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Ten New Developments And Trends That Will Shape The OHS Industry

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Executive Summary

SafetyCloud is a leading provider of innovative and cutting-edge occupational health and safety training and solutions. Our comprehensive suite of services and solutions is designed to help organisations enhance their safety performance, stay compliant with relevant legislation and reduce workplace incidents.

The SafetyCloud 2023 trend report highlights ten key trends that are shaping the future of occupational health and safety. These trends include the digital transformation of Occupational, health and Safety (OHS) capabilities, the incorporation of ecosystems into Fourth Industrial Revolution OHS solutions, and the changing nature of skills requirements for OHS professionals. Other trends include Environmental, Sustainability and Governance (ESG) engagements and responsibilities for EHS capabilities, contractor safety management embedded in strategy, and renewable energy as the world moves off the grid. The report also examines OHS implications associated with remote/hybrid work, the importance of skills rather than roles in OHS employability, and the circular economy's effect on OHS. Finally, the report highlights the growing importance of mental wellness as a core component of OHS.

As an industry leader, with a focus on digital transformation, ecosystems, ESG engagements, and mental wellness, Safetycloud is at the forefront of industry trends and a trusted partner for organisations seeking to stay ahead of the curve. Our team of experts is dedicated to addressing the unique needs of our clients, ensuring that their employees are safe and healthy, and their operations are efficient and effective.

Trend 1: Digitalisation and the digital transformation of OHS capabilities

OHS training and development content is becoming increasingly diverse in nature. Modern technology enables a wide variety of senses to be stimulated during training and learning, such as sound and touch.

The increased focus by organisations on adopting digitalisation strategies will require them to incorporate into their OHS capabilities various technologies that enable OHS-related tasks and activities. These include digital technologies that facilitate the training and development of individuals and the entire organisation in terms of OHS capabilities. Together, the adoption of digitalisation strategies and the implementation of technologies to give effect to these strategies lead to digital transformation.

The aim of digital transformation is to turn data into insights and thereby improve performance and productivity. This is achieved through the automation of business processes, which makes it possible to derive powerful prescriptive and predictive analytics. Digital transformation is characterised by the incorporation of several nodes within an ecosystem. These nodes ensure that data are collected along an entire value chain and that analytics can be performed to improve processes and inform decision-making. Hence, the digitalisation of OHS capabilities cannot occur independently of the digitalisation of the whole organisation, as it will lead to worker experiences and technology capabilities that are siloed and disjointed. The digital transformation strategy for OHS capabilities must therefore be aligned to and integrated with the broader organisational digital transformation strategy.

Essentially, digital transformation strategies empower workers to do their jobs effectively, better serve themselves in respect of key tasks and needs and collaborate and innovate with colleagues. Through digitally transforming OHS capabilities, organisations can ensure that individuals and teams have access to an environment that adheres to set criteria characterising a robust digital OHS environment and feels:

- Personalised and intuitive
- People-focused
- Continuously innovated
- Connected
- Proactive and intelligent
- Service-centric

+ The importance of digital transformation and the subsequent reliance on digital technologies to improve processes and support decision-making have resulted in the adoption of digital solutions within the wider training and development ecosystem, including in terms of OHS capabilities and OHS-related interventions. Some examples of technologies that characterise the OHS sector are connected worker devices, OHS analytics, mobile apps, industrial wearables, OHS management and sustainability systems. Three of the most prevalent technologies or nodes that dominate the OHS training and development ecosystem are technology-enhanced content, smart learner management systems (LMSs) and proctoring solutions for assessments and evaluations.

+ OHS training and development content is becoming increasingly diverse in nature. Modern technology enables a wide variety of senses to be stimulated during training and learning, such as sound and touch. Thus, the use of virtual and augmented reality and the metaverse allows training and development to take place in an interactive environment. This implies that modern OHS training and learning leads to knowledge transfer through knowing, doing and being.

