

Time 00.00

Intro: Welcome to the safety podcast with your host Richard Collins.

Richard Collins: Hi. Welcome to the podcast. I'm your host Richard Collins. I'd like to introduce our first guest on the safety podcast. His name is Jack Cornick, he leads up the health and safety team at Allen & York. He's recently come off a round table discussion on the state of the industry with IOSH. I'm delighted to have Jack on the show as our first guest. He really takes an enthusiastic and proactive approach to understanding the demands of different sectors to help you make the right decisions and progress your career.

Richard Collins: He really wants to go above and beyond to understand what these different demands mean for you as a candidate. Okay, and let's go and see what he has to say. Jack Cornick, welcome to the safety podcast it's our first episode and you're the first guest, so welcome to the show and thanks very much for coming along.

Jack Cornick: Thanks Richard. It's a privilege to be talking to you and thanks ever so much for having me.

Richard Collins: Not a problem, so the issue or the topic that we're going to address today is how to progress your health and safety career. This is something, obviously, that both of us have a bit of an exposure to, yourself being a recruitment manager and myself being a health and safety professional. Hopefully we can have a little bit of a chat and give people some insights into the things that might help them progress quicker in their career and look at some of the pitfalls and how they might overcome them as well. Kicking off then, let's let people know a little bit about your background then, Jack.

Jack Cornick: I've been recruiting now for three years in a variety of different areas. I joined Allen & York in 2016 into their health and safety team which has been running now for circa, 20 years. Within about six months, I've become a manager of a team and I head up a team of five people who look across the health and safety space, corporate areas, construction, CDM and others as well in addition to that, so I've been doing that now for around 18 months to two years, really enjoying it and it's a great sector work in as well and I think it's going to be really exciting and an evolutionary period so it's a great time to be recruiting.

Richard Collins: Great Jack, so let's dig in to some of the issues that we had discussed on this topic and where I think you can add a lot of value for people that are listening. There's a lot of people out there obviously trying to break into the health safety and environmental space, what, from your experience, have you seen to be the biggest challenges or obstacles for people just even getting into their first safety jobs from the get go.

Jack Cornick: What I tend to see quite a bit of is people moving from, I suppose, mid level management roles into health and safety positions, either through a keen

Time 02:50

interest or a certain company looking to push them into that sort of position. So, for example, in manufacturing, it's quite common to see production managers or technical managers moving into health and safety positions.

Jack Cornick: What that means is that there's a lot of people coming through who are professionally qualified, graduated just on maybe their IOSH general certificate or equivalent who struggle to break into the market because those opportunities have been dominated by people who are maybe already within those companies who are looking to transfer, so I suppose what we see is that not a lack of opportunity, but I think there's maybe a few opportunities at the assistant or graduate level that may present themselves and that can be a bit of an obstacle to people who maybe have just studied a health and safety degree, or as I've said, have just done their general certificate and they're looking for that first role, so that's something we see quite a lot of and again, I suppose location can add to that, if you're in rural areas or on the outskirts of the UK, then that can be an even bigger problem than if you're based in, perhaps London or Manchester or many of the central areas.

Richard Collins: Yeah. Absolutely. It's interesting that you should say that people even trying to get in at the lower level jobs, might struggle. Is there anything there then that you would say to them to try and compete with those that are coming from the more technical, the production managers, maybe site managers in construction and so forth? Is there anything that they might be able to do that would give them a bit of an edge or even a shout in to get an interview or to get offered a job?

Jack Cornick: Of course, so having a big network is really, really important. Going to things like your local IOSH branches and those meets, networking with practitioners who are already in that space is really, really important. I think, sometimes within safety, is a case of who you know rather than what you know and I think there will be many people with similar stories, so networking and becoming present on social media, I think is really important. It's amazing how many people are now using LinkedIn and have a big media presence on there, so networking would be one. Secondly would be to get any hands on experience that's available to you within the health and safety arena.

