



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

The Next Era of Safety Leadership

Insights from the 2026 Corporate Listening Tour



Why This Matters Now

Workplace complexity is accelerating

Workforce, technology, and risk are shifting together

Safety can no longer operate as a standalone function

The Forces Shaping Safety Today

01

From Function → Operating System
Safety is no longer a functional checkbox. It is becoming a core business operating system.

02

From Observation → Action
We are moving beyond understanding challenges to operationalizing solutions.

03

From Isolated Issues → Interconnected Systems
Workforce, technology, leadership, and well-being are now deeply interconnected drivers of EHS performance.

What We Heard



The Governance Maturity Threshold



Strategic Integration: Beyond Compliance



The Digital Evolution: AI and Automation



Workforce Transformation and the "Stability Risk"



Mental Health as Foundational Infrastructure

What You Told Us – Pulse Survey Results

Operational reality vs strategic aspiration

Safety professionals want greater influence, but most time is still spent managing risk execution.

Leadership is now the capability gap

Communication, influence, and leadership outweigh technical expertise.

Technology is enabling efficiency, not transformation—yet

The leap from data collection to predictive action remains the biggest opportunity.



1. The Governance Maturity Threshold

What We're Seeing

- Rise of hybrid professionals
- Data → influence
- Leadership gaps

What This Means

- EHS leaders = business partners
- Influence > authority
- Leadership maturity defines outcomes

2. Strategic Integration: Beyond Compliance

What We're Seeing

- Shift to value + operational discipline
- Leading indicators rising
- EHS embedded upstream

What This Means

- EHS = business function
- Data must drive decisions
- Operational excellence includes safety



3. The Digital Evolution: AI and Automation

What We're Seeing

- AI accelerating decision support
- Wearables, predictive tools, data expansion
- Trust + ethics concerns

What This Means

- Technology must **augment, not replace**
- Governance is now a safety control
- Trust is the constraint

4. Workforce Transformation and the "Stability Risk"

What We're Seeing

- Chronic skills gaps
- Rapid onboarding cycles
- Promotion before readiness

What This Means

- Workforce strategy = EHS strategy
- Knowledge transfer is eroding
- Stability drives safety performance



5. Mental Health as Foundational Infrastructure

What We're Seeing

- Stress, fatigue = safety risks
- Psychological safety rising
- Capacity as a control

What This Means

- Well-being = operational risk factor
- Mental health is foundational, not optional



The Big Shift

EHS Performance is Being Redefined

- Systemic
- Data-informed
- Human-centered





Key Tensions

Data vs. action

Technology vs. trust

Workforce gaps vs. expectations

Compliance vs. integration

Technical expertise vs. influence

Connecting the System



Breakout Discussions (25 Minutes)

Participants will join a room based on the topic they selected in the pre-pulse:

What topic would be most valuable for us to focus on during this session?

- Aligning safety with business strategy - Nick Sexton
- Turning data into meaningful insights - Scott Baranowski & Lisa Blotsky
- Addressing workforce and talent challenges - Madeline Demo & Ashok Garlapati
- Using technology effectively and responsibly - Eric Sachleben
- Strengthening leadership and influence - Melissa Schmaltz & Kamil Abiodun

Discussion Prompts:

1. What are the barriers to moving from the current state to the future state in this area?
2. Based on those barriers, what do you, as a safety professional, need to do to help remove them?
3. What role does ASSP play in helping remove these barriers?



Debrief (10 Minutes)



What This Means for ASSP

Remove barriers to action

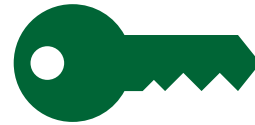
Focus on SIF drivers

Translate insight → systems

ASSP's Standards Based User Groups



Fall Protection



Lockout/Tagout



AI in Safety

Turning standards into practice • Data-driven, collaborative model

Closing out...

- Advisory Group Report and Recommendations presented to the Board of Directors in March
 - Advisory Group input directly impacted this report
- Summary of the Recommendations and Improvements
 - Details sent via email – Next Week
 - Summary overview – Fall 2026 Meeting
- Member at Large recruitment for 2026 – 27 year now open

ASSP's Corporate Listening Tour— Learn More Here



Thank you!

