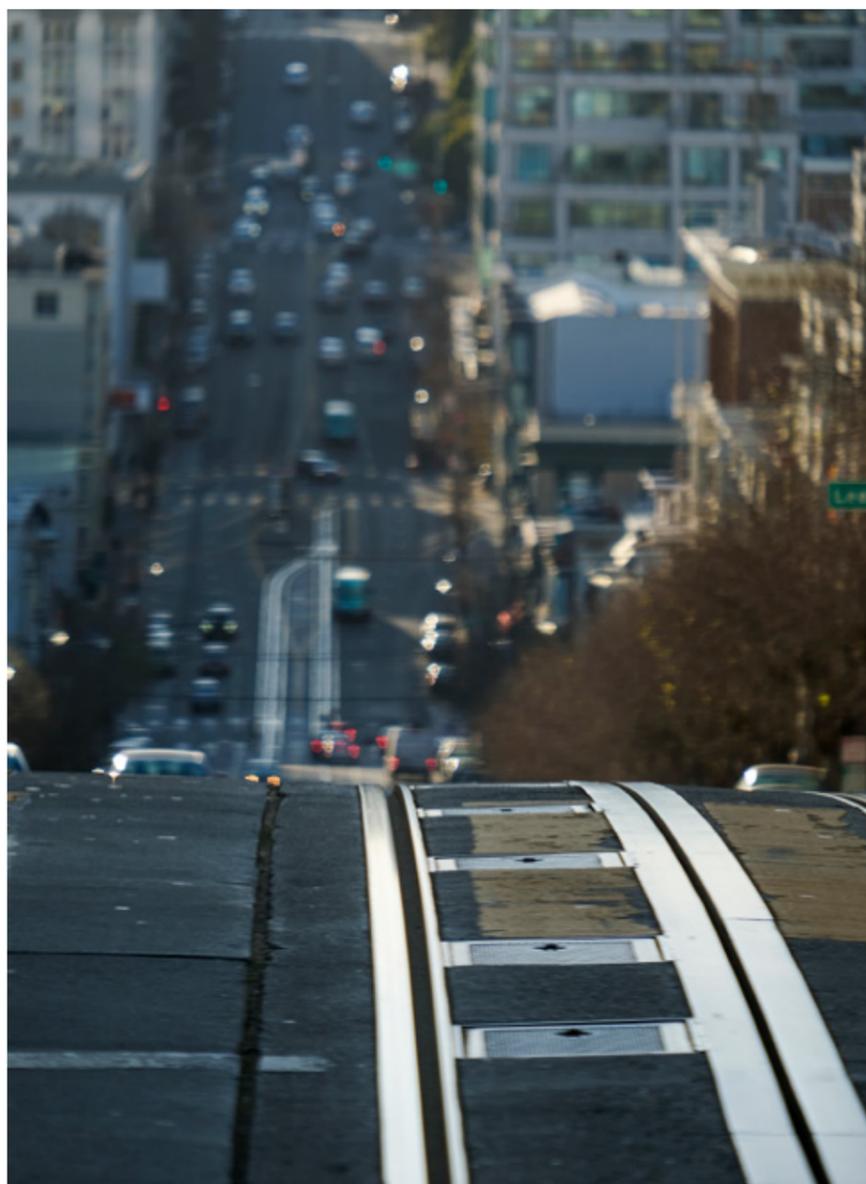




Paul Davison, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Founder of PPWD, explains more about creating workplaces for people to thrive and flourish safely

Shifting cultures from 'doing' safety to 'being' safe



Cable car tracks - San Francisco. Images by: Paul Davison

“Everyone home safe, every day within safety critical environments.” This is our vision of PPWD, explains CEO and Founder Paul Davison.

This year marks 13 years since he co-founded the award-winning end-to-end training solutions provider for leadership, human performance and cultural development. Its approach focuses on safety by people, not by numbers.

“Through partnering with organisations, we work together with our clients to evolve fairer cultures to achieve compassionate safety and our purpose of making a world where there is zero harm to people,” he added. “By focusing on prevention through non-technical skills (NTS), wellbeing, coaching and learning reviews, we set individuals up for success.

“Fair cultures empower and engage workers to be problem solvers, through the integration of safety with performance and customer experience ambitions.”

Paul’s dedication comes from his time serving in the Royal Air Force and is particularly driven by a Puma helicopter accident resulting in fatal injuries to the pilot and the navigator. He describes it as a significant moment in honing his purpose, which was captured in a single phrase following the accident: “This must not happen again”. “We know all the factors that trigger accidents and incidents and they have been repeated by many people; therefore, it is an education piece in preventing their reoccurrence,” he said. “What we do at PPWD is place people at the centre of everything that we do, creating an environment for them to thrive and flourish. The workplace ought to provide meaning and fulfilment to our lives and be a place where we can be our best person, and where work-as-done is both safe and has meaning.”

PPWD, which was co-founded by Paul with the now-retired Paul White in 2011, provides a compassionate safety approach that aims to generate environments that accommodate humans for being human. Its approach aligns personal and organisational mindsets, beliefs and values.