Jack Cornick: I see a lot of people who do great work in voluntary roles or organizations in their local community, whether that's doing a few risk assessments for their local church or community centers to help them out and whether that's going to do some hands on voluntary work with family or friends, just to get some exposure and some hands on and demonstrable experience is also really, really useful, but the most important thing for people is perseverance. Maybe my first or initial comments sounded quite pessimistic in that there's a lack of opportunity. I think that's wrong, there are opportunities for people out there, but you have to be persistent and you have to really work hard to get into those and if you do, those opportunities will present themselves eventually.

Time 06:00

Richard Collins: Yeah, I got you. You really have to show that you want that, I guess and that's something that I actually written a short article on safety.co.uk regarding how to become a health and safety officer, just to differentiate yourself. You have to involve in things, gets those little nuggets of experience, whether it be in an existing role that offers you an opportunity to help with ... to be a fire warden or a first aider or something like that, that you have to actually grasp those and those little bits and pieces add up to help you get noticed and help you demonstrate that you really want to get into the industry I guess.

Richard Collins: I noticed on social media recently a little bit of a debate between a recruiter and some, I suppose HSE professionals and others. I think the recruiter had said that people shouldn't apply for the jobs that they aren't qualified for and that started a bit of an argument and healthy debate.

Richard Collins: It was interesting for me I just wondered, some of the guys coming back were saying, "Well, the description in the jobs is unrealistic and the people don't exist and then, as well as that, that sometimes equipment companies are guilty of fishing for the best candidates, but whenever suitable candidates would contact them or apply for the jobs, that they won't even acknowledge that they've contacted them or give them any feedback as to what they're doing wrong.

Richard Collins: Obviously, with your experience, what would your take on that be?

Jack Cornick: It's a common obstacle or issue across, not only the health and safety market, but I suppose many, I think that can be applied, certainly with regards to job descriptions. I would tend to agree. I think there are a lot of people out there, maybe even including myself who are guilty of fluffing up job advertisements, making them sound, really interesting opportunities and part of the role is to gain interest in those roles. What we have to remember is that those job descriptions are put together by a client or an organization as a list of ideals and it's really almost the perfect candidate and to be honest with you, on 95% of occasions, that perfect candidate doesn't exist. There's no usually that one person that ticks every one those boxes, so I think we all have to start being a bit more realistic about those boxes, so I think we all have to start being a bit more realistic about that, and my job as a recruitment consultant might be to talk to clients and ensure they are being realistic about what they're looking for within the market and whether that exists.

Jack Cornick: That's one thing for people to bear in mind, and I'm always a big advocate of if you match, or if you think you match, 60-70% of those skills that are being advertised, don't hesitate to apply for that role and start talking to people, because I had a great conversation with a gentleman the other day and he said, "Funny enough, the jobs that I often apply for are not the ones that I get, but the relationships I build as a result, mean I get the right role at the end of it, so sometimes even if that role might not be right, the opportunity to have a conversation with someone can sometimes open a door, moving onto, I

Time 09:12

suppose that the feedback comment and I suppose, not getting back to people with adequate feedback is a really difficult one and it's hard to comment, I suppose, given that every recruitment company and even those internal recruitment teams within larger organizations are very different in terms of the way they operate to give people, I suppose, an idea about what it's like.

Jack Cornick: On average, I will receive 20 to 30 applications per day within my inbox for any one of my roles that I'm advertising at that time, given time constraints and other things, it's very difficult to get back to every single one of those people, but I'll do my best either by email or by LinkedIn or by phone if possible or I text it to get back to them to either arrange a follow up conversation or pass on feedback, but there may be many occasions where roles are receiving a hundred applications and it's very, very difficult to get back to every single person, so I'm not a big advocate of it and I certainly, as a general rule of thumb, will try and get back to everyone, but as I said, it's very difficult to comment on other recruitment company practices, and again, in an ideal world, you want everyone to get feedback on their applications on every interview, because if they're not getting the role that they've applied for, at least they can get some value from the process and take that forward with them into other processes to ensure that they're successful the next time round.

