



The 2023 CEOs Who “Get It”

Over the past year, I’ve had the honor of speaking with several safety leaders about what makes safety personal to them. Time and again, they’ve told me how witnessing unsafe conditions led them to become dedicated advocates for safety in the workplace. Listening to their stories, I’m continually reminded that strong safety leadership is much more than adhering to workplace regulations – it’s making sure everyone gets home safe at the end of each and every shift.

That’s what it means to be a CEO who “gets it”: a leader who ensures safety remains their organization’s top value by building a strong safety culture and encouraging workers to use their voice to speak up about safety issues, near misses and possible improvements.

The seven CEOs being honored this year have proven their dedication to the value of safety across a wide variety of industries and locations. They’ve integrated new technologies, broadened the scope of their programs to include psychological safety and bolstered worker engagement. Their impressive achievements have not only enhanced the safety of their workers, organizations and communities, but undoubtedly saved lives.

A CEO who “gets it” is inherently an innovator. Take CEO **Paul Danos**, whose company uses a custom-built safety tracking tool, as well as cutting-edge virtual reality and augmented reality technologies, to enhance worker training. Similarly, **Jane E. Cheeks** of the City of Houston successfully advocated the implementation of a new safety management system that has improved safety outcomes across city departments.

In the past several years, the importance of looking at a worker’s mental well-being has moved to the forefront. Our psychological safety – how included we feel within the organization and how comfortable we feel speaking up and identifying issues without fear of reprisal – has an enormous effect on our physical safety. A passionate advocate for transportation industry safety, **Ryan I. Daniel** of St. Cloud Metro Bus established a program aimed at improving worker well-being, morale and camaraderie.

And **Les Hiscoe** of Shawmut Design and Construction has prioritized Total Worker Health at his organization with trainings on mindfulness and inclusive management.

A good safety leader understands that safety is a dialogue between workers and management. They listen to their workers’ ideas and concerns and embrace their views when refining their organization’s safety culture. Look at **Ali Al-Baqali** of Aluminium Bahrain, who shook up the organization’s top-down safety strategy when he named every worker a safety manager and created a task force dedicated to out-of-the-box worker ideas. At S&C Electric Co., **Anders Sjoelin** built a safety culture so strong and worker-focused that 95% of workers surveyed said they feel they have a voice or ownership role in their safety program.

Finally, a CEO who “gets it” never stops looking for ways to improve the safety of their workers. **Brian Cox** of Stack Infrastructure has continued to grow his safety team, adding nearly a dozen full-time safety workers; a vice president of environment, health and safety; and safety consultants to ensure safety always remains top of mind.

Each of these seven extraordinary individuals has shown their workers, organizations and communities that nothing should matter more to an employer than safety and health. Their dedication to finding new solutions, creating stronger cultures and engaging workers more deeply in the work of saving lives is truly inspiring.

On behalf of the National Safety Council, congratulations to all of the 2023 honorees. **SH**



Lorraine M. Martin
President and CEO
National Safety Council





ALI AL-BAQALI

CEO

ALUMINIUM BAHRAIN B.S.C.
KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

Aluminium Bahrain (Alba) produces high-quality products in the form of standard and value-added products, which are exported to more than 240 global customers through its sales offices in Europe, Asia and a subsidiary office in the United States. The company has more than 3,100 employees.

Describe your personal journey to becoming a CEO who “gets it.”

In the past 15 years, I have worked closely with two different CEOs as a member of the senior management. One chose to focus on cost savings over safety, thus resulting in devastating outcomes in many arenas. My predecessor chose to focus on safety rather than cost, and that has yielded higher safety milestones that were never achieved before, in addition to other milestones. At the time of my assignment, I choose to cultivate the same safety approach that I witnessed while being the deputy CEO, but it was again too challenging, as everyone used to work toward achieving safety results rather than focusing on doing everything right.

This past experience made me believe that safety is not a destination, but a journey that never ends. My biggest nightmare was the thought of losing a person, which drove me to do more every day, every hour and every minute to ensure appropriate systems are in place, maintained and followed to safeguard all stakeholders in Alba through a solid and unbreakable safety culture.

