



People Sustainability Global Summit

**Wednesday 4 and Thursday 5
December 2024, London**

Sponsored by:

AIHA, Capitals Coalition, Global Solutions Inc, IIRSM, Institute of Advanced Risk Management, L'Oréal, NEBOSH, Pinsent Masons and Protex AI.



Introduction

On the 3rd and 4th December 2024, our sixth summit brought together sustainability and health and safety professionals from round the world to hear about the latest innovations and share ideas on putting people at the heart of truly sustainable organisations.

Space for this summit was generously provided by law firm Pinsent Masons at their headquarters in the City of London. The location, in the heart of Europe's largest financial centre, was fitting because institutional investors' interest in sustainability and human capital issues has been one of the motive forces driving the growing boardroom interest in the issues we discussed. We always knew this was the case and offered a platform for investors and fund managers to discuss their perspectives at our first summit in Paris in 2019.

Now, shareholder interest in social and environmental stewardship has blossomed to the point where national and international regulators have set down requirements for companies to report on their non-financial impacts and on the risks and opportunities that come from their interactions with people and the environment. Just one of these regulations, the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, brings the issues of people sustainability and impact accounting that have long been the focus of our summit discussions into the mainstream for tens of thousands of companies.

Since its inception five years ago, the summit has grown to be a centrepiece of the work by companies and stakeholder groups such as the Capitals Coalition to help refinement of approaches to making business more sustainable and resilient, nurturing human capital and finding ways to express its economic value. I hope these pages give some impression of the richness of our workshops



and presentations on everything from impact-dependency pathways and value accounting to people-centred change management and embracing neurodiversity. I hope they will also spark more thought and discussion on one of the most important business issues of our age.

Malcolm Staves, Co-Founder and Co-Chair, Valuing Human Capital in OHS Project - Capitals Coalition and Global Vice President Health and Safety - L'Oréal



Keynote: Connecting the dots

"We are not just going to be health and safety and environmental professionals talking to each other," said Kathy Seabrook, CEO of Global Solutions Inc and Co-Chair of the Capitals Coalition's Human Capital in OHS and Wellbeing Project Group, welcoming delegates to the summit. "We have economists in the room. We have accountants in the room. We have equity investors in the room."

"We're going to have different conversations this next day and-a-half. We're going to talk about value of safety and health, value of human capital in occupational health and safety, otherwise known as people-side sustainability."

She said the delegates would hear about accounting for different kinds of value than the traditional financial value that had been the yardstick for successful business in past decades. Accounting for the value to organisations of healthy, energised people was essential she said: "People are at the core of every thriving business, and their ability to contribute is based on, and influenced by, their health, their safety, their wellbeing."

Investors increasingly view companies through an ESG lens, assessing their standards of environmental stewardship and social responsibility. New reporting regulations and standards require businesses to assess and report on the financial impacts on them of sustainability challenges, but also their own impact on the world. These requirements placed health and safety leaders at the centre of creating and measuring value, she said, restating her belief that OHS professionals no longer just merited a seat at the table – "We are the table!"

She said that the sessions would connect the dots between health and safety and human capital and accounting for their non-financial value. Kathy noted that a survey of global CEOs revealed their highest priority was attracting and retaining talent.

She recalled a discussion with the chief sustainability officer of a multinational company who was trying to understand the way human capital could be expressed financially. She said he obtained a figure for the cost of recruiting and inducting a new employee – \$6000 at entry level – and the figure allowed him to begin to put a value on retaining and nurturing the company's current workforce.

"We are foundational to ESG, foundational to sustainability," she concluded. "So that needs to be part of our story, part of how we can actually influence our companies, but we need to have all the things you're going to learn in the next day and-a-half in our arsenal of information in our toolbox."

“

We are foundational to ESG, foundational to sustainability

Kathy Seabrook, CEO,
Global Solutions Inc, Co-
Chair, Capitals Coalition's
Human Capital in OHS and
Wellbeing Project Group

”

Before the event

In a morning of pre-conference sessions, early delegates were treated to some insights into some major business people issues of the day.

- **James Hay**, Principal Sustainable Finance Advisor at summit hosts Pinsent Masons, summarised the implications of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive for thousands of businesses trading in the EU, requiring detailed metrics on financial risk from health and safety and on supply chain people impacts.
- The International Labour Organisation's Team Lead on Occupational Safety and Health, **Manal Azzi**, set out the growing impacts of global warming on workers' health, safety and wellbeing, including heat stress and vector-borne disease spread and the implications for businesses and governments.
- **Al Hocking**, Partner at ERM, reported on the results of the sustainability consultancy's third Global Health & Safety Survey, examining the priorities and concerns of 256 health and safety leaders, including contractor management and psychosocial health and wellbeing.
- **Becky Hickman**, CEO of The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), described how the society's vision of ensuring safety and wellbeing at home and at work chimed with corporate ESG priorities.

Slides from all these presentations are available at: bit.ly/3F1AZI6

Keynote: *Expanding the bottom line*

The theme trailed by Kathy Seabrook of value accounting for people sustainability was picked up in the session that followed by Helen Slinger, Executive Director of Accounting for Sustainability (A4S), the charity set up by the present King Charles when he was Prince of Wales. A4S aims to educate finance professionals to account better for social and environmental issues.

Helen showed a slide with a company balance sheet that, amidst lines for the value of assets such as land and property and plant and equipment, had a line with a figure for human capital, which then fed into the valuation of total assets.

