



**Announcer:**

It's time for the *IHSA Safety Podcast*.

**Stacey Blea:**

Okay, Pete, so today we're going to talk a little bit about preparing for your internal audit. So I'm just going to ask you a couple questions, and see what the IHSA recommends that everyone does to prepare for doing their own internal audit. Sound good?

**Peter Smith:**

Yeah, very good. Very good.

**Stacey Blea:**

All right, sounds good. Okay, so what would you say that the first thing that an organization should do in preparing for their first internal audit?

**Peter Smith:**

Well, first thing to make sure you have, is you have to have your health and safety management system, your health and safety program. This should be in place, and it should be implemented over a year's time at a minimum, right? Because when we're looking at COR®, COR® is about verifying that you have a program that meets our requirements, but then it also, the implementation of that program. So you got to make sure that you have this in place for a year prior to getting started in COR®. And keep in mind, yeah, it is about that validation that it's been fully implemented in the field.

**Stacey Blea:**

Right, right. Yeah. I know in some of the audits, or sometimes I get an organization who submitted an audit, and they would say, "Oh, you know, we only just put together our health and safety management program six months ago, and we're just trying to make this work," kind of thing, to get COR® certified. But that's not really the intent. That's not the intent of the COR® certification, right, it's to recognize the health and safety excellence of your program, right?

**Peter Smith:**

Absolutely. And appreciate that those companies are getting started.

**Stacey Blea:**

For sure.

**Peter Smith:**

And it's definitely the right step to get that program in place and start setting goals. Because prior to COR®, a lot of companies didn't think about that, of setting goals for their health and safety program, or where they want to be in a year's time, or two years' time. So by putting those things together, or putting it in place, great start point, we just need to have a bit of history to be able to audit that. Because really, this does boil down to an auditing program to verify that that health and safety management system is in place and has been fully implemented.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, for sure, for sure. Okay, so what are some of the resources that the IHSA provides in order to help people properly prepare for their audit?

**Peter Smith:**

Well, first off, there's training programs. So the organization, when they get started in COR®, they're going to have to determine who is going to be their senior management representative and their internal auditor. Each of them have some training requirements. The senior management representative has to take one training program, *COR® Essentials*, and then the Internal Auditor has to take four training programs, including *COR® Essentials*, but then they also have to go on to *Basic Auditing Principles*, and that touches on just auditing in general. There's *COR® Internal Auditor*, which really gets into covering the use of our audit tool.

**Stacey Blea:**

Right.

**Peter Smith:**

And then there's the *Introduction to Hazard and Risk Management*, and this is about hazard assessment. We saw the industry struggling with that element of COR®, so we decided to put another program in place for that, just to help them along.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, that's definitely a hefty topic.

**Peter Smith:**

Yeah, for sure, for sure.

**Stacey Blea:**

Okay, and what other kind of resources?

**Peter Smith:**

So we've got the audit instructions, so these will guide you. So we teach you how to use the audit tool and the resources through the training programs, but you have these things to take home with you as well. And one of them is the audit instruction, so this is one that walks you through how to complete the internal audit. It really provides that guidance. You're not going to remember everything from the training program, but at least you're going to remember where the resources are and where to find that information afterwards as well.

**Stacey Blea:**

Right.

**Peter Smith:**

We also have COR® conferences. We run these twice a year, one in the spring, one in the fall, and we focus on different topics relating to COR® in each. We do have these coming up at the end of April, so I'd like to see everyone get on our website, or as you're looking into the future with these, just keep following our website with the news and events, and you'll see when we have our next conference available. We have COR® consulting, so this is some folks from our operations department will come out and work directly with companies who are trying to put together their program for COR®, or they might've done an internal audit and realize they have some gaps before they can move ahead to be successful with COR®. So they choose to work with us in those cases then, right?

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, that's good.

**Peter Smith:**

Now we have these podcasts, another great resource to walk people through it, you know what I mean? Things are moving along to the digital age, and people want to get the information this way, so great way to reach out to people.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah. With the podcast idea, I think it was, yes, of course, digital age, great, but it was just... I guess it's a supplementary resource so that people, you know, people learn in different ways. Some people are really good with reading and deciphering what they should do, and other people are more auditory learners, so it's just providing a different resource, and hopefully, that we can reach people and help them be more successful in their audit submissions, and make it a little bit easier for people to achieve their COR® certification, right?

**Peter Smith:**

Absolutely. We want these companies to be successful.