+ Furthermore, digitalised OHS capabilities facilitate training and learning through an embedded LMS enhanced with analytics that monitor and report on learner preferences and performance. Based on the micro and macro data that are created and collected during the training and development intervention and the interaction with the LMS, it is possible to generate predictive and prescriptive analytics to enhance the development of individuals. This can also provide empirical evidence substantiating a return on investment in OHS training and development.

+ Another critical component of OHS training and development engagement is the introduction of remote proctoring solutions that monitor and report on the integrity and authenticity of OHS assessments and evaluations.

Trend 2: Incorporating ecosystems into Fourth Industrial Revolution OHS solutions capabilities

The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the resultant increase in the adoption of digital technologies and digital transformation strategies are changing the world of work. There is consensus on the fact that digital transformation impacts the nature and location of work, who works and when and how work is organised and managed. Digitalisation therefore also impacts OHS, necessitating the development and implementation of new and updated OHS solutions.

Digital transformation and the adoption of digital technologies now provide business-critical services to all sectors of the global economy and society, and the pace of digital transformation is accelerating. Robots are becoming mobile, smart and collaborative. Intelligent machines are taking over a wide range of not just manual but also cognitive tasks previously done by humans. Workers are increasingly overseen by monitoring technologies and algorithms, to the extent that in the future they could be managed by intelligent machines. The emergence of technologies such as artificial intelligence, Big Data, collaborative robotics, the Internet of Things, algorithms and digital labour platforms, alongside a significant increase in the population working remotely, creates opportunities and risks for workers and employers. The benefits of digitally transforming work and workplaces can be maximised and the challenges addressed depending on how technologies are applied, managed and regulated in the context of social, political and economic trends.

Digital technologies can advance OHS in a variety of ways. For example, through innovative ways of monitoring exposure, they can allow for workers to be removed from hazardous working situations. They can improve the quality of work by relieving workers of repetitive or routine tasks. Digital technologies and new forms of work can also give workers higher levels of autonomy and flexibility and facilitate access to the labour market. This is particularly beneficial for vulnerable groups such as disabled people, ageing workers and those with care duties at home. Furthermore, digitalisation offers opportunities for more effective OHS training, advanced workplace risk assessment, communication and OHS inspections.

However, digital technologies and new forms of work also present challenges in terms of the application of OHS regulations. Depending on how technologies are designed and implemented, on the organisational context and on the employment status of workers, digitalisation can result in some employees being more exposed to OHS risks such as ergonomic and safety risks, including functional safety risks associated with cybersecurity. The 24/7 globally interconnected economy requires ever more flexible work organisation and has given rise to new forms of work, such as online platform work. Some of these forms may lead to an unclear employment status. They can also increase performance pressure and work complexity, deprive employees of social interaction and support at work, create irregular working hours and blur the boundaries between work and private life. In this context, psychosocial and organisational risk factors deserve special attention, as they may give rise to higher levels of work-related stress and poor mental health.

These challenges related to the ongoing digitalisation of the world of work reveal gaps in the current mechanisms for managing and regulating OHS. It is critical for OHS professionals to remain informed of the impact of digitalisation on the world of work in order to help organisations and their employees reap the benefits of the Fourth Industrial Revolution connected world of work and avoid the associated pitfalls.

Digitalisation offers opportunities for more effective OHS training, advanced workplace risk assessment, communication and OHS inspections.

Trend 3: The changing nature of skills requirements for OHS professionals

When identifying and recruiting talent, organisations are increasingly emphasising a desired 'skill set' rather than a job or role description. A skill set consists of not only technical or subject matter-specific competencies and capabilities but also human capabilities or skills (such as critical thinking and emotional intelligence) and potential (including latent or adjacent qualities, abilities and skills that can be developed and lead to future success). Deloitte, a management consulting firm, states that the word 'skills' is becoming 'short-hand for more granularly defining workers as unique, whole individuals—each with an array of skills, interests, passions, motivations, work or cultural styles, location preferences and needs, and more' (Cantrell et al., 2022).

The ongoing changes to the world of work and the workplace have a fundamental impact on the skills requirements for OHS professionals. Several emerging global trends indicate that these professionals will require a more diverse and complex skill set in order to fulfil their responsibilities. The roles of OHS professionals are becoming more general in nature and less OHS specific. These professionals will therefore need to have skills that are adjacent and complementary to the field of OHS but not technically related to OHS.

