



# Reimagining a safe and compliant workplace—The blue-collar edition





**The Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll revealed that there is a strong correlation between the probability of workers getting a serious injury at work and their opinion that they cannot freely report safety issues to their employers. Ensuring occupational safety and compliance should be a major dialogue as blue-collar organisations invest in technology to navigate towards a safe and complaint workplace.**

The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) report on World Day of Safety and Health at Work —2022, outlined that nearly 2.9 million workers die every year due to occupational accidents and diseases, and at least 402 million employees suffer non-fatal occupational injuries.

It translates into one objective: occupational safety and health must become a priority for Human Resources (HR) and business leaders. Similarly, it places a premium on blue-collar organisations to implement safe work environment policies and procedures for their workers—leveraging advanced technology as an enabler for safer working environments. An organisation that takes genuine steps toward fostering a hybrid safety work culture also lowers its risk of non-compliance penalties.

The same study also highlighted workplaces with higher engagement reported 64% fewer safety incidents and 58% fewer hospitalizations. So, building a preventative safety and healthy work environment where employee wellbeing is a major talking point among blue-collar leadership can be an actual game changer.

Several factors inhibit a safe workplace with working conditions that promote employee wellbeing. Compliance management can be complex and quite expensive. As per the Competitive Enterprise Institute, large firms are spending up to \$10,000 per employee to maintain compliance. Blue-collar workers are often

dispersed across various regions, states, and countries fulfilling their duties. Managing compliance becomes a vital issue because different localities often have specific laws regarding maximum work hours, employment contracts, overtime, worker conditions, wages, and leaves. Siloed and archaic shift schedulers and manual operations may further expose field-based organisations to compliance issues and hefty regulatory fines.

Another key factor that is often overlooked or found to be out-of-date is the field-based staff's health and safety training programmes. To harness deeper insights, continuous observations, and real-time alerts that help employees avoid unsafe situations, companies must invest in advanced artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning capabilities. Nowadays, AI-powered models come equipped with features like apron detection, machine components detection, etc., to ensure safe operation as well as operator safety. Business leaders, field supervisors, floor managers, etc., can ensure their blue-collar workers undergo safety trainings regularly, especially before using heavy, dangerous assemblies.

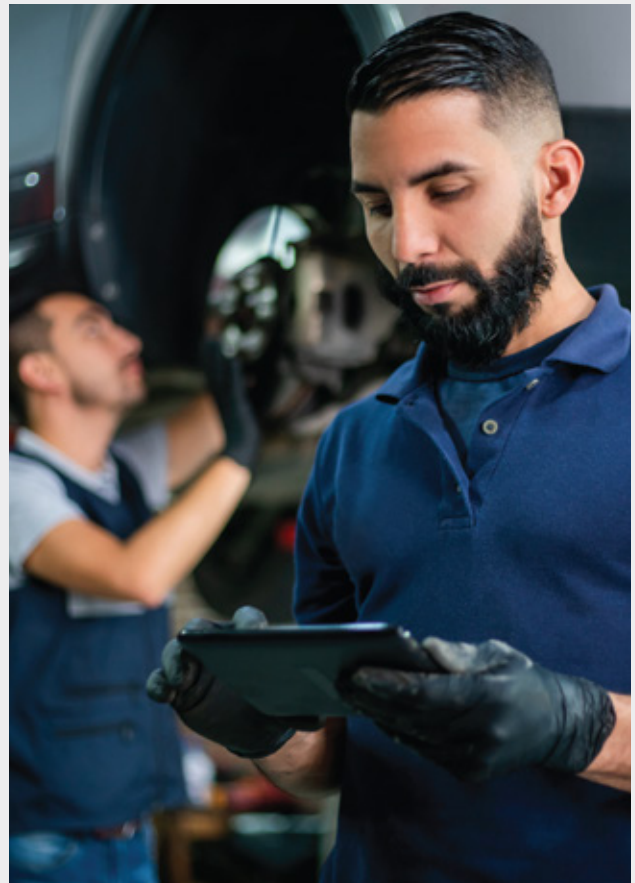
The absence of an incident reporting and management system can be a major flaw when it comes to workforce management, especially for field-based jobs. The Labour Force Survey in the UK revealed that 441,000 people suffered a work-related injury in 2020-21.

Ensuring employee safety is necessary. Blue-collar leadership is now expected to pursue a safe and compliant workforce and simultaneously realize how smart HR technology can be of immense help. Technology can help businesses overcome many challenges and foster a safe and healthy workplace culture for blue-collar and all employees. Here's how:

### 1. Digitise incident tracking and management

Instead of a paper-based incident tracking system, using smart technology to deliver accessible, user-friendly tools, etc., facilitates a connected culture where every employee can contribute to safety conversations. Investment in digital trackers enables employees to put in real-time suggestions in a way that is more naturally aligned to their daily activities, thus improving reporting rates and, at the same time, capturing critical data that is essential to creating high-quality insights. It also offers increased visibility of the safety and compliance status.

