

HACCP meets the real world

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HAACP is now an accepted part of the food chain and a fact of life for food manufacturers, caterers and retailers alike.

However, judging by the number of enquiries that Bodycote LawLabs receives on a daily basis, not everyone is as conversant as they should be with the basics and HACCP is still a minefield for many food businesses.

Smaller companies without the resources of a QA manager seem to be the worst hit, and it is those companies who face losing the most if there is a major problem within their food safety management system.

We have found that many food companies have difficulty seeing how HACCP principles can practically apply to their business and sometimes just can not 'see the wood for the trees'. In practice HACCP is straightforward and by tailoring the training to ensure that it meets the requirements of the individual business, will ensure success.

Too often product safety is kept as the domain of the quality team, but everyone from the cleaning staff to the production manager has a responsibility for HACCP quality.

But how do you ensure that HACCP in your business is successful? And what about the challenges of implementing a successful programme in your factory, where you may have seasonal staff and or a workforce where English is not the first language?

Ongoing commitment

The secret lies in an understanding of and commitment to the policies from the boardroom to the factory floor coupled a practical training programme and a commitment to ensuring ongoing staff training.

Getting selected staff members involved at an early stage in putting together the training plan along with the quality team will ensure that the philosophy filters through to grass roots level too.

What kind of training works best? To ensure that your training is successful, it is best to choose a route that is going to suit the audience and will be easy to understand. In most instances, employ a professional trainer who understands the

needs of the food industry and will devise a package for your company and then take you through the practicalities.

A member of staff can then be appointed as a designated trainer on site (the CIEH Professional Trainer Certificate is essential here) to ensure implementation of the HACCP plan.

Easy to use programme

An easy to use programme will be the best approach and should incorporate the following:

1Expectations – make sure there are clear expectations of what is supposed to happen when the training is complete.

1Communication – choose the method of presentation and presenter that best suits the needs of the audience.

1Create a practical format – in most cases it will be more cost effective to have training undertaken in the work environment rather than taking groups of staff to an external venue.

By training in the place of work, the trainer can give practical examples of how HACCP for example can be applied in the particular work situation. Using real life examples can also help employees to understand HACCP better and the possible consequences if a sensible approach to food hygiene is not taken.

A director of a food company will have different experiences of the food industry from

someone on the packing line for example, and the training should of course reflect this.

1Diversity awareness – ensure that training is easy for everyone to understand, even if English is not their first language. This is where the hands on, practical approach in the work environment is best. Ensure that any training documents are written in plain english so that they are clear for everyone to understand.

When presenting, speak clearly, maintain eye contact and avoid use of slang and idiomatic language – then everyone, no matter whether their native tongue is Polish, English or Urdu, will understand!

Some food companies have used training CD-Roms to practical effect on HACCP training. The visual nature of the training means that sometimes difficult scenarios can be clearly explained.

New training course

Bodycote LawLabs has worked extensively with food companies on a range of training needs.

As a result of the demand from food companies for assistance with HACCP, they have recently launched a new training course aimed specifically at businesses who want to learn the basics of HACCP in a practical, easy to understand format.

The Royal Institute of Public Health (RIPH) accredited Foundation Certificate in HACCP Principles is a one day course with a multiple choice examination at the close.

With examples and case studies tailored to the clients' own product range and business sector, the course is designed for up to 12 delegates and is hosted by Bodycote LawLabs' advisory team at the clients own premises to help delegates to see how the principles can be applied in their business.

In common with all Bodycote LawLabs' training courses, the HACCP Principles course can be validated under the Learning & Skills Council Green Card Scheme and the qualifications can be entered on the new national database of food industry employees' qualifications. n healthsciences@bodycote.com

