

VISION ZERO

The Vision Zero success story –
Working together to save lives

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PRACTICE



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Key Facts

- ▶ This article examines the Vision Zero initiative in relation to the current crises people are facing
- ▶ Vision Zero tools are freely available for operational use, are all based on the “7 Golden Rules” and can be used worldwide
- ▶ 5 future focus areas describe the next phase of the International Social Security Association’s (ISSA) prevention culture initiative, focussing primarily on the sustainable implementation of Vision Zero

During the World Congress on Safety and Health at Work in Singapore in 2017, the ISSA launched the Vision Zero initiative and the accompanying “7 Golden Rules”. This was the start of a success story. One that focuses on leadership culture, humane work, social dialogue and sustainability in corporate culture.

For many people, a glance at the daily newspaper or their smartphone means being bombarded with crises. Man-made climate change has been caused by how we live – or want to live – and by how we work. There is war and violence very close to our European homes. Inflation and economic problems continue to challenge us. World hunger seems insurmountable. This all leads to dramatic refugee and migration movements. On top of that there are global health problems and pandemics to deal with. Then there are global working conditions that need to be addressed. Global working conditions also need to be addressed, as global supply chains mean that we can no longer ignore the conditions under which items are produced for us to buy as cheaply as possible in our own countries.

The Vision Zero story

So – isn’t it a relief to read about a success story for a change? The Vision Zero strategy certainly deserves a positive headline.

Vision Zero has come of age since the International Social Security Association (ISSA) presented the fledgling campaign at the World Congress on Safety and Health at Work in Singapore in 2017. Today, the global prevention strategy Vision Zero is more successful than ever. In today’s fast-paced world with its constant stream of campaign slogans, who would have thought such a lifespan was possible? Who would have thought that the “7 Golden Rules” of Vision Zero would become widely known and understood around the world? Who would have thought that so many institutions would collaborate to develop the Vision Zero tools and that Vision Zero would be used to inform national and sector strategies? And who would have thought that more than 15,000 partners worldwide would lend their good name and commitment to Vision Zero?

Vision Zero – the path to a culture of prevention

Initially, Vision Zero focused exclusively on prevention in the workplace. It has since become clear that Vision Zero is even more effective if other fields of action are included, such as corporate environmental protection, road safety and public health. It’s about moving away from traditional ‘silo thinking’ and reaching all the people in their different environments with a unified, simple language. Because ultimately, physical integrity is indivisible: ONE VISION ZERO. Vision Zero’s core message is that accidents, injuries and occupational diseases have causes – so every accident and every disease can be prevented if the right measures are put in place at the right time.

Safety and health at work can no longer be the exclusive concern of experts and specialists. Instead, it needs to become part of the daily agenda for all entrepreneurs, managers and their employees.

It calls for a new way of thinking and a new way of looking at the issue. More than ever, ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) is being understood in the boardroom as a set of issues that increasingly determine a company’s long-term success in the global competitive arena.

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Vision Zero translates the world’s laws, standards and regulations into a simple, understandable action plan that is compatible with national regulations around the world. Vision Zero embodies people’s fundamental right to physical integrity. Everyone has the right to return home safe and healthy at the end of every working day.

Accidents and diseases are not random – they have causes. By identifying the causes in time, every accident and disease can be prevented. Vision Zero has three pillars: Safety – Health – Wellbeing.

Practical tools for the workplace

The vast majority of unsafe or health-threatening situations can be identified by not looking the other way. This is the primary responsibility of every executive board, manager and supervisor.

That’s why ‘Leadership’ is at the top of the “7 Golden Rules”.

The entire Vision Zero toolkit, which is now available in several languages, can be seen in the table.

With the groundwork laid and the toolkit well stocked, the next phase in the Vision Zero initiative is to support the sustained application of the strategy around the world. To this end, five primary fields of action have been identified as the main focus areas.

Future focus area 1: Implementing Vision Zero in the organization

Thanks to the wealth of experience gained in this area, we know that each company needs to follow its own path. This is because there are as many different starting points as there are different requirements for a culture-driven prevention approach. As a result, there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution, as some people may be hoping for. That said, it’s worth the extra bit of effort because it results in a more sustainable implementation. Plus, having ‘something of your own’ counts more in the end. There is often a fear that introducing Vision Zero will mean that everything has to be rethought. This is not the case. On the contrary, Vision Zero should be seen as a new umbrella under which everything worth preserving can be successfully brought together.

The VISION ZERO Toolbox	
The VISION ZERO Website	https://visionzero.global/
VISION ZERO Guide for Employers and Managers: 7 Golden Rules – For Zero Accidents and Healthy Work	https://visionzero.global/sites/default/files/2017-12/2-Vision%20Zero%20Guide-Web.pdf
VISION ZERO Guide – 7 Golden Rules for Small Businesses	https://visionzero.global/sites/default/files/2020-10/EN-VZ-Guide%20for%20small%20enterprises_0.pdf
VISION ZERO Advice and Consulting	For more information please contact the ISSA Sections
VISION ZERO – Proactive Leading Indicators Guide	https://visionzero.global/guides
VISION ZERO Training for Managers and Coordinators	For more information please contact the ISSA Sections
VISION ZERO Guide – 7 Golden Rules to Protect the Environment and our Future	https://visionzero.global/sites/default/files/2023-08/2-VZ-Environment2022_0.pdf
VISION ZERO Guide to create a Healthy Work Environment and promote Wellbeing at Work	https://visionzero.global/sites/default/files/2023-08/2-VZ-Wellbeing_0.pdf
VISION ZERO Guide for Improving Safety, Health and Wellbeing in Workplaces along Global Supply Chains	Coming soon
VISION ZERO Guide for Labour Inspection	Coming soon

For companies seeking external support, there is a twelve-point implementation process that provides guidance.

