



A NEW BENCHMARK IN UNDERSTANDING SAFETY & PERFORMANCE - HOW DO YOU COMPARE?

by **Andrei Stewart**, Global Safety Index

For too long organisations have been talking about the need to do something different so that we can better understand our current safety performance. Moreover, for too long, industry has argued that lag indicators are a poor indication of safety performance.

"We also know that a better understanding of your company culture and investing in training and leadership within your team, ultimately drives the safest culture, providing the safest performance", was Ben Wilson, MD of Global Safety Index (GSI), response when asked how the company came into being.

There is extensive data to support Wilson's remarks. Years of research, and most recently, meta-analysis of that research, has concluded that safety culture is in fact a reliable and robust predictor of: safe behaviours, injury frequency rates, and injury severity rates.^{1,2,3,4} Of course this will come as no surprise to safety practitioners and astute business leaders. The question is, what are we doing with this knowledge?

Amidst all the talk, and in the absence of any consistent application of this knowledge, Global Safety Index "has taken a stand". The existence of their business advocates and enables the measurement of this data at three different levels, to determine how high performance safety culture can actually be built and sustained. Wilson notes, "Of course we measure and understand your lead and lag indicators, the difference is, we ensure that you actually understand the safety culture that is enabling that performance. To understand culture you've got get back to grass roots and assess leadership competence and capability in your business today. Only from this point can you plan forward about where and how to apply resources to gain a different, desired, outcome.

"So rather than just talk about moving away from lag indicators, a group of global consultants came together to create a safety index that allows organisations to measure consistently by using the same safety culture tool. And from here to then understand exactly why we are getting the performance outcomes we are. A Safety Leadership Index was also created, for the first time enabling an individual to self assess their current safety

leadership performance and also gain performance feedback from their own leader. This consistent measure of safety culture and leadership across organisations is the integral feature of GSI. Part of the challenge for industry has not been a lack of culture measurement tools, rather, that the many tools available are all different. Like-for-like comparison has not been possible. The opportunity now is to choose one consolidated measure so that industry can collaborate and better learn the lessons and insights needed to change.

The timing is ripe for the Global Safety Index initiative, with a number of forces aligning to enable the possibility, and immediate implementation, of such a tool. Principal amongst these forces is information technology. At the back-end, the technology allows extensive and intuitive function. Further, 'big data' analysis capabilities promise limitless potential for the vast amount of collated data. The growth in devices such as tablets and the broad interconnectivity of such devices has been the front-end technical enabler for Global Safety Index. Even remote workers can be accessed via these devices and others such as digital kiosks at select locations. Furthermore, these workers, who not so long ago may have eschewed this type of technology, are entirely competent and comfortable using it today.

From a societal perspective, there has been for some time now, increasing calls for greater transparency, especially with regard to matters of sustainability. Participation with Global Safety Index supports this and furthers organisational trust and the learning opportunities necessary to achieve high performance.

With Global Safety Index established and rapidly growing, the potential for industry is an accelerated understanding of safety culture and its powerful part in producing high performance. At a local level, safety practitioners and senior leaders will be able to use the index to provide timely, accurate, clear, and compelling data in support of safety strategies and action plans. This in turn ensures safety initiatives are better understood, more readily accepted, and effectively executed. At a board level, Directors and Senior Executives have a tool to answer the questions "how do we compare?" and "what can we do to improve?"



Global Safety Index is facilitating a shift in focus upstream by allowing measurement and benchmarking of not only traditional lag indicators, but the critical successively precursory lead indicators.

PROFILE

ANDREI STEWART

Andrei Stewart began his career as a cadet with BHP and graduated as a Metallurgical Engineer before making the shift into safety and leadership oriented roles. Andrei eventually joined the ranks of consultancy and has spent several years travelling widely and focusing on safety strategy, culture and leadership. Most recently Andrei returned to further study, and is currently completing a Grad Cert Occupational Hazard Management at Ballarat University, and Psychology at Melbourne University. In addition to his consulting work and study Andrei is contributing at Global Safety Index as Research and Marketing Manager.

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