

Speaker 1 00:00:05 Welcome to the Clear Impact Podcast brought to you by PGTI University. Thanks for joining us today. My name is Sherri Connor, and I am your host.

Speaker 2 00:00:19 Unfortunately, complacency is one of the biggest risks in safety. You get somebody that's been doing the job for years, you know, or somebody comes in and thinks, you know, that they can muscle out something. That's where we get lots of injuries...

Speaker 1 00:00:34 Hard hats, gloves, eyewear, and steel toed boots are just a few things that keep people safe on the job. Our episode today centers around safety, as we talk with Todd Benedict, our Senior Manager of Environmental Health and Safety at PGTI. While safety gear is important, you'll learn that attitudes, training, and awareness towards workplace safety have a big impact when it comes to running a successful business.

Good afternoon, we are here on the Clear Impact Podcast and we are in the series Running a Successful Business. And today we have Todd Benedict with us. Um, Todd, I barely know you, tell us a little bit about you, about your role here, and maybe how you landed in this position.

Speaker 2 00:01:13 Oh, thanks Sherri. I'm basically the Senior EHS manager for PGTI, so I've been here about a year and a half, but I've been in the EHS, Environmental Health and Safety field for over 20 years. The last 16 being in managerial roles, major companies, such as Nestle, General Electric, Berry Plastics as well. So I have a lot of experience in general industry, as well as a little bit in the construction angle, things when it comes to our mouth and safety. Okay.

Speaker 1 00:01:39 So that's a pretty broad area, environmental health and safety. So that's everything under the roof of the plant and all the safety pertaining to our workforce?

Speaker 2 00:01:49 It's basically everybody that works for PGTI from the office staff, all the way down to the operations on the floor, our drivers out in the field, our service techs that are out there doing repairs. So it encompasses a large amount of people throughout the company.

Speaker 1 00:02:06 Oh, wow. So how did you get started in that?

Speaker 2 00:02:08 Environmental health and safety was something I've always been into. That's why I went to school for, back, you know, when I went to college. It was just a field that I felt there was a lot of future potential for. At the time, 25 years ago, safety and the environment was a lot different, so I was a field that I think thought was very up and coming. And once I got into it, you know, it became more of a passion for me. So especially around safety, you know, I started more in the environmental end of things. And as I progressed through it, through various jobs, various companies, more and more into the safety side of things, you know, and got to value the real meaning behind safety and basically, develop the passion for safety to understand. And because safety is kind of one of those things, it's not always about the numbers, it's about people, right? So to see people understand safety, to be able to drive, you know, safety to the level of where people understand the real reason behind safety and getting that feedback from them to see that they understand, it is really what drives me to further my career and to do what I do.

Speaker 1 00:03:12 That's great. So I picked the right person to talk to about this. That's awesome. I don't know very much about environmental health and safety. I know I went through orientation like everyone else, but I did look up a very interesting quote. Benjamin Franklin said that an ounce of

prevention is worth a pound of cure. And I think it would apply when it comes to people staying safe at work. And, you know, we all have the rules and regulations and, you know, don't stand on the top of the ladder, and put on your safety goggles, and all of that. How can a dealer establish and then enforce standards for safety of their own workforce?

Speaker 2 00:03:46 That's a great question, Sherri. I have actually two parts to that answer. Because, you know, you start talking about rules and regulations. Typically when you hear about safety, that's what everybody goes toward. There's plenty of rules and regulations when it comes to safety. And a lot of times it becomes almost a negative viewpoint behind it, which is unfortunate because rules and regulations are there for a reason. They're there as a guidance to make sure that our people, our employees, our team members are all being safe, and it gives an expectation what they need to do. The reason behind it is, somewhere at some time, somebody in the past has gotten injured, probably seriously, to cause these rules to be put in place and they're there to protect and make sure that we do not have additional injuries. Unfortunately, a lot of times when it comes to safety, we focus on the rules and regulations, and kind of make it around that, we need to be wearing our PPE because it's the rule, not getting more to the people side.

Speaker 2 00:04:41 And what's the real reason behind that, is to make sure that you go home safe. To make sure that you are not injured so you can still do the things that you enjoy outside of work. And that's kind of the whole premise for safety is we want you to go home safe. We want to make sure we, our team members go home safe. Everybody goes home in the condition they came to work in, so they can go and enjoy things that they work for. Right. They work for reasons, which is basically to support family, to support hobbies, habits, whatever it might be. There's reasons we go to work and be able to do those things; we have to make sure we're safe, because an injury is going to impact those things pretty significantly.

