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PS: Your company, ATI Worksite Solutions, is working on the safety-health connection. Why is it so important to integrate wellness and employee well-being with occupational safety?

Chet: I was a longtime client of ATI when I was working as an OSH professional for various organizations. I came to realize that the company has a unique capability. ATI’s athletic trainers in the industrial environment use a mind-set of keeping the athlete on the field as long as you safely can, and understanding the human body and its recovery and recuperation processes, to continue the mission of the team, or in our case, the client, the industry.

All of that really works with a relationship-building process, which is applicable to the world of safety. As safety professionals, we build relationships with those whom we are charged to protect. As a safety person at the site level, you know you are a team member—these are your coworkers and friends, and you want to help them.

However, as companies have gotten leaner it can be difficult for OSH professionals to spend the time we would like to on the floor talking to employees and continuing that relationship. In a sense, the athletic trainers become our surrogates. These conversation encounters are not just about work, they also are about how you feel in general. We care about workers and want to know if we can help in any way. That’s the connection. We help with musculoskeletal activities, we talk about acute injury prevention, and we have the ability as healthcare providers to counsel workers on lifestyle and well-being. It is a powerful combination.

Much of what we do involves early reporting. An early reporting culture is crucial. It is what OSH people think of as a proactive approach. Preventing injuries is much more efficient than dealing with them after they happen. As OSH professionals, we are attuned to prevent such activities. It is a key part of what we deliver to clients.

PS: What has your ASSE involvement meant to your career?

Chet: I started with ASSE when I was an industrial safety student at Marshall University. My professor mentioned it and told me I should get involved with the local ASSE student section. He said I would be able to interface with some veterans who would teach me things that teachers do not have time to cover. I got involved and immediately met practicing professionals. They were accepting to my fellow stu-

dents and me. I look back on those early years as an ASSE student member and think about how much I really learned from those guys outside the classroom.

ASSE brings such great access to knowledge. And I really enjoy networking with other OSH professionals. That is what drew me to the profession to begin with—how open and supportive my peers were. They want to protect their people and yours. I love that sense of teamwork and commitment. ASSE is a vehicle to stay engaged in the OSH community. As I have matured as a professional, I’ve also been able to share the things that are particularly useful with younger or other professionals.

PS: You are part of the aviation community. Has becoming a pilot influenced your approach to OSH? What lessons learned have you been able to apply?

Chet: I love to fly. It is personally rewarding and a great laboratory for safety. The aerospace environment is intolerant of mistakes. Unlike driving a car, where if you do something wrong you can be involved in an incident, but if the car stalls you just stop on the side of the road and get out. If the airplane stalls, there’s nothing holding you up except the thrust and the lift from the wing. From the Wright brothers on, there has been an understanding that risk is part of the deal when you fly airplanes. Pilots have to be an excellent risk manager. Ultimately, we are managing risk in the air. When I am flying I am applying safety to keep my passengers safe—and it is really fun to fly planes, too.

PS: What was the impetus of starting your blog, *LeadingEHS*, and what are some takeaways you hope it gives readers?

Chet: The blog started a few years ago when I was thinking about social media. I saw the value in creating something and sharing knowledge—taking the lessons learned and showing how they can be applied. The blog is a workbench where I try to work out new ideas and innovations that I think are useful for our profession. Some ideas I have discussed there I have applied with clients or in my flying. Other ideas are more theoretical and I’m just throwing them out there hoping other professionals will comment. I love to have conversations; my goal is to spur new ideas.

To me, the quest for knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge is really the heart of safety, and I think that the opportunity to talk with others and engage in a meaningful discussion is so exciting. That sharing of knowledge is such a key part of what we do. That is really what drives me in the end—new ideas and finding a way to apply them for a different outcome. That outcome is protecting people to the greatest extent.

Chet Brandon, CSP, CHMM, is corporate safety officer and vice president of operations at ATI Worksite Solutions. He has experience in process industries (chemical, metals and glass) and manufacturing operations (automotive, aerospace and electronics). Brandon is a professional member of ASSE and is President-Elect of the Central Indiana Chapter.