Four key factors are shaping this:

The roles of OHS professionals are becoming more general in nature and less OHS specific. These professionals will therefore need to have skills that are adjacent and complementary to the field of OHS but not technically related to OHS.

Digitalisation

The increasing digitalisation of the world of work requires OHS professionals to have an understanding of digital transformation and the effect of technology on work.

Mental wellness

Organisations are acknowledging the effect of mental well-being on the safety and productivity of individuals. OHS professionals therefore need to help manage and maintain the mental wellness of employees together with the human resources function in organisations.

Training technologies

OHS professionals must be able to engage with OHS training and development interventions that are technology-infused and differ vastly from traditional classroom-based training and development interventions. This requires an understanding of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, simulated environments and the metaverse as a training and learning environment.

Environmental, social and governance elements

Empirical evidence indicates that individuals in OHS roles are increasingly becoming involved in implementing environmental, social and governance (ESG) strategies. Specifically, OHS professionals are required to monitor and report on three specific aspects related to ESG: environmental performance, net zero target setting and social compliance. OHS professionals must have an understanding of the use of cloud solutions to meet the corporate demand for ESG functionality. Additionally, these professionals need a broader understanding of corporate functions adjacent to OHS capabilities and the interrelatedness of corporate functions to ensure organisational compliance with ESG targets.

Trend 4: ESG engagements and responsibilities for EHS capabilities

ESG elements form three pillars against which a company's behaviour is measured. This helps ascertain risks and guides the sustainable and responsible behaviour of a company in terms of its governance and in relation to the environment and stakeholder groups. Socially conscious investors often use ESG impact or compliance data to screen potential investments.

The environmental pillar addresses the environmental impact and environmental stewardship of a company's operations. The criteria guide and report on a company's behaviour pertaining to aspects such as corporate climate policies, energy use, waste, pollution, natural resource conservation and treatment of animals. ESG considerations can also help evaluate any environmental risks a company might face and how the company is managing those risks. These considerations may include direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions, management of toxic waste and compliance with environmental regulations.

The social criteria pillar addresses a company's relationship with internal and external stakeholders—including employees, suppliers, customers and the communities where it operates—and the manner in which said the company manages these relationships. This These criteria guides and report on matters such as responsible and ethical sourcing, employee health and safety, ethical treatment of customers and does the company donate a percentagecharity or volunteer efforts in local communities. of its profits to the local community or encourage employees to perform volunteer work there? Do the company reflect a high regard for employees' health and safety and whether the company take unethical advantage of its customers.

The governance pillar addresses standards which ensure that a company uses accurate and transparent accounting methods, pursues integrity and diversity in selecting its leadership and is accountable to its shareholders. The criteria therefore guide and report on aspects such as company leadership, executive pay, audits, internal controls and shareholder rights.sible and ethical sourcing, employee health

Environmental Pillar

- Climate change
- Carbon emissions
- Product carbon footprint
- Financing enviornmental impact
- Climate change vulnerability

- Natural resources
- Water stress
- Biodiversity & land use
- Raw material sourcing

- Pollution & waste
- Toxic emissions & waste
- Packaging material & waste
- Electronic waste

- Environment opportunity
- Opportunities in clean tech
- Opportunities in green building
- Opportunities in renewable energy

Social Pillar

- Human capital
- Labour management
- Health & safety
- Human capital developemt
- Supply chain labor standards

- Product liability
- Product safety & qulity
- Chemical safety
- Financial product safety
- Privcy & data security
- Responsible investment
- Health & demo, risk

- Stakeholder opposition
- Controverial sourcing

- Social opportunity
- Access to communiton
- Access to finace
- Access to health care
- Opportunities in nutrition & health

Governace Pillar

- Human capital
- Labour management
- Health & safety
- Human capital developement
- Supply chain labor standards

- Corporate behavior
- Business ethics
- Anticompetitive practices
- Corruption & instability
- Financial system instabilty
- Tax transparency

