THE MAGAZINE FOR ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND SAFETY LEADERS

MAY/JUNE 2022
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EHS Today®

The Future of EHS

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EHS Today

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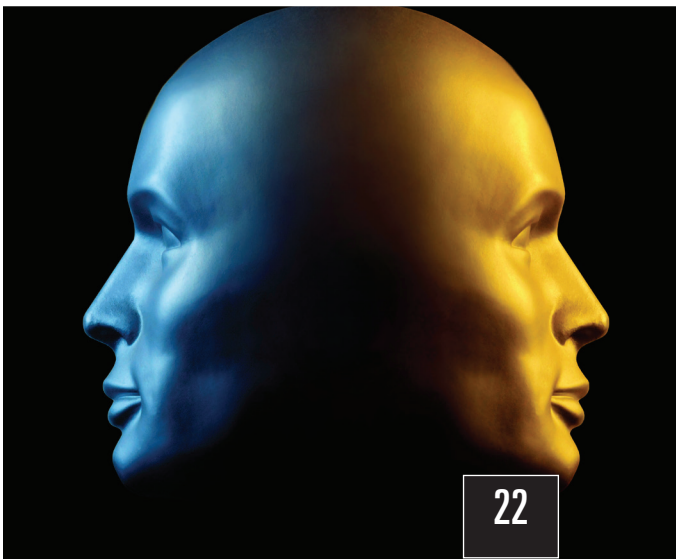

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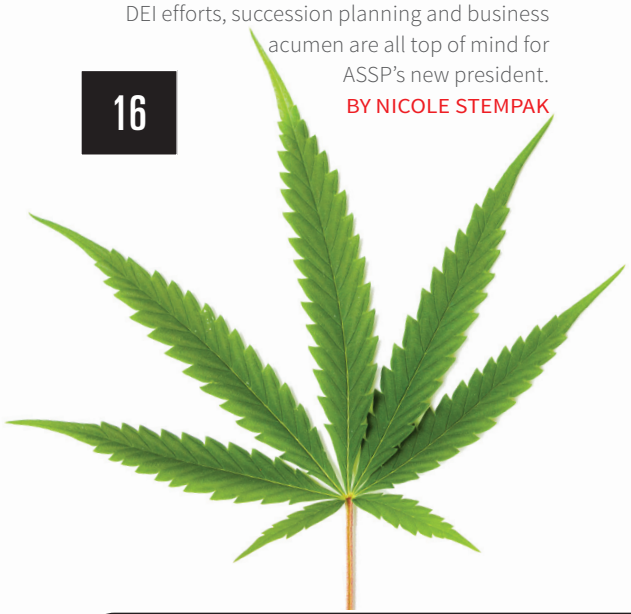

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DAVE BLANCHARD

Editor-in-Chief

LONG NIGHT'S JOURNEY INTO A NEW DAY

How to protect employees who may not know how to ask for help.

What mask do you wear to work every day? No, I'm not talking about a COVID face mask or a NIOSH-approved N95 respirator or any other type of PPE designed to keep contaminants out of your nose and mouth. I mean the kind of mask that camouflages certain aspects of your personality from your colleagues—the kind of things that maybe only your family and a few close friends know about you, or maybe even nobody else knows about you. Your job is to focus on safety, but that doesn't necessarily translate into you feeling safe enough to share all of your hopes and fears with your coworkers. Nor should you expect—and certainly you shouldn't insist—that your employees will share every intimate thought and feeling they have with you, either. As Longfellow once observed, everybody has a secret sorrow which the world knows not.

Your job is to keep your workers safe from harm, and it's proven to be a big enough task to ensure their safety that companies assemble entire teams to help prevent all kinds of accidents, incidents and injuries of a physical nature. But as the pandemic has shown, and as the opioid crisis showed even before COVID-19 arrived, and as the increasing withdrawal of people from the workplace even as the pandemic wanes is showing right now, the state of an employee's mental health is just as important—maybe even *more* important—as their physical health.

But how does a safety professional properly protect an employee's mental well-being, particularly when you don't even know what it is that's threatening them? How do you protect a person from something they themselves might not even be able to identify or define?

"To be safe, one must also feel safe," points out John Dony, vice president of thought leadership at the National Safety Council. "Feeling unsafe at work is hurting people, and more must be done to combat this in a holistic way. Employers everywhere must accept responsibility for their impact on workers on and off the clock by implementing safety policies and procedures that protect the whole person, including both physically and mentally."

In a recent study of more than 11,000 U.S. employees conducted by Mental Health America (MHA), nearly three-quarters (71%) of respondents said they find it difficult to concentrate at work, due to stress and distractions of various kinds. The pandemic is no doubt a major contributor of stress and anxiety for all workers, considering that less than half (48%) responded the same way in a 2018 survey. Whatever the causes, employees are feeling overwhelmed like never before, and the situation doesn't seem to be improving even as COVID recedes—in a recent Robert Half survey of 2,400 U.S. professionals, 41% said they feel more burned out now than they did a year ago. And here's one more statistic to consider: 76% of workers report being frequently tired at work, according to a Zippia study of 1,500 U.S. workers, with stress and anxiety being the two leading causes.

Imagine, then, the challenges safety leaders face knowing a significant number of their employees—many of whom work in hazardous, high-risk situations—are stressed out, burned out, distracted and overtired.

According to Andrew Faas, founder of the Faas Foundation, a nonprofit that supports the creation of psychologically healthy, safe and fair workplaces, there's a need for leaders "to reduce, and ideally eliminate, the tremendous amount of unnecessary stress workers face, largely because the conditions necessary for active and positive engagement do not exist in their workplace."

The MHA's *2022 Mind the Workplace* report attempts to answer the question: How can companies meaningfully support employee mental health? The answers, as you would expect, are not quick fixes. However, they do directly address the reality of the situation: investment of time, intention and action from all levels of a company; employee empowerment; and full managerial support (*see sidebar, "What Can You Do?"*).

The main takeaway from all of these recent studies is that safety professionals don't need a degree in mental health counseling to help keep their employees out of harm's way, nor do they need to be mind readers who are able to peer into the deepest recesses of their employees' psyches. They just need to do what they already do best: Pay close attention to their people.

Send an e-mail with your thoughts to dblanchard@endeavorb2b.com.

What Can You Do?

Safety leaders can contribute to a mentally healthier workforce in the following ways:

- Cultivating relationships built on trust and respect with employees.
- Applying active listening skills and emotional intelligence in daily interactions with employees.
- Providing appropriate guidance and assisting employees with workload management.
- Being aware of and noticing the signs of increased stress or burnout in employees.
- Encouraging employees to take time-off when needed.

Source: Mental Health America's 2022 Mind the Workplace

YE LIEW | DREAMSTIME

Time to Get Serious about Sustainability

By Jonathan Katz

The success of corporate sustainability programs may hinge upon four primary factors: staffing, funding, employee support and meaningful metrics. Operations professionals responding to *EHS Today*'s **2022 Sustainability Progress Report** survey indicated that these are the top areas they struggle with when implementing or maintaining a sustainability program.

Industry consultants suggest that corporate leaders prioritize sustainability initiatives as a strategic focus to overcome these challenges. In the coming years, they may not have a choice. In March, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) proposed rule changes that would require registrants to include information about climate-related business risks. In April, an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report concluded that industry must play a critical role in achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions targets.

Investors also are demanding change by pressing more companies to establish sustainability programs, says Ryan Lynch, practice director of sustainability, BSI Americas Professional Services.

"I see a lot of pressure from shareholders and some of their fund managers who have their own ESG (environmental, social and governance) commitments or ESG funds or have pledged to invest X amount of their resources to advance sustainable outcomes," Lynch says.

Lynch is seeing a push by private equity investors for corporate sustainability targets and reporting as well. In other words, if businesses don't get on board now, they may not have a choice in the future. And that's not always the ideal scenario for companies.

Company size can impact how an organization implements and executes a sustainability program. Nearly half of the companies responding to the *EHS Today* survey indicated they don't have a sustainability program in place.

It's a trend that's impacting large, mid-size and small companies, says Adam Redling, assistant vice president in the sustainability/ESG practice of Dix & Eaton, a corporate public relations and communications firm that helps organizations with their reporting efforts.

"Investors in many of these companies are requiring reporting as a metric for where they're putting their dollars," Redling says. "They want to see companies that are forward-thinking, so being front and center along those lines is something that is almost table stakes for big public companies now, but even smaller companies and private companies are jumping on board because everyone from customers to employees now expect it."

BUILDING A CULTURE OF CHANGE

Like any corporate strategy, building a culture around a specific initiative begins at the top. Issues such as insufficient staffing, lack of funding and inadequate support tend to resolve once the executive team is aligned on its sustainability purpose and objectives, says Greg Desnoyers, senior client partner for the global industrial practice at management consulting firm Korn Ferry.

"Those components are not natural barriers; those are human being barriers; those are decision barriers," Desnoyers says. "So, if you have insufficient staffing, that's a decision that's being made somewhere. If you have insufficient funding, that's another decision that's being made somewhere. Those are not insurmountable issues. You just need to apply pressure there. It has to be a priority."

Company size can impact how an organization implements and executes a sustainability program. Nearly half of the companies responding to the *EHS Today* survey indicated they don't have a sustainability program in place. Almost two-thirds of respondents have fewer than 1,000 employees.

For companies of this size, leadership must clearly demonstrate the strategic value in the early stages to foster a culture of sustainability across the organization

as it grows, Desnoyers says. That may require conducting a risk assessment, and a more focused materiality assessment, to determine the key areas where mitigation efforts can yield measurable results, Desnoyers says.

"You may have an idea as an organization of what those risks are, but if you don't have a formal process around it to put it on paper, you have the potential to leave some pretty significant risks on the table in terms of people, environmental, financial or broader reputational impacts," he says.

A materiality assessment typically involves identifying the impact areas most significant and most important to company's stakeholders, which may require customer research, employee surveys and discussions with shareholders.