Richard Collins: Yeah. I think that's a very important point for people to give them encouragement that they're actually pushing forward in the right direction and this is why it's so valuable for you to come on and give us your view on it. Something else that you touched on there that was very important was the fact that the perfect candidate often doesn't exist, if not never exists and that people should not be put off by these job descriptions that are so lengthy and difficult to meet. That 60 to 70 percent rule seems like a pretty cool way to look at it, and I think people will like to hear that and may give them confidence to go forward and apply for those roles that they maybe at the moment feel are off limits.

Jack Cornick: I think so, and I think for people, don't just send your CV, follow up with a call, follow up with some form of correspondence, and as I said, the great thing is, is even if that role doesn't turn out to be right for whatever reason, you've made a contact within the industry who you can guarantee that within the next six months is going to have something maybe a bit more suitable, so regardless of what comes from it, either short term or long term, it's something that's good practice to do.

Jack Cornick: I think one other comment to make on it is, I suppose now a lot of the recruitment teams are moving in house. This is very regular for large organizations to have big teams of internal recruiters rather than outsourcing their recruitment requirements, someone like myself, they will do it for niche or

Time 12.02

specialist roles that they're struggling with, but in those large companies again, where they're multi disciplinary, what you have to bear in mind is that some people will be not only recruiting health and safety professionals into that organization, if you say Unilever for example, that person will also be recruiting for, I don't know, environmental professionals, sustainability professionals, they may also be recruiting for general managers or site managers and other leadership roles, so another thing to bear in mind is that the person that's looking at your CV is not always necessarily a specialist, health and safety recruitment professional, or a technical health and safety specialist, so that's something to bear in mind when making those applications as well.

Jack Cornick: Bear in mind the person's that having a look at your CV might not always know 100% what they're looking for and they may just go on certain keywords or etc.

Richard Collins: Yeah, I think that's another very important point. I touched on that and some advice I gave on CVs myself in terms of importance that you just said of hitting the right keywords as bad as that maybe sounds, in terms of the job description, there's certain, obviously, essential criteria that must be met and then as you say, if you're forwarding your CV to someone who isn't a specialist in the area, they don't understand the technical skills are that are required for the job necessarily and would you say, Jack, that you would need to really get specific on how your skills apply to the job role you're actually applying for rather than giving them something that's more broad based in terms of the actually CV and so forth?

Jack Cornick: Of course. I think in an ideal world, you'd want to tailor your CV to every opportunity that you're applying for. I appreciate that some people's circumstances dictate that they can't necessarily do that. If you're looking for work immediately due to redundancy or other reasons and you're looking for a role urgently, then you may be applying for 15 to 20 roles a day, in which case it's very difficult to take the time to tailor your CV to every single one of those roles, so I think just being aware of your end user is really, really important and whether that's by just putting together a small cover note just to cover any areas that may be missing from your CV or, again, following that CV up with a telephone call, is really, really important to add some context.

Jack Cornick: There's other things that people do above and beyond to show willing, but also to show relevant skills within that area, so again, in an ideal world, you tailor it for every single one, but it's not always possible.

Richard Collins: No, definitely. I definitely think that is the case. I guess, if someone really wants to go for a role that they should devote the time to make themselves stand out from the crowd and as you've already said, a lot of the times now, necessity is that, they really need to do it as opposed to ... it's not really an option as much as something they must do.

Time 14:50

Jack Cornick: It comes to the fact that there may be 20-30 other applicants to that role that you're applying for and you want to stand out. Most companies will interview five to six people at the first stage for a role, so you want to be in that top percentage and the way to do that is to stand out on that CV. That's what gets you in front of organizations, so be conscious of that as well as it's a competitive marketplace and lots of people are applying for the same role, so you have to make yourself stand out with that early stage.

Richard Collins: Yeah, it's a competitive market space, as you've just said. I think you touched on that in your recent round table with IOSH and you did mention soft skills being a very important aspect of any HSE professional skill set. Could you give a wee bit of a review of what you were talking about there and how someone who's aspiring to get into the industry or is looking to actually progress their career in the industry in what is becoming more and more competitive for each of us, can actually do to stand out from the crowd?

