



Information Item	CHASNZ's desire to make a difference with data
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CHASNZ's desire to make a difference with data

Changing decades of longstanding culture within the construction industry will involve some "skinned knees" but when its driven by innovation, data will ensure health and safety is no longer the "poor cousin".

So says Construction Health and Safety New Zealand (CHASNZ) Chief Executive Officer Chris Alderson.

As head of the relatively new not-for-profit, Chris is excited about the future of health and safety in New Zealand's construction industry.

"Look at [CHASNZ project] Whakatipu as an example," he says.

"That's something that's never been done around the world before; getting organisations to actually share the good and bad stuff with each other.

"And the only reason that they'd probably agree to do that is because CHASNZ isn't the regulator.

"So, we're in a unique position to be a trusted and safe data collector, to do some pretty cool and pretty innovative types of research with the data to analyse and determine what keeps people safe on sites."

Using data to provide insight and action is not a new management science. In many other fields, such as banking, insurance, fraud detection and customer channel marketing, the use of predictive analytics is commonplace.

However, in the field of health and safety, New Zealand is lagging – because health and safety has always been seen as the "poor cousin", Chris says.

"So, why don't we take a leap on that? It's going be difficult to change people's point of view and there'll be a few skinned knees along the way, but that's the kind of thing we need to start thinking differently around health and safety."

It worked for the construction industry prior to and during COVID-19, when CHASNZ produced consistent protocols to ensure employees returned home safe.

Chris believes, in some ways, it has been a bit easier for the industry to follow these because some of the things that were introduced have been normal practice.

“The feedback we’ve had has been pretty universal from all parts of the construction industry, that they appreciated having the protocols. Because at least it provided some central and consistent approach to dealing with COVID Alert Levels 3 and 2.

“Compare that with, say, the lack of clarity that’s been seen in other industries like retail and hospitality, even education. I think construction has been a lot better off because we’ve had that central view of what that consistency should look like.

“Now, having said that, a lot of the things particularly under Level 3 we were asking of people were hard. But at least everybody thought that they were fair and knew everybody was doing the same thing.”

So forcing change through that method is better than just telling someone to do it differently, because it’s about the skills and the capability and the engagement of your supervisor or other stuff that you really need to focus on it.

However, he’s not naïve enough to think that changing a decades-long culture around health and safety won’t be without some resistance.

“There will always be a challenge around trying to get people to do things differently,” he says.

Which is why data is so important, as well as other innovative CHASNZ projects like the Site Access Guide and the Supplier Health & Safety pre-qualification.

“When you get inconsistency, that’s when you get a lot more anguish.”

Chris Alderson

Construction Health and Safety New Zealand (CHASNZ) Chief Executive Officer

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