"This could involve reaching out to local communities where a company operates; it's also important to take stock of the products, materials, processes and impacts inherent in those," Lynch says.

Once a company has completed that process, they can begin working with a cross-functional group within the organization to develop an action plan, he adds.

RELIABLE REPORTING MATTERS

Thorough, credible reporting is one of the most important aspects of a corporate sustainability program. At the time of the SEC's proposed rule changes, SEC Chair Gary Gensler said, "Today, investors representing literally tens of trillions of dollars support climate-related disclosures because they recognize that climate risks can pose significant financial risks to companies, and investors need reliable information about climate risks to make informed investment decisions."

Organizations need to be realistic about what they can accomplish, not overpromise on their goals and be honest in their reporting, Redling says. He suggests businesses identify manageable, quick wins before embarking on more ambitious plans.

"Companies have to start somewhere," he explains. "You're not going to have all the answers right away. You're not going to be a perfect performer and be able to have these amazing results right off the bat. But you need to take some small steps to get the ball rolling because it is something that stakeholders are looking for companies to demonstrate." **EHS**

Jonathan Katz is a freelance writer based in Cleveland, Ohio, and a frequent contributor to Endeavor Business Media publications.

SLC 2022 Preview: What Strong Safety Leadership Looks Like

By Nicole Stempak

Safety professionals are required to comply with a number of rules and regulations, but in order to create lasting organizational changes, they need to appeal to—and inspire—their colleagues.

EHS Today spoke with Rick Fulwiler, Ph.D., president of Transformational Leadership Associates, and Stephen Jenkins, corporate director of health and safety with Cintas Corp., about how to create a culture of safety and explore what's possible when an organization leads with safety.

Jenkins and Fulwiler will speak at the **2022 Safety Leadership Conference**, being held in Cleveland from Oct. 18-20. They will be delivering a presentation on workplace culture, entitled "A Strong Safety Culture—No and Heck No!" Below is a preview of what to look forward to this fall.

EHS Today: When you talk about transformational safety, how exactly can safety leadership be transformational? What does that

look like in practice?

Fulwiler: First, the safety leadership of an enterprise needs to understand the difference between transactional and transformational leadership. Then, they need to coach the leadership of the enterprise on becoming more transformational by focusing on whether they are listening to the wants and needs of the shop floor workers. Do they show they actually care about the workers? Do they communicate in a way that is meaningful to the workers? Do they engage the workers in the work process? Are they open for input from the workers?

Jenkins: An example of transformational safety leadership is asking 'how' questions rather than 'why' questions. 'How' questions set the stage for leadership listening and learning.

How can a company create and sustain safety excellence?

Fulwiler: Safety has to move from being a priority to becoming one of the top values of the enterprise. Safety has to be embedded in the culture of the enterprise, i.e., part of the DNA of the enterprise. Safe practices have to become as instinctive as putting on one's seat belt. There has to be a clear message of mutual self-interest.

Jenkins: Excellence emanates from consistently repeating successful habits until they become rituals. It also means that employees may have unsuccessful habits and sometimes fail and need coaching. That's part of the mutual self-interest—developing successful rituals together.

How can companies demonstrate they care about their employees and their safety?

Fulwiler: First, senior leadership needs to communicate that their employees are the most valuable part of the enterprise—they are not just cogs in a wheel. They do this by engaging the workers in the overall safety process. Then, they need to communicate that the safety of their workforce is one of the top values of the enterprise. The simplest way to accomplish this is to talk with the workers about their jobs and their job safety in a caring and empathic manner.

Jenkins: Safety follows culture. The company first has to have a culture of caring. Recognizing contributions to the workplace community and broader community [along with] recognizing growth and employees taking opportunities to develop are two great ways for companies to show they care.

What is one aspect of workplace safety that keeps you up at night?

Fulwiler: That the workforce, by and large, is not engaged. A recent Gallup poll of about 200,000 workers found that only 33% of the workforce is actually engaged. Fifty-one percent merely put in their time, and 16% are actively disengaged. That means 67% of the workforce is not actively engaged, and the negative impact on safety is obvious.

Jenkins: That we make safety and health (S&H) too complicated because it doesn't match the workplace culture, is too prescriptive or doesn't reflect the needs of the employees.

Given the current state of workplace safety, what are you most looking forward to in the future?

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"Safe practices have to become as instinctive as putting on one's seat belt. There has to be a clear message of mutual self-interest."

—Rick Fulwiler

Fulwiler: That the concept of transformational safety leadership is more broadly embraced.

Jenkins: The evolution of bottom-up S&H, where frontline contributes more broadly to S&H, including job design and risk elimination. S&H professionals or experts may think they have eliminated the risk but commonly introduce another issue. When the solution generator is not the person who does the job and doesn't understand the job implicitly, something gets missed.

What is the single most important change safety professionals can make to the workplace starting today (or tomorrow)?

Fulwiler: Understanding the importance of engaging the workforce—and that transformational leadership is the way to engage the workforce.

Jenkins: Learning from employees, truly listening and understanding their workplace culture and that the workforce includes everyone at the workplace. **EHS**

"When the solution generator is not the person who does the job and doesn't understand the job implicitly, something gets missed."

—Steve Jenkins

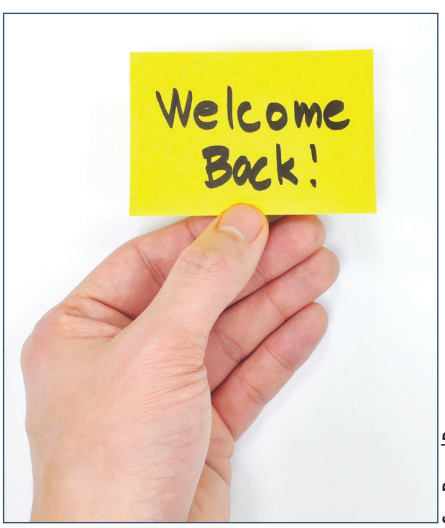
Adrienne Selko
Senior Editor

Moving from Pandemic to Endemic

Preparation and risk management offer the best course of action in a post-pandemic workplace..

While it's hard to catch a moving target, employers are starting to transition from the pandemic perspective to the endemic one. Guidance for this forward movement came from Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, when he said on April 26, 2022, that he feels the U.S has passed the "acute component of the pandemic phase."

"People are getting pandemic fatigue and are tired of the whiplash effect of having to remove safety standards, such as not wearing masks, and then having to put them back on again," notes Rachel Walla, owner of Ally Safety, a producer of safety videos. "So, now that we are in a new phase, safety professionals are able to apply the lessons learned during the pandemic to decide how to move forward."



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Walla notes that while in many cases both employers and employees are feeling optimistic, safety professionals need to continue to be prepared for any changes. And they do have processes and procedures to fall back on, given their overall "success" in how they were able to deal with the pandemic and keep employees as safe as possible while continuing to operate their companies.

In her work with companies large and small and in a variety of industries, Walla has discovered some best practices. Her advice is as follows:

- Have as few rules as possible.
- Change rules slowly and deliberately.
- Keep it simple and easy to follow.
- Communicate the why and not just the how.

When analyzing the safety leaders that she worked with over the past two years, Walla found that at companies that are science-based, employees were very accepting of changes that had to be made to address the pandemic. As these employees understood that science changes, the culture was quick to adapt to procedural changes due to the pandemic. However, union shops had a more difficult time adapting to new procedures as generally they tend to be more leery of management. What was universal, however, is that companies that took the pandemic seriously very early on did a lot better than those that, as Walla describes, "dragged their feet."

And companies that were very clear in communicating with their employees about what they were doing—and why—were very well-received. "Even if people didn't like the rules, they understood the reasons behind the many safety precautions and felt their employers were trying to do the right thing," says Walla.

When safety professionals were already part of the core management team, things well smoothly as well. But safety professionals who worked separately from executive management were sometimes susceptible to burnout, as there was a lack of coordination about what procedures to follow. Often, those safety professionals didn't receive the support they needed.

When it comes to the question of getting the COVID vaccines, Walla feels that this issue has been more or less resolved. "As everyone now has access to the vaccine, and it looks there won't be a federal vaccine mandate, I think the safety profession is taking a more neutral approach. People can make their own choices and then companies can decide how they want to manage that from a safety perspective."

In order to continue to be prepared for whatever strains or complications may still arise from the virus, Walla feels that preparation is the best course of action. Her advice is for companies to review their risks.

"Now is the time to do a full hazard assessment. It should be a very thorough review that is given an adequate amount of time. One of the critical parts of this process is to determine what lessons were learned over these past two years and use that to manage the disease as we move from the pandemic stage to the endemic stage."

Send an e-mail with your thoughts to aselko@endeavorb2b.com.

The Future of EHS

Safety professionals have a once-in-a-generation chance to make working life more flexible, modern and safer for everyone.

By Bill Pennington

COVID-19 has caused a revolution in the environment, health and safety (EHS) function at workplaces across the world, in what has become a story of two timelines for industry leaders.

The pandemic has already proved transformational, and the executives we spoke to believe the process is not yet complete. The immediate impact set off a broad pattern of change in the first days of lockdowns, one which moved quickly from the corporate front lines to the boardroom via the back office. The transformation would soon deepen, as companies continued to adapt alongside a "new normal" that took hold as governments eased restrictions. The combined effect is likely to reshape the scope of health and safety management as well as the way in which executives fulfill core operations while managing budgets and looking ahead to dealing with climate change.

THE IMPACT ON FUNCTION

First, the pandemic touched the EHS function and how it operated. Our survey shows how the speedier adoption of a range of new technologies kept essential EHS processes working during lockdown, protecting vital work just when head counts declined in the workplace. EHS leaders reached for cutting edge digital tools—from mobile applications to wearable devices and even virtual reality—to keep safety auditing, training and compliance operations in place. Nearly one-third (32%) of executives told us last year they were already using location-tracking wearables, while another 8% said they planned pilot schemes.

