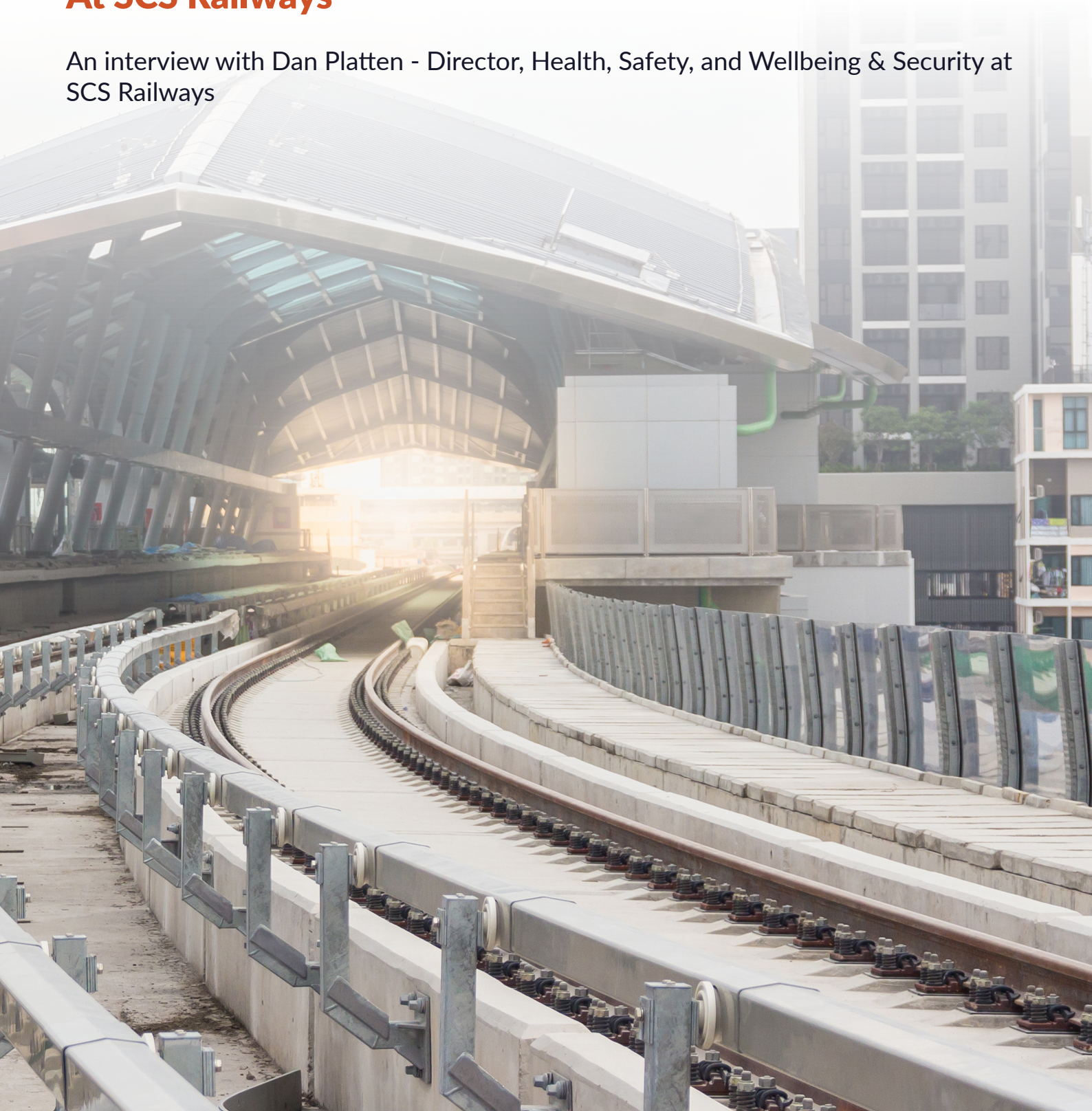

Changing Culture and Operational Excellence At SCS Railways

An interview with Dan Platten - Director, Health, Safety, and Wellbeing & Security at SCS Railways



Dan Platten



Director, Health, Safety, and Well-being & Security at SCS Railways

I started out with a degree in Construction Engineering & Management and a few years after graduating I did my NEBOSH Construction Certificate as continual professional development. From that point I started getting more involved with H&S before permanently moving into H&S a few years after that. In 2011 I moved to Lendlease where I became Head of EHS for their public and uk regions sector – this comprised of many sectors including Ministry Of Defence, Ministry of Justice, Health and Education. It was during this time I learnt the importance and link of operational excellence to health and safety – the 2 go hand in hand. In 2016, on behalf of Skanska, I had the opportunity to oversee Crossrail and their bid for HS2, with me taking up the HSSW Director role when we won in July 2017.