In light of the risk- and compliance-based nature of ESG monitoring and reporting, it is evident that there are similarities between the activities performed by ESG, risk and compliance officers and the responsibilities of OHS professionals. For decades, OHS professionals have been reporting on environmental health and occupational safety in the workplace. The earliest purpose of OHS was to meet compliance standards and keep reputational risk at bay. Recent research indicates that OHS professionals will increasingly be required to participate in and take responsibility for monitoring and reporting on ESG elements. It has been stated that ESG is one of four megatrends (sustainability initiatives, total worker health, psychosocial risk and digitisation) that will have a defining impact on the future of the OHS sector. ESG pressure will redefine the role of OHS capabilities and professionals: research shows that 44% of OHS professionals will have full ownership of defining and delivering their organisations' ESG strategies (International SOS Foundation, 2019).

Companies are often assessed by stakeholders and investors based on their ESG impacts and are assigned an ESG score. Investors can use ESG scores as input data into investment decisions. The roles and responsibilities of OHS capabilities and professionals in terms of ESG activities have elevated these activities to a strategic level. In light of this, it is essential for OHS professionals to realise the importance and relevance of ESG activities in order to add business-critical value to their organisations and related stakeholders (Sayers and Pennington, 2022).

The roles of OHS professionals are becoming more general in nature and less OHS specific. These professionals will therefore need to have skills that are adjacent and complementary to the field of OHS but not technically related to OHS.

Trend 5: Contractor safety management embedded in strategy

Although contractor safety management has always been included in the OHS agenda of organisations, there is an increased emphasis on the relevance of contractor safety management in the post-pandemic corporate environment.

Contractor safety management is understood to be 'procedures, systems and technology solutions designed by hiring clients as well as contractor organizations to improve the safety of individual workers and enhance the safety performance of the contractor organisation' (Winter, Tohani and Metcalfe, 2019). Managing contractor safety is the responsibility of all individuals in the organisation who engage with the contractor and could be affected by the associated activities; however, OHS professionals are responsible for providing leadership and best practices regarding contractor safety management. Traditionally, OHS capabilities focused on activities such as:

Best Practices For Contractor Safety Management

Pre-Contract		During Contract		Post-Contractor
Pre qualification	**Safety Onboarding**	**Safety Tools & Practices**	**Safety Monitoring**	**Performance Evaluation**
Contractor Information Database	Contractor Information Database	Mobile apps	Supervisor Dashboard	Contractor Safety Scorecard
Prequalification Assessment	Prequalification Assessment	EHS Software	Incident Reports & Obeservations	Contractor Safety Debrief
Worker Safety Data Model		Industrial Wearables	PPE Video Analytics	Update Internal Database

Figure 1: Focus areas of contractor safety management

Source: Winter, Tohani and Metcalfe, 2019

It is evident that the role of the OHS professional in terms of contractor safety management has become far more proactive and strategic in recent years. OHS capabilities need to take full ownership of defining supply chain and contractor safety management strategies in organisations.

Shifts in employment models:

Previously, OHS professionals were generally employed on a full-time basis. As the pandemic spread, a variety of other employment options became common for OHS professionals, including part-time, flexi-time and contracting or consulting. It is evident that remote work has increased the focus on quality of life and maintaining a healthy work–life balance

Global economic contraction:

COVID-19 and the resulting effect on the global macro and micro economy led to organisations in all sectors reviewing and restructuring their business models. This caused a significant increase in unemployment levels. Organisations began to favour employing OHS professionals as contractors and consultants rather than in a full-time capacity (International SOS Foundation, 2019)

The need for specialised skills:

The OHS sector underwent radical changes and became far more diverse and complex in nature. In a recent survey, 84% of respondents said that the complexity of health and safety requirements has increased (International SOS Foundation, 2019). This has largely been driven by three trends: regulatory compliance, industry best practice compliance and data management. In order to account for this rising complexity, organisations will need to employ OHS professionals with specialised and niche skills as contractors

Trend 6: Renewable energy as the world moves off the grid

As renewable energy gains traction in South Africa, OHS professionals need to familiarise themselves with the hazards and risks associated with the use of renewable energy sources.