At the same time, the structure of professional life changed around us, with many more people working from home. The abbreviation WFH became as ubiquitous as the EHS shorthand itself in the industry. Remote workers remained covered by EHS governance, taking awareness of ergonomics and screen fatigue from the office desk to the kitchen table or the spare room the world over. Next came the hybrid working model as gov-

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ernment-mandated restrictions on personal movement eased, bringing in a new blend of working, with some days spent at home and others in the office. With that came fresh subject matter for risk management briefings, which started to cover the commute and other forms of traveling for work.

This widening scope introduced a cultural change, altering workers' understanding of what EHS is and what it means for them. The common perception that it was all about compliance evolved into the wider concept of total worker health. The mental well-being of people undertaking their duties when confined to their homes took on added and greater importance, with staff turning to employers' EHS functions for support beyond the traditional sphere of occupational health, which was more limited to clinical care in the office or on the shop floor.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS AND WHAT WE KNOW

That brings us to the second part of the COVID-19 story line: the second-round effects of the pandemic, much of which still lie ahead. A clear majority of the EHS leaders in our research last year (58%) said improving mental health and worker wellness would be a high priority for 2022 and 2023.

That follows the increased profile of EHS activities within businesses, including an improved profile at the most senior levels of corporate management and a higher priority for budgets. Increased spending will help shape the working patterns ahead in the "new normal." Occupational health operations seem poised for the biggest increase, as employers prioritize general health and fitness while also funding ongoing pandemic management, vaccination management and travel management.

The confluence of these trends is likely to affect corporate structures, influencing the way in which companies organize their welfare and safety operations, and where these two strands meet. It will be necessary to manage interlinked responsibility for total worker health between EHS functions and human resources departments, where they have often been traditionally located.

Hybrid working models are expected to be retained and the software running them is likely to include integrated EHS features, designed to keep staff engaged as they split their professional lives between the office and their homes. Such efforts may help offset the impact on staffing levels caused by the "Great Resignation," in which a notable proportion of office workers have left their previous employer rather than return to their previous commuting frequency.

SOME THINGS REMAIN THE SAME

Amid all the change, some important things remain the same. But here, too, there are benefits from what we have learned from dealing with COVID-19. The traditional EHS priority of accident prevention remains crucial, as do established procedures to recognize and maintain adequate risk awareness and risk management.

As EHS professionals benefit from the range of new tools at their disposal, sharpened by the increased use and innovation of the pandemic years, that improvement could—and should—gather momentum. Artificial intelligence (AI) techniques pioneered during the pandemic could help in identifying danger areas. AI could also be used to fully understand the patterns within the increased amount of data now being gathered on overall worker health.

Meanwhile, the raised profile of EHS operations necessitated by COVID-19 could help us all save lives by lowering the number of fatal injuries—and at a faster pace. Between 2003 and 2018, deaths in the workplace declined by only 5% to 5,250 a year. It may be that the pandemic has given us a much better chance to further reduce that figure now that safety operations are at the front and center of working culture and practice, liberated from what once often felt like a "silo of compliance." Increased EHS budgets will play an important role in this vital part of all our operations.

OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

The pandemic has made EHS leaders more agile. It catalyzed their use of state-of-the art technology, helping them carry on at the height of uncertainty. COVID-19 reshaped the contours of the working world. Now, the industry can see opportunities ahead. From the move to hybrid work arrangements to the growing use of AI, wearables and mobile technology to the broader and deeper understanding of the importance of safety procedures, executives are ready to ensure that this stronger scope complements their traditional focus on the highest risk areas of their business.

Familiarity with rapid innovation in response to challenges that both lack precedent and pose great risk will also help with another area expected to come under the EHS remit: improving sustainability and fulfilling environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria. These are ever-more important considerations for companies and their shareholders alike.

The executives we spoke to expect this area to be part of their future responsibilities, with knowledge of the relevant frameworks important. They expect EHS functions to play an important role in gathering the data needed to deliver change against challenging criteria. This process will not be easy and will have a high profile as the world moves on from the COVID years.

Over 400 firms have already signed up for The Climate Pledge, an initiative designed to establish net-zero carbon emissions by 2040. If EHS leaders convert their experience of the pandemic into an equally broad and deep ability to forge meaningful change from potential crises, they will be well placed to handle the new monitoring and reorganization procedures needed to meet such ambitious and important targets.

Taken together, the findings of the Verdantix survey and their implications provide grounds for optimism. They show how, with further hard work, the gravest global health crisis in a century may one day be recognized as a turning point for the workplaces of the world. Our story of two timelines—one sudden and one sustained—transformed not just the way in which people work, but also the workplaces to which they returned, and what they could go on to achieve.

Heightened staff awareness of the importance of EHS—what it means and what it can do for them—offers an opportunity in and of itself. These are promising times, and EHS managers are well placed to seize a once-in-a-generation chance to make working life more flexible, more modern and, above all, safer for everyone. **EHS**

Bill Pennington is research director, EHS with Verdantix, a research and advisory firm. His current agenda focuses on EHS and sustainability services and product stewardship as well as benchmarking EHS technology buyer's budgets, priorities and preferences globally.

The Importance of Psychological Safety to Your Workforce

When employees can bring their best selves to work, the result is a safer and more productive environment.

By Adrienne Selko

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Psychological safety is achieved when an employee feels that they can be their authentic self, especially in a team setting, and not suffer any negative consequences as a result. The realization that an employee should have a safe environment where they can be who they are every day at work is something that became especially important due to the pandemic. As companies and employees had to adjust to a variety of circumstances, a more open atmosphere was essential.

"When I think of psychological safety prior to the pandemic, it was always important to me as a leader," explains Jean Angus, president and CEO of Saint-Gobain Life Sciences, a Solon, Ohio-based manufacturer of materials and solutions for the pharmaceutical, medical and biotech industries. "When I became the director of innovation processes at our Performance Plastics group, our goal was to help everyone be creative. I quickly realized that in order for everyone to bring their best ideas to the table, they had to feel they are working in a safe environment."

A BASELINE OF SECURITY

"Safety is one of the basic needs on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and it applies to the workplace as well," says Angus. "Psychological safety is tied directly to a company's culture. At our company, which is over 350 years old and has been built on a foundation of deep respect for others, it's easy to leverage that culture into an inclusive workplace."

An example of how this culture is codified can be found in specific programs. "The deep respect we have for each other has resulted in Employee Resource Groups (ERG), which are grassroots organizations that allow leaders, like me, to access input from a variety of groups. It expands our perspective and makes us truly diverse, inclusive and equitable," says Angus. The ERGs include networks for women, veterans, LGBTQ, Asian Americans and a multicultural group, Leading Efforts to Ancestral Diversity (LEAD).

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT LEADS TO INNOVATION

"If people come to work exactly who they are, they are going to be more engaged. And engagement is a global metric for the company. It's also part of every leader's performance metrics at our company," Angus notes.

To measure engagement, Saint-Gobain deploys an annual survey called, "When the Collaborators Get the Floor." Each year, this survey has shown higher levels of employee engagement. This is especially important in a competitive job market, as a 2021 Gallup survey showed that 80% of all employees are not engaged.

And there is a strong business case for ensuring that employees are engaged. As mentioned earlier, innovation becomes easier with a psychologically safe environment, in that employees are less likely to fear failure and more likely to challenge the status quo. This helps with tackling complex problems and uncovering new ways of working.

Angus feels so strongly about the connection between this type of security and its link to innovation that she posted the following on LinkedIn:

At one stretch of my 11-year career with Saint-Gobain, I was responsible for running a very technical area of our business. In this role, I saw firsthand how psychological safety supported employee engagement—because I was not as technically savvy as other members of my team. Despite lacking certain technical skills, I felt empowered to ask questions, try new things and bring a fresh perspective to the team. Most importantly, I knew I could share when I didn't understand something without being judged or dismissed. We had each

other's full support, which created a collaborative forum for knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer encouragement. We leaned on each other's respective expertise and, as a result, it was one of the most productive and innovative teams I've ever been a part of.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIRES SPECIFIC ACTIONS

When the pandemic began, companies had to ensure a variety of safety measures, both physical and mental. Saint-Gobain was able to leverage an existing safety structure. "We have always had specific tools, such as a robust EAP [employee assistance program], ERG groups and a strong EHS culture," explains Angus. "So, we created a COVID task force as a way to leverage those tools to address workforce needs during the pandemic."

Part of the process was to empower individual sites to make decisions for their own facilities. For example, one of the Midwest facilities was having trouble with child care, so the employees created a community-wide program to address that. "We had sites that shifted their schedules to accommodate family needs as well," she says.

And now as the shift is moving from a pandemic to an endemic, the company is increasing awareness of its mental health benefits, letting employees know that there are still unlimited counseling sessions.

Like Saint-Gobain, other companies are using a variety of tactics to address mental health issues, which have increased as a result of the pandemic.

LuAnn Heinen is vice president of Business Group on Health, a nonprofit organization specializing in optimizing workforce strategy through health, benefits and well-being solutions. She notes that this year's winners of the Best Employers Award for Excellence in Health and Well-Being used a variety of tactics as follows:

- Well-being/engagement platform (98%),
- Assessing employee experience with health and well-being benefits (95%),
- Using employee testimonials to communicate health and well-being benefits (91%) and
- Deploying a network of well-being champions (89%).

Another important tactic for addressing the pandemic and one that will continue is the increase in both the method and quantity of communication. "We had 'CEO chats' over coffee, which created an open dialogue where employees could ask anything," Angus explains. "Similar forums were conducted by plant managers. And for employees who aren't comfortable in group settings, there is a hotline where they can express their concerns. Our message is that if you have something to say, speak up—we are here."

This rang true across the Business Group on Health winners as well, with practices that include:

- Cascaded communication campaigns

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using senior leaders, managers, well-being champions and ERGs;
- Fireside chats with company leaders, such as CEOs;
- Weekly messages from CEOs to all employees, encouraging them to share personal stories, such as family members' health challenges;
- QR code utilization for quick access to targeted resources; and
- Well-being platforms and hubs.