What is the biggest obstacle to safety at your organization? How do you work to overcome it?

Alba comprises 3,100-plus full-time employees and 4,000 contractor workers working in the vicinity of 1.2-square miles, with the majority doing manual and interactive work. This scale of people – most of whom are working with machinery and equipment – needs vivid systems, supervision, procedures, knowledge, skills and much more, coupled with safety culture being consistent to all individuals who are working in and around this organization. This is what we do on daily basis! Building a sound health and safety management system is one of the fundamental areas, alongside having clear objectives and targets.


Read the full Q&A
at sh-m.ag/3ii1NCO.

Therefore, building robust systems and empowering employees are key to overcoming the obstacle of constructing a sound health and safety culture. It is worth mentioning that our first safety principle states that “ownership of safety and environment is everyone’s responsibility.”

Why is safety a core value at your organization?

Safety excellence has been put at the top of Alba’s strategy. I have seen the difference between poor and good safety performance, and how it can affect the company – whether it is on the operational and financial fronts or employee morale. I believe that one injury is too many. Our aim is to produce aluminium safely, and I can confidently say that we have been achieving zero lost time injuries in the past few years. These results clearly demonstrate that when you get safety right, everything else will be right!

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Al-Baqali performed comprehensive research on the company’s safety performance and found that the safety culture was linked solely to top management’s influence. This led to a change to a bottom-up approach rather than focusing on a top-down approach.
- He formed a task force that created an employee engagement campaign. “Safety Voice” invited employees to deliver a presentation on any EHS topic to senior management and their colleagues. Despite resistance from senior management, who expected low participation, 75 employees presented and 13 candidates were selected for the final round. Although the initial plan was for Al-Baqali to narrow the selections down to five, he instead requested that all 13 candidates be used in the campaign. He then revived a Weekly Safety Hour program and made the remaining 62 candidates’ presentations a part of it.



JANE E. CHEEKS

**DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES
CITY OF HOUSTON
HOUSTON, TX**

The City of Houston provides the services and programs necessary to take care of the nation's fourth largest city and its residents. With a workforce of over 21,000 in 26 departments, the city's responsibilities include maintaining infrastructure, providing public health services, maintaining parks and providing recreational facilities and activities, managing three airports, supporting neighborhoods and their residents, promoting public safety, enhancing sustainability, supporting businesses and entrepreneurship, and a host of other activities.

Describe your personal journey to becoming a CEO who "gets it."

When Mayor Sylvester Turner confirmed me as the human resources director, safety was at the forefront of what I wanted to accomplish. We had a phenomenal team, which I believe had been stifled in its creativity. I wanted to unleash their capabilities in a manner that the city had never seen, and I wanted us to stop being so reactive to things and start being proactive to address what was necessary. I also think it's important that we realize that it's usually our employees who can actually help us accomplish our safety strategies and goals. When you allow their ideas to come to fruition, you see great and wonderful things. That's what happened with me. The team had great and wonderful ideas, and it was my responsibility to remove any obstacles and give them the opportunity to be successful in what they wanted to do.

It also helped that the mayor saw safety as a priority, but on a bigger scale that covered the whole city. As he worked on his Safe Houston initiative, we were working on our Zero is Possible (ZIP) program, a standards-based safety campaign with the primary goal of driving the city's occupational safety awareness and mindset toward zero accidents, zero injuries and zero safety compromises. The mayor's program was implemented first, which allowed us to pivot and gain more attention for our internal policy that was approved hours later.

Believe it or not, employees pay attention. Hearing things from the top is a good thing, but when they see you implement things from the bottom that rise to the top, it's even better. When we started rolling out the ZIP initiative, it had to be a collaboration between human resources, the departments and the employees! Using that formula as a guide, we were able to get directors from all departments to understand our vision with ZIP, and see how the initiative had to be embraced at the highest level, so that the employees could actualize it at their level.

We incorporated our Talent Management System into the administrative process so that employees could take safety courses online and, upon completion, get a ZIP Safety T-shirt. Believe it or not, this was one of our biggest successes in implementing the program. We found employees taking the safety training even before it was rolled out in their department, so that they could receive one of the T-shirts. You might find that odd, but we said, "Whatever works!"

