



IN SAFE HANDS

RUSSELL SLACK WAS RECENTLY APPOINTED TO THE IIRSM BOARD OF GOVERNORS. WE ASKED HIM TO GIVE MEMBERS AN INSIGHT INTO HIS CAREER.

My first job was in the textile and allied industries in 1966, as a Personnel Assistant. A redundancy programme four years later meant I was sent to be trained as an Industrial Training Officer. On my return to Northern Ireland, I was side-tracked into health and safety. An accident had just occurred, something that unfortunately took place on a regular

basis in the textile sector in those days, and the previous health and safety manager had left the company. Although I'd had very little health and safety training, I was asked to investigate the accident. It was to be the start of a long, enjoyable and challenging career as a safety professional, while also integrating my HR and training skills.



COMMENDATIONS

During the past 41 years, my knowledge and experience of health and safety has crossed many different industrial sectors and commerce while also operating throughout the UK and Ireland.

I have also operated in the Middle East, where not many of the industrial sectors (apart from the oil industry) previously had any form of health and safety in place. Through my involvement on behalf of City and Guilds with the introduction of NVQs into Oman, I was able to bring a level of health and safety management to part of the textile and clothing sector which was not previously known within the area. This was achieved with the permission of the Omani Ministry of Labour. As a result of working in partnership, my centres were all awarded the highest commendation by the Adult Learning Inspectorate. This

grade would be a cause for celebration by any college in the UK, but it was a remarkable achievement for centres in Oman, where there was limited experience of competence-based vocational education.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Being a rare individual who came into the health and safety profession through HR and training, my background has allowed me to think "outside the box". In days gone by, health and safety tended to sit in a box on its own; however, whatever you do from a health and safety perspective can impact other departments and employees within an organisation. I believe health and safety should not sit in a box of its own – it's a framework, which every aspect of the organisation should fit in to.

While working as Group HSE Training Manager for Lamont Holdings Plc, a firm which operated across a number of industrial sectors, I was part of a programme to help change and develop the safety culture, while also striving to reduce accidents and insurance premiums which were at an unacceptable level.

As a direct result of this successful programme, one of the manufacturing divisions went on to be one of the national winners of the European Week for Safety in 2001. I was also actively involved with the management of BFF Nonwovens when, for a second time, it achieved a National Winners place during the 2003 campaign.

PROUD TO BE A PART OF IIRSM

Following redundancy in 2002, I started ASK UZ Ltd, a consultancy for the provision of business services in both health and safety risk management and HR.

I became a member of IIRSM in October 1983, and I believe the Institute has a lot to offer the health and safety profession, both nationally and internationally. As I reach the mature stages of my career, I see it as giving something back to the industry. I am proud to be a Board member of IIRSM and look forward to assisting in and taking a constructive role with its ongoing development.