MENTAL HEALTH AS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

As well-being and wellness programs have been part of corporate offerings for years, there has been more emphasis—even before the pandemic and continuing to the current day—to focus on mental health, which can tie into psychological health. *EHS Today*'s **2022 Mental Health in the Workplace Report** found that a large number of employers say they are prioritizing mental health as part of their wellness programs, with 81.8I% saying they have a program in place that focuses on mental health and 6.3% saying they have one planned.

The Business Group on Health is also seeing a high interest in mental health. "Mental health is top of mind for employers in 2022," says Heinen. She provides some statistics based on the winners' profiles:

- 91% have made changes to address burnout;
- 88% offer support for family, adolescent and/or pediatric mental health;
- 86% have initiatives and benefits that address suicide;
- 82% have mental health allies or champions in place; and
- 80% have initiatives and benefits that address substance use disorders.

While those statistics apply to that specific group of winners, the *EHS Today* survey found that structured policies are lacking at many organizations. In fact, 33.9% of respondents said they either don't have a mental health policy in place or "don't know" if they have one. Of the companies that have a program, respondents rate those programs as merely adequate (21.7%) or poor (13.7%).

This will be a hurdle for companies to overcome as the uncertainty with regard to the COVID-19 virus will be a continued factor in planning, both from a physical safety and a mental safety aspect.

For Saint-Gobain, adjusting to whatever the future holds will be somewhat easier given the company's response to the pandemic. "We have created very clear guidelines on how to respond during the pandemic, so those will be used going forward as well as continuing to assess the situation," Angus says.

That level of security, combined with an acute awareness of the importance of simultaneously providing psychological security, is the key to success for both the individual employee and the company at large. "When employees can bring their best self to work, they prosper—as does the company," Angus says. **EHS**

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Changing Patterns of Abuse Make

Widespread legalization of marijuana muddies the waters for employers.

By David Sparkman

One of the biggest dilemmas facing employers today is how to maintain a safe workplace while laws and popular attitudes toward psychoactive drugs like marijuana appear to be lining up against them. This is particularly true for employers in industries with a safety-sensitive jobs such as construction, warehousing, transportation and manufacturing.

When Quest Diagnostics recently released its annual nationwide Drug Test Index in March, it quoted Jenny Burke, vice president of impairment practice at the National Safety Council (NSC), who said the complex problem of drugs in the workplace is not going away anytime soon. "Employers should have the right and ability to maintain a substance-free workplace and the use of drug testing, including oral fluid in addition to urine," she argued, noting that NSC supports the ability of employers to ensure safe and healthy workplaces.

One of the most recent developments was the U.S. House of Representatives voting 216 to 202 to lift federal restrictions on marijuana on April 1. Although that legislation is not expected to be approved by the Senate, its passage by the House offers a vivid glimpse of this country's changing attitudes toward that particular drug.

Along with legalizing medical and recreational marijuana, some states also have passed additional laws to prohibit employers from discriminating against workers who use cannabis off the job—except for those who are restricted by law. Also, debate continues to rage over what is the most appropriate and effective testing method for employers to use.

The rate of positive drug test results among America's workforce in 2021 reached its highest level since 2001. In fact, positivity was up more than 30% in the combined workforce from an all-time low in 2010-2012, Quest Diagnostics' index found. Although year-over-year comparisons showed only small increases in 2021 over 2020, Quest said it rose substantially over the previous five years in most drug categories.

The company's definition of the combined workforce includes the general workforce of mostly company-policy testing by private employers along with the federally mandated, safety-sensitive workforce. This includes federal

It Harder to Stay Drug-Free

employees and those who work in the transportation and nuclear power industries, such as pilots, truck drivers, train conductors and others required to drug test under federal regulations.

Overall positivity in the federally mandated, safety-sensitive workforce based on nearly 2.7 million urine drug tests stayed even year over year (2.2% in 2020 and 2021) but was 4.8% higher than 2017 (2.1% in 2017 vs. 2.2% in 2021).

That's the good news. The bad news is that for the general U.S. workforce, positivity increased 1.8% (5.5% in 2020 vs. 5.6% in 2021) and was 12% higher than in 2017 (5.0% in 2017 vs. 5.6% in 2021), and was up for each of the last five years. Last year saw small but continuing increases in positivity for methamphetamine, cocaine and opiates, such as hydrocodone.

Barry Sample, Quest Diagnostics' senior science consultant, noted that among notable trends were increased drug positivity rates in the safety-sensitive workforce, including those performing public safety and national security jobs, as well as higher rates of positivity in individuals tested after on-the-job accidents.

"People who use drugs during working hours or before work can still be impaired and dangerous to co-workers, the general public and themselves," he added. Of course, those laws exclude employees in safety-sensitive positions. "It is important for workers to know that certain employers are required to test for marijuana under federal law," Sample said. "If they use marijuana, they can still lose their jobs."

CANNABIS TAKES CENTER STAGE

Although other drugs continue to show up prominently in the survey, marijuana remains one of the most troublesome as far as employers are concerned because traditional testing techniques and observation often are inadequate to reveal whether someone is under the drug's influence.

Legal marijuana is available in a dizzying array of different types and in different concentrations of its psychoactive ingredient, THC. Individuals also react differently to the drug and, in some circumstances, they may not seem impaired at all. Recent scientific research testing the effects of driving under the influence of cannabis bears this out.

Drivers under the influence of cannabis are often unaware of the negative impact it has on their judgment and reflexes at different times following its ingestion, researchers at the University of California-San Diego found. The researchers constructed an elaborate experiment designed to measure the drug's impact on drivers.

Drivers' reaction times and judgment were tested on driving simulators after they were given two different strengths of THC concentrations (a third control group was given a non-psychoactive placebo). The drivers were tested at intervals of 30, 60 and 90 minutes after ingesting the drug.

Driving ability was measurably impaired 30 and 60 minutes following ingestion. Cannabis users displayed significantly diminished ability when their abilities were assessed regarding key simulated driving variables, such as swerving in lane, responding to divided attention tasks and attempting to follow a lead car.

In general, the comparative decline in performance was found to be sharpest at the 30- and 90-minute marks after the test subjects had ingested the cannabis. That decline later leveled off to only borderline differences with the non-placebo group after three-and-a-half hours, and eventually showed no difference with the placebo group at four-and-a-half hours.

But after 90 minutes something unusual happened that surprised the researchers: Most of the drivers believed that they were no longer impaired—and half of those drivers turned out to be right, and no measurable or observable degradation of their driving abilities were observed.

This could complicate matters for law enforcement if the experiment's results are replicated by other researchers. Lead researcher Thomas Marcotte explained that, "although users in the THC group felt impaired and were hesitant to drive at 30 minutes, by 90 minutes they believed the impairment was wearing off and were more willing to drive."

In spite of performance improvement at three-and-a-half hours, recovery was not fully seen until four-and-a-half hours after the drivers first got high. "This was despite their performance not significantly improving from the 30-minute point," Marcotte said. "This may indicate a false sense of safety, and these first few hours may constitute a period of greatest risk since users are self-evaluating whether it is safe to drive."

The lack of a firmly ascertained relationship between blood THC concentration and driving performance at certain times may be used to raise questions about the validity of laws that simply ban the ingestion of cannabis before getting behind the wheel, Marcotte concludes.

"When users control their own intake, one cannot infer the level of impairment based on the THC content of the product, the level of behavioral tolerance in the individual or the blood THC concentration," he observed. He also urged that future research address factors such as individual biologic differences, personal experience with cannabis and cannabis administration methods in relation to driving impairment.

THE TESTING CONUNDRUM

Employers already face the problem of how and when they can test their employees for illicit drug use, particularly with regard to marijuana. THC can remain in the body for weeks after it has been ingested. Some state laws protect employees from being tested routinely, and even post-accident testing has been limited to situations where the employee

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exhibits symptoms because such tests are believed to be unfair and retaliatory.

Public attitudes have also changed, making anti-drug use policies much less popular. Last year, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse reported 56,000 drug abuse violations among professional truck and bus drivers. Of these, 45,822 of the violations were the result of drug test failures and 29,500 involved marijuana.

The big surprise was how few of the drivers taken out of service chose to go through the mandatory rehab required to return to driving. This is the last thing that trucking employers had wanted to hear while confronting a serious truck driver shortage.

On Feb. 25, the Department of Transportation (DOT) issued a proposal to add oral fluid testing to its arsenal of weapons against illicit drug use in the safety-sensitive positions it regulates, including pilots and train operators as well as truck and bus drivers. Specifically, employers could use oral testing as an alternative to urine testing, which has its own set of disadvantages, including availability of methods used to help those being tested to cheat.

"This will give employers a choice that will help combat employee cheating on urine drug tests," DOT said in its published proposal. "Unlike directly observed urine collections, an oral fluid collection is much less intrusive on the tested employee's privacy."

Although useful for ascertaining the level of THC and presence of other drugs in a driver's system, oral testing does not address testing for excessive alcohol use. "In proposing oral fluid testing, the department is offering an alternative specimen for drug testing; however, we are not proposing to eliminate urine drug testing," DOT explained.

The department is seeking public input on this and other questions surrounding the use of oral testing. "Specifically, we are seeking comments as to whether there are circumstances where either urine or oral fluid should be mandatory," DOT said.

You can't blame some trucking employers for being only cautiously optimistic about this new testing proposal. For many years, trucking employers backed the hair testing method, but a proposed rule has been blocked within the bureaucracy for two-and-a-half years.

"We are elated that DOT is proposing the inclusion of oral fluids as an approved testing method for DOT purposes," said Dan Horvath, American Trucking Associations' (ATA) vice president of safety policy. "ATA has long advocated for its inclusion, and [this] is another step closer in getting it done."

