

# **First Impressions Last - Make Your Induction Count**

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## **Abstract**

Is your induction sending the right messages to new workers and contractors? Does it attempt to cover everything for all attendees, regardless of experience or role, applying a 'just in case' methodology rather than a 'just in time, just enough approach'?

This paper begins with a series of questions that challenge you to evaluate your current induction program. The paper then examines some of the key factors that can reduce the quality of induction programs; why those factors occur and some of the processes that can be applied to address them.

As our workforce grows and becomes more diversified, the quality and consistency of key messages at induction will become even more crucial; this is the key opportunity to engage new employees and contractors and demonstrate and reinforce desired culture and safe behaviours. Is a just in time, just enough approach to induction easier said than done? Maybe, but our experiences have shown that it can be achieved by completing a thorough Induction Needs Analysis; using skilled Instructional Designers to create the program and its resources, and finally ensure active site / organisational involvement in managing the quality of delivery and program content.

## **Introduction**

Inductions have become a fundamental requirement for entering the resources industry and our sites, but how many induction participants actually benefit from this training experience? Should we accept the current state of our inductions and continue to use them as a compliance 'catch net', where the legislation, key hazards, procedures, incident outcomes and lowest level controls on the hierarchy are covered off to absolutely everyone entering site (Mine Manager to Mine Operator)? Or is it time we took a different approach to inducting workers – both our full time employees and contractors - with a clear purpose of setting them on the path to a safe and fulfilling experience on our site/s.

## **Case Study**

Below is a case study for a hypothetical mining company; however it includes some scenarios that may ring true for many mining operations.

XYZ and Co's Surface Mining Operations require all contract workers to hold the general industry induction program as a pre requisite to a site specific induction, which is delivered to all workers (contractors and employees) over half a day.

The site induction is delivered offsite by an external training provider using trainer-centred delivery supported by PowerPoint presentation. The assessment is a paper-based written assessment covering questions from all topics in the induction. It is completed at the end of the induction delivery and takes participants approximately one hour to complete. A number of trainers deliver the site induction; they have not worked for XYZ and Co but each hold significant industry experience.

The content of the site induction duplicates much of the general industry program but this is because there are strong concerns about inconsistencies in the content and quality of the industry induction. In addition, the site induction needs to cover the many specific systems and standards that XYZ and Co. requires workers to understand and apply while working on their sites.

XYZ and Co require all of their contractor workers to refresh the general industry and site induction every 2 years, but employees are not required to refresh the site induction at all.

XYZ and Co have had a number of complaints from workers and contractors regarding the quality of delivery and relevance of information delivered in both the industry and site specific programs. They also receive complaints from department heads that workers constantly need to be retrained when they arrive at their department on knowledge and skills that are meant to be covered in induction. The training provider has been asked to include new content based on changing site needs and has made several requests to extend the induction to a full day, but these have been rejected due to production timelines (particularly for contractors).

Do any elements of this case study ring true for your site?

How much of this case study applies to your induction program?

Use the Induction Analysis below to review your current induction.

## Induction Analysis – Could your induction process be improved?

<b>Content &amp; Delivery</b>			
1.	Is your induction delivered predominately by a PowerPoint presentation with a 'trainer centred' focus?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
2.	Do you hear complaints from workers about the induction (poorly delivered, irrelevant, done it all before)?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
3.	Do you find that you need to retrain workers on the basics even though they have just completed an induction?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
4.	Do you use induction as a 'catch net' to ensure everyone is aware of all hazards / risks / incidents that have occurred on site or across the industry?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
<b>Business Alignment</b>			
5.	Is your induction delivered by trainer/s who do not have a full understanding of your business culture, safety systems and practices?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
6.	Has your induction been implemented without being aligned to your site / business systems and processes?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
<b>Quality &amp; Consistency</b>			
7.	Are you concerned about the quality and consistency of your induction delivery?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
8.	Is the content of your induction almost constantly out of date?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
<b>Assessment &amp; Refresher</b>			
9.	Do you require workers to complete the same induction program periodically to meet refresher requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
10.	Does your induction include a lengthy, paper based assessment?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

### **Self Rating**

Review the number of YES responses you selected. The more 'yes' responses, the greater the need to stop and review your induction process in order to gain more value for your business and employees / contractors.

This paper provides some suggestions for improving the value of your current induction program and improving the outcomes it delivers to the workers entering your site/s.

## **Causal Factors and Suggested Solutions**

This section outlines the causal factors associated with each of the questions in the Induction Analysis and provides some suggestions for revisiting, revamping, and / or revitalising your current induction.

### **Content & Delivery**

#### **1. Your induction is delivered predominately by a PowerPoint presentation with a 'trainer centred' focus.**

While PPT is a great tool, it is often over-used in our inductions and general training delivery ('death by PPT'). If your induction is a 200 plus slide PPT, chances are you have too much content in your induction and the key messages may ultimately be lost. It is also likely that this single style of delivery is not meeting the learning needs of all Participants in the room.