**Stacey Blea:**

100 per cent, yeah.

**Peter Smith:**

So the more we can offer them, the better.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yep.

**Peter Smith:**

Last but not least, we also have the COR® handbook. So this is a document that provides a lot of instruction on a step-by-step, question by question basis for the entire COR® audit, on what to submit when you're submitting your internal audit. So this is a key resource, our auditors use it when they're reviewing audits. It should be the resource that is heavily relied on by any internal auditor preparing their COR® internal audit.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah. I know even for myself, if I am working through an audit question, and maybe there's been a lot of documents submitted for that one question, and I get a little bit, "Okay, hold on a second here. What am I looking for," I will refer back to the handbook, and say, "Okay, three samples of this, da, da, da, okay, perfect," and then it just helps me streamline a little bit. Because sometimes we get maybe too many documents submitted, and just trying to bring myself back to focus, right?

**Peter Smith:**

Yeah, yeah. No, great point. Great point. And that's the intent of these, right? We have these companies that are submitting their internal audit for the first time, they've only been through our four training programs, it's a big subject to take on.

**Stacey Blea:**

For sure.

**Peter Smith:**

And then following that, they're only most likely doing an audit once a year afterwards, so it's difficult to remember all those things from a training program you've taken months, or even years ago, so those documents and resources are key to use after the fact as well.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, perfect. And with the podcasts, because with the handbook, you can go through question by question, line by line, what are we expecting? And I was kind of thinking that with the podcast as well, people can listen to, "Okay, I'm working on element one right now. I'm going to sit down, listen to the element one podcast, and really digest the information, and work on that element and get through it," right? And just take it chunk by chunk, right? You can't tackle the whole audit one go, right?

**Peter Smith:**

Yep. Well, and I picture that's how the internal auditors are doing it anyways.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah.

**Peter Smith:**

In my mind, it's always like they've got their regular job that they're working on as well, and it's just this has been something that's been added on their plate, and it could be a month's worth of time.

**Stacey Blea:**

For sure.

**Peter Smith:**

So you will be breaking it up. And love the way you described that there, the perfect approach, right? A fantastic way to go through the audit.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, absolutely. Okay, next question, is there any critical advice that you could provide to a company who's just starting out and considering applying for COR®?

**Peter Smith:**

Oh, there's lots of advice. I guess, a couple key things to start with would be making sure you've got that health and safety program in place for a year. It's a good way to be able to identify the trends and the gaps and deficiencies within the organization, but as well as the strengths, right? And it'll help you identify those areas of focus going forward. You also want to make sure that you've got all 19 elements implemented, right?

We've got a certain scoring criteria that we have within COR®, where you've got to pass the audit and be successful with the audit, you need to score 80 per cent overall, 65 per cent on each element. And there are legislative questions that you have to be successful on each one of these. You should need 100 per cent on the legislative questions. So with that idea about the scoring criteria, we see companies that submit their audit, and it might be a little bit early or they haven't implemented portions of it. Let's say Element 12, Statistics and Records, this is a common one that organizations don't feel like they've had their safety program in place long enough, so they don't have enough information to collect statistics on.

**Stacey Blea:**

Right.

**Peter Smith:**

But to be able to pass, you still need to have that 65 per cent score on each COR® audit element. So they have to make sure they've got that in place, but as well as they have to address all 19 of the elements to some degree, just to make sure they're going to be successful and able to move on to that external audit.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, for sure, for sure.

**Peter Smith:**

I guess one other key that, and you just can't be successful at COR® without this, is senior management commitment. You want to make sure that the senior management of the organization, the owners of the organization, they need to be committed to health and safety and to achieve COR®. Keys for them is to make sure that they're leading by example and demonstrate that health and safety as a priority.

**Stacey Blea:**

Right. Sorry, guys, I have to clear my throat here. So how is it that senior management could demonstrate their commitment to the health and safety?

**Peter Smith:**

One way to do this, and this is probably one of the most effective ways to do this, is to make sure they hold company-wide health and safety meetings. And there's two benefits to this. This is a requirement in COR®, so to make sure that you're going to be successful in COR®, you want to make sure you're doing this as well. But the reason this is part of COR®, because it's a very effective method to be able to get the message out, that safety is a priority to the entire organization, right?