User-friendly, AI-powered Incident Management Systems (IMS), available in the form of mobile apps, empowers employees to report incidents in actual time from wherever they are, gain from quick tips, or request help in case of emergencies.



### 2. Digitise employee health monitoring and worksite maintenance

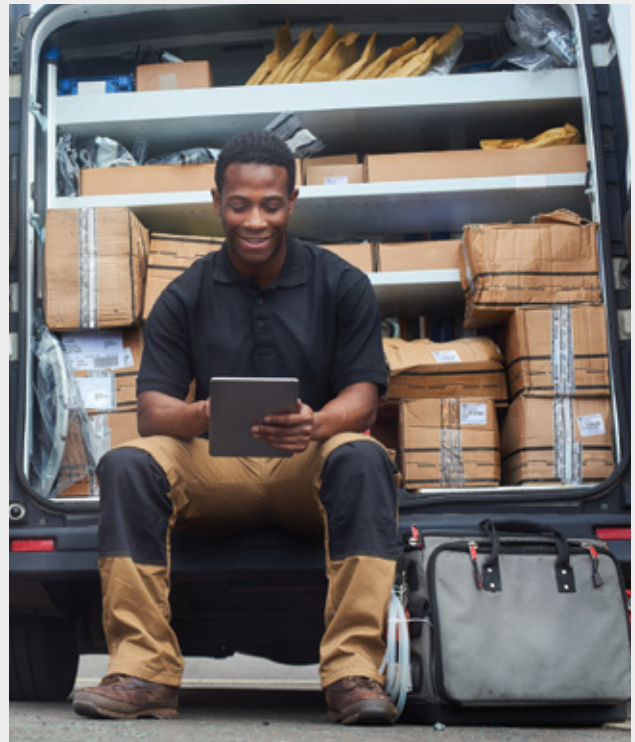
The Covid-19 pandemic pushed the work world towards an increased reliance on different digital health alternatives. Blue-collar employees can be given digital apps to monitor their external workplace environment using sensors that check air and gas quality, provide weather updates, etc. Additionally, employers can provide wearable devices to remote field-based employees so they can monitor their heart rate, blood pressure, and skin temperature. These devices can detect potential health complications. AI-enabled chatbots and digital health kits offer quick solutions to health-related questions. These digital safety solutions can also trigger alerts to facilitate emergency response and rescue measures or proactively warn workers so that they can take necessary precautions or preventive actions.

Research has shown that major heavy-industry players who trusted advanced analytics and AI to digitize maintenance experienced reduced unplanned outages and enhanced maintenance-labour productivity, leading to a rise of 4–10% in profitability in 2021. They were able to predict and prevent equipment failure and enhance worker safety on the field.



### 3. Digitise attendance and extend shift flexibility

Tracking attendance can be another significant challenge when the blue-collar workforce is dispersed across different locations, shifts, and working environments. Intelligent technology like GPS tracking can help efficiently record attendance and time worked. Employees also benefit from intelligent technology. In case a blue-collar employee is not feeling well on-site, he or she can simply queue a sick leave on the company's digital attendance management system and inform his reporting manager or the employer with an instant notification feature. This can be a great step towards extending digital healthcare and shift flexibility to the remote workforce. When employees are empowered to choose flexible shifts, the blue-collar workforce is likely to stay with their current employer. In fact, 73% of American blue-collar employers were willing to trade an increase of \$1.00 per hour for extra 5 PTO (Paid Time Off) leaves.



### Navigating blue-collar leadership forward

It feels like the right time to attract, secure, and nurture blue-collar talent. Apart from ensuring employee engagement and satisfaction, maintaining workplace safety and health standards is also critical to meeting regulatory compliance requirements. In almost every country, federal and state laws enforce mandatory health and safety regulations for employees, and maintaining these regulatory practices is often a challenge for Human Resources.



As organisations invest in digital technologies such as cognitive AI, predictive & prescriptive analytics, hyperautomation, etc., they can enjoy the multiple benefits of safer work environments, from creating digital safety data sheets to pushing automated notifications and updates to employees' mobile devices regarding essential safety policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs). It's digital technology that allows HR to conduct virtual safety courses with employees who access the training from anywhere.

It is imperative to note that a comprehensive, digital HR solution with a complete array of 'hire-to-retire' lifecycle capabilities can help manage workforces effectively, enhance productivity, optimize costs, ensure workplace safety, and promote employee confidence and engagement. Digitized incident reporting, maintaining an AI-based health and safety management system, and integrating next-gen technologies like IoT to create monitoring devices that provide real-time information on hazards will promote a culture of communication and collaboration around workplace safety. It's good news for blue-collar leadership with the greatest opportunity to navigate toward a safe, compliant workforce simply by leveraging digital technologies.



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