



## Are you prepared for “what’s next”?



Sensors, dashboards and waves of Big Data — we aren’t in Kansas anymore. Technology needs to earn our trust — and we need the courage to adapt.

By KYLE KRUEGER

To borrow a phrase from the Wizard of Oz, we in the safety industry are “not in Kansas anymore.” Those old familiar spreadsheets, processes, and equipment that got us to where we are today, are not going to get us where we’re going. We’re stepping into the Land of Oz where “Big Data,” “IoT,” and “Connected Safety” are the new reality. As someone who has grown up in the safety industry, it is exciting to see these changes, and frankly, about darn time.

Are we as a collective industry prepared for the “what’s next?”

In general, I think our hearts are in the right place, we want to invest in technology with the hope that the return on investment (ROI) will be safer, more productive workplaces.

So what is the catch?

At the heart of the matter is the truth that as an industry, we haven’t typically valued data, it isn’t instinctual yet. To be candid, technology hasn’t

earned our trust in the way our human relationships have. Additionally, many still conflate more data with more risk and therefore shy away from innovation. It is OK if we take a minute to collect our breath to not be overwhelmed by this wave of data.

Here are a few things we can all do to help be the tide that lifts all boats.

**Technology hasn’t earned our trust in the way our human relationships have.**

### Start with one or two goals

Regardless of the amount of investment made, we need to focus on the steady flow of improvements that we can make together. Before we can turn your office into a virtual command center with more dashboards than an airliner, we need to get off the ground. Nothing is worse than take off followed by an epic crash landing. To avoid the crash, this means gather-

ing a tight scope with measurable outcomes.

For some organizations this might be as simple as, “I want to make sure that every gas detector is calibrated this month” or “I want to make sure monitors aren’t being turned off while in alarm.” Start with one or two goals and expand from there. Investigate high impact investments that can get you to 80 percent of the way. It is quite possible that basic connected packages will get the job done.

### Mindful materialism

It looks so smooth! Did you see that glowing dot on the map? As a fan of design, I really admire great user interfaces and features. When used correctly they enhance the experience and foster more engagement.

But there is a tendency within all of us to get too caught up in the material aspect just to have the fundamental intention go to waste. I have interacted with too many clients who are excited about data, yet don’t log in for over a year or use the reports. Let’s face it, we all have that thing we excitedly bought lying around our house or office collecting dust. This year we will invest in our first connected safety products. Likely this will be the first of many investments. Accordingly, we have an obligation to both our companies and the concept of connected safety to demonstrate the highest ROI possible. Please buy the shiny objects. Just make sure to use them.

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### Invest in skill sets

This wave will push organizations toward demanding more efficiency from employees. Aspects of our jobs could be automated, or eventually disappear. This means we need to be prepared to understand the skills required to manipulate the data and fully leverage it, so as not to become obsolete. Understanding how to contextualize the data to make more informed decisions will be the challenge ahead. Evolution is currently an implied by-product; it will soon be needed for basic survival.

There are many grass roots movements going on in various safety groups to start collective skill development. Let’s be proactive about adapting rather than be left behind.

### Clear eyes, full hearts, can’t lose

Aligning technology capabilities with your organization’s safety goals and philosophies is vital. Deep down, figure out why you want this awareness and what you are going to do with it. Without a doubt this isn’t going to be a completely smooth ride. Equipment (specifically gas detectors) will still break and people will be averse to change. If people are to be monitored and tracked, they are owed a solid explanation of why. A strong commitment from all stakeholders, especially the person wearing the device, will be needed to successfully implement a “connected” program.

Our yellow brick road is paved with sensors, data, and dashboards. It will also have its fair share of beasts along the way. “Safety Oz” can be a shining capital city where death in the workplace is a thing of the past. Connected Safety will require heart, courage, and brains. HSE Managers grab your little dog, here we go! **ISHN**

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