So the idea here is you have senior management ownership, and they're taking the employees out of the field for a day. They're not actually doing their production work, or day, half day, whatever it is, but you're spending that time speaking to them about health and safety. And it helps get your message out about your health and safety goals and objectives within the organization, but it does show that health and safety is a priority, because it's not this competing thing with production at that time. It's not health and safety versus production, it's "Okay, we're going to take a stop from production and we're going to focus on safety for today, and we're going to get back to production to make sure everything is being done safely afterwards," right?

So that's probably one of the key ways, I would say, is a great start point for senior management and ownership to really focus on that, making safety a priority, or demonstrating that safety is a priority.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, and I think that it definitely goes to the whole, that safety can't be driven from a middle management position. It can't just be on the shoulders of the health and safety person in the company, whether that's a health and safety manager or health and safety coordinator, or whoever. You're not going to get the full... How would I say it? You're not going to get the full impact in the culture of your company if it's being driven from just a middle management position, it has to be top-down. There has

to be that leadership from the owner, and from, like you said, senior management in general, who are making that a priority, for you to have the success in health and safety long-term.

**Peter Smith:**

Absolutely. I fully agree, Stacey. Those individuals that you mentioned are resource people and key to the organization, but they're resources to take that senior management and ownership vision and make that a reality.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yes.

**Peter Smith:**

So yeah, both were going to be working together, for sure.

**Stacey Blea:**

So we touched on this a little bit a moment ago, about if a company doesn't fully have their program, or doesn't have all of the elements, the 19 elements, developed yet in their program, so just going to touch on it again. So if a company does not have something like statistics developed yet, is it still possible for them to submit a COR® audit and leave out statistics, and just say, "Hey, we'll catch this next year?"

**Peter Smith:**

No, no. So we've got that scoring criteria, 80 per cent overall, 65 per cent per element, and 100 per cent on legislative questions. Each element is going to require, at minimum, a 65 per cent score, so they do have to address it in some form or fashion. To just completely omit it is not going to be... They won't be successful with that. It's really, at that point, it's an audit that we're going to send back, because we need a full robust program that's touching all these elements and been in place for a year before we're able to audit that. And when we receive submissions like that, audit submissions, we'll review it, or it will get pre-assessed, and that'll be something that'll be just sent back to the organization because it's incomplete and it's going to fail. So it's certainly not the way to go, they're better off putting in the time, making sure they've addressed it somehow, and then move ahead to the submitting the internal audit.

**Stacey Blea:**

Right, okay. So I wanted to delve in a little bit to the different phases of preparing for your internal audit. In the IHSA, in one of the resources that you mentioned earlier, the audit instructions, we've outlined the three different phases of the audit process. So we've outlined phase one, preparing for the audit, phase two, performing the audit, and phase three, summarizing the audit. So this is a process I just wanted to talk to you a little bit about today, and see if you can walk us through each phase and what is kind of important to focus on in those phases.

**Peter Smith:**

Sure, sure.

**Stacey Blea:**

Okay.

**Peter Smith:**

So first off, preparing for the audit, I would say this starts with the training, right? So first and foremost, we got to make sure that that internal auditor should have taken the required training before attempting to complete the internal audit. It really is that basic understanding of how to do an audit, how to use our audit tool, that's really what we're covering in the training. It'll also walk you through audit scoring, our different verification methods, which are documentation, things that are verified with observation, and things that are verified by interview. So they got to have an understanding of the different verification techniques as well.

It'll get into how to complete the audit tool, which includes the identifying which questions are legislative questions. It'll get into the requirements for completing the auditor's notes. So those are all key parts of key information that's going to be picked up during the training programs.

**Stacey Blea:**

Right.

**Peter Smith:**

There's also the pre-audit checklist. So in our COR® audit instructions document, there is a list, a pre-audit checklist, and this is going to give you an idea of some of the important items that need to be considered before completing an audit. It'll lead you to some of the items to consider in your preparation on conducting interviews, but also where to find documentation and evidence, and things along those lines.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah. The checklist is pretty comprehensive, and it gives you, not everything might be applicable to you, but at least it gives you a trigger too, something that you can consider.

**Peter Smith:**

Great way to put it. Yeah, exactly. Again, with that limited experience of these auditors, any of those tools that they have, that are going to walk them through the process, are going to be beneficial, and they should take advantage of all of them, I would say.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Peter Smith:**

So some other things to consider when you're preparing for the audit is you want to make sure senior management, or ownership of the company, is letting everyone know about the audit. Because first off,



you're going to need cooperation from everybody. The auditor is going to be conducting interviews, you're going to be doing observations, you're going to be interacting with some of the other employees, you want to make sure that everyone's been made aware that this is a priority and they should be cooperating with you for this. Not that they wouldn't anyways, but it's just that extra nudge from senior management does help along with that.