Speaker 1 00:05:20 Right? No, that totally makes sense. I know I did hear one time, like we should just take all the safety labels off and see what happens. You know, we're talking about like, don't use the blow dryer in the bathtub and that kind of thing, that doesn't apply here. We're not talking about those kinds of safety labels. We're talking about big pieces of glass over your head and you know, not lifting more than you should and things of that nature. Right?

Speaker 2 00:05:40 Well, there's hazards in everything we do. So, you know, part of it is the workplace we know of the hazards we have. You know, we are aware of them. There's things put in place. When it comes to home, actually there is probably more hazards that you're not aware of that are probably more significant, than what we'd have at work, because at work we're protected more so because we have guarding in place, we have, you know, signs, we have awareness, we have training, we have all these measures. You know, and that kind of comes into the second part of the question is around the prevention, you know? So while we have rules and regulations, realistically, we want to get to where, you know, more preventing these safety injuries, more proactive. Unfortunately, a lot of companies out there pick a reactive stance, meaning they wait until something happens, and then decide to do something about it.

Speaker 2 00:06:25 You know, realistically, that's a very old way of thinking and it doesn't really make sense. It doesn't really put our, our employees, you know, first, because why wait till somebody gets hurt to do something? Right. You know, we need to look at our, you know, our employees are, your team members as people. They're all, you know, somebody's father, mother, daughter, son, you know,

friend, they are realistic people. How would you, as an employer, want to feel if your son or daughter went to a place where they decided, we're not going to put safety measures in place until somebody gets hurt, because we can't justify it. You know, unfortunately, you know, maybe your son or daughter would be that person that gets injured, to finally, they decide to put safety measures in place. It's not a great way of looking at things. And it's probably, you know, it's not the way we want to go. We want to develop a culture where it's more proactive, more getting people to see hazards before they cause injuries, getting people to look for things out there, report stuff. And then also making sure that we're putting stuff in place as employers to ensure that our team members are safe before any kind of injury happens.

Speaker 1 00:07:30 So we can learn from, you know, from the past and we can learn from what others have experienced and take that as good guidance and, and not have to learn everything the hard way ourselves.

Speaker 2 00:07:41 Exactly. Yeah. I'd rather, you know, look at guidance through rules, regulations through other people's injuries, in different companies over the years, best practices that are put in place. Those types of things help keep us from our people being injured, our team members being injured. Because you know, an injury while it does affect the people get injured, it greatly also affects us as employers too, because now we have, you know, a number of costs that related to that. We have team members that are out of work, and we got in that backfill those positions with other people that might not be as skilled. You know? So if you have somebody that's been working a job for a long time, very skilled employee, they go out and get hurt because of, you know, something we didn't do or put in place. Now we're trying to backfill them with somebody that probably may have less experience, and might not be able to do the job to the same level. And that's going to cost, you know, a lot of things as well.

Speaker 1 00:08:35 Even if you can find someone. Like everyone's got a labor shortage right now, so you don't want to injure the people that are working for you, because you already probably have openings on your team and you know, to be down even further, that's, that's rough. When I'm thinking about our dealer audience, and I'm thinking specifically around the install crews, you know, I think of macho guys that are, you know, rough and tough, and they don't need to wear a hardhat and they don't need to wear gloves and they don't need to wear, you know, cause they're macho. That's just my viewpoint of that. You know, I think sometimes safety gets kind of a reputation as like you're a nerd, if you are wearing a helmet or you know, those kinds of things. So I did a little bit of research, and ran across this number. I read that in 2019 because 2020 wasn't a normal year. So I didn't want to look at any statistics around 2020. In 2019, 20% of workplace fatalities, which was over a thousand people in the U.S., happened in the construction field. And so that kind of speaks to the tough guy mentality. How can we shift that? Or do you think it already is shifting?

Speaker 2 00:09:39 I mean, there is some level of shifting in there, but construction industry is probably one of the most dangerous occupations out there as a whole...