We also needed to recognize opportunities to enhance our risk management programs. As a result, we created a specialized safety team focused on high-risk public works operations; a specialized chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive safety task force; and a citywide campaign to launch the ANSI Z10 system.

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Through her servant leadership style, Cheeks gained the trust of other key leaders and organizations to develop a task force that supported her goal of implementing the ANSI Z10 Safety Management System.
- She sought out partnerships that had high visibility into operations that were at high risk. Her goal was to get to the root of the issues first and then implement counter-measures that targeted those specific hazards.
- She gained desired results and changed the overall safety culture of the City of Houston's 26 municipal departments.



BRIAN COX
CEO, STACK AMERICAS
STACK INFRASTRUCTURE
DENVER, CO

STACK provides digital infrastructure to scale the world's most innovative companies. With a client-first approach, STACK delivers a comprehensive suite of campus, build-to-suit, colocation and powered shell solutions in the Americas, EMEA and APAC regions. With 500-plus employees and contractors across the globe, the STACK team provides the experience required to deliver scalable capacity with a commitment to excellence.

Describe your personal journey to becoming a CEO who "gets it."

My personal journey began in the Army when I first observed the best leaders prioritize the welfare of the troops in their command. Leading the exercise, checking on the well-being of the soldier and taking care of themselves only after everyone else was accounted for was engrained in my memory. The visual has stuck with me. I try to make sure everyone at STACK is prioritized before I worry about me. We live in such a dynamic time that it must start with the well-being of our employees. If we do not – at a minimum – prioritize human life in physical safety and mental health, I am not sure the rest of it matters.

Early in STACK's growth, we recognized the inherent risks to workers in the construction trades and empathized with the challenges faced daily by the tradesmen and women. Although these workers are not direct employees of STACK, they are our partners, and they have people in their lives who count on them to come

home safely. It is part of our culture to value these partners and do our part to ensure our buildings are safe to construct and operate. We can delegate the authority to help with a project to our partners, but the responsibility for safety at all levels resides with the CEO.

How do you instill a sense of safety in employees on an ongoing basis?

I believe safety must be an intrinsic part of company culture, and STACK has enacted standards to ensure it is. We start by providing tools that enable any employee to easily report and identify concerns and issues, as well as recognize co-workers for great safety behavior and performance. This observation program has helped us to improve and engage all levels of the organization while providing valuable insights on areas that need further attention to achieve the desired safety success.


Read the full Q&A
at sh-m.ag/3ii1NCO.

How does your organization measure safety?

STACK is committed to transparency in reporting of incidents and near misses and monitoring for trends weekly. To ensure communication, all construction and operations employees receive training on expectations for incident investigation and reporting. For any incident that is recordable or any serious near misses, the EHS team develops a full corrective action plan and tracks it to closure, with senior leadership engaged throughout the investigative process. We track many standard industry KPIs and are working on more innovative approaches that measure leadership engagement and safety innovations. We believe these new approaches will provide more predictive insights desired to prevent incidents. We seek out partners who are willing to think outside the box, be creative and explore fresh approaches to ensure worker safety.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Under Cox's leadership, STACK brings a safety-first perspective to every aspect of the design, construction and critical operations of its data centers.
- Cox has increased the EHS team to nearly a dozen full-time safety employees, along with additional safety consultants, in the past year. In less than a year, each one of the company's construction projects has been staffed with a full-time STACK safety representative.
- He consistently challenges the team to know senior leaders from the company's general contractors and vendor partners to ensure they have a deep respect for safety, and work with them to improve their EHS practices, if necessary.



RYAN I. DANIEL

CEO

ST. CLOUD METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION
ST. CLOUD, MN

The St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission, also known as Metro Bus, operates in central Minnesota, with the mission to provide safe, friendly and reliable public transportation services. Metro Bus has three primary divisions: Fixed Route, Dial-a-Ride paratransit and Northstar Link Commuter Bus service operated on behalf of three counties. Metro Bus and its 160 employees transport over 1 million passengers annually.