**Stacey Blea:**

Well, like we were talking about before, that the top-down leadership, right? So you want to start with the senior management, and they should really be addressing the situation, "Hey, guys, this is the direction that our company is going, and this is our goal, and what we're working on," and that communication piece, right?

**Peter Smith:**

Absolutely, absolutely. And yeah, that focus on the goal too, that this is an organizational priority to work towards COR®, for sure, that's got to be part of that communication. Preparing should also include things like your interviews, right? Interviews are a big part of the COR® audit. There's got to be some planning that goes into this, right? Where are those interviews going to be conducted? Have you got a suitable location? And at the head office, there's probably a boardroom, something easy, some way to make sure that you can get that done, but then we go out into the field, because most of the firms that are certified at the COR®, or going through the COR® process, are construction companies, their field operations don't always lend themselves to a great interview location. So is this going to be done in an office trailer, or how is this going to be accomplished when you're on site?

**Stacey Blea:**

And even just talking on the point of interviews, just from my personal experience, because I used to be an internal auditor, preparing your staff for those interviews, not just where's the location, stuff like that, but giving them the tools and resources and the information that they need to know. Most of the stuff, obviously, they should be already trained on a lot of it, but refreshing their memories. Maybe sometimes when you're asking the questions in the interview, the interview tool, maybe people don't understand it exactly, so just preparing them, training them, right? Sometimes it's not as effective just to go out there and just start conducting your interviews randomly, you want to make sure that you've prepped your staff and that they know what to expect, right?

**Peter Smith:**

Fully agreed, right. There's no harm in preparing your employees, or the staff, to get ready for the interviews. There's going to be things they remember from previous training, but a refresher never hurts. And if you're doing that prior to the interviews, great. And when I'm coming out to do an audit, I've done several external audits for IHSA, I'm expecting the company to put their best foot forward, and I really want them to spend that time with the employees, to make sure that they can properly represent the organization during the interviews.

**Stacey Blea:**

Absolutely.

**Peter Smith:**

So the largest part, so we've got our three verification techniques, and that's observations, interviews, documentation review. Documentation review probably makes up the bulk of the COR® audit. So this is going to be key to know, get all the ins and outs of your organization on where you're going to find this information. First off, is it paper-based or is it electronic? If it's paper-based, is it all kept in one central location or is there multiple locations where you're going to find this documentation? Are there keepers of the documentation, people you need to reach out to to be able to get access to it? So it's a bit of prep work there, just to figure out the ins and outs of your organization and where you're going to find this info.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, for sure.

**Peter Smith:**

We get then to the observations. Now, there are a certain number of workplace observations you have to conduct, and depending on the company, depending on the organization, maybe it's all based around the town you're in, maybe you're based right across Ontario. So there could be things like travel arrangements that you have to put in place, right? Flights, rental cars, hotels, these are all things that need to be considered when you're setting up your plan on how you're going to move your way through conducting these observations.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Peter Smith:**

I guess, one last thing to consider in the preparation though as well, is training and orientations. So as an internal auditor, do you have different training requirements as you go from site to site to go visit to conduct your observations? Or are there certain orientation sessions that you have to go through as you go from site to site, right?

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah.

**Peter Smith:**

This can change depending on who your client is, or who you're doing work for, or constructor that you're working for, they may all have different requirements for training and orientations. And it's something to just make sure you have all these things pre-planned so that you don't run into hiccups when you're actually trying to conduct those observations.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, absolutely. Because if you go to a site and you haven't considered the fact that maybe the GC [general contractor] has a two-hour orientation that needs to happen first, right? That's a timing that wasn't considered for, so it's definitely something that you need to include in your plans.

**Peter Smith:**

Oh, for sure, for sure. Absolutely.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah. Okay, so that would kind of wrap up, I think, phase one, preparing for the audit. We can move into phase two, performing the audit. If you want to just walk us through your suggestions for phase two.