Helen explained she runs the A4S Academy, a programme which teaches thousands of finance professionals to think differently about value generation, challenging them to broaden their definitions. "I ask them, for example, do they understand how human and social capital drive value in the organisation?" she said. "Do they know how to protect and enhance that value?" She noted that just as assets such as equipment depreciate faster if they are neglected, human capital needs investment in training and maintaining wellbeing to maintain its asset value.

Helen made a plea for businesses to prioritise equity over equality, making adjustments to arrangements, whether it is job application processes or working hours, to allow for the importance and value of the change to each individual.

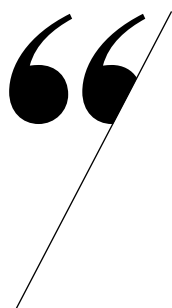
Building alternative forms of value into businesses' accounting and decision making needs a business case for doing so, she said. This involves picking the benefits most likely to resonate with a business's leaders, whether it is strengthening its licence to operate or overcoming skills shortages. "The argument that it's the right thing to do may not be enough for many of the best key decision makers," she warned.

Reliable data was key to accounting for social and human value and the information that is increasingly mandated for standards such as GRI 403 and regulations such as the CSRD, provided a good starting point for value calculation, Helen said, since many businesses had to gather them anyway. She recommended teaming up with colleagues in finance functions to help prepare data in a form that would be familiar to executives.

“Sustainability reporting is here to stay,” Helen concluded, “so use it to your advantage. Use it as the basis of your social and human value calculations and embed these in your financial decision-making processes.”

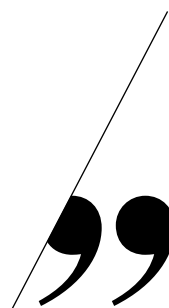
Key points

- Value accounting adds estimates of human and social capital value to an organisation’s financial bottom line.
- Value accounting must be justified by a business case.
- Sustainability reporting standards and regulations provide a framework for value accounting.



***Sustainability reporting
is here to stay, so use it to
your advantage.***

Helen Slinger, Executive Director,
Accounting for Sustainability





Panel: Trend spotting

The latest trends in social and human capital value accounting were reviewed in another of the summit's early sessions. Capitals Coalition Executive Director Natalie Nicholles told delegates an uncertain economic climate and strong headwinds for business made assessing their impact on the people they employ and the world around them more than a "nice to have".

Adele Tharani, Sustainability Director at renewable energy supplier Ørsted, said that when her company had looked for a framework to assess its impact on employees and communities, it had not found any ready-made solutions. In other areas of sustainability, she said, their efforts were driven by a challenge, such as climate change driving the need for carbon reduction. On the social and community side there was no obvious challenge or goal to motivate senior executives and the rest of the organisation, so they were looking for "a context-specific, yet globally-relevant goal we can aspire to contribute to with our social sustainability work and our positive social impact". Ørsted is working as part of a coalition of renewable energy providers, said Adele, to develop a framework which provides goals they can aim for to achieve collective impact.

Madeleine Evans, Director of Generation Investment Management, said that investors concerned with

sustainability faced the same issue of the lack of a generally recognised framework for measuring and improving impacts on people. "If I was to ask my peers in impact roles in investment firms about social sustainability, I could ask 10 people and get 10 different answers," Madeleine said. She hoped the Taskforce on Inequality and Social-related Financial Disclosures (TISFD) might fill the gap. The taskforce brings together investors, businesses and non-governmental bodies to help create a framework for assessing the business opportunities and risks associated with social issues and provide a "shared mental model" for investors to think about human capital. The TISFD is expected to report in late 2026 and rather than offering a new separate standard its work will be used to refine existing ones used by the Global Reporting Initiative and the European Sustainability Reporting Standards which underpin the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive.

Noelia Pacharotti, Senior Impact Expert at the Valuing Impact consultancy, presented a snapshot of research the consultancy had conducted for global apparel brand Nike into the financial value of health and safety programmes among its tier one manufacturing partners. She said the research, using the US National Safety Council's methodology for assessing the financial value of safety, found that the programmes had generated an estimated \$6m value to Nike in reputational protection. Natalie noted that the methodology, available via an activation guide - available at <https://www.nsc.org/workplace/resources/new-value-of-safety> - could be useful to any company looking to shift the emphasis on health and safety as a cost centre to a generator of value to a company and its workforce.

Tom McKenna, Senior Economist at the Capitals Coalition, presented the coalition's updated framework for integrated decision making in businesses <https://capitalscoalition.org/capitals-approach/frameworkintegrated/> launched in September 2024. The seven-step framework was intended to allow organisations to account for social, human, natural and economic capital and map their impact dependencies in a standardised and consistent manner in a way that gives them and other stakeholders confidence. The framework was being tested and subject to consultation, said Tom. Systematising capitals accounting was important, he said: "It's about integrating it fully into their own decision making for the benefit of the business and the benefit of people and the environment as well."

“

If I was to ask my peers in impact roles in investment firms about social sustainability, I could ask 10 people and get 10 different answers

Madeleine Evans, Director,
Generation Investment Management

”





Keynote: The investor's view

A rare glimpse of how investors and fund managers assess companies on their human capital management was offered by Andrew Howard, Global Head of Sustainable Investment at Schroders Asset Management, which manages around \$1 trillion dollars of client funds. One insight Andrew offered was that the fund managers' research goes way beyond reading companies' own published data and ratings agencies' assessments.

"We can get quite a long way without ever opening a CSR report," he observed, noting that there was rich information on employee review sites. Data from software suppliers such as PayScale will provide a picture of pay levels and the gender pay gap in a company.