Renewable energy is a form of energy derived from sources or processes that are constantly replenished. It is therefore regarded as a form of sustainable energy. Renewable energy is much less harmful to the environment than energy derived from fossil fuels. The sources or processes involved in the creation of energy need to meet three criteria to be regarded as sustainable.

These three criteria are:

+ the energy can be naturally replenished
+ technology improves energy efficiency
+ the energy source has long-term availability

Some of the less familiar renewable energy sources are wave and tidal power as well as energy created by means of hydrogen. More familiar sources are solar, wind, hydroelectric and geothermal power.

Solar energy is derived from the radiant energy of sunlight, which is captured and converted into heat, electricity or hot water. Photovoltaic systems can convert direct sunlight into electricity through the use of solar cells.

Wind energy is created when wind farms capture the energy of wind flow using turbines and convert it into electricity.

Hydroelectric energy is generated when water flows through a dam's turbines to produce electricity.

Geothermal energy is derived from heat that is trapped beneath the earth's crust from the formation of the Earth and from radioactive decay. Heated water is pumped from deep underground to the Earth's surface and then turns into steam as a result of pressure changes. This steam can be used to operate a turbine, generating geothermal energy,

Climate-related factors and the need for sustainable investment (as manifested in the recent movement towards monitoring, measuring and reporting on ESG elements) have led to exponential growth in the renewable energy sector. South Africa is becoming increasingly dependent on alternative energy sources to bolster the supply of electricity generated from fossil fuels and gas. The South African government's approval of a Just Energy Transition Partnership investment deal in 2022 is clear evidence of the government's commitment to investing in renewable energy. The Just Energy Transition Partnership consists of $8.5 billion in concessional and commercial loans and investment guarantees pledged by Britain, France, Germany, the United States and the European Union at the COP26 in Glasgow.

As renewable energy gains traction in South Africa, OHS professionals need to familiarise themselves with the hazards and risks associated with the use of renewable energy sources. Training must be provided to prepare employees to operate in a safe manner when engaging in activities linked to the use of renewable energy sources. The most prominent hazards and risks associated with the renewable energy sector are both unique and oddly familiar, including fall hazards and working at heights. Individuals in the solar industry are particularly at risk of sustaining injuries related to electricity, such as arc flashes, shocks and thermal burns. Electrical and lockout/tagout violations are among the most common OHS infringements. Additionally, turbine hazards are the source of various safety issues.

It is necessary to note that industry standards are typically re-evaluated every five years, but because the renewable energy sector is a niche area, standards are re-evaluated every 18 months to ensure that they are still aligned with industry expectations and include new developments. OHS professionals need to familiarise themselves with the standards associated with the renewable energy sector as well as any linked evaluations and changes that might impact the workplace.

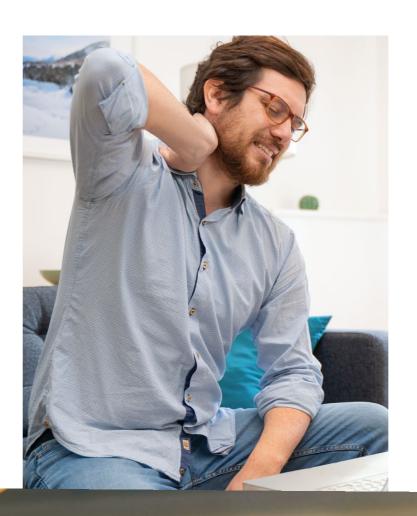# Trend 7: OHS implications of remote/hybrid work

OHS is singled out as an important aspect of remote and hybrid work because of how these new models affect liability and compensation.

In recent years, many organisations have moved to a hybrid or remote workplace as a result of the increased digitisation of work, improved and enhanced collaboration tools embedded in software solutions and the need to work remotely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Organisations' enhanced focus on reducing their carbon footprint, preparing for the inevitable impacts of climate change and operating in a more responsible and sustainable manner has provided further impetus for organisations to adopt the remote or hybrid workplace model.