Tell us about Operational Excellence at SCS Railways.

SCS Railways is a joint venture between Skanska, Costain and Strabag so we are very lucky that we can build upon the experiences and culture of three strong companies. Operational excellence is a fundamental part of how each work and with this support, we have been able to establish a project based operational excellence function within SCS Railways which is a fantastic step forward. The SCS Operational Excellence function are responsible for a number of key disciplines that all work together to build our project culture. Lean improvement helps us to remove blockers and improve productivity, innovation helps us to go beyond industry best practice, knowledge and learning helps to improve the way the whole business and wider communic-





ations and collaboration connect our people and help promote excellence. We are also backed by our client HS2 who prides themselves on working to the highest standards but also understand that as a public sector project, it is all about offering value for money and so adopting a Lean approach through continuous improvement is a fundamental way of how we work.

Achieving Operational Excellence is everyone on the projects responsibility, and part of our project success is down to how enabled people are. To help support this, the Operational Excellence team have started a programme for training and development which includes Lean Practitioner cohorts to embed champions within disciplines (including supply chain) along with Lean Leadership training across senior and middle management. General awareness training for Lean, Innovation and Communications will ramp up as we mobilise to site to ensure we can continue to embed our culture of Operational Excellence throughout the project.

At this year's IQPC Operational Excellence & Risk Management Summit you are going to talk about culture change programs. Where do you start when it comes to changing culture?

It always starts at the top – without the most senior people's buy-in you will struggle to get it effective. Culture is often described as “the way we do things around here” so it's important to remember it's not just about rolling out a course and ticking a box – it's about driving lasting behavioral change. One of the key things to successfully achieving this is ensuring that the leaders of the business behave in the right way. Setting out clear pinpointed behaviors helps to measure this but ultimately if the leaders don't live, breathe and believe in these then cultural changes won't happen. It's also important that the business has a clear vision and values as without these then people will not understand the “Why” of rolling out this change.

SCS Railways is a joint venture. How are you integrating multiple cultures to foster an overall culture of operational excellence?

Another key part of SCS Railways is equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and this is what enables us to foster our multiple cultures on so many diverse levels – from organisational cultures to personal cultures. Ensuring everyone has a voice, everyone is listened to and is respected is key.

At SCS Railways, the highest standard of the parent companies becomes our minimum standard and it's this approach that also helps when it comes to selecting different ways of operating.

We also use tools & techniques within our Behavioral safety program to ensure we are successful as well. For example, engaging with the workforce and the end user is key to understanding how they do things – often how we think they do it is so different from how they actually do it.

We also look at predictive behaviors, identifying all of the antecedents that may drive certain behaviors and the consequences we need to put in place to ensure that the behaviors we require happen (like following procedures to ensure operational excellence).

What are some of the biggest challenges you've experienced when it comes to culture change? How did you overcome them?

A lot of the time its challenges from the bottom not the top and often outside of the company. It's ok to focus internally, but if you use subcontractors it's just as important, if not more, that they too are on your journey. This means getting your procurement right and not just being about cheapest price. That said, it can often be the workforce that are the biggest challenge – the “Prisoner” in the room who just wants to be elsewhere and earning money. The key to that is having engaging content and presenters that are able to change people's perceptions. For us, once we can get people to explore and recognise the contradiction of “I know it's not right but I do it anyhow” then our job is done – providing our projects and staff are walking the talk as soon as they step back outside!

In your opinion, what is the most important thing leaders can do to influence company culture?

Quite simply walk the talk and be willing to be called out if you aren't. Be visible, be approachable and most importantly recognise excellence – don't just focus on failure, see it as a learning opportunity where we can improve and grow, to continue on our journey to Operational Excellence.