He said that injury rates, workforce diversity and employee satisfaction are among the other measures Schroders uses to measure a company's treatment of its human capital. By tracking this sort of information against company performance, "you can effectively start to compare companies that invest more than the bare minimum in trying to build a strong, powerful workforce, and the profitability that those companies are able to generate relative to a company that spends the bare minimum."

As the value of companies becomes more dependent on and more contingent on their employee base, human capital, capabilities and strengths, this kind

of analysis helps the asset managers make better investment decisions on where to place their money for reliable returns. "If you have different companies, which appear to have similarly high levels of return on capital today, the trick for us is, can we figure out which one of those companies maintains a higher return on capital for longer?"

He showed delegates analysis by Schroders based on its own research and data from Thompson Reuters' Worldscope database that showed a strong correlation over five years between financial returns and investment in employees. "Those companies which achieve a high level of profitability, and do that through a more solid underpinning strength in terms of their human capital management, tend to maintain it for longer, whereas those companies whose profitability is underpinned by weaker capital management, human capital management in general, tend to see that deteriorate more quickly."

He admitted out that enthusiasm for ESG investing, measured both in positive news coverage and net inflows of funds, had peaked in 2021, “but there's still stronger demand for sustainable funds, they are growing more quickly than the wider market.”

He noted that stock markets representing more than half the world's capitalisation had committed to the International Sustainability Standards Board reporting standards, so even major organisations not covered by the EU's CSRD would still be required to make non-financial disclosures on material sustainability impacts. He also pointed to the results of surveys of business executives by the World Economic Forum that showed that between 2016 and 2024 the majority of their biggest concerns had been environmental or social. “It isn't just investors making a lot of noise about this,” he said. “This is not just a few campaigners on fringes. This is at the heart of how companies think about their long-term sustainability and viability.”

Key messages

- Fund managers' sustainability analysis of companies extends beyond the their published ESG metrics.
- Research shows a positive link between sustained corporate profitability and investment in employee development.
- Pressure from regulators and investors means corporate accountability for human capital management is likely to increase.

“

Companies which achieve a high level of profitability, and do that through a more solid underpinning strength in terms of their human capital management, tend to maintain it for longer

Andrew Howard, Global Head of Sustainable Investment, Schroders Asset Management

”







Workshop: The impact dependencies journey

Charles Redinger, Founder of the Institute for Advance Risk Management and Kizzy Augustin, Partner at lawyers Mischcon de Reya put delegates to work to provide a snapshot of whether and how their organisations were measuring their impacts on people and society.

"We're talking about companies, your companies, being held to account, not just from a financial perspective, but also from a people perspective," said Kizzy. She suggested delegates could encompass impacts such as employees' conditions and wellbeing, corporate purchasing decisions, and product and service impacts.

The attendees worked in eight groups to consider three questions about their organisations' progress in and experience of impact-dependency assessment and measurement. The main contributions of the groups are set out under the three questions below.

1. Where is your organisation on the impact evaluation journey?

- We haven't even started.
- We have begun but have a long way to go.
- Approaches are still evolving.
- We can see the spotlight changing.

- Not yet on the path but starting to change the priority of HSE staff.
- We have support from the top to change how we measure value and are working on implementation.
- We are linking human capital to profitability.
- It's a long haul, complicated by geographical and cultural factors.