Jack Cornick: Soft skills, I'm talking about engagement, communication, the ability to adapt to circumstance within a given organization. The company may look for a safety manager who can work with the boards, but equally work with the shop floor and work with people at a slightly lower level as well and so, companies are now looking for someone who can adapt to that role and someone who can really engage the workforce at all levels. It's quite difficult to highlight your soft skills on a CV. It's usually something that is discussed and spoken about at the interview stage. It's a skill that comes across in that face to face environment, however, there are some things that people can do on their CVs, to highlight that skill set.

Jack Cornick: One of those would be any opportunities or experience that you have had working in multi-discipline teams or diverse teams or large teams and any exposure you have had to communicating across a diverse platform and also the results that you got as a result of that, so things like training, experience training large groups of people and the feedback you got is great and you want to list those under your roles and responsibilities within that.

Jack Cornick: As I said don't forget to mention your key achievements as a result. That would be, one, talk about those teams that you've worked with and the cross functions as well. I think secondly, any qualifications that you can look at to enhance your skill set within that area so there are specific management qualifications that people can go away and do to highlight their skill set in that area when moving into those sorts of positions, so as I said, it's something that most people would discuss or come across at that face to face interview stage.

Jack Cornick: However, there are small things you can do on your CV like highlighting key experience or specific qualifications that can highlight that skill set to employers.

Time 17:50

Richard Collins: Okay, I think something that we mustn't forget here is just not everyone has good examples as you were saying. Key studies of working with big teams and organizations and so forth and a question I think would be valuable to the audience to answer and you may or may not be able to answer it would be, for someone who hasn't got those workplace experiences to demonstrate, what sort of examples would you encourage them to use apart from that? Maybe would it be through their education or would it be through just other activities or what would your take be on that?

Jack Cornick: I think that's a really key point actually Richard, and one that I think we shouldn't forget is that actually things like voluntary experience or other experience in previous roles where you may have that experience is of equal importance, of any experience doing it in a health and safety environment. So, don't forget to highlight that and I think there's a lot of people I can see now who negate in their CV about what they do outside of work, and I think if you remember a sports team, a successful sports team, any sports team for example, football, cricket, where there's 10, 15 players on a pitch and you're communicating with those people on a weekly basis and I suppose, a pressurized environment, that that is also of equal importance, so that's one thing that people put on their CV and don't hesitate to highlight to show skill set in that area. It doesn't necessarily have to come from a health and safety environment.

Jack Cornick: I think another thing that people can do is, as I said, when you're making these applications, don't hesitate to pick up the phone and talk to someone because a CV at the end of the day is just a piece of paper and it doesn't demonstrate your whole personality and the way you operate, so picking up the phone and showing professionalism in that face to face communication is really important if you can get a face to face meeting, then great, that's your platform to move forward.

Richard Collins: That's a good point to move on to the next thing that I want to ask you about and it's just something I was thinking about after some discussion we had had about this topic. In terms of being able to demonstrate your personality and so forth, with the emergence of social media, as you've already touched on previously, I actually, myself, I'll be honest, went off social media for quite some time. I stopped using Facebook. I got disenchanted with it. I was fed up with it. I was little bit sick of living it, the same old stuff over and over again, but I've started to get back into using LinkedIn and I think from a professional point of view, it can be very useful platform, so, with that said, and with watching what other people are doing, is this whole emergence of social media from a professional point of view, are we seeing the emergence of the need for a personal brand to be out there in the world for employers to see?

Richard Collins: I've seen a lot of examples and heard a lot of people talking about be careful what you put on social media, be careful what you put on Facebook, be careful

Time 21:00

what you do in this or that. I would rather see people being themselves personally, but obviously sometimes that can be detrimental.

Richard Collins: In terms of giving people guidance on how they can use their personal brand or build their personal brand, do you think that's an important thing now?

Jack Cornick: I 100% believe so. If I look at my LinkedIn network for example, it's made up of around about 7000 people and I would say at least 4000 of those are within the health and safety sector. It's a big audience that you can reach very, very easily and spread your message I suppose. I think your point about the risks associated with it, you have to be careful what you post. You want to be yourself, but I would advocate people remaining professional on there and not trying to be too controversial. I think what you have to remember is that where most people now have that LinkedIn platform, it's quite easy to go through your history of what you've written and what you've commented on and you can gauge someone's personality quite easy from that.

