It’s been a busy time for John Herr, CEO of supply chain risk management software provider Avetta. In mid-February, the company announced that it had combined with supply chain solutions provider BROWZ, expanding Avetta’s global network to 85,000 customers in more than 100 countries. The ultimate goal? To elevate safety and sustainability in workplaces around the world.

Shortly after the merger was announced, Herr shared with Safety Decisions some reflections on the current state of risk management and what he’s most excited about when he considers the future of safety.

Tell us a little bit about your experiences working in the risk management and safety space. What inspired you to get involved in the industry?

Every year some two million men and women lose their lives through accidents and diseases linked to their work. Hearing this and the corresponding stories of the real people affected inspired me to propel risk management into the forefront of the market. The more people realize what is at stake, the more proactive they become in ensuring every worker makes it home safely each night, and I am no different.

While I’ve only led Avetta for five years, I’ve been involved in risk management for almost two decades. I’ve learned that no matter what industry you’re in, there will always be liabilities and hazards. As a result, risk management is a topic that needs to be brought into every boardroom discussion.

Working across various industries has given me unique insight into the wide variety of risks factors that handicap a company. From supply chain inconsistencies to data security breaches and everything in between, no company is immune. The first step to building a strong and sustainable business is making safety a priority. Once you can ensure that your

John Herr
CEO
Avetta
employees will arrive home to their families safe each night, then you can start tackling the tougher issues of business.

What are the biggest supply chain safety and risk management issues giving organizations problems today?
The biggest impediment to safety and strong risk management is tradition. We work with industry leaders who use outdated paper and filing cabinet systems simply because that’s the way it’s always been. What they don’t realize is that their own systems are frequently causing inconsistencies and weaknesses in their supply chain. As compliance requirements become more complex, such processes will only become more inefficient and error-prone.

Oftentimes it takes an incident occurring to help businesses realize there’s a better way to manage their teams. Our goal is to help companies recognize their unique risks before something tragic happens. While supply chain risk management comes with costs, the cost of noncompliance is even more devastating, not just for the company but for the lives and families of affected workers as well. A third-party platform can help reduce these risks, while at the same time lowering administrative costs. What once took an entire team a full week or more to manage, can now be automated on our platform in less than a day. More important than the massive savings companies have found is the confidence they have gained in their supply chain, the confidence that their employees and their brand are protected.

What innovations in safety are you most excited about, and what concerns do you have for the future of safety?
The future of risk management is progressing rapidly, with new developments hitting the market every month. It’s an amazing and exciting time to be part of the industry! Currently, I’m interested in the power of analytics to predict unfavorable events and prevent them from occurring. Our system enables companies to track trends in their supply chain. Through intuitive reporting tools, data visualization, and in-application modeling, they receive pragmatic data points that are then used to make informed and efficient business decisions.

As these analytics and automation advancements continue, businesses will gain unparalleled insights into every aspect of their supply chain, from far-reaching overviews of compliance all the way down to the compliance level of individual workers. Not only that, but at the same time this increase in data will give them the power to implement real changes that make a difference. While the ability to protect and manage your supply chain from anywhere in the world is already reality, better automation and analytics will make it a household item for companies.

My main message is one of encouragement. Implementing and optimizing new technology into existing programs will always be an adjustment, but it’s worth the effort. Our technological daydreams from 20 years ago are simple children’s playthings today. This progress was only made because people were willing to look past what has always been done and instead see what could be possible. Strategically and continuously doing so, regarding technology adaptation, will not only strengthen your business but sustain it through the natural rises and falls as well.

One of best ways to optimize technology is to choose platforms that are adaptable to your specific needs. Many companies set themselves at a disadvantage by choosing a “one-size-fits-all” solution. On paper these appear nice, but the truth is you end up paying more for services that don’t benefit you. And when it comes time to adapt, your technology is often the issue that’s lacking. Here at Avetta, our clients are able to configure our platform to their specific needs. Your business and supply chain are unique, so your solution should be too.

As always, you should look to the people who are going to be using the technology on regular basis. As an executive it’s easy to mandate what systems will be used further down the line. However, if the individuals tasked with using the program aren’t supportive or compliant with these requests, the technology will never be leveraged to its full extent. That’s one of the reasons why we spend so much time here at Avetta ensuring that the contractors and suppliers using our platform find value in it as well. Through our unique Marketplace and Insurance offerings these contractors get discounts on products they already use simply for being our customer—no extra charge. When it comes to creating and optimizing a world-class, technological platform, we look at the customer experience from the entire operational standpoint. This has helped us successfully help businesses reduce their Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR) without disrupting their existing supply chains.

What advice do you have for safety professionals looking to optimize their use of technology within their programs?
Decisions for more details on how Avetta and BROWZ joined forces to become a world leader in supply chain risk management.

Check out our Keeping Up section in this issue of Safety
To learn more, visit www.avetta.com.
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