

# TRAINING WISDOM

WE ASKED FOUR PEOPLE WHO RUN HSR TRAINING COURSES THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- If someone asked why should I become a H&S rep? What would you say?
- How has H&S rep training evolved in the last year?
- What should an employer do to help realise a trained rep's full potential?
- How could Unit Standard 29315 be changed to help make reps more influential/effective?



June Hoddle conducts a WorksafeReps course.

# PETER SCANLAN

## WORKSAFEREPS

As a health & safety rep myself I would say that if you are interested in ensuring that your fellow workers get home safely from work every day in good health, then this is the right job for you. I would caution that there are responsibilities associated with the position. Sometimes you need to ruffle a few feathers. However, there is satisfaction in knowing that your actions as a rep can have a positive effect on the organisation and in the workplace.

Worksafe Reps decided on 20 March to stop all face-to-face training until the crisis passed. We were fortunate to have two online courses available and to use the iQualify learning platform. If there was one silver lining for us, it is that knowledge and understanding of H&S legislation is vital in this Covid-19 situation; how H&S representatives can support workers and managers to undertake their responsibilities under the HSW Act is central to our courses. We started face-to-face courses again under Level 2.

We also adjusted our F2F courses to be delivered on the Zoom platform. Zoom has proved to be a reliable and effective platform for presenting information. Feedback from our learner surveys has been overwhelmingly positive for Zoom training, particularly for people that live in areas where it is difficult to get to in-person training. It also has the benefit of no travel, no parking, and physically distant. We will be continuing with Zoom training as part of our new business model, post Covid-19.

Employers should ensure that reps are trained to a high standard so that they feel equipped for the job. We get a lot of people coming to our courses who have no idea what is involved. Many of them have had their arms twisted and many have not been elected to the position. Employers should use the opportunity of having trained reps as an additional resource to the health and safety toolbox. Well trained reps are an asset to the organisation and should be encouraged and given the resources to do their jobs.

Regarding Unit 29315, I don't think there is anything wrong with it or any changes that would make a rep more influential or effective. If I could change anything it would be the attitude of employers to reps. There are employers who do not realise why there are reps in their organisations, what powers they have or why they should pay to have their reps trained at all. During Covid-19 I've heard of employers taking charge of the situation and making H&S decisions without involving their reps (or H&S committees).

Employers should ensure the H&S committee is chaired by a rep, that the majority of its members are workers, and that the committee is given wide powers of influence. CEOs, board members and officers in an organisation can get things done, but they need to communicate with reps to ensure an effective worker voice and get buy-in from the reps and committee members – as required in the worker engagement, participation and representation part of the HSW Act 2015.



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community. I currently sit on the Air New Zealand board's Health, Safety & Security Committee where I represent the interests of the HSR community and present their realities at the highest decision-making level.

I also sit on a H&S engagement and participation steering committee that involves senior leaders from the company and senior leaders from union partners, where I also represent the interests and voices of the HSR community.

The aviation industry has been greatly affected by Covid-19. The HSR community has remained resilient and

has provided great feedback to the board around how work was imagined and how work was done during the various alert levels.

I would definitely put my hand up to be a rep again! It has literally changed my life. I have found so much fulfilment in working with others for the betterment of the safety of our workplaces. To anyone thinking about putting their hand up, I say do it! You will not regret it. It can be a thankless job at times, but speaking up and representing your friends and colleagues in matters of H&S can literally change their lives for the better. Your voice

is so valuable in being a catalyst for change.

My experience as a HSR has changed me as a person. It has taught me the importance of the workers' voice, and to look differently at the way we work. It has also taught me how to communicate tactfully when encouraging my peers to speak up with the realities of their work, and how to communicate with management when asking for things we need.

I have learnt that having a win-win between workers and management has been the most productive way to get meaningful change.

## Worksafe Reps

# GETTING WORKERS HOME SAFE AND HEALTHY

WorksafeReps is a New Zealand owned and operated non-profit charitable trust (Workers' Education Trust), with a mission to provide education courses in health and safety at work to get workers home safe and healthy.