Jack Cornick: Having said that, I've seen some people do some really positive things through LinkedIn, building those personal brands, spreading a specific message and I think that can work really, really well and especially when it comes to employability. If you can build a reputation on social media or a knowledge base within a certain area, then that's only going ... if a certain role comes up, sometimes that enhances your employability within that area, so I think it can be a really good platform when you use it correctly.

Jack Cornick: There's a lot of people that now use it to recruit and also just to spread the message of what they're doing on a daily basis and I think that's great when it comes to the market in general, because people can share good practice. They can share what's going on within their teams, so I think as long as you're using it to spread out a positive message, then that's fantastic and I've seen a lot of people use it to great success.

Richard Collins: Yeah, absolutely. I think it's a great point and as you say, to use it in a positive way, and to promote positive debate and healthy debate is always good as well, looking at issues in the industry and so forth. Obviously, you have to be professional, it goes without saying, and conducting yourself in the right manner. It's not just LinkedIn that you have to ... you should be doing that on so, hopefully for most people that are listening and people that are serious about progressing their careers, that I think it shouldn't be too difficult for them to remain professional from my perspective.

Richard Collins: I think putting a bit of your own personality into it definitely can be a positive thing and differentiate you from everybody else as well.

Time: 23:41

Jack Cornick: Yeah, it's a great place for people to put together their portfolio of work, so people can view that online and now on CVs I'm seeing more and more people share their LinkedIn user name, so again, employers can get on their LinkedIn, so I think yeah, using the right way, it's really positive and I'd advocate, if you are actively seeking a new position, I'd advocate getting on there, because you're building that network. You can connect with some mentors, people who are going to give you great advice, but also people who might have that next opportunity, so I think yeah, social media, when used correctly, from [inaudible 00:24:17] or healthy debate or sharing best practice or looking for new opportunities, is great.

Jack Cornick: I think, I'd say, 80% of the roles that I've recruited over the last 18 months have been through LinkedIn. It's a really great platform and it's a great place for people to get spotted, [inaudible 00:24:32] spotted, especially when it comes to these opportunities.

Richard Collins: Awesome, well, definitely sounds like there's a lot of opportunity out there and as I said, even I can put my hands up and say that I went through a period of avoiding it or not paying much attention to it, but I think it's progressed to such an extent that you just can't ignore it and it's almost probably will get to the point that if you aren't doing it, that that's weird, if you know what I mean, that you're not on it. There is no presence, do you know what I mean?

Jack Cornick: I always find it strange when I go to search someone's name and they're not on there, because like I said there's so many people on there now and I think, within the IOSH, they were speaking about generations and millennials and do they take a different approach to the application process and the answer is, everyone's on social media, everyone's on LinkedIn and everyone's doing the stuff online. Gone are the days you'd send a CV by post or by fax. Everything's being done electronically, so to have that electronic profile and platform is great for people and like you said, I fully advocate it to anyone.

Richard Collins: Okay, Jack. We've covered some really pertinent points there, I think, that people can really use whether they're looking to progress in their career or just starting off in the HSE industry. There's a couple of bits and pieces that I wanted to ask you about as well on this call. One particular question came from someone from abroad. Believe it or not, there are still people looking to get into the UK market, even with all the political strife that's around. Do you see much movement from outside the UK into the UK within the HSE market and if you do, what advice would you give anyone trying to make that breakthrough, or would you encourage them even to come here?

Jack Cornick: I would think there are great opportunities in the UK for health and safety professional. I think we do have recognized high standards and to give an opportunity to work within that is, I think is always great. I do see a lot of people on a daily basis looking for that move from abroad to the UK, whether that's due

Time: 26:22

to family restrictions and wanting to move closer to home maybe, or whether that's due to a desire to work for a specific company in a specific environment. It is something we do see quite regularly.

