

Evolution in the Health Environment Hygiene Safety Manager Profile *a Cultural Change Manager*

by Gloria Damaschi

What evolutions and specific trends are reflecting the professional profiles in the Safety and Health functional area? What changes are occurring in the organizational environments on these topics?

During more partnership with different organizations in the industrial world for searching, recruiting and hiring professionals for the company project "Safety, Environment, Hygiene and Health", we could register some specifics and trends, what we have encompassed in an interview to the Head Hunting specialist Dr. Damaschi.

In production and industrial organizations with particular high level risks, the HS HE manager plays a very important and primary role. What recent learnings from excellent companies about the profile and role design have you collected?

In order to identify the managers who will take over that role responsibilities, some structured companies focused on some key specific skills. Frequently they seem to orient their choices towards Manager with a high *technical background* and experience at international organizations. They look forward to candidates with an excellent preparation about the law, rules, certifications requirements, etc. applied to the Safety, Security, Quality and Environment areas.

We could see how companies have definite and clear ideas about this important function, where they look for managers with a relevant long experience in production. They look for managers ready to live and work close to production lines, who do not give just "company directions from the top", without real significance and concrete impact.

At the same time company top managements look for a Manager who could be "*super partes*", someone with the "big picture" in mind and able to influence operative people. Extremely important is the ability to be autonomous at taking decisions and to lead others.

The function design frequently encompassed the responsibility of an operative team of people, who will be constantly trained and involved. This is considered a *conditio sine qua non*, an absolutely essential skill for the effective exercise of the Responsible role activities.

Organizations have understood that it is not enough to have on board just perfect documents about the themes Environment, Safety and Health. Essential is to provoke and impact and to push towards a real change in work behaviors.

What are the most critical role elements at local companies in comparison to International organizations?

Often local smaller size companies tend to be scarcely structured, with few audit and inspections activities, poor job risks analysis, law and rules update.

These are tools that International organization and more structured companies can more extensively apply.

The most critical point for both of them refers to the value, level of importance, relevance and ability to impact the work environment that the HS HE Manager can adopt and apply. There are some contexts where despite the available tools (also some very structured and International organizations) they adopt only a superficial tension towards the correct behaviors. What of course exposes the company and all people working there at impressive risks.

At less structured work environments often you can find more employee "resistance" to adopt safety measures and behaviors. They can't see the importance if the function Safety and Environment and tend to consider that manager just as the one who imposes more bureaucracy.

For whom who works in these companies the big challenge is to be able to speak the same language of operative production line people and at the same time to make people understand the importance of the rules, measures, procedures who are put in place o prevent risks and damages at all levels and for a more safe work environment for everyone.

This means the expectations to this manager is to drive a real cultural change within the company by increasing sensitivity towards these themes.

We must also remember here the obligation for the companies to appoint a Safety, Prevention and Protection. Often companies who look for a HS HE manager encompass in the role the responsibilities of the so called RSPP (Safety, Prevention and Protection) while at the same time the try to overcome the role vision as that of the one who imposes new rules and that carries on controls (considering the implications and risks, this appears anyway a very important aspect). Sometimes organizations think of a Manager who will promote best practices and who transfers the rules and procedures value and significance, not only for respecting the law but also for a continuous improvement.

How can develop this function at industrial companies in the future?

Safety and Environment themes are particularly actual in these days.

This sensitivity is pushing towards more awareness at top management company level that drives the decision to hire a trustworthy very capable professional manager, very effective to whom to give this area responsibility.

What do best professionals pay particular attention to? What challenges are they ready to take?

Most prepared best managers, who are used to work in developed professional contexts, take in consideration a new challenge based on the company goals. That is to say they evaluate how high and challenging the goals are.

It appears evident that in our entrepreneurial industrial context, we still need to grow awareness and safety culture: this is known especially by excellent candidates who operate at not that excellent companies. This often drives professionals to choose “higher” goals and cultural environments.

Managers in this role tend to “measure” the top management will and commitment to strongly support the behavioral changes the new context is aiming for.

What gap between what is requested by companies and what you can “find” among candidates seems to be particularly difficult to fill?

The gap to fill does not refer to candidates: the labor market can offer different profiles and very qualified experiences. Despite this availability, company requests often remain unmet, and they cannot cover their need and open position. Key is to facilitate company management by defining precise expectations and role requirements for this hiring. It will be fundamental to reflect on the available tools company will give the new Hire, the new HS HE Manager for reaching the challenging goals and results who cannot be postponed any longer.

We cannot limit to declare we want to reach the ambitious goal “Zero accidents”; we need to define also how and what means we want to provide.

What elements can make the difference for an effective recruiting and hiring process of high caliber profiles in this function?

It makes the real difference to share and discuss what will be the best solution and perspective for the company and the candidate.

In this role we find managers (candidates) who “choose” carefully the organizational contexts where they can “contribute well”. They are aware, their professional skills are not enough for reaching any goal kind: in order to succeed they will need to work effectively with others, they will need to work together the company top management and all other managers. They will need to be able to involve whole company.

This is a “crucial” point that needs to be carefully evaluated through a punctual and objective consultancy, especially by hiring cases of professional profiles where the expectation is to drive change.