"People who use drugs during working hours or before work can still be impaired and dangerous to co-workers, the general public and themselves."
—Barry Sample

IRINAVERYOMINA | DREAMSTIME

David Heller, vice president of government affairs for the Truckload Carriers Association (TCA), observed in *EHS Today*'s sister publication *Fleet Owner,* "Fighting half the battle with one alternative measure is great, but allowing hair testing would truly provide carriers with the ultimate flexibility of identifying potential drug users at the time of test and allow for other fleets to reap the benefits of those results by allowing them to be uploaded into the clearinghouse."

Expanding the list of available drug testing methods also may help DOT address an accusation that it is underreporting the use of drugs by drivers, a charge that was leveled in January by the Alliance for Driver Safety & Security (aka the Trucking Alliance), a trucking and logistics company group unrelated to ATA and TCA.

The alliance cited a study conducted by University of Central Arkansas (UCA). "Our research found that DOT is seriously underreporting the actual use of harder drugs by truck drivers, such as cocaine and illegal opioids," said Doug Voss, UCA professor of logistics and supply chain management. "Our analysis clearly concludes that hair testing identifies these harder drugs at higher percentages than the single urine testing method relied on by the federal government."

The study compared 1,429,842 truck driver pre-employment urine drug test results reported by the FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse with 593,832 urine and hair test results submitted by trucking employers who are members of the Trucking Alliance.

The alliance—which advocates for replacing urine testing with hair tests—noted that in 2020, FMCSA disqualified 54,955 commercial truck drivers for failing a urine test for illegal drug use, with marijuana cited as the primary drug of choice. However, the UCA study found that the agency would likely have disqualified twice that many truck drivers—another 58,910—had they submitted to a hair drug test.

Unlike marijuana, cocaine was the primary drug among this driver population, the researchers reported. "Federal law prohibits truck drivers from using illegal drugs, yet thousands are escaping detection," said Lane Kidd, managing director of the Trucking Alliance. "Driving a tractor trailer while under the influence is a lethal combination and we must keep these drivers out of trucks until they complete rehabilitation and return to duty."

Not everyone is persuaded. Todd Spencer, president of the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, responded, "What the Trucking Alliance is claiming cannot possibly be extrapolated to the entire industry. They really should be taking a closer look at why their carriers are so attractive to potential employees that use illegal drugs. And, any shipper that uses those companies might also take note." **EHS**

David Sparkman is founding editor of ACWI Advance and contributing editor to EHS Today.

ASSP President Christine Sullivan: Safety Professionals Need to AIM HIGH

DEI efforts, succession planning and business acumen are all top of mind for ASSP's new president.

By Nicole Stempak

Christine Sullivan, CSP, ARM, will take the reins as the president of the American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP) effective July 1.

She will be inheriting a ship that has been swayed by COVID-19 for the past two years. It's impossible to know where the pandemic will lead us next, but Sullivan is already busy charting her course. She knows it won't be easy navigating murky waters, but she is optimistic that COVID-19 has raised awareness about the role of safety professionals and has increased their influence within their organizations.

Sullivan, senior vice president and risk control director at Sompo International, has 30 years of experience in the safety profession. Her Society honors include the Charles V. Culbertson Outstanding Volunteer Service Award and Risk Management and Insurance Practice Specialty Safety Professional of the Year. She is a past vice president of the Council on Professional Development.

EHS Today caught up with Sullivan to hear more about her plans.

EHS Today: Is there any work from outgoing ASSP president Brad Giles that you plan to continue?

Sullivan: We've done a lot of work with Brad on DEI [diversity, equity and inclusion]. We've reiterated our commitment to fairness, respect, equal opportunity for all and working to become a transparent society, embracing all occupational safety and health professionals. That's something we will continue to work on.

Are there any new initiatives that you're planning to start?

Something that is important to me is supporting emerging professionals. There's a lot of potential for the future growth of ASSP and the occupational safety and health profession. We really want to make sure we're bringing people into the field.

Are you thinking in terms of retention or succession planning?

I work in the insurance industry and, similar to other industries, the safety profession is aging, so we want to make sure that we support and help these future safety professionals to become leaders—not only to be good safety people but also to be good business-people. How do we get them to develop business acumen, and to understand the value of building and bridging relationships? How do they grow their career in the field? That's something ASSP can support these young professionals in.

Have you seen an increase in your membership since the pandemic started?

Actually, because of the pandemic, I would say we lost members—not because of the lack of value but because of financial constraints. They weren't able to have company support to help them become a member. We've [started to see] that turn the other direction.

Are you seeing an uptick overall in the number of young people interested in becoming safety professionals?

I do some college interviews for incoming college students at my alma mater. You're definitely seeing more people interested in the field, but kind of anecdotally. I don't think the statistics are there yet. But, for example, we did start a new student chapter for ASSP.

After two-plus years of a global pandemic, during which safety was thrust into the spotlight, where does safety go from here?

I think there are a couple things. The pandemic has caused a lot of companies to reevaluate their continuity plans. Many companies had written plans in place, but they never really tested them. Nobody anticipated the number of people that would [work from] home. A lot of things hadn't been looked at, such as overloaded networks and supply chain disruptions. There are a lot of things that came up that are going to change and [raise] the importance of planning.

The other thing that the pandemic did—and it's something that I believe in as well—is that compliance is a bare minimum. It's not that compliance isn't important, but it sets a minimum standard that doesn't really bring the business to the next level.

Hopefully, the worst is over with regards to COVID-19. What do you see as the next pressing concern?

I don't think anybody could have predicted COVID and what the pandemic would do worldwide. I think [the next big thing] is dealing with the aging workforce, not just in the safety community, but in the workplace. It's not new, it's not something that has not been there, but it's definitely something that is going to continue to impact safety professionals as they bring people into those roles.

I think AI and machine learning are going to have a huge impact on safety professionals and how jobs are done in a manufacturing facility, for example, with machine learning. How does that impact what the safety professional does? There are a lot of things out there that are going to change how people do their jobs.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTINE SULLIVAN

> "What I tell people—and this is more on the bigger picture, both from a safety and professional standpoint—is aim high. Set your goals. Figure out where you want to be and find people who can help you get there."

What does safety mean today, and how does that compare to the past or even the future?

You have to look at safety from a lot of different perspectives. We talk a lot about worker safety, but I would also tell you safety could be a customer in a restaurant, a guest in a hotel, or a person who purchases a manufactured product. In the world [of insurance], we also have fire protection that works against keeping a building from burning down or water damage and things like that. You have to look at safety across all those areas.

You hear the term "total worker health," and that's another piece of it. If somebody is only safe at work and then they go home and they're not safe at home, a lot of other pieces tie into that. Safety professionals are being asked to do more things. They're being asked to look at a lot of different things, and their role's constantly changing. So, a safety professional might become the person who's working on continuity planning or some environmental issue. In my mind, the safety professional's job is getting bigger, not smaller.

I recently saw a LinkedIn analysis that EHS specialists are the fastest growing green jobs. Do you agree with that assessment?

Absolutely. ESG (environmental, social and governance) has become an everyday word. People who didn't know what ESG was even a year ago tend to know what it is now. I think that [will only increase] moving forward. Young professionals care about things like climate change, and they want to make an impact. I do think that ESG is a big piece of the future of safety.

Discussions about ESG are becoming more commonplace. How will EHS grow to incorporate these additional responsibilities or work with others who share them?

It's going to depend on the organization, and it's going to depend on the organization's desire to make an impact. ESG has really come a long way in a very short period of time. An organization probably needs to have somebody who is really the champion for ESG. I don't know if the safety professional is [always] that person because they need to be the champion for the risk and safety piece. I think they can partner together and work closely together, but I do think someone needs to be championing that. Safety should be a big component of it, but I do think it's bigger than just the safety professional.

Do you think that safety is becoming more representative of what the country looks like?

It's becoming more representative, but we aren't there yet. And that's why DEI initiatives are so important. When I started in this field, there were very, very, very few females. I didn't have a lot of female mentors. Most of my mentors were male. As I've continued in this field, I have seen the growth of females and people of other races. One of the things that I [find] really interesting is that the four major safety so-

cieties will all have female presidents this year at the same time.

Some people say they don't want what you look like to be part of the conversation, but at the same time, representation matters. Seeing a woman, seeing a person of color, seeing someone who looks like you in a leadership role allows you to think about doing things you might not have otherwise.

Representation absolutely matters. My daughter was adopted from China and seeing people who are Chinese is important to her. She's only 11, but she's seeing them in different roles. There was a Marvel movie recently that had an Asian cast, "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings." That's really important. Representation does matter, whether it's in business or everyday life.

What do you wish to see?

I don't know that this is a wish for the safety field, but I want to see—and I hope that I show—that things are possible even when people don't believe it. I mentioned my daughter, but I have three children. As a working mom, I've had a lot of people say through the years, 'You can't do this.' I think it's really important that people see that we can do this. We can be successful and have a family and have a career.

From a safety standpoint, I want to see safety professionals have a seat at the table from the C-suite. It does happen at some organizations, but not in a lot of organizations. Safety is still an afterthought in some companies. They don't really tie profitability, quality and safety together, but they should because they all impact each other.

What advice do you have for safety professionals who are trying to espouse the benefits of safety to others?

They've got to be able to tie the message into the impact of the safety programs. They need to understand the finances of the organization. They need to understand what the goals are of the organization—not just the safety goals, but the organizational goals. They need to understand the total cost of risks and the impact that safety professionals can make. [In other words,] what impact can safety professionals make into the success of the organization.

Is there anything else you'd like to mention that we haven't discussed?

What I tell people—and this is more on the bigger picture, both from a safety and professional standpoint—is aim high. Set your goals. Figure out where you want to be and find people who can help you get there. A good mentor or mentors can really help you get to different areas in your career, help you to grow in that career, and help you identify weaknesses and cultivate your strengths.

Mentoring and networking. Those are the two things I would encourage all safety professionals to do: take the time to find a mentor who can help you achieve your goals and network. Build your relationships and build your network of safety professionals because we can really help each other. **EHS**

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Tight vs. Loose Personalities:
Implications for Safety Leadership

Everyone needs to tighten up and comply when rules and regulations are in place to keep people healthy and safe.