Implementation Process: 12 Steps to the VISION ZERO Strategy	
1	START: Create Commitment for VISION ZERO
2	KICK-OFF: Information and Motivation Workshops
3	INVENTORY: Use VISION ZERO Guide
4	STRATEGIC PLAN: Timeline-Stakeholders-Structure
5	DEFINE GOALS: Select Leading Indicators
6	DEFINE MEASURES: Define Activities
7	DETERMINE TARGETS: Control Implementation
8	GO PUBLIC: Event – Advertising – Communication
9	REALIZATION PHASE: Measure & Monitor
10	ANALYSIS: Target/Actual Comparison
11	RESULTS EVALUATION: Document & Communicate
12	UPDATE PHASE: Update Procedures & Strategy

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Future focus area 2: Vision Zero at national level

The second field of action works on the premise that those affected have to become stakeholders if sustainability and acceptance are to be achieved. Finding local or sectoral partners to introduce the Vision Zero approach at national or industry sector level will prove beneficial. A stakeholder should take the initiative but without claiming exclusive rights to Vision Zero. Rather, all stakeholders should be able to find their place in this initiative. An open culture of collaboration ensures mutual acceptance and transforms participants from consumers into promoters.

In the end, everyone benefits from this.

There are already some good examples in different countries that are making Vision Zero a national strategy. Successful strategies are characterized by statements about the following questions:

- What is at the core of the initiative?
- What should the strategy be about – workplace prevention or a broader approach?

- Who will take the lead – who will be involved – how will the roles be distributed?
- What are the most specific targets to be achieved?
- What is the time frame?
- What concrete measures and activities are planned to achieve these targets?
- What implementation structures are available or need to be established?
- How will marketing and communications be carried out?
- How will success be measured and, if necessary, how will it be readjusted?

One very positive development supports the move to develop national strategies: In its new strategic framework for safety and health at work for the period 2021-2027, the European Commission strongly urges all Member States to consider the Vision Zero approach in their national policies. Consequently, the only recommendation is to develop national prevention strategies along global supply chains based on Vision Zero to gain better market access through better connectivity.

Future focus area 3: Overcoming silo thinking with Vision Zero

We all know it – The best thing to do first is check who is responsible. We think and act in silos. And, of course, the requirements, actions and approaches are completely different depending on the environment one is in.

Is this a promising road to take, if essentially we want the same thing – to guarantee people’s fundamental right to physical and mental integrity? If we want to reach and influence our peers, wouldn’t it be much better to use one language? Isn’t everything connected?

The conclusion has to be: Yes, we need to bring together what belongs together. People cannot conduct themselves in a safe and healthy way some of the time, yet at other times ignore it completely. That’s why OSH professionals need a more holistic perspective as well:

- Protect life and health at work.
- Include prevention with general health risks.
- Prevention also applies outside the workplace.
- A culture of prevention must also include the financial and business sectors.
- Why do we only start talking about safety and responsibility in the workplace?
- What about the school, education and training sectors?

Future focus area 4: Vision Zero as a matter for CEOs and management

It cannot be said often enough: Occupational safety, health and wellbeing is not primarily the responsibility of OSH professionals. It is management's responsibility. All those involved in OSH must therefore learn the language of corporate leaders.

Rather than being unnecessarily complex, the concepts should be made accessible to everyone through clear and simple language. Only then can people adopt them as their own. The arguments have been on the table for a long time:

- For some, legal certainty is important.
- Fewer accidents and illness mean less downtime and lower costs.
- They also mean better quality and a more motivated and creative workforce.
- Building a good image takes years – destroying it only takes a second.
- Attractive companies find skilled workers, even now.
- What's wrong with having happy, satisfied employees if they deliver better economic results?

So if prevention, safety, health and wellbeing are the responsibility of our managers, we have to ask ourselves what we are doing to ensure that they are also able to communicate with people in a way that motivates and values them. The answer is: not enough. Of course, some people do it naturally. And most of us have responsibilities – we just haven't learned how to fulfil them.

Hence the call to action: Talking about prevention culture in the workplace is too late. It's like locking the stable door after the horse has bolted.

It has to start in pre-schools, schools and all educational settings – be it vocational training or higher education. Vision Zero must become part of the curriculum and syllabus for all those who could have leadership responsibilities later in life – regardless of which discipline. This must be achieved politically. If not, this endeavour will fail.

Future focus area 5: Cooperation, not confrontation

The fifth future focus area revisits the topic of alliances. Many notable organizations, governments, institutions and also social partners have well-founded ideas and concepts. However, most of the time, they fight alone – always with the message that the issue at hand is the most important. Unfortunately, it has a limited impact. Why? Because although all these well-known organizations generate a flood of messages, tools, concepts and initiatives, the target groups are often identical. Is it really so impossible to join forces and work together instead of against each other?

While this may sound utopian, it's our duty to demand it, to reach out to each other and to make proposals. Let's make a start if no one else will! Preferably today! Because it's all about the bigger picture: about one world – one humanity – ONE VISION ZERO.



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