**Peter Smith:**

Sure, sure. So like I said, three main ways that we verify, or go through the audit process, and that's documentation, observation, and interviews. Now, the documentation is really split up into two parts, there's documents and then there's records. Documents are, consider your health and safety program, and this is the document that gives you direction on what you should do, whereas records are verification that you have completed it. Another example might be a document could be a blank inspection checklist, whereas a record is a completed inspection checklist to validate that you have done this, that you've implemented it.

So with that said, now the documents we're looking at, we call it document review, but it's really made up of a collection of documents and records. First, we want to... COR® is very much based on the idea that say what you're going to do and then do what you said you were going to do. Say what you're going to do is the health and safety manual, the program itself, giving that direction on what has to be done, and then you are going to have the verification that you have done what you said you were going to do.

**Stacey Blea:**

Right.

**Peter Smith:**

And then one of the key principles as well, with the document review, or when you're sending in the documents with your internal audit submission, is to make sure there's three samples of evidence for those documented questions. And again, if it's a procedure, you're only going to have one sample, because that's the procedure itself, to answer that question. But if you're into something like inspection records, or you've got your joint health and safety committee meetings, there's going to be a frequency, and these are things that are recurring. The inspections could be something that's done weekly or monthly, depending on your organization. You want to make sure that you're submitting three consecutive samples of these things to show you are doing it at those prescribed times, that you're meeting those prescribed timelines.

**Stacey Blea:**

One of the examples that I can think of, in terms of where people get kind of confused between the documents versus records, is in element eight, when we're talking about orientations, and oftentimes, internal auditors will submit, if we're asking for records or samples of their orientation records, then they might just submit a blank document showing, "Hey, here, this is what we use for our orientations." Which is great, however, if the question is asking for the records and the samples, then we want to be able to see three completed, filled in actual records of the documents.

**Peter Smith:**

Exactly, exactly. Yeah, we need to get down to that implementation piece just to make sure.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, are you doing it?

**Peter Smith:**

Yeah, yeah. Perfect.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah. Okay. And so we talked about documents, and then what about some interviews?

**Peter Smith:**

So the interviews, it's something you work on over time, and you get more comfortable with this idea of performing the interviews. So peppered throughout the audit tool, you're going to have certain questions, or audit questions, that are supported with an interview question. And there are specific questions that are going to be asked for this, right? And some are geared towards management and some are geared towards workers, so you've already identified within the organization who are the worker interviews, who are the management interviews, and you're going to ask them the relevant questions that are applicable to them. But what we want you to do, is when you're going through the interviews, first we want you to start with the set question that we have in place. It's written in that audit language, and sometimes they're a little awkward, so you might be in that position where you have to paraphrase and make that clear to the interviewee on what you're asking for there.

But the expectation is that you're starting with the actual interview question that we have set out for you. Beyond that, if the understanding is not there, it's just making sure you can paraphrase and try and make it clearer for the interviewee at that point. Even before you get to that point though too, you want to make sure that you're putting the interviewee at ease. So this is something where... To be perfectly honest, you're interviewing all these employees, they probably don't want to be there. Audits not their idea of a good time, it's a company requirement, so they're going to go through with it.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah.

**Peter Smith:**

So you want to take away from their nervousness, because you want to get to them being able to provide those open and honest answers, and really speak to the organization and what they're seeing out there. So key is putting them at ease. And I know you've got your eyes on the clock, and there's a certain amount of time that you're going to be spending with each individual, but take a couple minutes. It's definitely an investment in the quality of the interview you're going to get afterwards, is taking a couple minutes to put them at ease, to make sure that they can provide those open, honest answers for you.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah. And I think that even in part of your preparation, when you're letting everybody know that you're coming out to do the interviews, and stuff like that, maybe even prefacing the whole thing by sending out an email, or some sort of communication, just to let everybody know that... I don't know. Yeah, like you said, to put people at ease, and that it's not about... Obviously, we want them to have the right answer, however, a lot of times when you're doing these interviews, it can actually show you where the gaps in your system are, right? So maybe a lot of people don't answer a certain question properly, well, that shows to me that there's some training needed there. So just because they didn't get the question right doesn't mean that it's not valuable. It's still valuable, it's valuable information for you, as internal auditor, right?

**Peter Smith:**

Oh, I would say that's even more valuable. The purpose of COR® is about continual improvement. It's to set a benchmark so you understand that from a health and safety perspective, we're here. And sure, COR®'s got a scoring criteria, but that's a way to easily identify where your current level of health and safety performance is. It also gives you something to shoot for. So when you get that information, where you're identifying gaps, that's valuable towards that continual improvement for the long term.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, for sure.