By E. Scott Geller

In my previous article ("Tight vs. Loose Cultures: Ramifications for Occupational Health and Safety," *EHS Today*, March/April 2022), I proposed connections between occupational health and safety and the tight/loose dynamic evidenced in various countries and cultures, and studied systematically by Michele Gelfand, a professor at the University of Maryland. Here we make an inferential leap from nurture—the culture in which a person is raised—to nature, or particular personality dispositions of an individual.

In her 2018 book *Rule Makers, Rule Breakers: How tight and loose cultures wire our world,* Gelfand distinguishes between a tight and a loose mindset, which is largely determined by the culture in which a person is raised, and "is like the program we use to make decisions."

Those with a tight mindset appreciate discipline, adhere to routines, conform to social norms, control their impulses, show strong preferences for structure and order, and focus on avoiding failure. In contrast, individuals with a loose mindset are generally more impulsive, risky, less attentive to social norms, and relatively comfortable with ambiguity and disorder.

It is interesting and instructive to consider the consistency between the tight/loose mindset introduced by Gelfand and the Big Five taxonomy of personality traits that personality psychologists have recognized favorably for nearly three decades (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1993). More specifically, psychological scientists (e.g., DeYoung, 2006; Digman, 1997; Olson, 2005) have discovered a replicable higher-order structure of stability (conscientiousness, agreeableness and emotional stability) and plasticity (extroversion and openness). A follow-up study demonstrated that these two higher-order factors predict relevant variation in behavior: restraint for stability or tightness, and engagement for plasticity or looseness (Hirsh, DeYoung, & Peterson, 2009).

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THE TIGHT/LOOSE SWEET SPOT

Gelfand introduced the concept of a "sweet spot between tight and loose." Given that excessive constraints or tightness and excessive freedom or looseness contribute to lower happiness and life expectancy, as well as greater rates of depression, suicide and mortality, she proposes that "we need to balance our natural preferences for more constraints or more freedom to be at our best." She refers to the classic Yerkes-Dodson Law of Arousal (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908) that predicts an inverted-U relation between performance effectiveness and arousal or stress. In other words, the quality or effectiveness of performance peaks with a moderate level of arousal or stress and depletes when arousal or stress is too low or too high.

Gelfand operationalized the Yerkes-Dodson Law and her sweet spot concept by referring to parenting strategies—overly protective versus overly permissive parents. She introduces the notion of a "parenting sweet spot," whereby children have restrictions but also have the freedom to make personal decisions within specified limits.

She supports her "sweet spot theory" by referring to a longitudinal study of college students at the University of California that found the following:

- None of the students with uninvolved parents who provided loose guidance graduated in four years nor readily found employment.
- Those students who received tight guidance from "helicopter parents" graduated in four years, but they had "professional and emotional dependency issues."
- The students with parents who were available for guidance but allowed them to make their own decisions had the best outcomes—graduating from college in four years, finding desirable employment and handling emotional challenges without excessive parental involvement.

PERSONALITY TRAIT VS. PERSON-STATE

Most personality researchers and scholars discuss personality characteristics as traits: permanent dispositions to think and act in particular ways. For example, the two higher-order personality traits derived from the Big Five, which connect directly with the tight/loose concept—stability for tight and plasticity for loose—define immutable dispositions that influence an individual's daily cognitions, attitudes and behaviors. Given this perspective, people with a stability trait should feel more comfortable or happy in a tight culture than in a loose culture. In contrast, those individuals with the plasticity trait should be most content in a loose culture.

Some psychologists use the term person-state rather than personality trait to reflect the malleability of various dis-

positions. A person-state can vary as a function of particular interpersonal and contextual factors, including education and training. With this perspective, the culture of an organization can influence one's personality, and vice versa. A tight culture supports the person-state of stability and can tighten up the looseness of a plasticity person-state. Likewise, a plasticity person-state is supported in a loose culture but might tighten up in a tight culture.

NATURE VS. NURTURE

This discussion of personality trait versus person-state connects to this age-old question: To what extent are personality characteristics or dispositions determined or wired-in at birth (i.e., nature) or developed through life experiences (i.e., nurture)? The easy quick-fix answer is both, but the relative influence of nature and nurture on our personality dispositions has yet to be determined—and perhaps never will be. While we can influence the person-states of ourselves and others, the degree of such influence is determined by personality traits.

Consider, for example, the introvert/extrovert dimension of the Big Five personality traits. Personal reflection or introspection might reveal a natural inclination or desire to interact with strangers or to avoid such interactions. Extroverts are presumably energized from social interaction, whereas introverts experience fatigue from interpersonal encounters.

However, introverts can learn to interact effectively with strangers and through experience can feel quite comfortable interacting with people they do not know. Unlike extroverts, however, introverts will not seek such interpersonal exchanges without an ulterior motive (e.g., selling or promoting a product, or seeking assistance or advice). Analogous to Gelfand's "sweet spot" theory, many individuals are neither an introvert nor an extrovert. Instead, they have a personality trait that falls between the introvert/extrovert extremes.

A DISCRIMINATION PERSPECTIVE

Gelfand explains convincingly that a sweet spot between extremes is most desirable, whether the extremes are tight vs. loose or even the number of choices in a decision. While much research has demonstrated the positive impact of perceived choice or autonomy on human well-being (e.g., Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985), too much choice or an overwhelming number of selections can be debilitating (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000).

Rather than seeking a sweet-spot personality trait or disposition between two extremes, let's consider a discrimination approach to the tight/loose dynamic. Instead of attempting to adopt a sweet spot mindset or a disposition between tight and loose, I suggest we should examine circumstances carefully with empathy and act accordingly, even when an extreme position is warranted.

There are circumstances or situations when a tight mindset and action plan is needed (e.g., the enforcement of COVID-prevention behaviors), and there are other times when a loose perspective is best (e.g., the creation of strategies to encourage and support more engagement in an occupational health and safety process). With this perspective, there is not a "parenting sweet spot." Rather, there are times when direct parental direction and supervision is needed, and other times when parental scrutiny can—and should—be lessened.

Such tight/loose discrimination is much easier to propose than to accomplish because a personality disposition can inhibit behavioral adjustments to situational cues. It can be quite challenging for a tight, disciplined individual to lighten up and allow for more variability in mindset, purpose and/or behavior. Relatedly, many cultures within the United States seemed to lack the solidarity and compliance needed to fight the COVID pandemic with face mask wearing, social distancing and vaccinations.

Thus, while optimal performance is most likely to follow an unbiased assessment of circumstances and contingencies, both culture and personality predispose people to be tight, loose or somewhere in between, independent of the situation. Regardless of personality or cultural bias, everyone needs to tighten up and comply when rules and regulations are in place to keep people healthy and safe. **EHS**

E. Scott Geller, Ph.D, Alumni Distinguished Professor, is director of the Center for Applied Behavior Systems at Virginia Tech. He is a co-founder and senior partner of Safety Performance Solutions Inc. and GellerAC4P Inc.

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How Prevention through Design Improves Worker Safety in the Electrical Workplace

The goal of PtD is to make electrical infrastructure safe for all workers throughout the entire life cycle of a facility.

By Rachel Bugaris

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Safety is a constant state of mind on the job floor and in the workplace, often woven into a company's culture. Safety begins with design-first thinking. Safety by design is an achievable intervention that improves worker health and safety.

Designing to eliminate or avoid hazards altogether, before any exposure happens in the workplace, is also the top priority in the hierarchy of risk controls common to industry safety professionals. Known as Prevention through Design (PtD), it includes all efforts to envision and eliminate hazards to workers in facilities, the processes and procedures, as well as the tools, equipment, products and new technologies that come in contact with the people in the workplace.

Today, just about every manufacturing process has a multitude of inherent safety risks, so it's important to identify and minimize potential hazards from the very beginning. It's also becoming common for PtD approaches to attempt to solve for uncertainty, in that the actual safety of a technology or use of a product largely depends on the behavior of workers in and during the process. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in the responsibility for electrical workplace safety.

With Prevention through Design, new technologies and products attempt to reduce human exposure to hazards as much as possible to achieve higher levels of safety. When looking to eliminate the problem, there are times when it's best to design for the safety of the user.

This requires design engineers to work closely with and understand the needs of safety managers as well as qualified electrical operators and maintenance workers who use the products and devices daily. The goal of PtD is to make electrical infrastructure safe for all workers throughout the entire life cycle of the facility, which necessitates designing for safety during normal plant operations and routine maintenance but especially—and probably most importantly—for abnormal service and repair situations.

SAFER AND MORE PRODUCTIVE WORKPLACES

Within the arena of electrical safety in the workplace, product development by way of PtD is achieving safer workplaces while simultaneously increasing productivity. Several PtD product innovation examples include permanently mounted voltage indicators, voltage portals, data access ports, infrared (IR) windows for thermal inspection and absence of voltage testers. The process of de-energizing and verifying equipment is in an electrically safe work condition before beginning work can prevent electrical incidents.

A study found that the most common work task leading to arc-flash injury was replacing fuses without turning off the power and verifying that the fuses were de-energized. The data also indicated that there may have been a lack of training and judgement by those injured, underscoring the need for emphasis on creating an electrically safe work condition that includes that process of voltage testing before beginning work. Because this process occurs frequently in the workplace, it is worthwhile to examine whether it can be optimized using PtD methodology.

The PtD case for electrical safety can be easily made. It has been well-documented that using PtD principles is one of the most effective and reliable methods of protecting workers from electrical hazards. The point remains: thinking about safety in the design phase for all tasks that occur through the life cycle of a product can be more easily (and often more economically) addressed by

design solutions rather than relying on administrative controls—such as warnings, labels, training and written procedures—and personal protective equipment (PPE). Administrative controls and PPE, as opposed to design engineered solutions, will still protect workers from some electrical hazards, but de-energizing equipment needs to be a clear, reliable and uncomplicated process when verifying absence of voltage.

