



Have the conversation they need. Get the ROI you want.

What 100+ leaders told us
about their world, and what it
means for how you show up
at this event.

100+

EHS leaders
surveyed globally

40

Senior interviews
conducted

67%

Cite culture change as
biggest challenge

58%

identity commercial
awareness as top gap

A note before you read this

This playbook will make some of you uncomfortable.

Stay with us, it comes from a good place.

The EHS leaders attending Global Series events are senior professionals navigating one of the most significant transitions their profession has ever faced. They are under pressure from their boards, their environments and a need to evolve from a compliance function into a strategic enabler.

They are not attending looking for a product. They are walking in looking for someone who understands their world.

This playbook exists because vendor conversations can start in the wrong place: with a solution. This one will show you how to start with the person.

The numbers behind the conversation

Over 100 EHS leaders responded to the Global Series EHS Voices survey. We also sat down with 40 senior professionals from organisations including L'Oréal, JLL, Hitachi Energy, Danone, Netflix, Vopak and others for in-depth interviews. What they told us will help how you prepare for every conversation at this event.

67%

Stated culture & change management as their single biggest operational challenge

58%

Said strategic thinking & commercial awareness is their biggest capability gap

55%

Influencing & stakeholder management is where they feel most underprepared

74%

Rated on-the-job experience as most valuable, beyond qualifications and demos

More than abstract statistics, these insights showcase the professional reality of the people you're engaging with.

The problem

Starting at the finish.

A no-brainer vendor conversation might go something like this: you introduce your company, explain what your product does, talk about features and implementation, hand over a brochure, follow up on LinkedIn. The EHS leader nods politely, takes your card, and maybe carries the conversation on at dinner.

This isn't because your product isn't valuable. It's just the framing is, well, backwards. Less time spent exploring their challenges, more time telling them about



Tim Eldridge,
Global Head of HSSEQ,
JLL

"The biggest challenge I see at a senior level is being able to explain the why, not the what. The why is not 'because the law says so.' It's about the value proposition — and I don't think the value proposition has yet built itself into the vocabulary of safety professionals."

how you can solve them. The same is true of vendor conversations. Too many lead with the 'what'. The ones that land lead with 'why'.

The same is true of vendor conversations. Too many lead with the 'what'. The ones that land lead with 'why'. The EHS leader sitting across from you probably isn't thinking about your product. They're thinking about how to get the CFO and COO to take them seriously; why they're still seen as a technical function; how to cross

that gap and talk to the business in a language they understand.

If your opening conversation is about what your product does, you've already lost them. Start where they are.

The core principle

Your solution is not the story. Their challenge is the story. Your solution is what makes progress possible

Three realities to understand

The world they're operating inside

The EHS leaders in our research aren't looking for a pitch. They're looking for a peer; someone who understands the pressure they're under and can speak to it honestly. That pressure has three distinct dimensions. Understanding them helps you better place yourself in their world.

Reality 01

They're trying to prove their function is worth listening to.

Most EHS leaders have spent years being seen as the people who say no. The auditors. The compliance department. They are actively working to change that perception inside their own organisations. It is slow, frustrating work.

What this means for you

Before you talk about your solution, ask them how they currently make the case for EHS investment internally. Listen to the answer. That's where your real conversation begins.

“Can I talk in their own language: return on investment, NPV of that safety system? I see that gap across the industry. We are still not able to write a very good business case.”

Avishek Biswas
Head of HSE, Vopak Australia

Reality 02

They're dealing with an identity problem that needs to rise above the technical.

The skills that got most EHS leaders to where they are — technical knowledge, regulatory expertise, audit capability — are not the skills they need to go further. Many find this confronting.

What this means for you

Don't position your solution as a technical tool. Position it as something that helps them operate at a level above the technical. Help them extend their influence, not just their capability.

“EHS people are seen as engineers. People do not invest in their leadership skills, their influencing skills. They invest in lockout tagout, confined space; the technical aspects.”

Malcolm Staves
Global VP Health & Safety, L'Oreal

Replace your opening pitch

Five questions worth asking

To help shape your next conversation, here's a few starters to reframe and focus. Each is grounded in what EHS leaders told us they actually want to talk about.

01

“How do you currently translate safety outcomes into language your CFO/COO responds to?”

Opens the business acumen gap immediately. Signals you understand the real challenge, not just the technical one.

02

“Where does EHS sit in your organisation’s enterprise risk conversations right now?”

Tells you exactly how much internal work they’re facing (and where your solution might genuinely fit).

03

“What’s the hardest part of getting leadership to see safety as a business driver over a compliance obligation?”

Opens the culture and change management conversation without you having to introduce it artificially.

04

“What would it mean if you could draw a direct line between safety performance and operational continuity; is that something you’ve tried?”

The ambition question. Shows you understand where they want to go, not just where they are.

05

“What’s one thing you wish I understood about your world before talking to you?”

The most disarming question you can ask. Use it when the conversation needs to shift or when you want to reset entirely.

How to structure every conversation

The Session Architecture

Whether it's a session or a one-to-one, the structure stays the same.

Step 01

The challenge

Open with the problem the profession is facing. Not your product.

Step 02

The reality

Show you understand what this looks like inside real organisations. Customer stories are great here.

Step 03

The lessons

Share what you've seen work, including what hasn't. Authenticity matters.

Step 04

The discussion

Invite their perspective. Ask one of the five questions. Listen more than you speak.

Step 05

The opportunity

Only here do you introduce your solution as an enabler of their journey.

Before you pack up

Ask yourself this

Every conversation you have here is an opportunity to either confirm or break the stereotype that vendors are here to pitch slap. You're not. Part of our job at the Global Series is to break this stereotype. Part of the reason for this playbook is for us to work together in doing so. A quick check-in post chat with the following will help you refine and go again:

- Did I learn something about their specific challenge before talking about my solution?**
If the answer is no, the conversation started in the wrong place.
- Did I talk to them on their terms, in their language?**
Features and functionality are your language. Risk, influence, and business value are theirs.
- Did I leave them with something genuinely useful?**
Even if it has nothing to do with your product. Insight builds more trust than a brochure.
- Would they describe this conversation as useful, or as a pitch?**
The vendors who build lasting relationships show up as peers first, providers second.

The standard to hold yourself to

EHS leaders have spent years being talked at by people who didn't understand their world. Be the exception.



Helping HSE find its 'so what' to create what's next, together.

The Global Series community exists to
move partnerships beyond moments into
meaningful change.

Welcome to the
changemakers.

theglobalseries.com

**EHS Voices
Research**

100+
Survey
Responses

40
Professional
Interview