

## Moving to the Right Side of Safety: Where Are We on the Path?



*Today's expert blogger is Nuala Gage, Senior Consultant, Sub-Saharan Africa for Intertek's Consulting and Training group. Nuala brings more than 10 years' experience in the industry of learning development and safety leadership.*

Being a woman, I keep an eye on fashion and trends – what's new and exciting; how are designers attracting and keeping people's attention and what inspires them. Trends come and go, and often come back again in a slightly different shape or form, but the core stays the same – keeping people looking good and feeling good about themselves.

Believe it or not, this got me thinking about safety in the work environment. There are many trends and fashions that come and go, but the core of keeping people safe does not change. The methods, tools and gadgets may vary but the core is stable and several questions remain: *How do we reduce the likelihood of harm? How do we move to the right?*

The right side of safety is where we make choices. Why and what does the *right side* truly mean? *Moving to the right* refers to making decisions based on rationale responses that are aligned with the correct way to do something – the safest method. But how do we move to the right side of consistency in what we implement by developing long term solutions and avoid following short term fads? We are all at different stages on the path from high-risk to the right side of [safety](#). Our journey has many influences which can include: 1) our individual risk tolerance; 2) the unknown; and 3) the experiences and influences that have guided us to the point for which we are, currently.

When individuals are first exposed to risk, we typically are unaware or even naïve to the potential dangers and hazards. Simply put: We don't know what we don't know; therefore, we follow the rules. As we grow in experience, we become more aware of and mature to the vast array of things that could go wrong and we move from being compliant to believing that every step we take and every decision we make must be on the right side of safety.

Along this path there are many role players who have positive or negative influences on the direction our journey takes. There are standard operating procedures and policies. We also attend safety training and have safety representatives to guide and assist us and we have each other – our team mates. Working with organizations across industries, I get to meet a number of individuals at various points in their career. From experience, it is important to have someone take interest and acknowledge those individuals within companies that show an interest in safety. This interest not only shows investment in people, but leaders begin to emerge that can help provide a [safety-focused culture](#). Together, when people acknowledge and work together like this, then they not only are open to the possibilities of learning from mistakes but also creating new solutions. As a result, this type of experience allows us to make choices and to remain on the right side of safety.

Whether we are an identified leader or a team member, we have all been given the invitation to help someone get to the right side of safety and to move along the path to making safer choices. Each of us has the opportunity to influence the long term impact that isn't a fad or the current trend, but sustainable and impactful for our organization.

Join us for the second blog posting on this topic later this week. If you have any questions about this topic, please email [Nuala.gage@intertek.com](mailto:Nuala.gage@intertek.com) and we'll get back to you.