Describe your personal journey to becoming a CEO who “gets it.”

I started my career in public transportation as a bus operator for the New York City Transit Authority. Along the way, I spent two years as a training manager for the Central Ohio Transit Authority, where I supported and operationalized the mission of training and safety by designing job-related and safety-focused learning systems in support of COTA’s workforce. Washington Metro Area Transit Authority was my next transit system, where I served as the manager of bus service. At WMATA, I directed the overall functions for day-to-day bus service delivery, trained staff and managed performance. I managed standards for improving safety culture, employee development and labor relations. These three transit authorities prepared me to be the CEO of St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission and to navigate a pandemic no one knew was on the horizon. In New York City as a bus operator, I was part of a team of over

5,000 bus operators, where our goal was to safely move over 2 million people a day, 365 days a year, without accident or incident, no matter what the weather conditions were. That taught me the importance of being safe and that safety had no days off.

Why is safety a core value at your organization?

Citizens who use public transportation in central Minnesota consider their mode of transit a personal asset for them to get to work, school, home and even for leisure purposes. As a result of being an asset, and having the trust of the community, safety is paramount in maintaining our position in the eyes of our riders, as well as our employees, thus the reason safety is a core value.

 Read the full Q&A at sh-m.ag/3ii1NCO.

We can have top-of-the-line buses with all the bells and whistles, but if they pose a risk to our bus operators, customers or community, we have done a disservice.

How do you instill a sense of safety in employees on an ongoing basis?

A favorite saying of mine is, “You have to inspect what you expect, or employees will not take what you are saying seriously!” Therefore, we measure our incidents and reward all operators every time they collectively go 30 days without a preventable incident. We listen to our team through regular pulse surveys, suggestion boxes, committee meetings and act on all items that can enhance the service delivery experience. Our training and safety department, along with the safety committee, are leading top-level factors in making sure employees are given the tools they need to be safe and successful in their various roles. We also have a digital safety board that keeps a running count of the time since our last preventable incident. Our safety reporting system also provides employees with a tool to directly submit any issues or concerns they perceive as a safety hazard as they perform their daily tasks.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Daniel’s commitment to the safety and health of both employees and customers was showcased during the COVID-19 pandemic with the robust safety measures and practices that were put in place to protect all Metro Bus stakeholders.
- Daniel is an advocate for safety in the transportation industry. He serves on several boards, including the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine – Transportation Research Board and the Minnesota Public Transportation Association board of directors.



PAUL DANOS

CEO
DANOS
HOUMA, LA

Danos is a 76-year-old, family-owned energy service company that employs more than 2,500 people who help build, maintain and operate customer assets. Danos is at the forefront of the energy industry as a company with a heart for service and a culture of safety. Since 1947, Danos has grown from a small South Louisiana oil and gas service company to a trusted, global energy partner with 13 service lines.

Describe your personal journey to becoming a CEO who "gets it."

I am a third-generation family member in a family business that started in 1947. Part of the program for family members interested in working at the business is to work summers at various field locations during high school and college. From our fabrication shop in Larose, LA, to our shore base in Fourchon, LA, to a lift boat in Lake Maracaibo, Venezuela, I learned so much about our business during those work experiences. The most seminal component of that learning was the amazing Danos team members I got to know along the way. Our commitment to safety is rooted in our desire to set the standard for how we treat the people who work for this company. Spending summers getting to know the people on our front lines continues to drive my commitment to protect our people. Today, we continue to require that our leaders regularly engage with our team members who are working at field locations.

What is the biggest obstacle to safety at your organization? How do you work to overcome it?

We work tirelessly to instill a commitment to safety in our people and provide the skills and knowledge to execute every task safely. However, most of our people leave their homes and go directly to a customer location without regular trips to our office locations. Because we do not control most aspects of our team members' work environments and have limited face-to-face contact with employees, we must be creative about supporting, training and connecting with our people. There is no one silver bullet to overcome this challenge. Instead, we have a long list of activities, meetings, communications and engagements that enable us to support our people.



