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10 ways to achieve standardisation in personal safety in the Pharma Industry

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There is no denying the importance of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Even if, in the hierarchy of risk control, all other appropriate means of protection must be applied before making PPE considerations.

Despite its importance, there is very little let-up in the pressure to drive efficiencies here and right across businesses. With that pressure comes a range of demands from different areas. Health and safety teams focus on developing a culture of safety within an organisation. In doing so, they aim to reach a benchmark level of compliance and also to minimise the number of accidents or health related incidents. The procurement team, who also recognise the importance of safety, strive to simplify their supply chain and achieve savings for the business. These, sometimes conflicting, drivers mean it is necessary to find ways to improve safety while also looking for efficiencies.

VWR, part of Avantor and 3M offer a standardisation process to the Pharma industry that can make the selection, procurement, delivery, training, use and PPE support a lot easier.

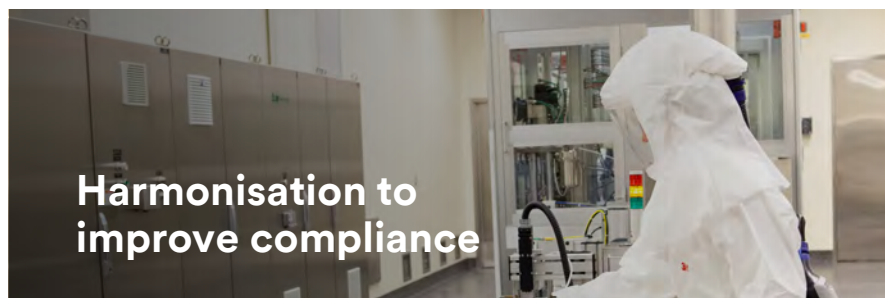
But what else do you need to consider?

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PPE: beyond personnel protection

When selecting a global supplier, you'll recognise their value if they also identify PPE that protects your product as well as your people. You need to find suppliers who understand your production process and can recommend approaches that protect both. Your assessment should involve your quality manager with follow up work ensuring that your production processes are maximised and not impeded.



Harmonisation to improve compliance

Confidence in and compliance to the PPE you supply to your employees can be achieved through standardisation and harmonisation of your products. There is an obvious value with single source-supplier compatibility, where you know that, from a safety perspective, the variety of pieces in use are all designed to work together. This isn't rocket-science, it's a logical and common-sense approach to harmonising the different safety products used across your sites. Harmonising your PPE in this way also contributes to a greater level of compliance and overall confidence in your employee's safety.



Buy quality assured equipment

You should seek assurance that your PPE is made to the highest standards. European Union (Personal Protective Equipment) Regulations 2016 require PPE to have the appropriate 'CE' mark. In the US, equipment needs to meet the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) standards, and Canadian Standards Association requirements must be met in Canada. Working closely with VWR, part of Avantor and 3M, as experts and trusted partners, you will have the confidence that your PPE is the best you can buy and meets local health and safety requirements.



Address local needs

Every site, every team, every job and environment is unique. In addition, across your business, local regulatory requirements can be different too. This raises a number of key issues. Individual local assessments will be key to identifying the PPE for each specific area of your business. This will ensure that the right equipment can be identified for the right person in the right place. Your hazard assessments will also pinpoint the performance levels that need to be met by the correct equipment. Therefore local knowledge backed by global expertise will be essential in the supplier chosen to supply and deliver this equipment if you are to achieve standardisation across multiple locations.

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Ensure best fit

We're all physically unique and have different responses and levels of comfort. There is no "one-size fits all" approach to buying jeans, so why would you adopt that approach when it comes to PPE for your employees? Addressing the needs of each individual is necessary to achieve best-fit. When sourcing PPE, keep in mind that it needs to fit – perhaps after some adjustment – each individual employee perfectly. The employee should not feel restricted in any way (mobility, visibility, audibly etc. Equally, it's important to note that while PPE should be easy to use, it shouldn't change the perceptions of safety/ hazards of the employee wearing it.