In the rail industry the organisation’s work started following a conversation with an individual talking about the challenges facing train drivers. Paul

recognised the similarities that he faced during his time in the military around human performance, and that the organisation could add some real benefit to the industry.

“We saw an industry in which we could come and help,” he said. “An awful lot of the challenges are to do with the infrastructure of the railways, and its compliance-led nature. This provides both historical baggage as well as the opportunities and strengths which cause individuals to behave the way they do.

“Through our compassionate safety approach, which centres on the development of self-awareness and awareness of others, the physical, psychological and emotional factors become equal safety priorities and result in colleagues who possess a clarity of vision, are calm, understanding, and agile in action.

“The approach and methods bring together individual and organisation safety motivations, values, beliefs and mindsets, shifting safety cultures from ‘doing’ safety to ‘being’ safe. As part of our offering, we provide a management tool for safety leaders to both control hazards, and more accurately quantify risks and care for colleagues.”

PPWD offers learning interventions and workshops from the boardroom to the classroom, with proprietary sticky learning methods delivered by its expert facilitators. It specialises in NTS, human factors, human performance, learning reviews, culture leadership and coaching, communication workshops focused on NTS that support safety critical communications, and pre-trauma workshops focused on the NTS and preventative measures required to develop trauma resilience, management and recovery.

“There are two elements to what we provide,” he explained. “There are the overall cultural evolution programmes which are taking people and organisations to just or fairer cultures and within that, there are very specific products that we offer within the classroom all the way from the boardroom to that frontline.

“It is around the idea of what it is to be a ‘well being’, as in well beings make the safest beings, so from a safety critical role let’s set people up for success. It is then about what that means in relation to things like equality, diversity and inclusivity. The latter is another phrase for psychological safety, which leads to feeling included and safe, and being able to be your best person and share all that is going on in your head.

“That approach has worked really well, and bringing adult learning-based techniques to the classroom that demonstrates that there is a real power here that people can take into all of their lives, but equally into the job, to have discussions around safety and mental health, NTS and so on.”

It is proving a success. Among its partners’ results include reductions in adverse event occurrence of 50 to 64 per cent for its closest partners, net promoter score of 93+ achieved by its expert facilitators using sticky learning, reduced staff turnover, disciplinarys and absenteeism, and increased dialogue between frontline and management, focused on co-creating safety.



A track record in improving company cultures

PPWD has won four awards in the last year, including a recent Stevie Award for Great Employers - Health, Wellness and Safety Solution Provider of the Year. The firm’s partnership with Southeastern Railway has also won a coveted 2024 UK Company Culture Award for the ‘Best Culture Transformation Initiative’.

It comes after the train operator selected PPWD to deliver a comprehensive NTS course to its train drivers as part of a larger train services incident reduction strategy.

The judges described the courses, which were centred on the information processing model the ‘rules of the mind’ as “a beacon of proactive change and employee empowerment”.

“The idea behind this is that if those in safety-critical roles understand the limitation of their senses, memory and processing abilities, they will make more effective decisions, hopefully resulting in safer actions,” explained Paul.

“Overlay this understanding with wellbeing, mindfulness, and a better understanding of the impacts of pressure, stress, sleep and fatigue, and you arm safety-critical staff to more effectively manage daily stressors.”

Such was the success that the learnings have been migrated to all business areas, with passenger, engineering, commercial and HR all part of a cultural evolution, weaving a cultural tapestry including psychological safety, inclusivity, equality and diversity.

Paul added: “All Southeastern employees had a role in being safety leaders and generating a fair culture. This has developed with the change from investigations to learning reviews, a shift towards prevention of recurrence, which has informed business plans, resource allocation and an investment in safety capacity.”

The future

Paul is realistic that the company may never achieve its aim of a world where there is zero harm to people at work, but he is confident that the work PPWD is providing will continue to reduce the risks.

“Zero harm in the workplace may be unachievable, we set it as an infinite vision, yet that ought not prevent us from striving to reduce it to as low a level as is humanly possible,” he said. “Zero harm goes beyond the physical to include the psychological, emotional and spiritual safety of people.

“Hearing the anecdotal stories of the impact we are having is great, but we are mindful there is a lot of work to do and that we can only change cultures one authentic conversation, one person, at a time.”

PPWD is ready to work with more organisations in the rail industry, but they have to be in the right place of cultural maturity for what PPWD offers to land appropriately.

“There has to be an open door for us to get some traction,” he said. “If there is a desire to unlock the potential in the rail industry, that is held within the people, then it is by taking an absolute focus on them as human beings, as a long-term investment.



“By focusing on prevention through non-technical skills, wellbeing, coaching and learning reviews, we set individuals up for success”



Puma helicopters - Duxford Air Show

“The UK is fortunate to have one of the safest railways, yet the industry faces very real pressures and challenges as we move into CP7. A new Government, the formation of a GB railway, and climate and sustainability targets. Yet the people remain the most flexible and adaptable factors, like Blue Tack they hold it all together.

“People are the most valuable asset, often they stay within the industry for decades, so that upfront and continual training investment is crucial. It is all about understanding how humans function, and how we can create environments around them that enable them to thrive and flourish.”

www.ppwd-consulting.co.uk

www.linkedin.com/in/pauldavisonppwd