



From Administration Manager to Health & Safety Manager, Natalie Spray shows us what it means to follow your passion. Read about her journey here.



Kaizon

Introducing Natalie Spray, Health & Safety Manager at Kaizon. Natalie began her career in Administration but once she was offered the opportunity to move into Health and Safety, she quickly realised what her passion was. Read on to hear more about her career change, why she's passionate about Health and Safety, what her concerns are, and what it's like working in a male dominated industry. **Includes quotes from NZISM and VS Health and Safety Solutions.*

1. You started your career at Kaizon as Administration Manager, how long was it before you realised your heart was really in Health & Safety and what attracted you to that field?

Whilst I had been away on maternity leave the new Health and Safety at Work Act had come in and health and safety as we knew it had changed. The opportunity to take charge of health and safety at Kaizon was presented to me by our Managing Director. It was something new, exciting and something that I had wanted for a long time. It was the opportunity for a career, a formal education, to help people keep safe while at work, and to further myself both personally and professionally in a way that I hadn't done before. Whilst initially reluctant at the thought of what health and safety entailed, I decided to jump in with both feet and haven't looked back since. There are many different aspects to health and safety, whilst some are challenging and others are monotonous it is the continual variety of work that I enjoy.

2. Having worked in the building and construction industry for a while now, do you see a big need for improvement in health and safety within the industry and what do you think needs to happen?

I think there is a need for improvement in health and safety in every industry, including building and construction. The statistics for workplace deaths and injuries in this sector are much too high (8 deaths in the construction industry since January 2018 until February 2019, *Worksafe statistics*). New Zealand in general has been quite relaxed and traditional in its approach to health and safety. I feel that it's all about attitude and people's perceptions. Health and safety can be seen as a hindrance, creating more work, too many documents, too many rules, the list goes on. I see it as being extremely important to keep everyone safe and healthy. I'm sure all anyone wants is to have people be able to do their jobs and then go home to their families in the same way in which they left them. Attitude is important and I think an overall mindset shift is needed regarding health and safety in order for the wider population to take it more seriously, and in-turn reduce injuries and deaths in the workplace.

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3. Not many building and construction consultancy firms like us employ a Health & Safety Manager, why do you think it’s necessary and how does your role impact employees within Kaizon?

In our industry especially there is so much room for error when on a construction site. If people don’t take the time to assess their surroundings and know the environment that they work in, however changing, then they leave themselves open for complacency, old habits and the possibility of incident or injury. As is the case when implementing anything new within an organisation there will always be push back. It’s hard to change from the status quo and form new habits. Kaizon has a great collaborative culture and everyone is involved in changing and refining our systems to be both compliant with legislation and also do what works for our people using the systems. I feel that Kaizon has an advantage in having a dedicated Health and Safety manager looking out for our people who is genuinely concerned about their wellbeing. Because I’m part of the team and because I know the industry well, I then understand what our people deal with day-to-day and can help them be better prepared. Our company has a really positive mindset in regards to health and safety which shows in how proactive our guys and girls are while on site.

4. You work in a fairly male dominated industry, what is it like being a female within the building and construction industry, and in particular in health and safety?

I enjoy working in such a diverse industry with different types of people. It can be challenging to own my position and be confident in what I am saying and doing. It grows me as a person and also makes me realise that although I wish I knew everything, I most certainly don’t and we all have our limitations. It’s all part of the learning process and finding ways in which to deal with certain situations and most importantly, different personalities. Personalities play a huge part in health and safety as you need to be adaptable in your approach and sell the same changes to different people, in different ways. You need to find ways to communicate to get buy-in and acceptance that what you are doing is for the greater good. This is something I am still working on improving - how I communicate with people in a way that is best suited to their individual personality. I am passionate about my job and I genuinely care about the people I work with, hopefully that is seen as an advantage for everything that encompasses health and safety.

5. What would you say to someone who is considering health and safety as a career path?

Go for it! The industry needs more people and health and safety is a really great career choice. It offers a lot of variety and there are many avenues you can take and areas to specialise in. The industry is ever evolving so you won’t get to a point where ‘you know everything’, there is always something new to learn and grow your knowledge base. The people in the industry are supportive and share their knowledge and experiences which is really helpful when you’re starting out. I feel lucky for having the opportunity to work in this field, for the experiences I have already had and those to look forward to in the future.

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Quote from Selena Armstrong, CEO of New Zealand Institute of Safety Management, “Natalie is typical of the new wave of Health and Safety practitioners we are seeing coming through the industry. She is passionate, articulate and understands completely the fundamental principles of OH&S. That as a profession we put people at the very heart of decision-making. There is no one size fits all approach when it comes to health and safety, but without involving the people intrinsically engaged in the work being done, we will never achieve the outcome we are after and that is everyone going home to their loved ones healthy and safe. Keep up the great work Natalie.”



New Zealand Institute of Safety Management

Quote from Margaret Van Schaik, Director / Principal Consultant Van Schaik Health and Safety Solutions, “New Zealand is going through a significant H&S regulatory reform and nationwide culture change. This includes improvements to our H&S system, how we view and value health and safety, improvement of professional practice and addressing capacity issues to ensure NZ businesses have access to competent advice. Just as other professions require professional grading and registration so do health and safety practitioners. This is to ensure that competent and effective H&S advice is given to improve health and safety practice and to the harm in our workplaces.

For many years the Health and safety profession has been an established and valid career pathway in other countries including Australia, the UK, Europe and the US for many decades. New Zealand is only just beginning to understand the skill set and experience of the H&S practitioner and how they can add significant value for businesses. National and international studies show that good health and safety practice not only reduces harm, it also influences organisational culture, worker engagement, effective leadership and productivity. Health and safety is much more than just a compliance exercise.

The current demand for experienced H&S practitioners is currently outstripping the resource available in New Zealand. Significant work is underway by the Government to increase H&S capacity and capability to ensure businesses have access to specialist advice. In 2018, the Health and Safety Association of New Zealand (HASANZ) launched the HASANZ Register which is a one stop shop for businesses to find verified professionals across the workplace health and safety disciplines.

To find a registered and verified professional visit the HASANZ Register:
<https://register.hasanz.org.nz/>

