

Do Women Who Work in Safety, Health and Environment Consider Themselves Leaders?
Our survey with Women in SH&E said, "yes!"
Oct 12, 2013

The purpose of this survey was to inquire into the self-perception of women in Safety, Health and Environmental as leaders. We also desired to know what skills they believe are the most valuable to fill their role. The survey was initiated by Rosa Carrillo, Kelly Bernish and Cheryl Archer. There were 40 respondents from various Linked-in groups and mailing lists.

Highlights:

1. The vast majority (72.5%) of respondents would describe themselves as safety leaders.
2. 62.5% would value leadership development opportunities where women were the dominant group.
3. The most important leadership skills were perceived as employee engagement, influencing supervisors. Influencing others to be in compliance was in 6th out of seven places.
4. All influencing and communicating upwards were perceived as the most important skills. Building relationships with client was viewed as less valuable than other strategies.
5. 75% responded that the classes typically covered by an employer relate to technical skills.
6. 15% responded that employers were likely to pay for a women only leadership development course. Although an additional 39% responded "somewhat likely."

Discussion:

1. The term "safety leader" would seem to be an accepted descriptor for a woman working in SH&E.
2. While the majority of women feel they would benefit from "women focused" leadership development opportunities, only 15% feel their managers would be likely to support it. It seems that management should reconsider their perception.
3. The most important roles fall into the communication and influencing arena. While compliance is important these women seem to place more emphasis on their engagement and communication skills.
4. More research is needed to determine why these perceptions exist and how management can support women in SH&E to fully develop into leaders.

1. Does the term "safety leader" apply to your role as a SHE professional?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	72.5%	29
Somewhat	22.5%	9
No	5%	2
	Other (please specify)	
	Safety Consultant	1
	Research and Analytics	
Answered question		40
2. If "safety leader" does not fit for you, what would be a better role to describe your work with safety culture?		
	Response Count	
Researcher and Analyst		
Better would be "health & safety"		
Occupational Safety & Ergonomics Leader		
Safety engineer		
Consultant	10	
Consult with other companies		
Industrial Hygiene Lead		
Educator		

Safety Partner									
Safety and Environmental Engineer									
Answered question									10
3. Please rate how much you value the opportunity to share challenges and learn in an environment where mostly women are present?									
very little	somewhat	moderately	strongly	very strongly	Rating Average	Rating Count			
2.5% (1)	10.0% (4)	25.0% (10)	45.0% (18)	17.5% (7)	3.65	40			
4. Please rank the following from most important to least important to your work as a SHE professional. You must drag and drop the most important item into the #1 slot.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Rating Average	Rating Count
Influence others to be in compliance	15.0% (6)	7.5% (3)	10.0% (4)	17.5% (7)	25.0% (10)	12.5% (5)	12.5% (5)	4.18	40
Increase employee engagement in safety	30.0% (12)	25.0% (10)	22.5% (9)	15.0% (6)	2.5% (1)	5.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	2.50	40
Influence supervisors and managers	17.5% (7)	32.5% (13)	25.0% (10)	10.0% (4)	12.5% (5)	2.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.75	40
Gain personal credibility as a professional	10.0% (4)	5.0% (2)	10.0% (4)	15.0% (6)	12.5% (5)	27.5% (11)	20.0% (8)	4.78	40
Facilitate and manage change	5.0% (2)	10.0% (4)	12.5% (5)	20.0% (8)	22.5% (9)	17.5% (7)	12.5% (5)	4.48	40
Achieve lower incident rate	7.5% (3)	0.0% (0)	5.0% (2)	2.5% (1)	17.5% (7)	30.0% (12)	37.5% (15)	5.63	40
Mitigate and reduce risks	15.0% (6)	20.0% (8)	15.0% (6)	20.0% (8)	7.5% (3)	5.0% (2)	17.5% (7)	3.70	40
answered question									40
5. Rate the importance of the following skills in helping you achieve your goals as a SHE professional									
		not important	somewhat important	important	very important	Rating Average	Rating Count		
Influencing skills		0.0% (0)	2.5% (1)	32.5% (13)	65.0% (26)	3.63	40		
Facilitation skills		0.0% (0)	5.0% (2)	60.0% (24)	35.0% (14)	3.30	40		
Meeting and presentation skills		0.0% (0)	2.5% (1)	55.0% (22)	42.5% (17)	3.40	40		
Communicating upwards		0.0% (0)	2.5% (1)	30.0% (12)	67.5% (27)	3.65	40		
Building relationships with clients		2.5% (1)	7.5% (3)	40.0% (16)	50.0% (20)	3.38	40		
Technical expertise		0.0% (0)	2.5% (1)	52.5% (21)	45.0% (18)	3.43	40		
Other		37.5% (15)	30.0% (12)	25.0% (10)	7.5% (3)	2.03	40		
Answered question									40
Skipped question									0
6. What workshop topics do you or your company typically pays for?									
				Response Percent	Response Count				
Technical				75.0%	30				
Personal skill development				47.5%	19				
Relating to safety culture				40.0%	16				
Personal leadership development				37.5%	15				
				Other (please specify)					
				In house training (no cost, but supported) Usually to a conference NSC, ASSE, etc.	2				
Answered question									40

7. Rate how likely it would be for your company to authorize payment for a workshop on safety leadership development for women. Why?

Not likely	Somewhat likely	Likely	Very likely	Rating Average	Rating Count
35.9% (14)	38.5% (15)	17.9% (7)	7.7% (3)	1.97	39
Other (please specify) Show Responses					8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Director is a woman and I'm pretty sure she wouldn't see the need. I'm not sure I would either. I would like to gather with other women at a conference I was already attending. • I am the only female safety person • Because I am my own boss • If the narrative focuses on the Safety Leadership development vs. the "for women" part, I might be able to sell it to my boss. • Too narrow focus to spend money in tight economy. • I am uncertain, as I am new to this organization. 					
Answered question					39
Skipped question					1