Speaker 1 00:09: Be sure to tune in for upcoming episodes to help you understand the fenestration industry, what you need to know when buying windows and doors and other related topics, you can find out more about us at pgtiuniversity.com. You can also find us on Facebook and LinkedIn.

Speaker 2 00:10:06 You know, number of fatalities every year are significant while, you know, yeah, there is that macho guy type of premise there. We really not that any more. We have people of all ages, all builds, all sexes doing that work. But when it comes to injuries, injuries don't discriminate. So it doesn't matter if you're a big burly guy or a small person or what, injuries happen. And you know, in my experience over these 20 plus years, injuries happen to various people. There's no discrimination as far as what types of people get injured, especially some of the major ones. You know, falls, falls from heights, which is the number one serious injury, cause of fatalities in construction, with heights over just over six feet. It doesn't matter if you're 250, 300 pounds, or 150 pounds, if you fall and you land on your back or your head, it's going to cause a serious injury.

Speaker 2 00:11:00 It might even kill you. It doesn't matter. You could be the strongest person in the world. There's a good chance that you're going to be seriously hurt. You know, some of the other major injuries, such as eye injuries, eyes are very sensitive. It doesn't matter how much muscle you have on your body, an eye injury is going to happen to anybody. If you fail to wear your proper eyewear for the job, you know. And then things like cuts, your skin is probably, you know, is a very weak part of the body. Cuts, you know, can happen to anybody, so it doesn't matter your, your size on that. The biggest issue is around, more around complacency. So yeah, we got that big macho, strong, thinking they can do everything. You know, unfortunately complacency is one of the biggest risks in safety. You've got somebody that's been doing the job for years, you know, or somebody comes in and thinks, you know, that they can muscle out something.

Speaker 2 00:11:51 That's where we get lot of injuries. You know, people have been doing the job for 20 plus years, think that there's no hazards, or hazards there don't apply to them. Cause they haven't got hurt. Unfortunately, that have got hurt yet, because now they missed the hazards, they missed the changes, they missed the things that are there that appear. You know, and the same thing with, you know, those that are big and tough, you know, mentality wise. Now they're starting to do things as, you know, try to muscle something up or, you know, try to use improper techniques, which then end up causing an injury, caused you to pull out your back because you didn't use proper lifting technique. Cause you thought, yeah, I can lift 300, 400 pounds at the gym, but it's different when you're working, you're doing motions that are work-related and not necessarily fixed types of activities in a gym, you know, which are exercise based and stability based.

Speaker 1 00:12:40 Yeah. I think that, you know, I mean, as a female, there's plenty of times where I will try to pick up something that I probably shouldn't. Not here at work, but like at home and it's like, well, there's nobody around to help me. So I'm just gonna muscle this out. I've learned to be helpless when there are other people around. You know, so if there's a buddy, why not ask? You know, Hey, can you help me carry those? Can you help me lift this? This is heavy. I don't want to hurt myself. I don't think there's anything wimpy about that.

Speaker 3 00:13:06 Todd, what would you say to a dealer, who maybe hasn't embraced a safety culture in their dealership? Maybe they've got some more experienced installers who've been doing this job for a long time, and they don't need anybody to tell them how to do something in a more safe way. How would you approach that kind of a situation?

Speaker 4 00:13:26 My experience I've had a few of these situations before. One kind of recently in the last five years, I worked for a place where in the tool and die location, one of the leads there was basically probably did the job for over 30 years. And that mentality when it came to safety, was, I've

been doing this for a long time. Why should I do anything different? Why do I need to look at the job I'm doing in any different way? I've never got hurt before. And those are the kinds of people you really need to work at and get them to understand the value of safety, get them to see, you know, what safety is really about, and challenge them to think in a different way and become the safety champion. And this, this individual, he basically, it took a few years, but he ended up seeing the value of safety to the point where he was the leader in his department for safety.

Speaker 4 00:14:14 He would run the safety meetings in the department. He would run the safety projects and saw the, you know, the value of safety enough, to where he wanted his coworkers to understand it as well. And he made this point to make sure that, Hey, wow, I've done this this way for a years. Let's see if there's a different way or a safer way to do this. Um, you know, and that's when you get somebody like that on board, it's really rewarding on my end of things. So as a safety professional, where, you know, when I left that company, he actually came up and thanked me, thanked me for opening his eyes up and basically making him see things differently, said I was able to teach the old dog a new trick, you know, which is basically looking at things differently. You know, look at safety in different way, where now he had his eyes opened and he was taking safety home too as well.

