

ESG and Sustainability in Health and Safety

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Executive Network Group had the pleasure of speaking with Gerry Mulholland, an accomplished Health and Safety professional with over 35 years of experience in his field.

Gerry is currently the Global HSE Director at Ocado Group and sat down with ENG to discuss ESG and sustainability topics in the Health and Safety industry.

"Gerry, please tell us about your career journey in Health and Safety"

"I have been in the HSE profession for over 35 years and came into it via the construction industry. I was fortunate to be given a chance as a Trainee H&S Adviser and have worked for several organisations in different industries and been offered promotional opportunities along the way.

My career has taken me as far south as the Falkland Islands, as far east as the South China Sea coastline and I've sat in the tower crane at the top of The Shard."

"What is the biggest challenge you've personally faced as a safety professional within the Logistics & E-Commerce industry?"

"I am relatively new to the Industry having just joined Ocado over a year ago. Ocado are now listed as a Technology business but there is a large presence in the Logistics and E-Commerce Business that is UK centred.

One of my biggest challenges was to get to understand how the business operated and managed their risk profile during lockdown which was when I joined."

"What has been the biggest change within the HSE industry in your career?"

"Ownership of issues by line management has improved dramatically, I think. I would also say that occupational health, which was always the poor relation to safety, has been improving but has been left in the shadows of wellbeing and mental health awareness in the last five years or so."

"What role does a Safety Professional play in both Sustainability and ESG goals?"

"This will vary depending on the size of the organisation and where the business sets its priorities."

Many of my roles have had "E" in the title which has always focused on legal compliance rather than the wider sustainability and ESG goals which have a wider impact on businesses.

However, there is an opportunity to contribute and this is something I am involved in at Ocado."

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"Shifting the dial towards becoming a sustainable business is a huge challenge, with both organisational, systematic, and financial barriers. How can HSE professionals help to get this on the agenda?"

"In its simplest form, the pillars of a sustainable business are environmental, economic and social dimensions. HSE professionals have something to offer in each of these spaces and need to be able to translate what they do into a language that businesses understand and want to hear about.

I have found that providing a business case for change or investment tends to be the best way forward to get operational teams and support functions to understand the benefits. They need to be targeted and not too generic to enable change across any (or all) of the three dimensions."

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"What metrics and measures can be implemented to track the impact of Sustainability initiatives on the wider business?"

"Again, it will depend on the individual business and the industry they work in and for many organisations who are part of a supply chain, what their Client wants and expects.

Some examples could be based on waste or recycling targets, Greenhouse gas emissions, water usage, energy consumption or tracking products from sourcing to recycling or eventually ending up as landfill."

"What would you say is the first step for a logistics organisation to strengthen its EHS within ESG initiatives?"

"Demand and expectations are changing for organisations, not only with their investors and clients but also how they attract people into their organisations.

Caring about people (sending them home safe and healthy every day) is far more prevalent now than it has ever been with ethics and governance playing a key role in this. Two aspects that HSE professionals can play their part in."