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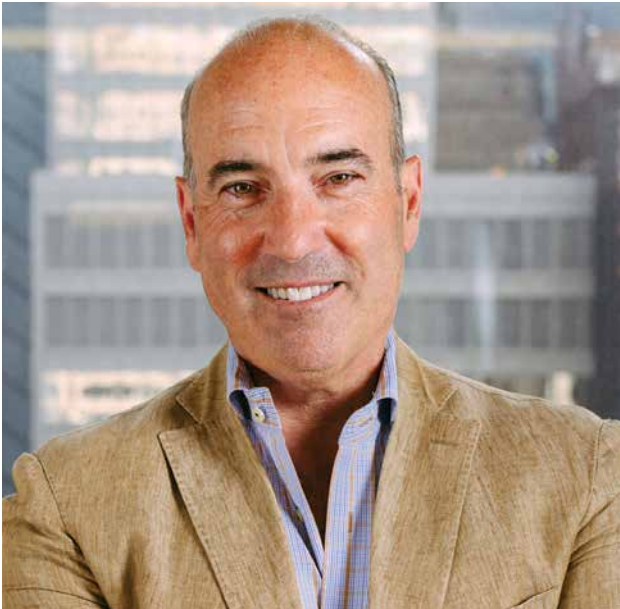
It's all rooted in safety being a value that enables a commitment to the resources required to continue all these activities.

How do you instill a sense of safety in employees on an ongoing basis?

I believe people are more likely to buy into a culture of safety if they understand where it comes from. We strive to ensure people feel cared for at Danos. We are committed to setting the standard for caring for employees. Once they see we are serious about this, they will be more likely to engage in all the safety meetings, read our safety alerts, share best practices with their teammates, provide recognition to people who are living our safety values and challenge someone who is falling short. We are also a listening and learning organization. Many of our policies and procedures are developed with the help of our field leaders. Giving them a seat at the table is essential to building our safe work culture. When our employees learn that our field leaders are engaged in our strategy for safety, they are all in.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Danos provides updates via quarterly town hall meetings and video messages to keep employees aligned and working safely.
- He uses the company's custom-built safety tracking tool for real-time safety action planning, incident tracking and root cause analysis.
- The Danos Foundation provided financial assistance to employees affected by Hurricane Ida, and Danos employees jumped into action to help one another. Danos' leadership was on display during this time of need. As employees came together to clean each other's homes and yards, Paul was among them, cutting trees and clearing debris.



LES HISCOE

CEO

SHAWMUT DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
NEW YORK, NY

Shawmut Design and Construction is a \$1.3 billion national construction management firm. As a 100% employee-owned company, Shawmut has created a culture of safety, ownership, proactive solution-making and forward-thinking. The firm completes hundreds of projects annually with its 1,000-person workforce, tens of thousands of onsite workers and up to 8,000 unique subcontractor companies.

Describe your personal journey to becoming a CEO who “gets it.”

I’ve worked in the construction industry for over 30 years – 24 of which have been at Shawmut. From studying engineering at the University of New Hampshire to starting my construction career in the field as a superintendent to becoming CEO, safety has always been my top priority. Having worked long hours on jobsites for many years, I’ve experienced firsthand the high-stakes, fast-paced construction environment. Everyone is working as quickly as possible to deliver projects on time and on budget, multitasking, and dealing with hundreds of people in a day – so, it’s not surprising that people could lose sight of safety. But in these environments, everything can instantly change to cause risks and incidents. Technology, protocols and standards have certainly evolved over the past 30 years, but I’ve carried the same essential lessons about safety throughout my career, including:

- Safety should always be the No. 1 priority. Don’t cut corners, make impulsive decisions or shirk protocols. It is always better to do things the right way, safely.
- Safety extends beyond the bounds of your team. It encompasses far more than employees – it reaches into the local community, general public and families of all involved.
- It’s not just about sending everyone home safely, but also sending everyone home more informed, so they come back even better the next day.
- Safety is not something you focus on just at the beginning of the year to check the box. Strive for continuous improvement and innovation by implementing new technologies, trainings and resources. It’s all day, every day.