Although the terms remote and hybrid work are often used interchangeably, there are slight differences between these two concepts. Remote work implies that employees do not have to be physically present at an office location; instead, they can choose to work from home, in a co-working space or in any place of their choice. In a hybrid workplace, employees switch between on-site and remote work on different days. There are several variants of the hybrid model. In the remote-first hybrid model,

The move towards hybrid and/or remote work has brought about a seismic shift in how organisations function. OHS is singled out as an important aspect of remote and hybrid work because of how these new models affect liability and compensation. In a working environment other than the normal workplace, employers have limited control over the preventive and security measures taken. This represents challenges in terms of OHS compliance and also highlights the importance of creating a positive and healthy working culture and clearly defining employers' responsibilities and liabilities. In addition, remote work may increase psychosocial or mental wellness risks linked to employees working alone and the blurring of boundaries between personal and work lives. These risks need to be properly managed.

Although the shift towards remote and hybrid work has touchpoints with most aspects of OHS, it will have a focused impact on ergonomics and musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) as well as mental wellness.

Ergonomics, including workstation setup, is a critical aspect of OHS and is of particular relevance, as workers will likely have more than one designated desk or workspace when working in a remote or hybrid workplace. Most organisations have adopted a 'hot desk office plan' to accommodate a hybrid approach, with the result that workers have different workstations every day. This implies that the ergonomics of the workplace is designed to accommodate workers without any MSDs, and specific arrangements need to be made to ensure that workers with MSDs have access to workstations that meet their health requirements and needs.

Furthermore, remote or hybrid work may reduce the mobility of workers, as they will be required to travel less frequently. Research indicates that sitting or being sedentary for an extended period of time is positively related to chronic disease and mortality (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work [EU-OSHA], 2021b). Additionally, remote and hybrid work models may increase employees' levels of work-related stress and feelings of isolation resulting from a propensity to overwork and a lack of interaction with co-workers.

It is evident that the combination of being sedentary for an extended period of time and working in an isolated environment has a negative impact on the OHS of workers and can lead to MSDs and reduced mental well-being. Nine organisational and psychosocial (or mental wellness) risk factors are significantly related to at least two of the three MSD types (backache, MSDs in the upper limbs, MSDs in the lower limbs). MSDs are associated with elevated levels of anxiety, sleeping problems and overall fatigue among workers. The prevalence of MSDs is also higher among workers with lower levels of mental well-being. MSDs may cause these health problems or exacerbate them. However, the causality could also run the other way: high levels of anxiety, fatigue and sleeping problems may cause MSDs or worsen existing ones (EU-OSHA, 2021b).
Such risks emphasise the need for OHS professionals to be cognisant of the impact of hybrid and remote work on the physical and mental wellness of

Trend 8: OHS employability is about skills rather than roles

The roles of OHS professionals are becoming more general in nature and less OHS specific. These professionals will therefore need to have skills that are adjacent and complementary to the field of OHS but not technically related to OHS.

The majority of OHS capabilities will continue to support functions such as operational risk, quality management, contractor safety management and the development and implementation of policies and procedures related to working safely. However, the skills requirements for OHS professionals are becoming far more diverse and complex in nature and now include both technical and management skills. The report What will occupational health and safety look like in 2030? (International SOS Foundation, 2019) states that OHS professionals will increasingly need to be able to:

Understand business administration and management and the 'language of the business'

Communicate effectively in both directions—top-down and bottom-up

Monitor, calculate and report on the return on investment in OHS

Network, collaborate and partner with business units adjacent to the OHS function, such as sustainability and risk

OHS professionals will also have a lot to consider from a technical perspective. Their roles will be characterised by several new developments, such as new regulations and best practices, innovative technology and entirely new focus areas, including mental wellness. For example, the skills requirements of OHS professionals will be impacted by:

+ Growing awareness of matters pertaining to ESG elements and the incorporation of these elements into reporting corporate reporting mechanisms

+ The repositioning of total worker wellness as part of the service offering of OHS and specifically the adoption and use of digital solutions to monitor and report on the mental wellness of workers

