

Interview Series.

Leaders making a difference, 2024.

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Cristiane Goulart

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By combining legal expertise and extensive experience in health and safety, Cristiane Goulart has created an inspiring career built on passion and responsibility for safety and the well-being of employees.

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How did you begin your career in safety, and how has it evolved?

I have a degree in Law with a specialisation in the labour relations. This is how my career began, as a consultant in labour law for a large multinational company. When a work accident occurred, I visited the site to better understand what had happened. My goal was to obtain the perspective of a wide range of people within operations in order to go beyond simply theory and better defend the company and its people. Over time, I found myself working on safety quite closely, and I developed a passion for this topic. I was not a safety leader, but I was a leader who was always interested in this subject.

I started working at my current company as a labour consultant and soon became the President of the Internal Accident Prevention Commission. I believe I took on the responsibility for workplace safety not only because of my interest in the topic, which has always been part of my daily life, but also because I am a leader who has demonstrated that I have full understanding of safety means for business.

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How can organisational culture and leadership make a difference in the evolution of safety in the workplace?

Cultural transformation happens first through compliance, then through influencing behaviour. It is an intense journey that starts with leadership, as it is the leader who sets the tone for change and evolution. The leader needs to understand what they are responsible for and that visible leadership inspires people. When we apply it in everyday life, we inspire people to do the same. The leader cannot let bad situations go unnoticed and cannot condone certain attitudes. The leader needs to act.

Furthermore, having good communication tools is essential to encourage people consistently, as responsibility for safety needs to be shared. Each person is important to influence one other to be safe.



How can safety programmes benefit from innovation and technological change? And what is the role of communication?

In 2020, we held the Internal Accident Prevention Commission vote online for the first time. It was a very challenging experience with a lot of learning. Now, such digital experiences have become normal. Last year, we held the first Internal Work Accident Prevention Week (SIPAT) digitally. It was another challenging experience with lots of learning. However, we had a wider support and were able to reach a larger audience. We have used gamification for safety campaigns and digital comic books accessed via QR Code. These are examples of how we have used technology and innovate to improve audience reach and engagement.

Digitising processes a challenge, but necessary, as technology helps to integrate tools and maximise audience engagement in an effective manner.

Using a mobile phone within the company is a challenge given privacy concerns, but it is a key communication tool that allows you to innovate and reach more people. If approached with discipline, awareness and balance, it can be quite powerful.

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What impact do other areas, such as sustainability, operational risk management and operational excellence, have in helping to create a safe business that is better positioned to withstand industry volatility and succeed over the long term?

Management needs to take an integrated approach with a robust system driving improvement. These issues are interlinked, and therefore a clear business strategy with concrete actions is required to achieve high performance in each area, and, ultimately, business results.

At the end of the day, everything is connected to safety. When safety improves, business efficiency improves and the quality of products improves.

Production will be less impacted if there are fewer accidents. We will have fewer legal issues if we have fewer accidents. We will have a healthier environment if we improve ergonomics. Mental health will also be better if we have a safer environment. With all these impacts, there will be higher satisfaction in the work environment and people will be more bought in to deliver the company's vision and strategy. We need to build more understanding of the positive effects of safety on performance.



What I always say is that people create the size of their territory. One may be operational, for example, but they can play a strategic role in the success of the business, and should feel empowered to actively contribute their suggestions for improvement."



Based on your own experience, what would you say are some best practices when creating a safety programme in your industry?

I highlight just one point that is crucial to any initiative's success, which is listening to stakeholders. When you start something without listening to and engaging them, buy-in to the initiative becomes more difficult to obtain, which can end in failure. Listening to stakeholders means building something together and enabling co-creation of the process.



What initiative or action have you taken in your career that made a difference and that you are most proud of?

Every leader needs to keep in mind that they are a leader only because there is a team. What I'm most proud of is being able to bring together 100% of my team to talk, to listen to them. Listening to my team and carrying out projects to recognise and value people and everything we are able to achieve has encouraged them to feel more empowered and deliver the required business results.

What I always say is that people create the size of their territory. One may be operational, for example, but they can play a strategic role in the success of the business, and should feel empowered to actively contribute their suggestions for improvement. The team then feels ownership, changing the way they engage. This unlocks significant potential for positive transformation. This is the way I am proud to lead.

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