**Peter Smith:**

So last part of this that we haven't touched on yet, is the observations. And so again, you're going to be visiting the different workplaces, and you've got to make sure it's representative of all the operations within the organization.

At IHSA, we're COR®-certified, and we've got a head office, we've got a mail room, kind of a warehouse area. We do hands-on training, and different types of hands-on training, in different work locations, and each of those present risk, right? So we want to make sure that even during our audits, that we're seeing something that's representative, so head office is going to be visited, mail room's going to be visited. Where we do some of that hands-on training, whether it's for our power line apprentices over at our Skills Development Centre in Mississauga, that's a location we'd probably want to visit. Where we do swing stage training for construction trades and window washers, that's another high-risk area, and it's representative of our work, but kind of key to one location. We want to make sure we include that in the audit as well. Organizations conducting their own internal audit should be thinking the same, right,

"How do we capture all the different operations that we pursue, or a sampling of those operations, just to make sure that the audit is representative of all the organization's activities?"

**Stacey Blea:**

For sure. I mean, let's say we're talking about an ICI GC [industrial, commercial, and institutional general contractor] doing interior work, you should be looking at a sampling of your different job sites, right? The biggest one and possibly the smallest one, right, it's not all about doing the three biggest job sites. You do a big job site, a medium job site, and maybe you're working on a couple washrooms, right? You want to go and visit one of those too, because we want to make sure that the standards are being upheld across all of your work locations.

**Peter Smith:**

For sure. For sure. Yeah, great point. The size definitely fits into that as well, when you're considering that representative work.

**Stacey Blea:**

For sure. Okay. And I think we already touched on some of the observation stuff about travel arrangements, and all that kind of stuff, so I think we can move into phase three now. What do you think?

**Peter Smith:**

Sure, sure. Absolutely.

**Stacey Blea:**

So last but not least, the phase three of the audit would be summarizing the audit.

**Peter Smith:**

So you prepared for your audit, conducted your audit, now the end result of this is how you summarize that, and that's key information, because this is where you really kick off that continual improvement process. I would say the start point here is summarizing your findings for senior management. So COR® and a COR® audit is all a senior management, and it's the ownership, it's their objective to attain this, so they should want to receive detailed information on the results of the audit and how they fared, and how they're doing on their health and safety performance.

**Stacey Blea:**

Right.

**Peter Smith:**

So there's going to be a summary of those findings for senior management. This should include strengths as well as the gaps in the program as well. So any company going through COR® has put in a

lot of work to get there to that point, right? So the score is not always representative of all the work that they put into it, and there's certainly strengths that these organizations are going to have, so you want to make sure you focus on some of those strengths in the reporting. But then the key to move towards that continual improvement is going to be the gaps, identifying those gaps as well, and then working with senior management to prioritize those, and how to address them.

And as with any audit report, there's going to be a detailed set of findings that kind of breaks down the audit question by question, and gets into a lot of the detail, but they should also have an executive summary. And this should speak to, again, strengths, should speak to weaknesses, overall scoring, and then if this can be boiled down to where there's a few root issues that lead to deficiencies across the board, those are probably some of the ideas that you want to focus on with that executive summary. But just a way to break that down into a shorter document, or shorter section of your summarized audit findings, so it's easily understandable for senior management, who may not have that same depth of knowledge with health and safety as that internal auditor.

**Stacey Blea:**

So would you say that this is something that would be valuable to prepare the audit summary and have that as a piece to speak to at your post-audit meeting?

**Peter Smith:**

Absolutely, absolutely. And probably something you want to share with senior management ahead of time, just so they can have a look at it, and they can come back with some questions, or they're not going to be caught flat-footed in that meeting.

**Stacey Blea:**

Right.

**Peter Smith:**

But yeah, definitely a great resource to use for that post-audit meeting.

**Stacey Blea:**

Okay. So you have the summary audit report, and do you want to touch a little bit on the corrective action plan?

**Peter Smith:**

Absolutely. So following this, you've identified strengths, you've identified weaknesses, now it's time to really focus on how you're going to improve for the future, and this is the idea of putting together that corrective action plan, key to this continual improvement process. Now, you've got your audit report, you've got your findings, and the idea is to take those and prioritize them. There might be some that need to get addressed immediately to be able to move to be successful with your COR® external audit, to get your certification. There might be an element where you're scoring less than 65 per cent, or some reasons, or a few questions that are keeping you from getting to that 80 per cent overall.