+ The increased need for and relevance of digital enablers that disrupt the manner in which new skills are acquired, work is performed and impact is measured, evaluated and reported

It is critical for OHS professionals to remain aware of and embrace the diverse skill set that will be required of them, as recruitment trends indicate a shift towards recruiting for a specific skill set rather than according to a specific job description. Organisations can adapt to the changing requirements from the external and internal environment by recruiting in this way. The proliferation of such 'skills-based organisations' implies a move towards a whole new operating model for work and the workforce that places skills, rather than jobs, at the centre. In a skills-based organisation, skills are divided into three main categories (Cantrell et al., 2022):

Hard" ' or technical skills (job- related skills)

Human capabilities or human skills (such as critical thinking and emotional intelligence)

Potential (including latent qualities and abilities or adjacent skills that can be developed and lead to future success)

The recruitment of a skills-based organisation is more proactive and aligned to the strategy of the organisation as determined by market conditions, trends in a specific industry or sector and the needs and expectations of clients and customers. Recruitment practices are based on the future needs of the organisation in terms of skills rather than just in terms of traditional and existing jobs and job descriptions.

The OHS profession and OHS capabilities therefore need to be agile and respond to the emerging challenges in the workplace. The increasingly diverse and complex nature of the OHS sector means that organisations will be far more inclined to recruit OHS professionals based on their skill set rather than on a job description associated with an existing role that does not necessarily make provision for the long-term or strategic objectives and growth targets of the organisation or the OHS capability.

Trend 9: The circular economy and its effect on OHS

It is necessary for organisations and OHS capabilities to develop an understanding of how a circular production cycle can impact working conditions and OHS in particular.

For many decades, the standard approach to production and consumption has been to take raw materials and transform them into products. These products are then made commercially available to consumers, who dispose of them when they no longer serve a purpose or have any value for the consumer. In many cases, discarded products end up in landfills and oceans. Thus, an outcome of this approach is material waste, which in some cases contains hazardous substances and contaminants that have a negative impact on biodiversity. This 'take, make, use and dispose' cycle is referred to as a linear model and is characteristic of a linear economy.

More recently, organisations across a wide range of industries have adopted an ambition to operate in a more sustainable manner in relation to the environment, communities as well as internal and external stakeholders. Organisations have become more mindful of matters such as climate change and environmental degradation and have started to question the linear model. Increasingly, organisations are embracing a circular model in terms of the production cycle. In a circular economy, the 'take, make, use and dispose' model is replaced by a 'take, make, use, reuse and reuse again and again' model. According to EU-OSHA (2021a), the circular economy is defined as 'the circular flow and efficient (re)use of resources, materials and products'. In this model, 'the life of products and materials is extended and waste is minimised. Products and industrial processes are designed to keep resources in use, and unavoidable waste or residues are recycled or recovered'. In a circular economy, no new material inputs are required, which reduces emissions, waste and eventually cost. Therefore, many organisations and industries have transitioned to this more environmentally friendly and sustainable production model.

In light of this, it is necessary for organisations and OHS capabilities to develop an understanding of how a circular production cycle can impact working conditions and OHS in particular. Dealing with an environmental challenge does not exempt organisations from considering OHS. The circular economy is often considered a just and preferable option, but environmental measures can negatively impact human health and safety. OHS industry associations are of the opinion that the circular economy will have a major impact on OHS and on working conditions; EU-OSHA (2021a) identifies the circular economy as one of the leading emerging risks in the field of OHS. For example, the packaging, dismantling and dismounting operations in a circular production cycle can lead to an increase in physical risks to workers, such as MSDs and lower back pain, as well as chemical or biological risks. According to EU-OSHA (2021c), there are four possible future scenarios for the transition to a circular economy, each with implications for OHS:

+ The economy becomes fully circular and inclusive and working conditions are significantly improved
+ Carbon neutrality is achieved, but there is a lack of attention to job quality and working conditions
+ Economic and environmental crises make staying afloat the priority, and environmental, social and other concerns are neglected
+ A binary system forms in which circularity and environmental stewardship are implemented in some regions and absent in others, and contracted employees are well looked after, while those in other types of employment are not