While the number of fatal workplace electrical injuries has fallen over the past 20 years, the trend with non-fatal electrical injuries is less consistent. Determining voltage status before equipment is accessed and preventing direct exposure to electrical hazards can be achieved with an absence of voltage tester (AVT) that also simplifies this process by automating the voltage verification process. It's important to point out that when establishing an electrically safe work condition, verifying the absence of voltage is only one step in the process; using an AVT is a part of the lockout/tagout process and is not intended to replace it.

PREVENTING HAZARDS BY DESIGN

Today, safety managers are challenging electrical infrastructure suppliers to create even better methods of identifying and verifying de-energized electrical equipment that conform to the NFPA 70E standards. Every safety manager's top priority is to provide a workplace free from serious safety and health hazards, ensuring that the workplace is fully in compliance with all applicable standards, rules and regulations to maintain safety in their manufacturing facility.

It is important to establish and promote designing for safety and begin to incorporate PtD products that protect workers into the overall plant safety program. Most importantly, when safety is addressed in the design process, it is more effective and can prove to be a more economical safety play in the long run for the facility. When the benefits of PtD can improve worker productivity, create faster maintenance and less downtime, then the facility—and everyone in it—wins.

The safety culture is changing and the responsibilities for safety will be shared across the facility among its workers. Preventing hazards by design is a priority for facility owners and the team responsible for maintaining safety management standards. Thanks to PtD, new technology, such as AVTs, will continue to play a major role in electrical hazard reduction strategies to help plants achieve improved safety and productivity for workers responsible for electrical energy. **EHS**

Rachel Bugaris is a business development manager at Panduit Corp., a provider of network infrastructure and industrial electrical wiring solutions. Her work focuses on electrical safety solutions for the workplace.

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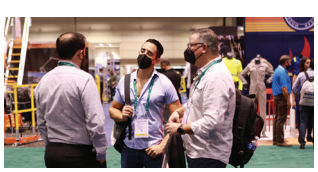

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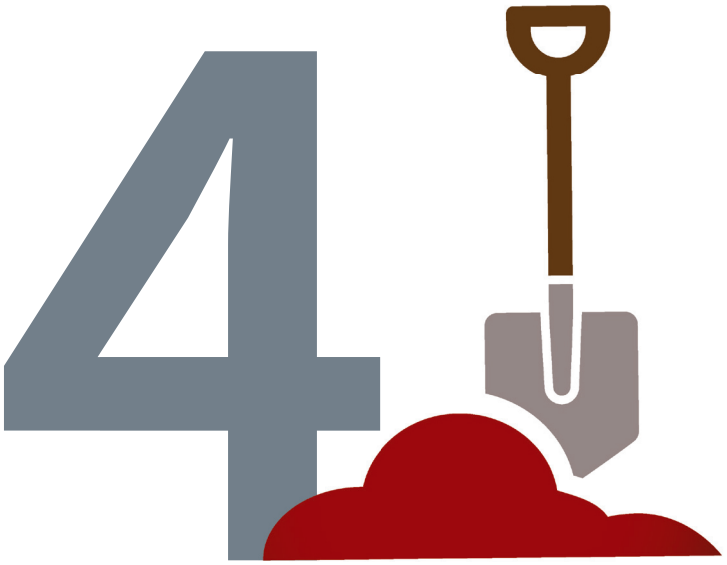

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4 Reasons Why You Should Dig Out Your Emergency Response Plan

No matter the weather, keep your employees safe by planning for disaster.

By Danielle Myers

The start of summer might seem too soon to begin preparing for next winter. But with memories of snowstorms still fresh in your mind, now is the perfect time to review your emergency response plans. Preparing emergency response plans ahead of time also means you'll be ready when snow, tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires, drought or other types of severe weather hit.

Emergency preparedness is one of the most important things a company can invest in. When an emergency happens, being prepared can mean the difference between the loss of money, time, and—most importantly—the safety of your staff. Thanks to advances in technology, companies can implement platforms and tools that can help them prepare for anything, from inclement weather to a dangerous intruder.

Despite improved accuracy in weather predictions, businesses are not always equipped with the necessary infrastructure to prepare a proper emergency response, wasting precious time during an emergency that could have been avoided. This is why it's important for companies to obtain the appropriate safety and communication technology—so they can protect their employees and property in the event of a weather emergency.

STEP 1: AUDIT YOUR CURRENT PRACTICES AND SYSTEMS.

The first step to being prepared for a winter storm or any other emergency is to audit your company's current safety and emergency plans. Over time, safety plans can become dated and, depending on the last time your plan was reviewed, it can even be counterproductive in an emergency situation. Making sure your plan is fresh and up-to-date with your facility's current infrastructure guarantees that when an emergency arises, you are prepared.

A great way to begin is by identifying all of your existing safety and communication technologies. Often, companies already have a wide variety of systems in place, such as door access control, fire panel, cameras, temperature or moisture monitoring. When it comes to communicating, companies use email, text, phone calls and other tactics to reach employees with timely messages that are often distributed from a variety of communication platforms.

Once all these systems are accounted for, you can determine how these technologies can be best utilized together as a single unit rather than as separate systems. It's important to consider how to get the most out of your current safety and technology framework as you create an improved emergency response plan.

STEP 2: INTEGRATE YOUR TECHNOLOGY.

Companies that can integrate their existing technologies in a more efficient way have a competitive advantage when triaging emergencies. For instance, companies can integrate all their existing safety systems onto a single platform with an emergency alerting platform.

An automated alerting platform gathers all the information from the previously disparate technology systems, monitors them and sends detailed alerts from one source. Not only does this allow the company to get the most out of its previous investments, but it also simplifies emergency responses.

Rather than having to access each of these technologies separately, they can be tied into the emergency alerting platform. That means when any of the systems are triggered, the properly assigned individuals will be contacted at once. For example, say a facility's door access control and temperature sensors are both integrated into an emergency alerting platform, so the alerting platform will constantly monitor those systems. If either are triggered, an alert regarding what has happened will automatically be sent out.

STEP 3: CUSTOMIZE YOUR ALERTS.

With an emergency alerting platform, any company can improve the functionality of their current technologies by enhancing their alerting capabilities. The alerts are entirely customizable, includ-

ing from which end users they are sent to and the information they contain. This allows for the quick and direct dispersal of information during an emergency.

Whether maintenance, security, police or a senior-level employee needs to be contacted, that can be predetermined depending on the triggered event. For example, if during a winter storm, a pipe bursts in the building and a moisture monitor is set off, a detailed alert can be sent to maintenance personnel immediately, ensuring that the situation is handled as quickly as possible.

This kind of automation means that even when employees aren't in the building, whether due to a snowstorm or any other situation, a response will still be triggered. This can seriously reduce response times to any emergency situation and can help companies save time, money and resources. In a dangerous scenario, enhanced emergency alerting can even save lives.

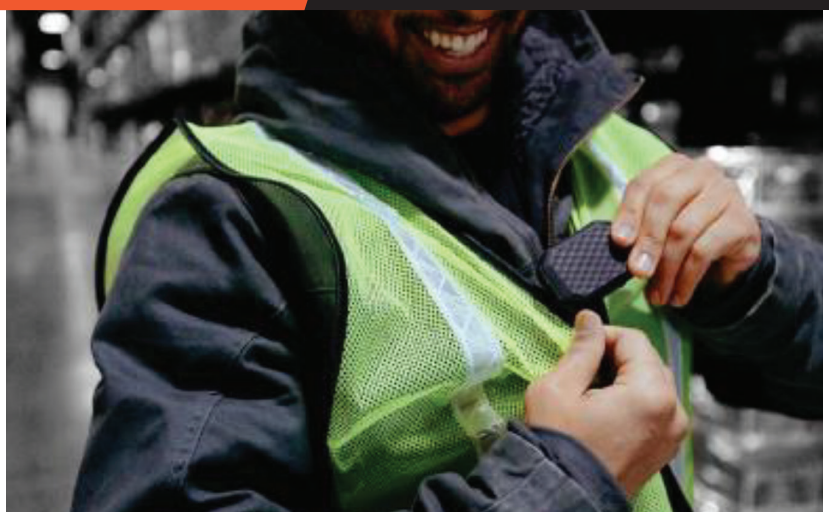
STEP 4: BOLSTER COMMUNICATION.

Automated emergency alerting isn't the only way to keep your company informed during an emergency. A mass notification platform is another great tool that can allow companies to keep their employees informed about any situation. For example, if a winter storm hits and causes closures, transportation difficulties or any other problem, then specific employees, groups of employees or the entire employee workforce can be notified immediately. These alerts can be preset or customizable, and they can be sent via text message, voice call and/or email.

Being prepared for inclement weather doesn't have to be complicated. The main things to focus on are taking advantage of the systems and tools that are already available to you as well as ensuring you have a communication platform that can keep everyone informed. Ensuring fast and proper dissemination of information will help keep employees safe.

Emergency preparedness is a year-round job. Concerns like winter weather only elevate the importance of having a plan in place. Not only will this help during the next snowstorm, but it will enhance emergency preparedness and safety plans for any situation. **EHS**

Danielle Myers is a general manager at Status Solutions, where she is responsible for day-to-day operations with an emphasis on sales programs. She has been with the company since 2008 and has served in account management and sales roles. Danielle's expertise includes working with customers in senior living, healthcare, education, manufacturing, hospitality and government to design, deliver and maintain solutions for integrated alarm management and automated mass notification. She also has been instrumental in expanding the company's U.S. channel with the addition of new voice, data, fire, security, audio-visual and managed services providers as certified resellers.



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FIVE WAYS Data Can Drive a Safety Culture that Scales

By helping optimize a facility, safety data allows new hires and experienced employees to operate in the safest environment possible.

By Lindsay Catsavis

Cultivating a company culture that champions worker safety is an easy thing to say, but a difficult thing to do. Posters are passed by without a second thought, left to fade and eventually peel off the wall. Morning stretches are good for morale but likely won't prevent a muscle tear. A well-meaning EHS manager needs more than a clipboard and a good heart to be effective. With reliable workers increasingly difficult to find and labor and supply chain demands soaring, it's never been more important to invest in the safety and well-being of your collective workforce.