#### ***Causal Factors***

- Often the easiest way to deliver a lot of content / information.
- Trainers need little professional development or facilitator skills to deliver the program – all of the content / information is on the screen in front of them.
- Some trainers like using PPT as they can keep easier control of the training environment.
- PPT is easy to develop and modify.

#### ***Suggested Solutions***

- Complete an Induction Needs Analysis on your induction to identify the content that must be delivered to everyone onsite; then content that is critical for particular departments and finally information needed at role level (if looking at on-boarding).
- Try replacing some of the PPTs with targeted activities. This allows the participants to learn by doing, and they often learn as much from each other as they do from one trainer (using experiences within the group). You may also find that the trainers enjoy the interaction and the break from doing all of the talking.
- Review the content which is aimed at creating 'awareness' only and create e-learning modules. This will allow the face to face delivery to focus on fundamental content, key messages and activities around these points which should lead to greater participant engagement and understanding.

## **2. You often hear complaints from workers about the induction (poorly delivered, irrelevant, boring, done it all before).**

### ***Causal Factors***

- Your induction applies a 'one program fits all' approach for employees, short and long term contractors.
- Your induction doesn't cater for varying levels of experience.
- Your induction lacks objectives and structure.
- Your induction doesn't cater for different learning styles.
- Your trainers are bored with delivering the same content day after day.

### ***Suggested Solutions***

- Conduct an Induction Needs Analysis on your induction to identify the core (must have) and non-core (nice to have) content. You can then determine the essential information to include and the best way to deliver this content successfully (get the message across to the wider participants – catering for various experience levels and learning styles).
- Ensure that you identify the key objectives of your induction– what participants should know and be able to demonstrate at the conclusion of the program. An outcome of this process may identify the need to segment the induction to allow a more targeted and relevant program.
- Change the delivery process of your induction to include a varied and blended approach. This may give your trainers a new lease on life, or alternatively they may chose to stop delivering training as they are unable to change their delivery style.

## **3. You find that you need to retrain workers on the basics even though they have just completed an induction.**

There is a common expectation that everything delivered in a training program should be able to be understood and applied at the completion of the program. This is an unrealistic expectation of any stand alone training program, and a majority of induction programs fall into this category.

### ***Causal Factors***

- There is too much information to be covered in a short timeframe with little context (particularly relevant for inexperienced workers) or emphasis on critical knowledge and skills.
- Your induction lacks clear objectives.
- The induction is delivered off site without work / task related activities and is not followed by any formal introduction / familiarisation when workers arrive onsite.

### ***Suggested Solutions***

- Conduct an Induction Needs Analysis to identify key content that must be included and other information that could be structured into other training at a later time.
  - Include relevant activities and scenarios during the induction that will assist with knowledge retention.
  - Consider segmenting induction delivery so that there are targeted induction programs with clear objectives for different worker groups e.g. core, operational, department, work area etc.
  - Ensure your site induction is followed by a work area assessment / familiarisation covering the key hazards, processes, location of emergency evacuation etc of the specific operating environment that will be worked in.
- 4. You use induction as a ‘catch net’ to ensure everyone is aware of all hazards / risks / incidents that have occurred on site or across the industry.**

### ***Causal Factors***

- There is no one role onsite that is accountable for the induction content / deliverables, and so the content of the induction is constantly changing in an uncontrolled way as a result of incident outcomes, industry data or legislative changes.
- Your induction has been structured primarily to meet legislative requirements rather than your business objectives.
- There is no clear, documented purpose or expected outcomes for your induction.

### ***Suggested Solutions***

- Your induction ultimately needs to have an ‘owner’ or ‘gate keeper’ who is accountable for the content and delivery of the program. In addition, there should be documented procedures for modification of content or change of deliverables (addition / removal).
- The content of your induction should align to business objectives/ goals as well as legislation. Inductions that have been designed only around legislation may lack context for your particular operational needs.
- An Induction Needs Analysis will help to determine the desired induction outcomes in terms of participant knowledge, skills and behaviours. Lessons learnt from site and industry incidents should only be included in induction training if they contribute to these identified outcomes. Ensure you complete a detailed analysis of the induction legislative requirements and don’t assume that because it is in your current induction then it must be legislated.

## **Business Alignment**

### **5. Your induction is delivered by trainer/s who do not have an understanding of your business culture, safety systems and practices.**

#### ***Causal Factors***

- Trainers are provided with a PPT presentation but little / no supporting trainer guides, lesson plans or notes to explain context and key underlying messages (who, what, why when, how).
- External Trainer/s deliver your induction.
- Trainers have not been actively engaged 'in the field' and don't understand the culture or how systems and tools apply at an operational level.

#### ***Suggested Solutions***

- Ensure your trainers have some form of guide that supports their delivery process. If they are using PPT, ensure the information on the slides is minimised so that the trainer and/ or the participants don't just read off the slides for the duration of the program (dot points on the slides, detailed explanations in the Trainer Guides).
- Whether your induction is delivered by internal or external trainers, it is critical that they undergo some form of professional development including application of your business and safety systems, culture, expectations and key goals / direction.
- There needs to be a form of field visit for Trainers so they can get first hand experience of how the site operates, where things are and how the systems and tools are applied (see, touch, experience). This process needs to occur regularly (e.g. quarterly / bi-annually) to ensure they maintain currency.