The effect of the circular economy on OHS in each of these scenarios will be evident in three aspects of OHS: policymaking, new forms of work and digitalisation as well as OHS training and skills needed. Over the next decade, it will be crucial for organisations to successfully implement and manage a swift transition to carbon neutrality and ensure that these changes contribute to improved safety and health for workers. In this regard, OHS professionals must encourage dialogue and reflection with internal and external stakeholders. It is essential for OHS professionals to be aware of the challenges that the circular economy poses to OHS and the best way in which to create a greener and more sustainable environment through the circular economy.

Trend 10: Mental wellness as a core component of OHS

A critical component of OHS is therefore creating workplaces where employees can be mindful and have the opportunity to manage and maintain their mental wellness journey in a supportive and trusting environment.

Mental wellness and the risks associated with work-related stress are among the most challenging issues in OHS. They significantly impact the health of workers, organisations and national economies. It is generally understood that mental wellness challenges arise from poor work design, organisation and management, as well as poor social contexts at work. These issues may result in negative psychological, physical and social outcomes, such as work-related stress, burnout and depression. Some examples of working conditions that lead to mental wellness risks are:

+ Excessive workloads
+ Conflicting demands and a lack of role clarity
+ A lack of involvement in making decisions that affect the worker and a lack of influence over the way the job is done
+ Poorly managed organisational change or job insecurity
+ Ineffective communication or a lack of support from management or colleagues
+ Psychological or sexual harassment or third-party violence
+ Unstable socioeconomic conditions

Research shows that mental wellness challenges are exacerbated by the inability of managers to identify and engage in a conversation with their employees regarding these challenges. Mental wellness has always been a difficult topic for organisations to address, and few organisations have initiatives in place on this business-critical topic. The baseline factors leading to the need for mental wellness solutions have always existed but have been intensified and become more prominent as a result of COVID-19. In South Africa, various socioeconomic factors have resulted in a dire need for organisations to provide training to managers and employees to help them manage and maintain their own wellness and support other employees in this regard. Empirical research conducted by SafetyCloud (2021) among OHS stakeholders reveals that:

+ Organisations do not always have the necessary awareness of the challenges that are created by mental wellness
+ Existing approaches in the form of employee assistance programmes do not always provide sufficient support
+ Employees do not always know how to address mental wellness challenges, so these challenges remain unaddressed
+ Organisations do not always provide training to managers to prepare them to identify and assist employees with mental wellness-related challenges
+ There is a direct link between mental wellness and the ability to operate in a safe and productive manner
+ Employees prefer to have a digital solution that addresses their mental wellness journey
+ Mental wellness solutions should make provision for a variety of different challenges of various levels of complexity

Therefore, empirical research (SafetyCloud, 2021) suggests that most organisations have a need for an intervention (such as a training solution or an integrated digital platform) that creates awareness regarding mental wellness and assists employees in conducting an initial self-assessment of their mental wellness requirements. These requirements will indicate the manner in which employees should go about managing and maintaining their mental wellness. In line with this, the International SOS Foundation (2021) states that an 'increasing number of countries are starting to recognise that [mental wellness] is an integral part of an employer's obligations, and are enacting regulations to confirm this. In many sectors it is the single biggest cost or spend on healthcare'. According to the same research (International SOS Foundation, 2021), companies should:

+ Move away from a focus on managing stress, which is a lagging indicator. Stress is to well-being what accidents are to safety
+ Focus on building a resilient culture (what can be done holistically), rather than individual case management
+ View mental health as an integral part of OHS and treat it as having equal importance to physical health
+ Focus on the mental wellness of remote and hybrid workers and the provisions in place for this high risk group and others

A critical component of OHS is therefore creating workplaces where employees can be mindful and have the opportunity to manage and maintain their mental wellness journey in a supportive and trusting environment. OHS professionals must have a deep understanding of their roles and responsibilities in terms of managing and maintaining their own wellness and the wellness of those around them in the workplace.

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