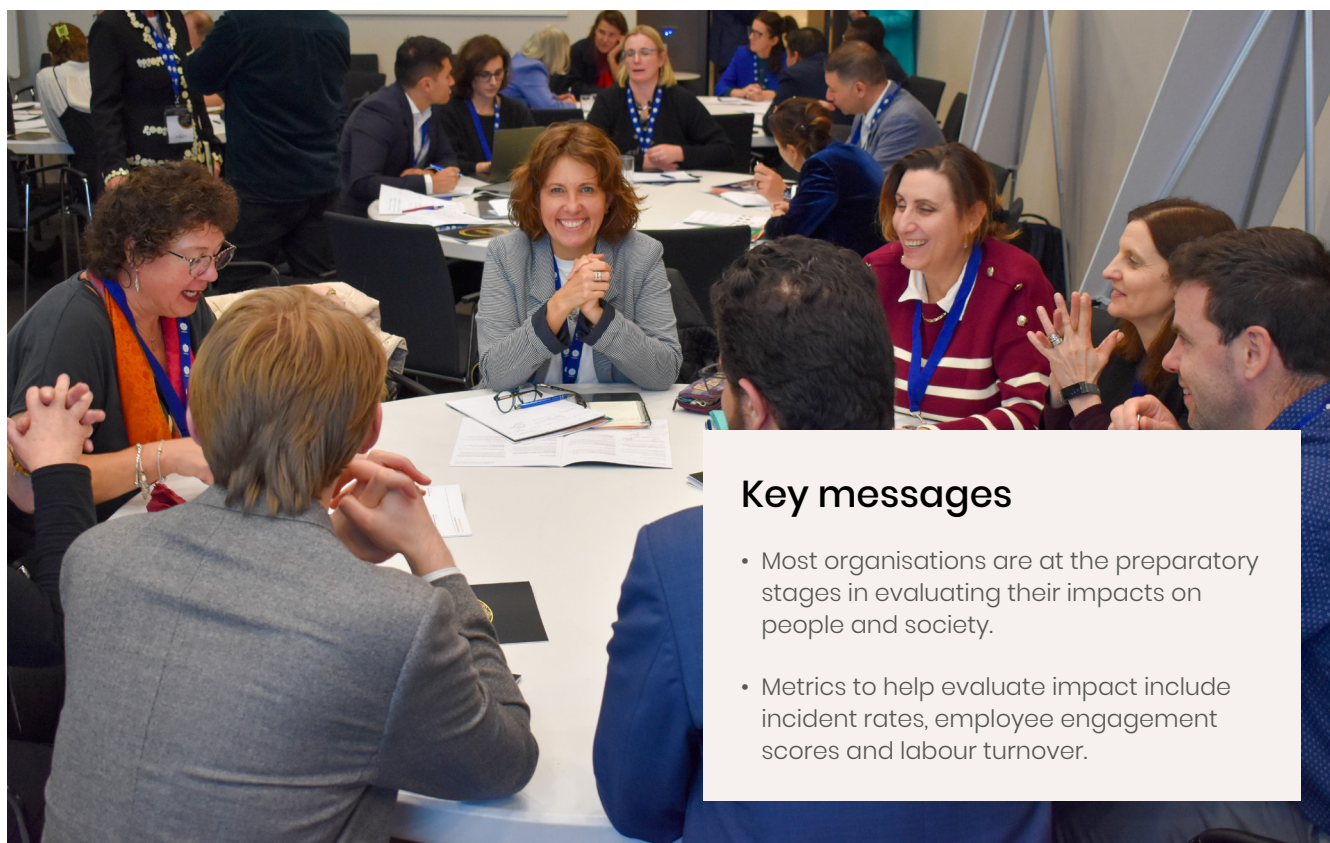


2. What are the ways in which you are exploring impacts by virtue of metrics?

- Taking time to review the measures – we need to slow down to speed up.
- We are looking at employee value equation, to make equity.
- Trying to move to leading indicators to drive positive behaviour and future success. But not everyone is aligned yet.
- Need joined-up working by different functions to measure impact – everyone has a piece of the puzzle.
- We are tying in all the disciplines.
- We need to identify blind spots.
- We need to ensure data reliability and assurance of any metrics.

3. What are the metrics and goals that you have either established or seeking to establish?

- Wellbeing scores.
- Training hours.
- Engagement scores.
- Incident rates.
- Numbers of improvement actions.
- Trying to measure people empowerment.
- Analysing employee attrition and retention.
- Employee turnover.
- Community investment.
- Everything to do with people.



Key messages

- Most organisations are at the preparatory stages in evaluating their impacts on people and society.
- Metrics to help evaluate impact include incident rates, employee engagement scores and labour turnover.

Panel session: Climate change people impacts

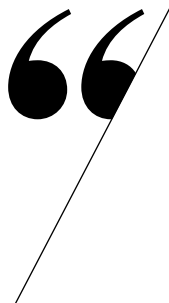
In a panel session, Stuart Hughes, Head of Health and Safety, Mercedes AMG Petronas Formula One, asked panellists to discuss the health and safety issues that come with global warming.

Stephanie Thery, Head of Sustainability, Global Manufacturing at smoking and vaping products maker Philip Morris International, said that the quickest way to focus the people challenges of climate change was to get it listed as an impact on the organisation's materiality assessment. "If it's recognised across the functions in the same company that it is material, then comes the action and the KPIs and investment."

Ben Legg, former Health and Safety Director at the NEOM mega-project in Saudi Arabia said it was time to stop talking about the problems of climate change and to start taking action. Martin Coyd, Group Head of Health and Safety at engineering services provider Beck & Pollitzer, noted that in some organisations contributing to the energy transition, such as electric car battery manufacturers, the rush to build factories in time to service the phase-out of old technologies meant that scant attention was paid to the health and wellbeing of massive migrant workforces.

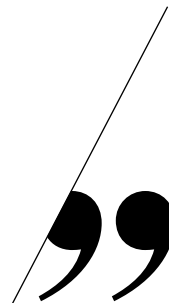
Stuart Hughes, echoing an earlier pre-summit presentation by Dr Manal Azzi of the ILO, noted that the estimated cost to the global economy of worker exposure to excessive temperatures was US \$361 million. "How have we got the money to just throw away in terms of lost time and hurting people through exposure to heat stress? ... How does OSH contribute to reducing that?"

Modifications to PPE and working hours were immediate answers said Ben, but engineering solutions would be needed eventually. Stephanie brought the question back to Andrew Howard's earlier session about what human capital issues investors were interested in. Costing climate-related people risks and a putting a value on mitigating them would help focus minds. "If we can bring this type of consideration in the early stage of business decisions, when investing, for example, it is eventually something that we can influence I believe," she said.



How have we got the money to just throw away in terms of lost time and hurting people through exposure to heat stress?

Stuart Hughes, Head of Health and Safety,
Mercedes AMG Petronas Formula One



Key messages

- Exposing workers to excessive temperatures costs the global economy an estimated US \$361 million.
- The fastest way to focus corporate attention on the health and safety impacts of climate change is to include them in materiality assessments.



Keynote: Leading indicator evidence lags

Leading indicators have been long touted as the intelligent measures for assessing safety culture, giving a picture of an organisation's inputs into a safety system rather than just the outcomes, which are measured by lagging indicators such as accident and ill health rates. But where is the evidence that leading indicators are a reliable indicators of safety performance?

That evidence is yet to be discovered according to Lavinia Ferrante di Ruffano, Project Director at York Health Economics Consortium (YHEC). The consortium was commissioned by safety research funding body Lloyds Register Foundation (LRF), to conduct a rapid research review to see if the evidence showed that focus on leading indicators was associated with any improvement in lagging ones.