But where to begin?

The key is capturing individual worker data that paints a picture of your facility's operational efficiencies—and lack thereof—as a whole. Watercooler chitchat and outdated anecdotes simply aren't enough anymore. If the cornerstone of your company's culture is workplace safety, then productivity, satisfaction and optimization will naturally follow.

Here's a closer look at how forward-indicating safety data can unlock a whole world of operational efficiencies, no matter your industry, output or head count.

1. FACILITY BENCHMARKING

Deploying safety wearables across your workforce provides more than real time injury prevention and risk feedback. The insights provided give safety supervisors an immediate benchmark that individual, shift and industry standards can be applied and acted upon. This provides an essential point of reference for learning where and how you can improve.

Knowing your average forward bend angle is one thing. Knowing how it compares to other people and shifts in your facility as well as how it ranks among the safest facilities in your industry makes this data exponentially more powerful. There are tens of millions of hours of safety data; facility benchmarking unlocks the full potential of it.

2. NEW HIRE TRAINING

New hires are significantly more susceptible to serious strains and injuries, as they often sacrifice form for output—hurting themselves and the company in the process. Data insights into work patterns and friction points put them on the same operational footing as more tenured workers, elevating the performance and overall safety standards of the entire facility. Furthermore, safety wearables enable new hires to constantly use proper lifting techniques, ensuring safety remains a personal priority.

New hires are eager to make a big impact on productivity as soon as they can. They've watched a few videos on technique and read a few pamphlets, but as soon as they're off on their own, safety falls by the wayside.

Wearables and data insights ensures safety remains a top priority, even if it's not top of mind. Safety wearables on their own offer a constant reminder to maintain safe posture and proper lifting techniques when lifting. With smart sensors capable of detecting potential ergonomic risk and haptic alerts to notify the employee, wearables can make a significant impact on the safety habits of new hires.

The data they collect amplifies this impact. Data insights shine a light on emerging patterns and locations in a facility that present the most risk. By increasing the awareness of these risks and presenting simple solutions to them, safety data is capable of optimizing a facility so both new hires and experienced employees operate in the safest environment possible.

3. MICRO INTERVENTION MOMENTS

Safety data flowing into a central management dashboard is the new supervisor clipboard: forward-indicating, proactive and specific down to job types, times of day and environmental factors. As a result, more intervention moments are revealed based on proactive measures rather than punitive ones.

Gone are the days of the safety supervisor circling the facility trying to catch employees acting unsafe, an ineffective strategy for a number of reasons. One, it's easy for employees to modify behaviors when they're being monitored by a manager. Two, there's only one supervisor. It's impossible for one set of eyes to see all the risks. Data can do this work for you, both more completely and more efficiently.

Safety wearables essentially act as an individual safety supervisor for each employee, monitoring every movement to ensure they are safe. When they aren't, wearables record why and how these risks emerge. Then,

when the data is uploaded, intervention moments are revealed.

If, for example, you discover an employee who continues to bend at dangerous angles or twist at dangerous speeds, and you know from facility benchmarking that this is not a recurring trend with other employees in this job type, then you know that the most appropriate course is for this employee to be coached individually.

Data insights can offer very broad, all-encompassing solutions to optimize facilities, but sometimes all that's necessary is a little intervention. Fortunately, safety data are capable of identifying when a personalized approach is best.

4. UNDERSTANDING JOB TYPE

It's crucial to keep in mind that there is no single solution for every employee. Just like different job types require different training, skill sets and knowledge bases, they also require different safety protocols. Parsing the data by job type will reveal what's working and what's not to help you and elevate your workflow.

Without data, it can be difficult to ensure existing safety protocols are doing what they're intended to. Stretching might benefit one job type but not another. Likewise, a safety tip/trick could be extremely relevant to the requirements of one routine and completely irrelevant to another.

Data insights provide the answer to these uncertainties. You easily learn whether or not a safety effort is working, and you have the capability to discover exactly who it's working on and who it's not. Most importantly, you'll know what needs to be done to ensure that every job type functions safely.

5. ENGAGEMENT IS PERSONAL

Gathering safety data from your workers isn't about tracking their productivity or their time off task; it's about well-being and ensuring they return home safely after every shift, free of aches and pains.

Transparency about what you're collecting and what you're doing with the data creates a comfortable environment where employees aren't afraid to make mistakes. Ultimately, just as it is critical that this data be used for their health and safety and the betterment of their facility, it's critical that employees understand this is all the data is used for.

An environment of constant monitoring is not a healthy one, especially when punitive action can be taken. Transparency in what you're collecting and why puts the power of data in your employees' hands to contribute toward a safer workplace. It also makes every moment of engagement meaningful.

As novel as it might seem to implement into your workplace, the benefits of safety data pay dividends toward ingraining safer habits and a culture around them into your operation. In the future of work, safety should be central. Integrating data is the first step to realizing this reality. **EHS**

Lindsay Catsavis is senior director, success with StrongArm Technologies, a provider of wearable devices.

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Brass Knuckle has unveiled a full-face protection covering to protect workers, completely and without gaps of exposed skin. The Vader Combo is a combined goggle and face shield that offers 180-degree peripheral vision and face coverage. It features anti-fog treatment for improved visibility and—because the all-in-one face protection isn't connected to a hard hat—greater wearer mobility. The ANSI-rated, military-style splash goggle also includes a durable anti-scratch treatment and is D3 rated for droplet and splash protection. The built-in venting system helps reduce the potential for moisture buildup, which also helps to maintain clear vision.

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Radians has launched a 12-gallon gravity-fed eyewash station and mobile drain cart to make emergency eye protection more portable and accessible, no matter the job site or location. The eyewash station offers simplified use and a longer-lasting active stream that can be mounted to the wall, placed on a tabletop or used with Radians' eyewash stand. The portable stand also allows for station relocation between job sites or when a hazard is moved within a facility.

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Cardo Crew now offers hearing protection that simultaneously allows workers to stay connected in loud or hazardous workplaces. The Comm-Set complies with the American ANSI standard and the European EN352 hearing protection standards against impulsive and loud environmental noises. The headset features Cardo's mesh intercom technology, Dynamic Mesh Communications, which connects two to 15 users via wireless mesh technology within a 2-mile range and offers eight different channels for coexistence of multiple intercom networks within the same terrain. The Comm-Set comes equipped with a plug to connect 2-way radios. Workers can also connect their mobile phone via Bluetooth technology and use the dedicated mobile app, plus operate such features as built-in FM radio and music streaming.

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NICOLE STEMPAK
Managing Editor

PROGRESS, NOT PERFECTION

Don't lose sight of the strides you're making, especially if you're on an unobtainable quest.

As I write this, my partner is spread out on the couch, having finished grading final exams that are piled on the seat cushions. I'm sitting in my brown leather club chair, proofreading this issue, when he starts talking to himself. That isn't unusual, but I look up just in case he's talking to me.

He wasn't, but he happily starts telling me about his students' performance. He shares the scores of some students and details how they improved throughout the semester. (To be clear, he doesn't disclose any students' identities.) For one student who was on the bubble, he bumps up their grade because they did so well on the comprehensive final.

He's considering students' performance and progress as he determines final grades, and it got me reconsidering my own metrics.

I've been on a monthslong exercise regimen. I said my goal was to build strength and improve flexibility, which is true—to an extent. Mostly, I want to lose the pandemic pounds so I can fit back into my dress slacks.

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I haven't seen much change, and frankly, I'm frustrated. Then I thought about how I'm using slightly heavier free weights, how I'm able to complete longer YouTube workout videos and how my legs weren't shaking after a two-hour walk a few Saturdays ago.

In other words, I stopped thinking about what I can't do and started thinking about what I can do. It has changed my whole outlook.

We all have either been assigned or assigned ourselves lofty and seemingly impossible tasks. I've read enough about goal setting to know that breaking down one big goal into several smaller tasks can allow progress to be measured or quantified.

That's certainly true, and there are many other techniques, such as habit stacking, to help you build momentum. In fact, the debt snowball method, whereby you focus on paying off debt balances from smallest to largest, is based on the idea that getting rid of one debt motivates you and makes it psychologically easier to tackle them successively until you are debt-free.

Safety professionals are tasked with, among other things, creating a safe workplace. I imagine these tasks feel overwhelming at best and unattainable at worst. There are so many steps, pieces, parts and people involved in achieving these goals that it can be easy to get stuck or feel defeated.

I think the solution may be to stop looking toward the end goal—which is never really the end, anyway—and start admiring the process. In other words, we can appreciate the progress we're making if we take our blinders off.

For example, I have been so focused on exercise that I hadn't stopped to consider whether what I'm eating will support my weight loss goals. Diet is just as, if not more, important than exercise when it comes to weight loss, but I somehow forgot that.

I think our desire to eliminate, solve or achieve our goals makes us so laser-focused that it's easy to lose track of the progress. We stop paying attention to the process and zero in on the final result. We also stop questioning our goal and whether our strategy is best suited for this endeavor in the first place.

Our drive is ironic—or perhaps problematic—because we will never fully finish. If we meet our end target, we have to shift our efforts to replicate that success. Or we keep striving toward a goal that proves elusive. Or we realize that this goal no longer serves us, so we set a new one.

Therefore, instead of endlessly toiling away, let's pause and take it all in. When we do, we'll realize that perfection isn't realistic, and change doesn't happen overnight. However, progress occurs incrementally. When we notice it, we should celebrate it. That allows us to recognize growth and renew our efforts so we can persist.

Of course, just because you achieve excellence once doesn't guarantee it'll happen again. But if you have a solid strategy and make it routine, you might continue to maintain that level of excellence. And that is even better than illusory perfection.

Editor's Note: Speaking of excellence, if you think your company has created an award-winning safety culture, consider applying to be one of America's Safest Companies of 2022. More details can be found on p. 2.

Nicole Stempak

Send an e-mail with your thoughts to nstempak@endeavorb2b.com.

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