challenge poor H&S practice. One Site Manager commented that the information sheet helped to boost his confidence:

“I get on with them all, I know them all... [But] standing up in front of the lads is a big thing... putting yourself forward... when you’re challenging the men out on site, instead of just shouting... I went through... one of the sheets on that.” (Site Manager, February, 2013)

■ Improved H&S leadership across the business

The leadership tools have increased awareness amongst management of the importance of getting workers on board, and the key role that they have in driving home the message to the workforce regarding the importance of completing the SOCs. The Managing Director was the catalyst for encouraging site managers and supervisors to change their approach to managing H&S on site so as to involve workers in discussions and decision making. “The leadership skills are important...and it’s helpful, there’s no doubt about that.” (Managing Director, January 2013)

Project managers have also come on board who previously did not consider safety to be their concern. “We’ve got two project managers and they don’t usually get involved in the safety... but those two are on board with it now... there’s definitely been attitude change there.” (Administrative Clerk, January 2013)

The leadership skills of site managers and supervisors have improved considerably through giving them more autonomy for H&S on their site, supported by the necessary training. The LCT and supporting information sheets (e.g. ‘Acting on worker engagement’, Step 2) were considered a useful development aid for new supervisors to make them aware of the behaviours expected of them on site and to identify any necessary training to support them in this role.

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How has using the LWIT helped the business?

■ **A reduction in RIDDORs, major accidents and serious minor injuries**

Within six months of using the LWIT (by February 2013), AGS noted a decline in major accidents and serious injuries (e.g. deep cuts). Whilst the number of minor injuries steadily increased in the months following the introduction of the SOC, by the end of the research (January 2014) incident levels had plateaued.

Management perceived these levels to be a more accurate reflection of site injuries compared with those prior to using the LWIT when workers did not always report injuries to site supervisors. The company has also experienced a reduction in RIDDORs reaching zero in 2013. AGS acknowledges that:

“The safer we are the more likely it is that we are going to get better quality work...we wouldn’t have stood a chance of getting [a large high-profile project] if we hadn’t got the highest safety and quality standards.” (Managing Director, January 2014)



■ **Increased awareness amongst management of H&S issues on site**

The SOC has alerted management to H&S issues that needed to be addressed on site that they were not previously aware of.

“The observation cards...are encouraging us to interface with the operatives directly and...I think it’s benefiting us... and it’s not an easy area to get the feedback, but we’ve found it’s an important area and there are... a number of specific things that we’ve got out of it that will definitely benefit everyone.”

(Managing Director, January 2014)

■ **More productive site audits**

The leadership tools have encouraged those carrying out site audits to approach workers differently by exploring work processes with them to better understand current practices. As the Administrative Clerk (January 2014) said,

“It’s useful for me... for when I’m doing the audits to talk to them. It’s not just like ‘What are you doing?’...it’s like ‘Can you help me out with this’, and then we can get talking to them about what they are doing rather than them being on guard.”

■ **Improved worker morale**

The Managing Director acknowledged the benefits of creating opportunities to discuss H&S with workers. Taking the time to talk to workers helps to make them feel appreciated by management and happier knowing that the company cares about their personal safety.

“The workforce is more content...if they are safer, why wouldn’t they be...and if you’re interacting with the workforce more... and not just coming and going and ignoring them...Surely everybody would be more inclined to play their full part in the company whether they be a steel erector or welder.”

(Managing Director, January 2014)

How does AGS plan to keep up these high standards?

“[Health and safety] is talked about more [by the workforce]... and will be sustained... part of it is the way the industry is going. It's not just us it's the clients and... the main contractors... there's no getting away from it.”

(Site Manager, January 2014).

■ Continue to embed SOC's across all sites

Management recognise the need to run refresher training (repeat orientation sessions) with all staff to continue the process of embedding the use of SOC's across all sites. The training will reiterate 'no blame' messages to workers to encourage the reporting of poor practices. It will also remind workers of the importance of being vigilant to the range of hazards that they face on site as well as checking whether anything else needs to be in place for workers to voice their concerns. Management also plan to create a company specific SOC using the template provided by their main client, including only the categories that apply to AGS.

■ Continuing use of LWIT

Management acknowledged that the **HSDT** was a useful tool for reflecting on current H&S practice. While results showed improvements over the course of the research in how AGS is complying with its H&S responsibilities and the involvement that workers have in H&S decisions, assessments by site supervisors tended to be slightly lower than those by senior management. AGS is considering using the HSDT in management meetings with site managers and supervisors to discuss reasons for any differences in views regarding H&S practice.

AGS plan to continue using the **information sheets** that encourage good communication with workers on H&S matters. The company is also considering developing their own series of additional toolbox talks to accompany those supplied by their main client. The **Leadership Check Tool** is regarded by management as a useful, practical tool for planning the development of upcoming site supervisors. Management are also considering implementing a suggestion scheme as referred to in the **Site Measurement Aid** in Step 7 of LWIT. AGS have experienced this type of scheme through their main client where workers are rewarded for feasible suggestions that they make to improve site safety.

A final word from the Managing Director and Administration Clerk in AGS Ltd...

“It's been beneficial and it's helped us. We were always very keen on safety and doing the right things. One of the difficult bits is always worker involvement...and that has definitely improved since we've started out on this path...and used the toolkit in that regard...hopefully...we can use it to full advantage as the years progress.”

(Managing Director, January 2014)

“Being involved has helped with [our] key goal... getting workers involved in H&S decisions and actions. The biggest improvements have been with developing the leadership skills of Site Managers and Site Supervisors to encourage worker involvement and understand... the importance of getting workers' views. This has been championed by the Director. A lesson learned has been that encouraging greater worker involvement in H&S requires as much work with Site Supervisors as it does with operatives.”

(Administrative Clerk, January 2014)

The Leadership and Worker Involvement toolkit is aimed particularly at small and medium sized businesses and is designed to help improve your health and safety and bring additional benefits to your business and productivity.

Developed by the construction industry's Leadership and Worker Engagement Forum, Hosted by HSE 04/12