

Next Gen GM

CHANGING THE FACE OF SAFETY



When we think of Health and Safety, the thought springs to mind of a function that sits in its own little bubble writing endless policies that are wordy, hard to understand, fail to add operational value and often only come off the shelf when something goes wrong.

I have been fortunate to hold various positions throughout my career in the aviation, museum, technology and hospitality industries. Each of these has allowed me to further develop my understanding of how best to manage risk and form the inevitable conclusion that really there is no, nor should there be, a one-size-fits-all approach to managing Health and Safety.

My vision has always remained strong, one that Health and Safety can be fun, friendly and engaging. A visible function that not only enables a company to grow and adapt but move with the times. A previous colleague had a saying of "one team, one standard". To many people this meant nothing, but to me, this really struck home by motivating and inspiring me. Ultimately changing my outlook to who and how I should be engaging with my stakeholders. Many companies face the challenge of teams and individuals working in their own silo, completing their KPIs and objectives, but failing to fully understand if the operation succeeds.



Joining Revolut, I knew my top priority was engagement.

I was not quite sure at that stage with who, but that did not matter, I needed to get out there and see how I could help. A month in as I was progressing with my "Terry on tour" stakeholder engagement, the Head of Global Mobility joined and a colleague of mine moved across to her team. Keen to make an introduction and understand how we could work together I set up a meeting as I suddenly found myself with a blank page

titled "travel safety". Being a curious soul, I am not afraid to ask a silly question, fortunately, this individual was kind enough to humour me and we quickly formed a close working relationship. We were able to support one another in taking a sensible approach to managing safety often forming an alliance from dealing with employees who wished to stay in an AirBnB rather than a recommended hotel to dealing with the effects of employees travelling during the coronavirus outbreak

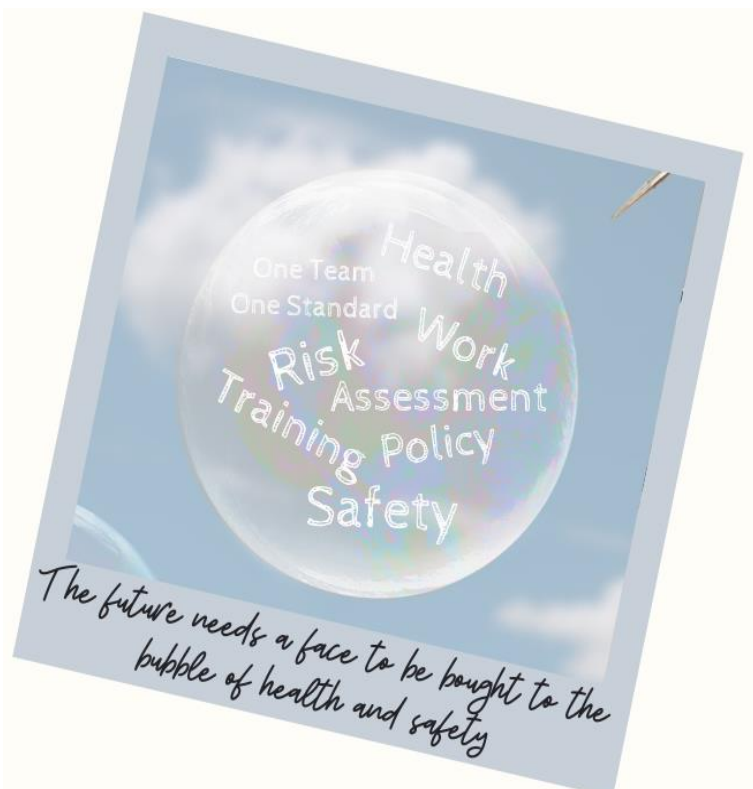
Nobody would know that less than two months in, my fate changed with the outbreak of COVID-19.

It was soon apparent that as the new Health and Safety Manager, the company were looking to me in spear heading the coronavirus situation. A channel with key stakeholders was set up and we initially agreed on several locations throughout the world to be classed as "high risk". Employees would not be allowed to travel for work purposes to these locations and if they did for personal reasons, a self-isolation period would be required. I will never forget waking up in the early hours while in New York to check the latest WHO situation report and messaging the group,

sometimes you just cannot clock off. Needless to say, each day I would be filled with dread before I took a glance at the latest report, aware that we might need to add another location to our high-risk list. Always knowing in the back of my mind what the impact this would cause on the business and its employees.

There is no doubt, that as a start-up and a company that had not been through this before that we were learning as we were going.

We learned one day that our neighbouring company had evacuated their offices due to an employee who had returned from an affected location and was showing symptoms. It was at this point that questions started coming "why we were not sending our employees home". It was key for us not to cause unnecessary panic or take knee-jerk steps, but rather follow guidance from government agencies and show that we were continuously reviewing the situation. It was soon apparent that we not going to please everyone, at one point, we were not communicating enough, then the next day we were communicating too much. As we continued along our journey in dealing with the effects of coronavirus, a team spirit was formed and together we built our Coronavirus Business Continuity Plan. It will be no surprise that as a tech company, we utilised software to help push automated and customised messages to each employee based on their location.



What does the future look like?

Companies should take learnings away from this situation and it is fair to say that the role of a Health and Safety function will change moving forward. Cross-functional stakeholders and engagement will become more important and bringing a face to the team who usually sits in a bubble will be essential. Companies should not be afraid of challenging the norm and thinking outside of the box and with each of our functions we should look at how coronavirus has changed our stakeholders and who we need to now engage with.

Terry Marriott

Health and Safety Manager

United Kingdom