Lavinia told delegates that most of the 48 studies included in the review focused on construction, energy or mining companies. The most common leading indicators reviewed were the introduction of new tools or processes, safety culture audits and inspections. YHEC found only weak evidence that there was any causal relationship between measuring and improving leading indicators and reducing accidents and ill health. "That's just about the strength of the evidence," she said. "All of the studies were observational, so there were no experimental studies that set out to control for other factors."

The YHEC team found flaws in the methodology of all the research. "We identified that actually about four-fifths of the studies were at a moderate to high risk of bias," she said. "What that means is that their results might be likely to at least partially reflect problematic study design as much as real differences." She said the study – available at <https://yhec.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/YHEC-Scoping-Review-of-Leading-Indicators-Final-Report-17.04.24.pdf> – highlighted the need for properly designed comparative research that controlled for other influences on accident and illness rates, to help determine whether prioritising leading indicators had the virtues so often claimed.

Malcolm Staves suggested that the results of the study could be a prompt for health and safety leaders. "Maybe this is a call to action," he said. "Maybe we should not just be focusing on the internal evidence but saying how can we have a voice in the future of research?"

Nancy Hey, Director of Evidence and Insight at LRF led a later session showcasing the results of the foundation's largest piece of work, the £2mn biennial World Risk Poll. The latest poll involved 147,000 interviews in 2023 with people in 142 countries. The main findings from the occupational safety and health questions in the poll were that 18% of respondents said they had been harmed at work, consistent with the previous two polls, though the proportion varied by country and industry. But across the sample fear of workplace injury lagged behind other fears such as crime against the person, which may be much less likely to happen. "So there is a lack of concern about workplace harm, and therefore we need to put in systems to make sure we tackle it."

Fear of workplace harm was higher among those who had experienced it personally or knew someone who had. "What's interesting there is you're then looking out for your colleagues," Hey observed. "Somebody is caring for you at work, and increases interpersonal relationships at work and builds that culture, builds that agency that you need in a culture of safety."

Hey noted that in her previous job as Executive Director of the UK's national What Works Centre for Wellbeing she had seen strong evidence that safety culture was the foundation of workforce wellbeing. Organisations whose leaders had plans to look after their people and followed through on their plans had staff with higher levels of wellbeing and were more resilient to shocks.



Returning to the LRF poll data, she noted that around half of those who had been harmed reported it through official channels, consistent with estimates for under-reporting through national systems such as the one mandated by the UK's Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations. Importantly, three times as many employees who had been through safety and health training in the previous three years reported their injuries as those who had not. "So we see a pathway from training to reporting," she said, "but not training to harm reduction, and that's interesting."

"This data generates a bunch of questions that we can test and understand a little bit further," she said, adding that LRF has a funding pool dedicated to that work in the coming years.

https://wrp.lrfoundation.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/World%20Risk%20Poll%2024%20-%20OSH%20Report%201_0.pdf

Key messages

- There is no reliable evidence for the efficacy of focusing on leading indicators to improve safety culture and performance.
- Previous studies have methodological flaws and more research is needed.
- Separately, in Lloyds Register Foundation's 2023 World Risk Poll, 18% of respondents said they had been harmed at work; only half had reported their injuries.
- Three times as many employees with safety training had reported their injuries as those without.

“Maybe we should not just be focusing on the internal evidence but saying how can we have a voice in the future of research?”

Malcolm Staves, Global Vice President Health and Safety, L'Oréal



Workshop: Leading indicators in practice

Malcolm Staves and Krishnen Mootien, Global Health & Safety Director at hygiene and health group Reckitt, set up what Malcolm described as the centrepiece of the summit, a collaborative session for delegates to work together to agree the indicators that were most useful to focus on in protecting employees, growing safety culture and enhancing people sustainability.

"What are those indicators that make impactful change, impactful influence?" Krishnen asked. "What are the indicators that working for yourselves? What are the indicators that could be working for us?"

Delegates split into groups to discuss their ideas, then reported back on their best suggested indicators.

Mining near-miss data. Speaking on behalf of the first working group, Stephanie Thery of Philip Morris International said that they had decided that since the only difference between a serious injury and a near-miss could be a few centimetres in the positioning of a body, "the cause analysis should be exactly the same". Their preferred leading indicator was the number of **in-depth analyses of near-misses with severe potential consequences**. As organisations have driven down accident rates, the learning points from them are fewer, but near-miss analysis could provide the same rich data, Stephanie

said. "As of next year, I am asking our factories to select two or three, maximum, near-misses for a root cause analysis in depth with the Manufacturing Director and myself." From those monthly reviews of three high-potential near-misses across 40 factories she said she expects patterns to emerge of hazards that still need tighter controls.

Leaders' engagement. "Leaders' conversations, leaders' tours, leaders looking at the implementation of programmes; all these things came out as really important," said Al Hocking of consultants ERM of his group's most critical indicator. The metric was about **the quality of the engagement rather than the number of tours or points of contact**, he added, it was about leaders testing the quality of controls on the shopfloor, "so using your leaders to kind of validate and breathe life into those processes and programmes," and measuring feedback from those they engaged with.



The group's full list of indicators included behavioural observation programme results, near-misses, leaders' tours, training completion rates, closure rates of safety improvement opportunities and active tracking of safety programme implementation.

Leadership capability standards. The third group had chosen another measure of leaders' effectiveness, said spokesperson Louise Hosking, Head of UK Health and Safety Transformation at The Scouts: **assessing leaders' capacity and capability against agreed standards;** "so you can say this is what good looks like and then measure them against that." Evaluating leaders against set capability standards and developing them where needed would assure all stakeholders, from investors to employees, that the organisation had the competence and capability to achieve its plans.