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at sh-m.ag/3ii1NCQ.

How does your organization measure safety?

Our corporate safety steering committee, shored up by our regional safety branches, ensures everyone adheres to our practices and expectations. Regional safety managers are our boots-on-the-ground safety champions who drive local initiatives, and large, complex projects have dedicated safety managers overseeing all operations. We also have a customized safety scoring platform that identifies project safety risks by pulling jobsite data from our different technologies and platforms. We track all the common items from a leading and lagging perspective, such as safety inspections, observations, quality of reporting, high-hazard issues and incidents. These all roll up into a safety score for each individual contributor as well as for the project, so we have real-time information on total safety engagement. Additionally, our safety team routinely audits our sites for additional leading indicators. Finally, our senior and executive leadership teams conduct quarterly safety blitzes to drive more top-down safety engagement. This allows us to address areas that need more resources and support before an incident occurs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Hiscoe is the driving force behind ensuring Shawmut’s safety program focuses on the entire person – encompassing both mental and physical health.
- He recently launched an Inclusion Learning and Awareness Plan that includes trainings on inclusive management and how to understand and interrupt unconscious biases.
- He understands leading-edge technology implementation is critical to achieving a proactive, preventive and predictive safety program.



ANDERS SJOELIN

PRESIDENT AND CEO
S&C ELECTRIC CO.
CHICAGO, IL

In 1909, S&C Electric Co. transformed the delivery of safe, reliable electricity with the invention of the Liquid Power Fuse. Today, as the world faces extreme weather events and the demand for electricity grows, S&C and its 3,500 employees continue to innovate and modernize the electrical grid, ensuring reliable and resilient power for homes, communities, and critical infrastructure around the world.

Describe your personal journey to becoming a CEO who "gets it."

I grew up in Sweden in a time when the country was really emphasizing car safety. Many know the Swedish car brand Volvo as one of the safest automobiles on the market. But what many do not know is that Sweden was one of the first countries to regulate front- and back-passenger-seat belt use. So, I feel that a safety mindset, and certainly a car safety mindset, was instilled in me at an early age.

I worked many years in factory settings before I transitioned to leading businesses, including those with remote construction sites. This is where it connected with me how important team member engagement is to safety performance and culture. With so much going on in these different environments, you really depended on everyone doing the right thing every day. I really began to see that safety is truly a team sport. You need everyone to participate and do their best to take care of themselves and their team members, every minute of every day.

What is the biggest obstacle to safety at your organization?

There is no one big obstacle. Safety is complex. It is every day and every minute. You need to build a safety culture from the ground up. You can't push it down from the top. Making sure that our team members are trained, that they have the right tools and that they feel empowered to speak up is extremely important. Ensuring a safe working environment is an ongoing activity that requires the daily attention and efforts of everyone.

Why is safety a core value at your organization?

S&C's commitment to safety was one of the aspects of the culture I was most excited to explore when I became CEO. I started at S&C at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and S&C's culture of safety proved essential in our response to keep our employees safe and continue to serve our customers with excellence. This


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also gave me the opportunity to share my passion for safety and prepared me to address COVID-19 with the urgency needed to keep our team members safe and the business running to serve our customers.

How do you instill a sense of safety in employees on an ongoing basis?

A sense of safety is not enough. We need to build a culture of safety, and there are no shortcuts when it comes to safety. It is important for everyone to understand that safety is a core value. One way we help our team members understand this is through communication and leadership engagement. Every meeting, at all levels of the organization, starts with a safety moment. This reminds people that safety is an "every day, every minute" effort. We must lead by example because we want to show that, when we care, we can make a difference, and nobody gets hurt.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Sjoelin has steered a course of continuous improvement and growth across the corporation, while reemphasizing that safety and health remain the foundation of the company's path to success.
- Culture is everything at the employee-owned, 111-year-old company, and the company's "true north" is a "safety first" mindset. Testament to this are the results of a 2022 third-party safety assessment survey in which 95% of respondents indicated they felt they had a voice or ownership role in the site safety program.
- The mindset that each team member deserves to go home safely every day starts in Day 1 orientation.