Speaker 4 00:14:59 So he not only was looking at for safety opportunities at work, now at home, he was making sure he was working safe at home. And his wife as well, working safely around the yard, as well as stories like that, you know, are really rewarding. And that's kind of where, when it comes to safety, those are the kinds of things that you really can't put a monetary value on. You can't put a number on. It's one of those things that, when you change the culture, you know, one by one, it changes, not just that person. It changes everybody around them as well because now everybody's gets involved in safety and start seeing safety differently.

Speaker 3 00:15:31 That's awesome. I know Patrick has a number of pictures that he uses in some of his training of what not to do. People that are, you know, taking ladders and putting them across to other ladders and then standing on it as though it were a piece of scaffolding and you know, things like that. So, um, the goal is not to end up in Patrick's slide deck. So let's, uh, thank you so much for that, for that story. That's amazing.

Speaker 1 00:15:58 I know we didn't prep for this question, but what are some outside resources that a dealer could look to if they're trying to evaluate their own safety practices?

Speaker 2 00:16:06 Well, the first part you want to start with is OSHA. OSHA will provide your general guidance, your basic regulations, at least for that part, interpretations and some of the good standards. But then they go further into the safety realm, you, you want to look at ASSP, which is the American Society for Safety Professionals, as well as the National Safety Council are two great resources.

Speaker 1 00:16:27 And I know even sometimes like insurance agents, you know, people who help underwrite your workman's comp, you know, they'll come out and do risk assessments for you as well. And kind of help identify the things that you can put in place, which will save everybody money, right? Cause nobody wants to spend more than they need to on insurance. Um, and I know workman's comp gives you rebates if you're not filing claims and things like that. So the better you can protect your workers, the happier they're going to feel, the more productive you're going to be. And everybody goes home at the end of the day. That's correct. That's awesome. I think that's kind of all the questions. Is

there anything else that would be helpful for our dealer audience to know around keeping their crews safe?

Speaker 2 00:17:06 We just make sure we're keeping our people in mind when we think about safety. Again, being proactive, talking to our team members, our employees, getting the understanding of what do they see? You know, they're the ones out there doing the work. So what do they feel like is maybe not safe to them, or what they need as far as extra tools, because we need to make sure we're setting them up for success, right? And to do that, you need to provide the right tools. You need to provide the right knowledge. So maybe you have people that don't understand completely the task. Are we training them correctly? And then are we providing them the right resources, you know, help, if it's something that's going to be heavy in these movement. So they don't try to lift it by themselves, because they have other people there. The feedback that you get from your workers will drive safety completely in a different direction. You know, especially if they feel like they have a voice and you're doing something about it. And then they, they understand that, that you actually do care about them. And you're not, they're not just a, you know, a body to do the work,

Speaker 1 00:18:04 Right. So maybe like a weekly inspection of ladders or, um, making sure that all the tools are working properly, making sure everybody has their gear. You said a PPE, that stands for personal protection equipment?

Speaker 2 00:18:19 Personal protective equipment, yes.

Speaker 1 00:18:20 Okay. So that would be, like, for our floor. I know that that is like steel toed, boots, ear plugs, and eyewear, correct. And then for like the glass crews, the people who are handling glass packages, even on our assembly floors, that includes, is it a Kevlar jacket?

Speaker 2 00:18:38 Yeah. It's a cut resistant jacket. That's something that even sometimes they have cut resistant chaps that go along, depending on the job they're doing. The key part about PPE is you need to assess the job that's being done. So the level of PPE, or the types of PPE, is going to vary from job to job sometimes. It needs to be looked at. What's the risk involved? We are a glass operation, we have a significant cut risk. So we are using cut resistant gloves. We are using cut resistant jackets for certain jobs, things like that, just potential overhead work, hardhats would come and place, you know, those things. So you need to make sure you're evaluating your job properly, to provide the PPE that's necessary to keep your team members say,

Speaker 1 00:19:19 I really appreciate your time today. Thank you so much for chatting with me and sharing your wisdom and experience and knowledge with our dealer audience. Thank you very much. Thanks Todd. Have a good day.

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