



## MONITOR WHAT MATTERS

# – What helps me

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### Jono Brent, CEO Connetics

*It was a conversation a few years ago, when I was told I needed to 'make sure you don't have any LTIs', that got me thinking about what health and safety really means. Connetics operates in an industry with plenty of safety rules and metrics. But was concentrating purely on rules actually making the industry safer?*

*I remember a site visit where I watched three workers set up for a job, while a fourth man in a truck filled out the health and safety forms. And I made a decision – Connetics would work towards the goal not of being **statistically** safe, but of being **actually** safe.*

*We realised that one of the biggest safety risks in our company was the gap between what management and directors imagine is happening, and what is actually happening. We decided we have to be open and honest.*

*And if that made the LTI rate unpalatable, so be it.*

*Our industry and many others have led themselves to believe that not having LTIs indicates that we are safe. Of course we want everyone to stay safe and free from harm. But our focus has to be on the way we handle the high risk aspects of the business.*

*But how was **actually safe** to be achieved? When I talked to staff they mentioned two things discouraging them from engaging with health and safety:*

- *Management didn't listen to feedback*
- *Fear of retribution for doing the wrong thing.*

*In response, Connetics set up a 13-person, cross-company **Safety Leadership Group** – separate from the more formal Health and Safety Committee – to delve into the difference between **what should happen** and **what actually happened** with health and safety.*

*We declared a total amnesty on what was discussed in the **Safety Leadership Group** – there could be no retribution for field staff if they told us: 'We know we should do that, but no one ever does. We had to deal with the reality and be open as to how we fixed it'. The group reports back to the Connetics board every three months.*

*Another initiative will involve two health and safety consultants being embedded into the workforce to watch and to ask questions about how work is actually done at Connetics.*

*Looking beyond safety metrics isn't the soft option.*

*In the scheme of things, it is easy to put in place rules and procedures. But changing leadership styles and getting worker participation is very hard. The trap we don't want to fall into is saying: 'We have good programmes in place so we must be a safe company'. We have to do more.*

Connetics is a Christchurch-based electrical distribution networks company.