## OUR COURSES

Stage 1 H&S Representative Training (including U:29315)  
Stage 2 H&S Rep Investigation and Risk Management  
Team Leader/Supervisor/Manager H&S Training  
Preventing and Managing Fatigue  
Creating Positive Workplaces  
De-escalation Training Workshop

## TRAINING OPTIONS

Face-to-face  
Online  
Blended (by Zoom)



**PUBLIC COURSES**  
**IN-HOUSE COURSES**  
**TAILORED FOR YOUR ORGANISATION**

**E: [SUPPORT@WORKSAFEREPS.ORG.NZ](mailto:SUPPORT@WORKSAFEREPS.ORG.NZ)**  
**W: [WWW.WORKSAFEREPS.CO.NZ](http://WWW.WORKSAFEREPS.CO.NZ)**  
**P: 0800 336 966**

# BUILDING CAPACITY

**FRANCOIS BARTON** reflects on Todd Conklin's message that in these unpredictable Covid times your organisation's capacity to absorb and adapt to change makes all the difference.



During a recent Zoom 'speaking tour' of New Zealand, US health and safety guru Todd Conklin questioned whether the dramatically changed environment created by Covid-19 requires businesses to adopt different sorts of strategies to achieve success.

Businesses, he said, have been working diligently for a long time to try to create stable, reliable, and predictable performance. But then Covid-19 came along, and stability and predictability went out the window.

In fact, he used a term coined by the US military during the Cold War to describe the kind of environment we operate in now – VUCA, which stands for **Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous**. That's not a bad description of what life's been like for many of us this year.

Todd said that in this new VUCA world, traditional business tools and approaches aren't necessarily going to work. This is particularly the case where they rely on businesses being able to forecast, plan and operate in a way that allows for little or no deviation from the plan. He argued that survival in a VUCA environment like Covid-19 is all about being able to cope with deviations from the plan.

Many businesses have long valued and prioritised efficiency and 'cutting fat' as the pathway to success. That strategy has delivered growth and profitability for many, but it has also affected the ability to deal with uncertainty and rapid change. Indeed, this focus on efficiency over effectiveness can make even normal operational variability harder to manage safely.

Todd proposed some strategies he believes will better serve organisations needing to respond to this VUCA environment. The three that really stood out for me were:

## OPTIMISE TOWARD RESILIENCE, NOT EFFICIENCY

In a VUCA environment, resilience is incredibly valuable, so it's important that organisations actively cultivate it. The key to ensuring resilience is to build capacity. Capacity can include your IT platforms, the quality of your relationships across staff and customers, the skills and capabilities through the organisation, your balance sheet, and more. These capacities protect a business when things go wrong – they soften the landing and help bounce forward. Proposing a move from *optimising for efficiency* to *optimising for*

*resilience* might seem controversial in the face of a pandemic-induced economic downturn. But Todd argues it is one of the best ways business owners can protect themselves from the uncertainty and volatility created by Covid-19.

## BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AS A STRATEGY

The virus severely disrupted normal ways of working. Despite that, I know many businesses kept operating, adapted to new ways of doing things, and spotted and solved problems in flight. An almost universal component in those adaptive stories was the relationships they had fostered with their workers, clients, and suppliers.

Relationships are something we often take for granted, but they deserve to be explicitly valued. The pandemic showed that relationships delivered bottom line value. In fact, Todd argues that the businesses that did best during Covid-19 were the ones that had not only built strong relationships, they had shown generosity and reciprocity in the way they conducted these relationships. This is especially important to remember as we head into more austere economic times.

## INSIST ON DIVERSITY OF INFORMATION – LEARN FROM THOSE WHO DO THE WORK

Businesses have a great opportunity to learn from how things were done differently during the various lockdown levels. Leadership teams will have plenty to contribute to this discussion. So too will the people who actually did the work. And by talking to them you will learn things about what actually happened in your business that you wouldn't learn elsewhere.

## TWO KEY QUESTIONS

It's essential to find out how people managed to achieve success without the usual support or rules being in place. Todd proposed two questions to help unlock that worker experience:

- Where was it great to have freedom from management?
- Where did you need management's support, but we weren't there?

The responses to these questions aren't just relevant to preparing for the next pandemic disruption, but also how to be a better more resilient business, regardless of what the future holds.

Remember, likelihood isn't a strategy, ensuring the capacity to respond is.