Taking the wellbeing temperature. "We were actually looking for something that gives us a real, fundamental measure of the health of our human capital," said Rosie Russell of her group's deliberations. Director of Environment, Health, Safety, and Sustainability at gene therapy company MeiraGTx, Rosie said that **wellbeing scores, collated from regular workforce surveys, were an important gauge of the state of the workforce.** She said she had been glad to hear that one of the delegates in her group had started using wellbeing ratings as a primary indicator, "because it works across cultures and it works across sectors".

Another delegate added that four basic questions: how individuals feel about their work; whether they have the autonomy to perform well; whether they



have the necessary tools; and whether they feel accepted – could provide a powerful barometer of workforce wellbeing and psychological safety.

Systemic metrics. Charles Redinger, CEO of the Institute for Advanced Risk Management in the US said the fifth group had come up with **the prevalence of measurement systems and systematic decision making** as an indicator. On shaping the architecture of decision making, he gave the example of instituting pre-meetings to deal with high-risk issues in an engineering department.

He said another potential leading measure was the degree of focus on identifying blind spots in systems, "and a continual focus on what we can learn from the blind spots we've seen".

Broadening the data triangle. The last group had considered the flow of information about incidents and near-misses that is commonly represented as a triangle with the large number of near-misses and minor incidents at the bottom, narrowing to a small number of serious injuries and even fatalities at the top.

Spokesperson Dan Hobbs, CEO of AI cameravision safety systems provider Protex AI said the group had questioned whether most organisations had enough data on those safety observations and lower-impact incidents. "So rather than think about as a triangle, if think we realistically about it, is it more like a Christmas tree [shape], where the bottom half is thinner because the data collection here is pretty bad." **Improving data collection could be the first priority among leading indicators,** he suggested.





Panel discussion: Data in depth

Continuing the theme highlighted by the group he had spoken for in the previous workshop session, Protex AI CEO Dan Hobbs asked his panellists what issues they faced in gathering and using data to inform health and safety decisions.

"One of the obstacles is access to clean data," said Moustafa Elsalwaly, Corporate Risk Manager at L'Oréal. "We need more reliable data." Megan Stowe, Senior Director for Sustainability and Procurement at warehousing company Neovia Logistics said the issue she faced was deciding which items out of a wealth of data streams to focus on, then trying to bring information that is held in different databases around the company together in a compatible format.

Darren Moppett, Global Fabric and Home Care HS&E Director at Procter & Gamble, agreed. "We have operations all around the world, and we have HR, we have manufacturing, we have QA, we have sustainability, we have HSE, we have finance. Every single one has built their data systems over the last, sometimes back 20 years." If any of the functions found what they thought was a promising digital innovation, they faced the challenge of securing the cooperation of those other functions and sometimes of the employers of Procter & Gamble's 100,000 contract staff. He noted that adopting an AI

cameravision system for the company's Essex factory had involved not just reassuring other departments about the legal implications of surveillance technology but also the staff and contractors that it was a system designed to help reduce incidents rather than to spy on them. He noted that observed unsafe behaviour, such as operators not wearing PPE, had reduced by half in three months after introducing the cameravision system.



"Transparency is key when you implement something like this," added Megan, so that your people can then feel empowered to go and help one another." Moustafa agreed, saying that just as websites in the EU ask permission to leave cookie tokens on visitors' computers, operators' consent should always be sought before using camera-based systems to observe their behaviour. Megan said that this type of system should be used to commend and reinforce and reward positive behaviour as well as curbing unsafe actions.

Adele Tharani, Social Sustainability Manager at Ørsted, said that data on the issues facing the communities in which the renewable energy provider operates was essential for effective targeting of the company's social sustainability funds and to measure the effects of funding. She said that Ørsted was now bolstering the face-to-face community consultations which might gather 100 people's views, with digital ones that could reach 100,000 and could be targeted to reach unheard sections of the community.

Dan turned the conversation to corporate use of ChatGPT and other large language model-based chatbots. Moustafa explained that L'Oréal had quickly developed its own firewalled version of the AI chatbot so that employees could interrogate it without sending sensitive information outside the company.

Dan said the next iteration to look out for was contextual AI that responded to its surroundings and previous experience to minimise the training it needed to give useful results. Adele added a cautionary note about the sustainability implications

of widespread use of web-based AI, which is energy intensive. "So, it's a double-edged sword," she observed. "Though it's a fantastic tool, it comes with very big hidden costs." Moustafa added that green energy sources and fusion technology could provide the answer to this challenge but they would need to be developed quickly.

From the audience, Krishnen Mootien raised the risk that all the data flowing in could reduce health and safety professionals' direct contact with the people they were tasked with protecting. Moustafa answered that the key was to gather and analyse the data, then to use it to fuel effective conversations in the workplace to improve safety.

Kathy Seabrook concluded the session, thanking the panel and saying the issues they had covered, such as transparency, workforce engagement and data security were big ones that warranted more attention at the next summit.

Key messages

- Effective use of corporate data to drive health and safety decisions is often blocked by siloes and incompatible software systems.
- AI systems can help improve supervision and safety but need careful engagement with employees and data security measures.