It is worth highlighting that not all equipment will be appropriate for employees with certain medical conditions. For example, if they have asthma, bronchitis or heart disease, certain types of respiratory protective equipment will be more suitable than others. Local assessment by the employer and clearance by a medical professional will help you establish what kit will be most suitable and if the employee can tolerate using the PPE.

Ultimately, establishing a best fit will drive efficiencies and cost savings in the long term.



Continuous assessment and innovation

A data driven approach will establish your needs, but it will also sustain the high quality of service and be the backbone of your continued assessment going forwards. Standardisation across your PPE provision can always be developed and refined both in terms of cost and delivery. Delivering sustainable solutions can also be achieved through joint innovation with your suppliers based on continuous assessment.

Find expert suppliers who can work with you on a local level to support your goals of continuous improvement around the issues of health and safety facing your specific locations. Together you can begin to innovate and implement new products and training solutions around safety, compliance and the reduction of risk.



Adaptability

Finding a supplier who is agile, responsive, aware of local changes and has the local and global ability to adapt quickly is incredibly important. They must be able to respond to regulatory or legislative change. If you can establish a strong partnership with them, they'll be able to work with you in an effective and agile way to maintain your high standards and deliver innovative and sustainable approaches to your new needs. Often, these changes are localised so you'll need a partner who can have a global impact, but who can also focus on the local requirements with expert 'field knowledge' and understanding of best practice.

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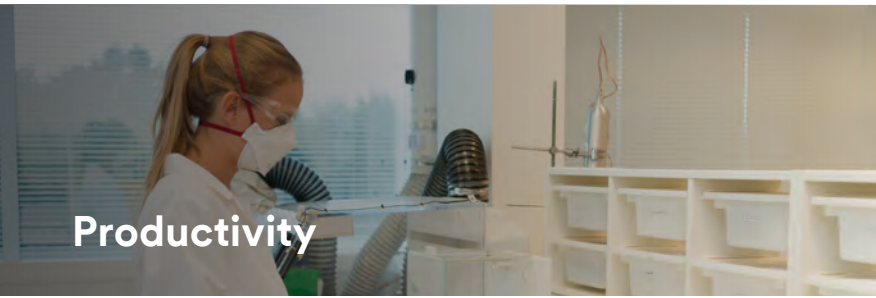
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Standardisation is also reliant on adequate training. Especially if you're operating a global business across multiple independent regulatory locations. Within large operations these regional differences can often be why standardisation is believed to be impossible. But even within a decentralised business there is still a route to harmonisation.

What if a smart global supplier with expertise in local regulations was able to help support your own global approach with local specifications and local training? It is possible. Even where international regions operate differently and regional differences suggest incompatibility with a universal approach, there is a way to create consistency.

If everybody in your business understood the basic science of safety, then the foundation can be laid on which localised approaches can be developed. This bespoke training should develop and adapt with your business and, when delivered by an agile and proactive partner, will continually be evolving. This training must cover everything from selecting the right PPE through to correct use, care and maintenance.



Productivity

How do you satisfy the team who are under pressure to sustain or increase productivity?

A reliable global partner with localised specialities and expertise will be integral to productivity. How? They'll be reactive to problems and issues, but they'll also be proactively identifying how to reduce the potential problem areas. Equally, a partner who has a global network (that can be drawn upon for additional support) and global supply chain, but who is locally available will reduce any down-time.

While the 'ease of use' of equipment is often seen as the only means to improve productivity, working with a smart and experienced supply partner will enable your business to develop a culture of safety and efficiency. They will also work with you to develop a bespoke, structured and comprehensive training regime that will underpin improvements.



Select equipment designed for your industry

Your supplier must be a pharma expert and understand your needs and demand for specific high-quality equipment. With hazards growing increasingly more dangerous, there is a need for more advanced solutions. Especially when products are used and changed every time the production area is left, such as coveralls and respirators or when PPE needs to be intrinsically safe or clean and sterile.

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Get in touch

VWR, part of Avantor and 3M share our customers' goals of wanting to send their team members home safely each day, and to keep them healthy throughout their career. We are dedicated to lowering risk by providing safety solutions across the globe for our customers. It's important to us because your employees are important to you.

Visit www.vwr.com/3M
for more information.

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