

Health and Safety - Focusing on what matters

Francois Barton, Executive Director of the Business Leaders' Health and Safety Forum, spoke at ComplyWith's Unplugged event on 29 May 2019. Here are some of the key insights from Francois' engaging presentation.

Good leadership of health and safety

The session started with Francois asking the audience what springs to mind when they think of health and safety. Answers included: paper-work, ticking boxes, red tape and the fun-police – all together painting an overwhelming, complicated and negative image of the topic!

Francois told us that in his view good leadership in any area, including health and safety, is about what leaders think, say and do. This drives the culture of the business and the tone of that culture will be essential to health and safety success.

To create a positive culture leaders need be seen to be focusing on what really matters, which in the area of health and safety includes the three 'Rs'.

Focusing on the 3 Rs for health and safety success

Francois suggested that good leadership of health and safety elevates the discussion by focusing on what really matters – risks, relationships and resourcing. The following questions are a great starting point:

- Are you confident you are controlling your **risks** effectively?
- Are you confident the **relationships** in your business support good health and safety? Between management and workers? With clients and contractors?
- Are you confident the **resourcing** of your people, processes and plant is adequate to control your risks?

Updated thinking

Francois explained that some of the earlier thinking around managing health and safety risks have been proven to not be the best and leaders need to be aware of

these changes. For example the relative ineffectiveness of administrative controls (policies and procedures) and PPE, when compared with the effectiveness of elimination, substitution, isolation and engineering controls.

Another change is to a focus on removing and managing risks of catastrophic harm, rather than the notion that managing lots of lower level impacts and risks will necessarily reduce more serious events as well.

To find out more, Francois invited everyone to check out the very useful resources available on the Forum's website at: <http://www.zeroharm.org.nz/resources/>