[AI is] a double-edged sword. Though it's a fantastic tool, it comes with very big hidden costs

Adele Tharani,
Social Sustainability
Manager, Ørsted



popular solution



Workshop: Influencing the board

Convincing executives of the power and value of investing in their people was the focus point of a workshop session hosted by health and safety examination board NEBOSH's Chief Quality Officer Dee Arp and Esil Mertoglu, Senior Environment, Health and Safety Manager, EMEA, at automotive seat maker Adient. "We are excited to find solutions to how we can influence leadership and engage employees to embrace people sustainability and we will do that together," said Esil.

Delegates divided into seven groups and focused on one of two questions: how best to influence leaders or how to engage employees with people sustainability. After 10 minutes developing their answers, each group was asked to move to the next group's area and voted for the strength of that team's solution by sticking orange dots beside the ideas they approved of on the group's flip chart.

The first group's most voted-for idea to influence executives was to speak their language and to focus on the potential gains from investing in the workforce. "We do that if we create a business case about the return on investment," said Ruairi O'Connor, Senior EHS Director EMEA at Ball Corporation. "A case that if we invest in people, we will create quality of output, quality of service, and that will be linked to company performance."

The theme was picked up by the second group, which emphasised the need for a data-driven argument to executives. Group spokesperson Melissa Mark-Joyce, Group VP, Health and Safety at Smiths Group, said the data sets should include the value of compliance, benchmarking against competitors and the value of risk management.





Getting a voice on the board to advocate for people sustainability was the third group's most popular idea. Edward Debrah, HSEQ Manager at Augean Group said senior leaders would be receptive to the right messages. "We think that if you have a good voice on the board through persuasive communication, you should be able to build trust, and that will translate into proper people sustainability," he said.

Thiago Ramos, Global Health and Safety Senior Manager at L'Oréal, said that his group had discussed the importance of storytelling in making persuasive arguments for people sustainability. "But as EHS professionals we tend not to be that good at storytelling," he admitted. He also returned to the earlier theme of return on investment and stressed the importance of showing the board what they stand to gain from investing in people.

The fifth group had been posed the employee engagement question. Nancy Hey, Director, Evidence and Insight at Lloyds Register Foundation, said their most popular suggestion with delegates was to make it personal and to link sustainability to individuals' wellbeing.

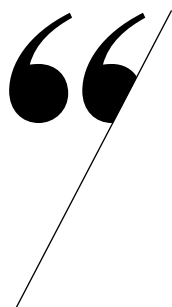
Building a corporate culture based on health, trust and employee empowerment was the next group's route to workforce engagement. "On the heels of that was understanding the person at work in the context of their whole life," explained Rosie Russell of MeiraGTX because we see them work, but that's only a third of the time, and they've got a lot of stuff going on."

The last group had two highly-voted ideas. One, said Lavinia Ferrante di Ruffano, Project Director at York Health Economics Consortium, was "giving employees a work environment where they can feel trusted", and the other was ensuring they were involved in decision making. One delegate had pointed out that those two points were inextricably linked, Lavinia noted.

"So we are talking about early involvement in decisions and providing solutions with them to create safety, eliminating hazards as early as possible" added Esil, "I think that's also a brilliant way to demonstrate your commitment to safety, which builds trust." She was joined by Dee in thanking delegates for a set of strong ideas that would help create a map for anyone trying to engage an organisation's senior management or frontline employees with the value of people sustainability.

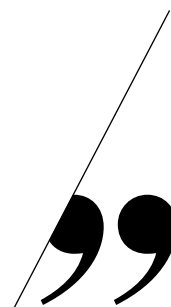
Key messages

- Highlighting the business case for a people-focused approach is the easiest way to convince executives.
- Linking sustainability aims to individuals' wellbeing accelerates employee engagement
- Building trust at work and involving workers in decision making also increases engagement.



***We are talking about early involvement
[of employees] in decisions and
providing solutions with them to
create safety, eliminating hazards as
early as possible***

Esil Mertoglu, Senior Environment,
Health and Safety Manager, EMEA, Adient





The power behind people skills

In a session titled Fit for the Future: Emotional Intelligence and Other Power Skills, Lawrence Webb, Chief Safety Officer at the Defence Science Technology Laboratory, asked the summit audience for the traits they associated with a good leader. Delegates offered authenticity, courage, curiosity, empathy and availability. Lawrence said these were all important but added another: emotional intelligence, which comprises self-awareness, social awareness, emotional control, empathy and emotional wellbeing.

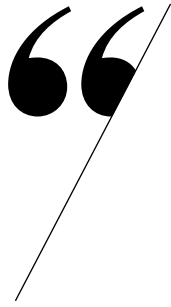
His co-presenter, Rita Hausken Barkhodaee, founder and CEO of the Shesustainability consultancy, explained that emotional intelligence involved recognising your own feelings and in choosing your responses to others' actions and words. Leaders often found themselves stressed to the point where they react instantly rather than listening to their own EQ and choosing how to respond. But trying to slow down and listen to our own inner voices made for better decision making, she argued, and also for more effective conversations where we gain real insight.

"This logical thing of slowing down, connecting to vision, showing up with emotional intelligence, is still very complicated," she admitted, but it was trying to practice and develop. Seeking out people to find out what they are thinking and feeling, rather than waiting for them to come to you is also a trait shared

by effective leaders, Lawrence added. He noted that it was a strength for leaders to be able to admit when they were not on their best form, but that few took the risk.

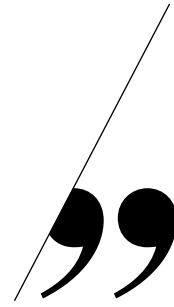
Rita said that the empathetic, engagement skills that are sometimes described as "soft" could be better described as "power skills" since they are so important to contemporary leadership.

