

President's Message

Gone are the days when passion and personal commitment for SH&E excellence are all it takes. Today, SH&E professionals also must be able to offer ideas that are in sync with business and risk models.

Operating in a Businesslike Manner



**"Safety is not something that stands off by itself. It is integral in every part of the business."
—Gerry Schepers**

At the Executive Summit held during Safety 2007, four senior executives shared their philosophical and practical views about the integration of SH&E within their respective business systems. The resounding message was that most large employers "get safety" and that we don't need to sell them on it anymore. Instead, they advised, we should focus on understanding the businesses in which we work. Executives want us to provide metrics that can project benefits and savings from sound SH&E management systems.

Businesses and professions that prosper in the long term are those which consistently pay close attention to their customers. Our traditional customers are the many people performing their jobs each day. We work alongside them, seeking to prevent injury and illness and to protect the environment. Who can argue with that focus?

But we have another major customer set—business and government leaders—that is increasingly asking us to demonstrate the value of SH&E and to measure its effect on the bottom line. The SH&E profession is changing significantly in response to challenging work assignments and expanded responsibilities that include environment, security, emergency response, finances, engineering, public relations and human resources. Operating in today's global economy also requires new skill sets. Most business leaders would agree that "safety pays." What they need from SH&E professionals is guidance and counsel to help them understand what that phrase means within the context of their particular business environment.

In his message in the July 2006 issue of *PS*, past president Don Jones spoke of our need to "communicate the business case for safety." ASSE's Business of Safety Committee (www.asse.org/practicespecialties/bosc) has collected many articles and research papers which provide a clear, compelling case that we must become more businesslike in our functional activities.

To do this, we must up our game as a profession and become more businesslike in fulfilling our role as SH&E professionals. We must define, promote and build a profession that operates in a businesslike manner. Gone are the days when passion and personal commitment for SH&E excellence are all it takes. Today, SH&E professionals also must be able to offer ideas that are in sync with business and risk models. Companies that wish to improve their SH&E programs must make sure they have an effective SH&E management system in place. This system should be measured against the criteria of existing business systems that have proven effective. Once this system is implemented, companies can begin to close gaps and make improvements to their SH&E programs.

During Safety 2007, several members of ASSE's Consultants Practice Specialty joined with OSHA Administrator Edwin Foulke Jr. to discuss ways to reach out to small businesses. Fay Feeney, Jeff Camplin, Bob Coffey, Katherine Hart and moderator Linda Tapp shared information with OSHA staff and others about how best to reach out to small businesses. ASSE also has developed a document outlining these best practices (see p. 14). The Consultants Practice Specialty expects that this document will be a roadmap that ASSE members can follow to consider both the business opportunities and the professional responsibility SH&E professionals have in helping small businesses provide safe workplaces.

These activities clearly demonstrate the key role our members play in helping businesses succeed. They also cast a favorable light on our profession as an enabler of safe, profitable business. It is up to us to continue to tangibly demonstrate that SH&E is a vital component of the business equation, especially in our global marketplace. ASSE is committed to reaching out to our members' customers on behalf of the profession and our members. As Don Jones recommended in July 2006, we are helping members to demonstrate the positive impact of safety on bottom-line profitability. This, in turn, is creating a greater awareness among business leaders and leading them to more highly value our profession and our contributions. How sound Don's advice was. In today's hyperactive business world, it is even more magnified in importance.



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