### **6. Your induction been designed without being aligned to your site / business systems processes.**

#### ***Causal Factors***

- Failure to complete a detailed Induction Needs Analysis which included consideration of business needs, desired outcomes, key messages and business expectations prior to the development of the induction program.
- The induction program was handed to an individual or provider (external or internal) to create and deliver who has no contracted or long term accountability for its success.

#### ***Suggested Solutions***

- Ensure your Induction Needs Analysis includes 'buy in' from senior managers / key stakeholders to set and agree on the purpose, key outcomes and expectations of the program. It is also crucial to ensure alignment to the site's systems and processes to ensure relevance to the participants.

- Be selective with the trainer/s or training providers you engage and actively manage their outcomes.

### **Quality & Consistency**

#### **7. You are concerned about the quality and consistency of your induction delivery.**

##### ***Causal Factors***

- There are no mechanisms to measure or manage the quality and consistency of delivery.
- There is no one role onsite that is accountable for the quality of induction delivery (whether internally or externally delivered).
- The induction evaluation data provided to you shows consistently good results.
- There is no quality audit process in place and so the quality and consistency varies depending on the individual trainer.

##### ***Suggested Solutions***

- Identify and record clear expectations and measurable quality standards for the Induction Program and trainers prior to audit. These standards should be included in any contracts you have with external training providers so there are clear accountabilities and performance indicators.
- Once you have clear objectives, the evaluation tools need to align to the set objectives and should be applied both during the induction delivery as well as to a random sample of Participants (post delivery). It is also beneficial to seek feedback from site supervisors to determine whether critical knowledge and skills are being demonstrated when Participants arrive on site. Evaluation should also include periodic trainer reviews by selected personnel (internal / external), and peer reviews by other trainers.
- Ensure that there is a single role onsite accountable for the quality of inductions. This individual should manage the induction evaluation data, reviews, and complaints and should have the authority to act on issues associated with quality.

#### **8. The content of your induction is almost constantly out of date.**

##### ***Causal Factors***

- There is no one role on site that is accountable for the induction program and its content.
- There is too much non-essential content included in the induction and therefore the changes are too regular to keep up with.



## ***Suggested Solutions***

- Ensure that there is a single role onsite accountable for the quality of inductions. This individual should manage the induction evaluation data, reviews, and complaints and should have the authority to act on issues associated with quality.
- Complete a mapping exercise between your induction and your safety / business systems to identify where changes to these systems require an update to induction content. Ensure the role onsite accountable for induction is part of the change management loop when these documents / processes change.
- Implement a review process for induction to account for changes to content not covered within standard systems and procedures.
- Conduct an Induction Needs Analysis to identify unnecessary content and remove it from the induction, ensuring removed content is captured at the appropriate level in the training process.

## **Assessment and Refresher**

### **9. You require workers to complete the same induction program periodically to meet refresher requirements.**

Why do we re-induct workers using the same induction that we know didn't work the first time? It ticks the boxes perhaps. Is this really the intent of the legislation, which is about managing risks and particularly managing a worker's exposure to risks?

## ***Causal Factors***

- Focus is on meeting the minimum legislative requirement.
- It is simple to re-deliver the same program.
- It is too difficult to capture evidence of refresher using other means (e.g. tool box talks, change management processes).

## ***Suggested Solutions***

- Induction should take place when a worker starts a role on site (once), and from then on refresher training takes place to revisit the key risks that workers are exposed to over time. This can take place through targeted training, toolbox talks and other training associated with change management on site.
- Record evidence of refresher training via the site training system database or records system (e.g. training attendance). This can be a complex automated system or simple process using hard copy documents (eg training attendance records).

## **10. Your induction includes a lengthy, paper based assessment.**

### ***Causal Factors***

- Written assessments, particularly short answer/ multiple choice/ true-false are seemingly easy to write and administer. In many cases though, they are poorly worded, ambiguous and assess only low level understanding.
- This type of assessment is generally applied with trainer centred delivery as other assessment methods including activity based and e-learning are not available.
- 'Self paced' training delivered through individual reading of procedures and manuals also often have assessments like this – again as other assessment methods are not available.

### ***Suggested Solution***

- Conducting an Induction Needs Analysis will identify the key learning outcomes to be achieved, which will then reduce other unnecessary content and assessment.
- Create assessments aligned to the intended learning outcome and level. For example; basic awareness, detailed understanding, application of a process / concept, analysis and making decisions etc. Understand that different assessment methods assess different levels of knowledge and skills.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has challenged you to evaluate your current induction process, delivery and assessment. It then offered some underlying causal factors that lead to common induction problems.

Your induction is the opportunity to set the scene for your employees and contractors and define the expectations of your site / organisation in terms of culture and safe behaviours. If delivered poorly, it can have the opposite effect and set workers on the wrong path.

Does your induction count? If not, taking action now could lead to significant positive change for your business, your employees and your contractors.