**Stacey Blea:**

Like if you realize that you don't have your statistics analyzed, or something.

**Peter Smith:**

Yeah, absolutely, great example. Yeah, for sure. Yeah, so that's something then you want to build into that continual improvement, or that corrective action plan, and address those through there, and put those things in place to make sure you can be successful. So this is something you got to work on. Senior management should be working on that with input from the internal auditor. I expect the internal auditor to bring that in-depth safety knowledge, where the senior management people, they can assign resources and set timelines, and actually make this a priority within the organization.

**Stacey Blea:**

**Right.**

**Peter Smith:**

So it's key that you have both of those groups together. But yeah, the idea then is to prioritize the things you're going to work on, because of all the deficiencies that are there, we don't expect that all are going to be addressed immediately.

**Stacey Blea:**

**Right.**

**Peter Smith:**

It's about continual improvement, and what you get involved in COR®, you're going to be involved with this for years, and it's about that continual improvement on an ongoing basis. We're not expecting perfection. We're hoping companies strive for that perfection, but we're not expecting that perfection on any single audit that we actually receive. So you want to make sure you're biting off pieces that are going to be doable. So pick enough items where you're going to be successful on your external audit, choose some items that are going to help you excel and get better with your health and safety program as well, and then prioritize and focus your resources on achieving those. We'd rather you do a few things well, as opposed to take on too much and not do any of them well.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, definitely. Okay. So before we wrap up our discussion here, I just want to touch base a little bit on the submission, the actual submission of the internal audit. So prior to submitting the internal audit, what would you say is the last thing that each internal auditor, or company, should be completing before they submit?

**Peter Smith:**



First off, make sure you've passed the audit. Unbelievably, we have these resources, we have the training programs, we do receive a lot of internal audits that have failed themselves. And whether that's back to our original discussion about the statistics and records, or not addressing an element, that could be one reason, or it could be a legislative question, because you need to get 100 per cent in all the legislative questions, it could be leaving one of these out, or not scoring yourself successfully on it, right? So make sure the audit is passed before you submit it to us.

**Stacey Blea:**

Right. And just so I can slip this in here, because internally, we have, like you had mentioned before, a pre-assessment process. So our pre-assessors will take a look at the audit and make sure that it has passed, and make sure that all the legislative questions have passed, before they even assign it to an auditor. So like you said, there's some times when we receive audits and they don't make it through the pre-assessment stage, and they have to be sent back, right?

**Peter Smith:**

Yeah. Oh, exactly. The pre-assessors are making sure that before an auditor looks at it, they're making sure that it's been completed as per instructions, that it's passed, that all the administrative documentation has been submitted along with it. So those are all key to have there, and that's just to get to the point where you're going to have an auditor do the detailed review and actually speak to the quality of the evidence, or give you feedback on your actual health and safety program. That's the key part you want to get to, is getting that feedback from a knowledgeable, well-trained auditor. Do yourself a favour, take the time, make sure that you are submitting those audits and they've been completed as per the instructions for COR®, and that'll help you a long way with getting through this with the least amount of frustration and most efficiency, to get that good information from the auditors.

**Stacey Blea:**

Okay. And making sure the audit tool is completed, and they also have the audit submission checklist, correct?

**Peter Smith:**

Yeah, that's right. So the audit submission checklist is there just to guide the internal auditors to the different documents and different types of evidence and things that they have to submit with the audit itself as well.

**Stacey Blea:**

Right.

**Peter Smith:**

So it's not just the audit tool, we've got an audit information form, there's a post-audit meeting form, a pre-audit meeting form. There's a few things that have to be submitted with this, so those are all noted

on that audit submission checklist. It's definitely a valuable resource for the internal auditor to get a copy of this and make sure they're submitting all the required documents, as per that checklist.

**Stacey Blea:**

Right, so it's kind of all the admin part of the submission?

**Peter Smith:**

Yes.

**Stacey Blea:**

Yeah, okay. Well, I think we've had a pretty good discussion on preparing for the internal audit, and I hope that it's a good resource for everybody out there who is preparing to do their internal audit. And Pete, I just want to thank you for coming in today and having this talk with me.

**Peter Smith:**

Perfect. Thanks for having me in, Stacey. Enjoyed it.

**Stacey Blea:**

No problem. Bye

**Peter Smith:**

Bye.

**Announcer**

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