

## Key Questions to Ask Before Hiring a “Safety Consultant”

Did you know that there are no standards governing Safety Consultants in Manitoba? That anyone can call themselves a “Safety Professional”? Unfortunately too many business owners have found out the costly way:

*A local construction company paid \$1000 per month to a “safety consultant” to develop their safety program. At the end of 12 months, the company had paid \$12,000 for a paper copy of a substandard safety program. They were not even provided with an electronic copy.*

*An employee of a Winnipeg Insurance company helped her husband get COR Certified. She is now a self-professed “Safety Consultant”, however she has no formal safety training and has no knowledge of safety management systems. Her husband encouraged her to get into the Safety Consulting business because he “thought she could make a lot of money”.*

Hiring a Safety and Health Consultant is a **BIG DEAL** when the safety of your employees and the profitability and due diligence of your company are potentially at stake. But with many people popping up and calling themselves Safety Consultants, how do you know which ones are the **REAL DEAL**?

### 10 SIMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU HIRE A SAFETY CONSULTANT

- 1. What is your Safety Management philosophy?** A credible Consultant should be able to explain their philosophy toward their craft. For example they should tell you about prioritization of your risks. They should understand that in general 20% of what most organizations do pose 80% of the credible risk and were they will spend most of their effort. They should be sensitive to the fact that they should be making the most of your time and money invested. Be an intelligent consumer. Find out as much as you can and ask for specifics and clarification if you don't understand something.
- 2. Will you provide the scope of work, timelines and deliverables in writing?** Talk is cheap and too often a “short consulting project” turns into forever and a big money pit...yours. A true safety professional that has confidence in their abilities will provide you with exactly what they will deliver, by when and at what price.
- 3. Will you work with anyone?** A good Safety Professional will not work with just anyone. They understand that “we'll do it all for you” is hazardous to your people, your profits and your due diligence. They will have requirements that they understand are imperative to your success and to meet the requirements of Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health legislation. Some of their requirements should be active management leadership and commitment in the process as well as involvement of your workers.

**4. How do you measure success in an organization you are working with?** A good answer is “when you don’t need me anymore”. A true professional knows that at the end of the day it’s always the employer and supervisors that are responsible and liable after a serious workplace incident. If the safety consultant leaves and your safety management system falls apart... then you never really had one in the first place. A good consultant’s goal will be to work themselves out of a job.

**5. What education and professional certifications do you have?** Certification is a credential given by an agency or institution with its own educational and testing standards. Quality credentialing agencies require a thorough, and often expensive, process of certification. Usually this includes written, oral and practical components. Some good examples would be:

**CRSP (Canadian Registered Safety Professional):** This designation is now a widely accepted form of recognition by industry and government in Canada. Many employers require the CRSP designation in order to qualify for a safety position since maintenance of the designation ensures that the highest standards of excellence and professionalism are maintained at all times and by all CRSPs. You can learn more about the CRSP designation at: <http://www.bcrsp.ca>

**CHSC (Certified Health and Safety Consultant):** This designation is awarded by the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering recognizes and promotes excellence in professional consulting in the area of occupational health and safety. CHSC holders have successfully completed specialized training on law, ethics, the consulting process and communication. They are CSSE members who have passed mandatory examinations; met prescribed academic and experience standards; and maintain professional liability protection.

**CCA (Gold Seal Certification):** This program is a national certification program based on the candidate's education, experience and their ability to satisfy the rigorous standards of the Program. This may mean the successful completion of a Gold Seal exam. The Gold Seal Certificate was developed by the industry for the industry and is a voluntary certification program for the individual. The Certificate signifies that the individual has attained a nationally recognized level of experience and competence.

**CRM (Canadian Risk Manager):** This designation is awarded to those who have successfully completed criteria of courses in risk management which include Risk Assessment, Risk Control and Risk Financing. These courses also comprise the risk management major of the Fellow-Chartered Insurance Professional.

**CSO (Construction Safety Officer):** This designation is a nationally recognized level of competency in relation to construction safety. The CSO designation requires that all individuals have a combination of formal training combined with 3 years practical field experience in the construction safety industry.

**Other Designations you might look for are:**

Graduate of a Certificate or Diploma Program in Occupational Safety and Health Such as:

- Red River College offers a certificate program in Occupational Safety and Health
- British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) offers both a Certificate and a Diploma Program
- University of New Brunswick - Certificate
- University of Manitoba - Certificate Program was offered in the past.
- University of Alberta - Certificate in Occupational Safety & Health

- 6. What experience do you have in the field of Occupational Safety and Health Management and Training?** Find out what previous experience the Consultant has. Do they have work experience in your industry? Do they have training in adult education? Many high quality consultants may be generalists and refer to specialists as required. Others will stick to certain specialities such as occupational hygiene or ergonomics, so ask what their specialty is. Find out how long the Consultant has been working in the industry and doing what.
- 7. Can I have references?** This is the best way to get honest information. A great Consultant will be more than happy to give you a list of satisfied clients whom you can contact. If the Consultant refuses to give references or acts as though it is a major inconvenience, look elsewhere.
- 8. Do you have errors and omissions and third party liability insurance?** This question speaks to the Consultants own professionalism and the way that they manage their own due diligence. A professional Consultant will always be prepared to protect both you the client and themselves, to a degree, should their work prove faulty. If the Consultant is teaching due diligence then they should be practicing it themselves. You have insurance for your business. So should they.
- 9. How do you keep up with current legislation and industry best practices?** It is true that a company can be held to the minimum WSH standards established in the Manitoba WSH Act and Regulations, and it is also true that you can be held to **industry best practices** in the event of a workplace injury.

All true professionals will update their knowledge on an on- going basis through ongoing education so that they are able to provide you with the latest safe and effective information. . All good quality Consultants will have reputable sources for information pertaining to your specific questions and concerns.

- 10. What documentation do you provide?** As the saying goes in Safety Management “If it wasn’t documented, it didn’t happen.” All professional Consultants will understand the importance of making sure you have proper documentation. This includes documentation of worker involvement in the development in any part of your safety program, training records including sign in sheets with names, dates and signatures of all participants, copy of the course materials and competency tests. Finally they will NOT keep all your records in their own possession.

The last question is one to ask yourself: ***What’s your overall comfort level after speaking with the Consultant?*** You wouldn’t buy a pair of safety boots without at least trying them on to see if they’re comfortable. The same concept holds for hiring a safety Consultant. Set up an interview, ask the right questions, and follow your instincts for a good fit. After these questions have been answered to your satisfaction, the decision to hire or not should be much easier. Don't settle for someone who makes you uncomfortable--it's worth the time to do some homework.