

The First 90 Days

Jeff Roycroft of the Billington Group

Q&A conducted by Sophia Darwin



WELCOME

At HSE Recruitment Network we work to develop long lasting relationships with our candidates and clients alike, and nothing delights us more than seeing someone's career progression and success.

Sophia had the absolute pleasure of interviewing Jeff Roycroft, who she placed in the newly appointed Director of Health, Safety and Risk for the Billington Group, to discuss and reflect on his first 90 days in the business.

The Billington Group is a proudly family-owned business, established in 1858, and today operates as a fast-paced and forward-thinking organisation. Made up of four businesses across the UK, it specialises in food production and agriculture through two main divisions. With a workforce of over 1,800 people, the Group continues to grow while staying true to its values and long-standing heritage.

This was a newly created role within the business to strategically and commercially align Health, Safety and Risk; bringing all sites together under one practical and realistic strategy and long-term plan. Aligned with The Billington Group's core value of putting people first, the role is key to ensuring that current and emerging risks are both mitigated and planned for, enabling the business to be future fit and raise the bar across Health, Safety and Risk.

Jeff has 30 years' experience as a Health and Safety professional, and this is his second time operating at Director level. He is experienced, self-aware and a person who likes to learn and reflect at key points during his career. His approach is people centric, he is a strong leader, likes to coach and pull people towards HS&R, not push. He leans on his ability to influence and persuade the workforce and stakeholders to find common ground, sharing stories of his experience along the way.

What were your top priorities and goals when you started your first 90 days as Health, Safety and Risk Director?

"My preparations began as soon as I accepted the job offer as it was important to me to "hit the ground running" when I started in January. I arranged a meeting with my new Line Manager in December to align on expectations for my first three months in the role and visited one of our mills where I met some of my key stakeholders before my start date. I like to proactively build relationships and connect with the right people early on. This allows me to be visible, encourage approachability and helps to accelerate and embed improvements from the get-go. After these meetings, I incorporated stakeholder expectations into an onboarding plan with milestones to check progress during my first three months.

I wanted to have clarity over the full organisational structure across the two divisions, and I went through the Company organogram to identify a complete network of colleagues, and I arranged introduction calls to explain the scope of our respective roles to each other. This helped me establish communication links and positive interactions between me and the wider business.

My 90-day plan was based on what I presented at my final stage interview which comprised:

1. Identify areas of existing good performance (to build on)
2. Determine opportunities for improvements (to achieve superior performance)
3. Prepare a plan to deliver the improvements over the next 12 months
4. All of the above was submitted as an evaluation report which I submitted to my manager for approval when I had completed 90 days with the Company."

Can you walk me through your 30-60 90-day plan and how did you structure your approach to safety management?

"I structured my approach around reviewing performance, identifying key priorities, assessing skills and then suggesting an improvement plan. This involved 46 meetings with key people in the business, the roll out of 7 SHE questionnaires and I also analysed the safety data from 2018 /19 to present to calculate lost-time injury trends. This process highlighted what was going well but also opportunities to manage SHE even better. During this consultation period, I expanded the Group Health & Safety Committee (called the STAR Team) to include senior leadership and address all areas of operational risk. There was a meeting of the STAR Team members in June where we prepared vision and mission statements for the Team and agreed responsibilities and timelines for the 12-month plan.

The vision statement is to provide "a safer, more sustainable environment – where people feel protected, inspired and empowered every day".

During the conference we identified a requirement for 10 new company SHE standards to be rolled out across the Group. Each standard was allocated a specific owner, and I set up meetings with each of them to prepare the documents. When complete, the standards will form the basis of a Group SHE audit of risk assessment, legal compliance, thermography, performance indicators to name a few."

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced during this period; and how did you overcome them?

"The main challenge was learning about the agriculture side of the business. The operations side was quite straightforward as this was made up of three feed mills. However, the rest of the business included machinery, retail and fuel across 42 smaller retail outlets, workshops and fuel depots. Luckily, I found the Head of HSE for agriculture had a really good structure in place and I made sure I spent lots of time with him early on to understand the associated risks and controls."

How did you engage the employees and leadership team to gain buy in for your safety initiatives?

"My approach is to continue to empower the employees and leadership team, giving them a voice, allowing them to own safety, take accountability, drive HS&R with enthusiasm and ask open questions.

I like to believe I am a good communicator, and I like to coach and guide people as well as gaining commitment from others. I like to give others the opportunity to take the lead, and I provide support to help them to develop. I want to each member of the STAR Team to feel confident to make suggestions and share their opinions."

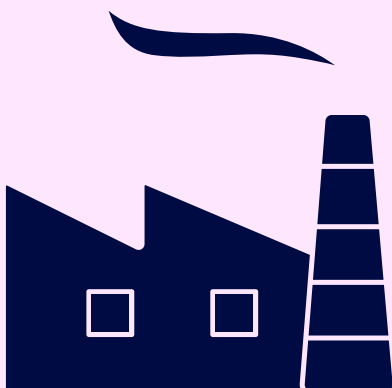




Based on your experience so far, what are your next steps and long-term vision for improving safety?

“We have already started to implement the 90-day plan, and the lost-time injury rate has started to fall. We have signed a contract with a company to provide a robust SHE management software which will help us manage data, identify trends and track performance. We will also roll out a standardised program of thermographic inspection of electrical cabinets and a Group SHE Compliance Lead has been appointed to assist me from 1st September.

The next STAR Conference will take place in March which will focus on formulation of a 10-year SHE strategy to align with the longer-term needs of the business. “



Book recommendations:

- “The First 90 Days” by Michael Watkins – great insights to help prepare for new roles
- “Start With Why” by Simon Sinek – helps clarify purpose and inspire others to follow you
- “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People” by Stephen Covey – a management classic which was referenced by Vernon Bradley (of Dupont) when formulating the “Bradley Curve”.

“A huge thank you to Jeff, it has been really interesting to reflect on your first 90 days with you. It is lovely to hear you are settling in well and thoroughly enjoying your new role! You have achieved so much in such a short period of time and excited to see what the future holds.

If you have any questions for Jeff or myself; or if you would personally be interested in featuring in our next blog highlighting your experience, new journey or career success; please do reach out to me directly.”

- Sophia Darwin

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