She said that fostering an atmosphere where all kinds of people could express their feelings and thoughts created a collective cultural intelligence which drives high levels of motivation and productivity as well as better solutions. "As Einstein said 'you cannot solve a problem with the same thinking that created it.'"



***If you haven't got a North Star ...
how do you know you're always going
in the right direction?***

Christopher Allen,
Montrock Consulting



Lawrence and Rita followed a session hosted by Christopher Allen from Montrock Consulting about importance of keeping people at the centre of change management. Christopher started by emphasising that culture is not owned by HR departments but by the whole business. He argued that while collective data in measuring culture or wellbeing was important, it was important people never felt they were reduced to "points on a spreadsheet".

He said that successful change management depended on sustained engagement with the people affected, noting that people do not hate change, though they may not like the process of change. He endorsed the US leadership guru Patty Beach's concept of SHUVA – short for seen, heard, understood, valued and appreciated, as the perceptions necessary for employees to follow a leader anywhere. He argued that a focus on wellbeing was the foundation for successful culture change and that tying the change to the organisation's values was important.

He restated the value of a concept familiar to delegates from Kathy Seabrook's previous summit presentations: the need for an organisational "north star", a goal that everyone could navigate by. "You definitely should have one as organisation. You can have one per team. You can have one for your project," he said. "...Because if you haven't got a North Star or something like an ending point to go for, how do you know you're always going in the right direction?"

Successful change did not end with the formal programme, he said, but involved governance structures such as teams or employee resource groups, tasked with checking that the change was maintained and that new behaviours persisted.

The message he said he wanted to leave delegates with was that the key components of a change initiative were leadership, communication, engagement and governance. "If you go back to your change programme, and everything you do supports one of those things you're on to a winner," he said.

Key messages

- Busy leaders gain useful insights by slowing down and listening to others carefully.
- Evidence-based decision making is important but leaders should never lose sight of the people behind the statistics.
- Prioritising employee wellbeing is key to successful change management.



Keynote: Valuing divergence

"What is the board actually interested in on a day-to-day basis?" asked Rosie Russell rhetorically in a session about the importance of supporting neurodivergent employees to perform at their best. Board members' main preoccupations, rightly, were generating shareholder value and safeguarding the company's reputation she said. "So if we're going to get them interested in neurodiversity, it's got to speak to those things."

The prevalence of all conditions commonly grouped under neurodiversity, including dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism spectrum conditions is between 15% and 20% of any population, said Rosie, and many people are neurodivergent in more than one way: "Co-occurrence is the rule; you will find huge overlap."

The treatment of different neurotypes as disorders, to be overcome or cured, missed the advantages they also experienced. "It certainly gives you different ways of thinking, that's for sure, and that could be a competitive advantage."

These advantages could be seen by the self-selection of neurodivergent people into different professions she explained. Though 5% of the whole population has ADHD, that rises to 37% in marketing departments. "You can see how that endless energy and idea generation

might be really helpful in something like marketing," she said. Similarly, there are high concentrations of people with dyslexia in construction, engineering and architecture, "because dyslexics think spatially. But barriers arise to neurodiverse people achieving their very best, and the barriers arise from the workplace and how it is designed," she added, noting that the average adjustment to help a neurodivergent worker deal with an over-stimulating and distracting office environment cost only £500.

"One of the things with neurodiversity is that it's kind of a threshold issue," she noted. "If you can lift the load a little bit, it'll give people much more mental space. And it turns out, neurodiverse people actually still have a high degree of neuroplasticity. If you create an environment in which they can thrive, it gives them more energy, so they'll be more productive."

Other benefits included greater loyalty among people glad of the adjustments, reducing staff turnover. But the benefits of accommodating neurodiversity did not stop with the individuals, she said, citing research that showed the teams they form part of are 30% more effective than wholly neurotypical equivalents.

This is where the argument about competitive advantage becomes compelling, she said: "I walk into the boardroom and say, 'I want to spend £500 on each member of staff, but it's going to give you 30% more productivity'. What's your answer going to be? 'Get on and do it!'"

Key messages

- Between 15% and 20% of the population can be characterised as neurodivergent.
- Adjustments to help neurodivergent employees thrive at work are typically low cost.
- Teams with neurodivergent members are 30% more effective than 100% neurotypical equivalents.



“

Neurodiversity is kind of a threshold issue. If you can lift the load a little bit, it'll give people much more mental space.

Rosie Russell, Director of Environment, Health, Safety and Sustainability, MeiraGTx

”

Last words

Kathy Seabrook closed the summit, thanking the delegates, the speakers and the steering group (see box) and NEBOSH for the administration of the event. She said her intention with Malcolm Staves as coordinators of the event had been to bring together social sustainability practitioners and experts to share their views and air cutting-edge thinking: “We really wanted to have a group of thought leaders in the room ... and we have them.”

She said the atmosphere of trust and 100% engagement in the workshop sessions showed how committed delegates were to addressing the challenges to keep people healthy and safe in a changing work landscape. The breadth of the speakers reflected the scope of the issues. “We had an executive coach here to give us her perspective on what we do,” she said. “We have had investors. We’ve had people that are in our industry. We’ve had accountants talk to us. We have had sustainability folks.” That variety was a reminder, she concluded, that “we cannot work in silos ... we really need to be working collaboratively in our organisations.” She said farewell and reminded delegates the next summit would be held on 12 and 13 November 2025.



Lawrence Webb, Chief Safety Officer, Defence Science Technology Laboratory



