



Words of wisdom from a health and safety leader

IHSA's Doug Heintz reflects on a work life well spent.

Doug Heintz started his career in the transportation sector more than 30 years ago. He began focusing on improving industry safety training not long after—and eventually joined the Transportation Health and Safety Association of Ontario (THSAO), an IHSA legacy organization, in 2004. Doug recently sat down with *IHSA Health and Safety Magazine* to discuss the lessons he's learned throughout his career as well as the challenges that still need to be addressed.

Q Can you share a bit about your career?

A I began my journey with Shantz Coach Lines, a school bus company, in 1991 as the parts guy. I managed the shop operations for a time, overseeing approximately 175 buses travelling to and from different areas, including Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge, and extending up to Wellesley, Guelph, and Aberfoyle. After several years, I began to ask myself, “Do I want to do this for the rest of my life?” So I went to see a career counsellor, and my “aha moment” came when he posed the right questions that revealed my interests in training and teaching. He told me I would need to attend teachers college, that I'd be off work for this long, and it was going to cost me this much. So I found an adult education program through Brock University that was being taught in the evenings at Conestoga College in Kitchener, which led me to the training aspect of the field.

I then decided to have an open conversation with my employer about having gone to see a career counsellor, unaware that the company was also considering a transition. Two weeks later, my employer emailed me asking where I saw myself with the company in five years. That was how the conversation about training with Shantz started.

In the spring of 1999, the company enrolled me in a program called PRIDE: Professional Instruction and Driver Education, which is recognized by the Ministry of Transportation and enables you to become a signing authority. By September of that year, I became a signing authority for Shantz and began focusing on safety and training from that moment onward.

Having open and honest conversations with your employer is really important so that they know where you stand and how they can help you—as well as how you can help them in return.

Q When you became IHSA's Manager for Health and Safety Education in 2015, what insights or challenges did you discover regarding the other industries we serve—construction, aggregates, and electrical utilities?

A I'm truly impressed by the committed safety professionals in both sectors who maintain high standards for themselves, their companies, and their teams. We observe this in various forms; the Labour Management Network, for instance. It's impressive to see so many individuals who are passionate about health and safety, who want to be part of the training process, and who have the mindset of, “How do we make our industries and workplaces better for everybody?”

I also think that the people who work for utilities are pretty impressive—given the type of work they do, how hard it is, the conditions they have to work in to get our power back on, and the long list of rules they have to follow to make sure their work is safe.

Q What courses did you particularly enjoy teaching?

A The number-one program would be *Foundations of Facilitating, Training, and Learning* (FFTL). An earlier version was called *Principles of Effective Training* (POET). Delivering the course was an absolute joy, especially since many participants, particularly from the THSAO days, were interested in delivering a THSAO program—whether it was related to defensive driving, commercial lift trucks, or the transportation of dangerous goods. They had to complete the FFTL course first to qualify for the trainer role. Some of the most enjoyable moments were watching new participants excel in their first presentations, asking questions, and involving others. Even those who were initially hesitant or fearful gained confidence over the course of the training.

Q Is there a similarity between training and managing?

A At the school bus company I worked at early on in my training days, the head trainer said to me, “All you have to remember is involve the participants in the work, because then they are a part of their learning and that will help to increase their confidence.” I think that that applies whether you’re in a training situation or interacting with colleagues. It’s important to say: help me understand what you think you should do and how do I support you in that?

Q What notable improvements have you observed over the past 25 years?

A I appreciate the direction IHSA is taking with its recent campaigns. I especially think the *Keep Your Promise* campaign delivers a straightforward yet powerful message. For over 25 years, I’ve contemplated the psychology of safety and why we do the things we do. The KYP campaign makes you think about safety differently: this isn’t just about me; it’s about me keeping my promise to other people. And the follow-up campaign, *See Something, Say Something*, demonstrates the importance of speaking up and being able to say, “Hey, I am telling on somebody and maybe I’ll get them in trouble, but if I don’t do that, what are the potential ramifications, and would I be okay living with that if something happened?” So I appreciate the remarkable new ways we’re getting everyone to think about health and safety.



Q If you had one wish when it comes to occupational health and safety in Ontario, what would it be?

A I would write a new law that states you don’t have to write legislation to sound like legislation. I would advocate for legislation that the average worker can understand. Legislation is written by lawyers for lawyers, making it challenging for the average person to really comprehend the intended message. Once you’ve been around legislation for a period of time, whether it’s in a joint health and safety committee or your regular job, it becomes easier and there is a clearer understanding. However, for someone new to a health and safety role, or someone who’s looking to start a small business and do the right thing but who is unfamiliar with legislation and all the terminology, it’s much more difficult.

Q Any final thoughts?

A Over the course of my career, I’ve had the pleasure of working with many wonderful people, and I hope that I somehow played a small part in their growth and development. I’ve had the great privilege of working alongside truly remarkable individuals. ■