Jack Cornick: Typically, due to differing standards across the industry and culturally across different countries, it can be quite difficult for some people to make that transition. I do see some people do it really successfully. Case studies of that recently includes people that have come over from abroad and just really embedded themselves with their local markets, so joining their local IOSH branch, getting to network and know the people within that and starting to build a name for themselves there and then getting referrals from people of specific opportunities.

Jack Cornick: I think if you're coming from slightly further afield and you require sponsorship for employments that's something a bit more different altogether because not all organizations are recognized or able to sponsor people to work in the UK without the relevant rights. There is a website that people can go on if they are looking to do this, which has all of the organizations listed on who sponsors people to work within the UK as long as they have the relevant skill set.

Jack Cornick: So, that's something that's worth checking out for people because it will give you an idea about what sort of companies maybe you should target and what sort of companies will hire people from the country that you are applying in.

Jack Cornick: My final point maybe on this would be if there are organizations within the country that you're living or operating in at the moment that have a global footprint, then please take up the opportunity with them to try and get some global exposure. I've had a gentleman recently who I worked with in India who's gone to work for a global consumer goods organization because he was really looking to get exposure to different cultures and different ways of working and his end goal perhaps is to come to the UK and work and working for this organization gets him over to the UK with them doing some auditing, doing some risk assessments, and he'll be based in India, however, he'll be coming over quite regularly, so doing it that way as well is sometimes really, really useful.

Jack Cornick: There are sometimes barriers to entry for people, but there are certainly ways to overcome them and networking, looking online and using the resource that's available to you will certainly help people looking to come to the UK and work in a health and safety environment and the sector as a whole.

Richard Collins: Okay, Jack, what was that website that you mentioned. Do you know offhand?

Jack Cornick: I haven't got it to hand. It's something I can quite happily share with people afterwards if they wanted to get in touch, or we can ...

Time: 29:24

Richard Collins: We can put it in the show notes.

Jack Cornick: Yeah, we can put it in the show notes and I'll get a copy across to you, but yeah, it lists all of the employers within the UK who will sponsor people to come and work with the relevant skill sets. It's a really useful tool for people.

Richard Collins: Excellent. I think the industry itself, there are a lot of opportunities around the globe in different countries and different sectors within the HSE industry and there's a lot of skilled people trying to make their way into the UK and there's a lot of skilled people from the UK trying to make their way in other countries, so I'd really like to continue that help for them if we can and this is a good start, so I'd like to thank you so much for being the first guest on the safety podcast.

Richard Collins: I think you presented a lot of really useful information here for people and hopefully when this goes live, you'll be able to see some questions coming and then you can give them some feedback and some more information on some of the topics we've discussed, so Jack, thanks again, and hopefully we'll see you soon.

Jack Cornick: No worries, pleasure to be the first person to chat to you on this platform and hopefully more to come and as you said, I think if people have got any questions following up from this, don't hesitate to reach out to me and hopefully I can provide some more value and answer any questions.

Richard Collins: Awesome, okay, see you Jack.

Jack Cornick: Thanks Richard.

Richard Collins: So guys, that was our call with Jack Cornick of Allen & York, hope you find that useful. Let's look quickly at the three top areas to take away from that call. The first one, is to make sure that you are not afraid to give a recruitment manager a call, have a chat with them, make yourself known, sometimes using email isn't always the best way to differentiate yourself from the rest of the crowd.

Richard Collins: Number two, is the development of a personal brand. Nowadays, in the digital age you cannot underestimate the value of being able to be transparent across social media such as LinkedIn, to be able to demonstrate what your principles are and what your unique selling point is, are both very important aspects of establishing your brand.

Richard Collins: And lastly, number three, the development of your soft skills. What we were talking about here is your ability to communicate and persuade with different types of audience, whether that be speaking to shop floor workers or trying to pitch to a board of directors in a company. That wraps up the first episode of

the safety podcast. If you enjoyed that, please subscribe at safety.co.uk to get notified whenever the next podcast has been released.

Richard Collins:

Of course, you can always follow us on our twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn page, to find out what episode is coming up next. Thanks for tuning in, we really appreciate it, see you next time.