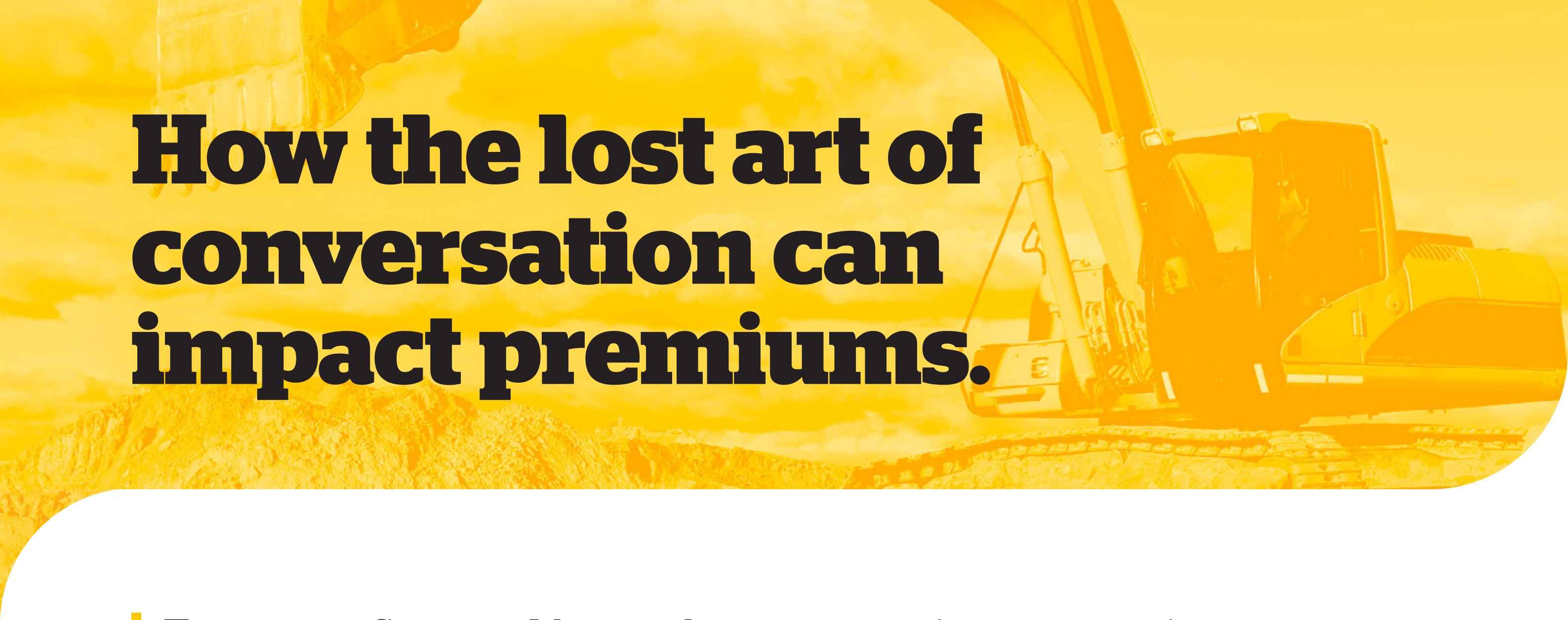

How the lost art of conversation can impact premiums.

Featuring Steven Alexander,
Heavy Motor Risk Engineer

A small, family-owned excavation contractor had few problems operating its plant and equipment. However, after looking over the business, NTI's Mobile Plant & Equipment (MPE) Risk Engineer found that the transportation of this company's equipment was a different story.

In short, while its operation was run to a high standard onsite, it had a higher-than-usual level of road accidents on the way to jobs.

"If we can identify that something's trending above normal, we'll engage with that client just to say, 'Hey, we've noticed you are outside the realm of what we think would be normal for a similar makeup and occupation,'" they said.

"Rather than coming down hard, we try and have a conversation. A lot of the time, businesses don't identify problems as being problems – they just see them as a cost of doing business. Being able to have a conversation is often the best way to find solutions.

"So, we had a conversation around complacency, employees rushing to the job, eating or drinking behind the wheel, being on the phone whilst driving, the kind of things that contribute to these events."

Having identified where there were opportunities to improve safety, however, Steven emphasised that employers shouldn't look for a blame-oriented fix.

"Often, clients jump towards tactics such as unfairly imposing insurance excesses on their staff, potentially installing technology that's going to prove that it was them at fault or banning them from driving once they have a claim," they said.

Instead, just as NTI began with an open conversation, they encouraged their client to have that same attitude and approach with their employees.

"Businesses should talk with the workforce and ask them what they think is driving the problem," they said.

"It could be that the time scheduled between jobs is not sufficient. Maybe employees are expected to eat on the go; can we change that? Or do accidents all happen at five o'clock on a Friday?

"There are often easy wins that the business has the ability to change."

As a result of clear communication, the excavation contractor implemented driver training and guidelines, and emphasised keeping its messaging clear, consistent and positive.

"From these discussions, the business turned its issues around. This saw its premiums go down and not wasting time mucking around with getting vehicles fixed or waiting for parts," Steven said.

"That's a lot of additional benefits from focusing on simple things, but a lot of these 'simple things' were issues the team didn't know it had.

"Having a chat with us, and with the workforce, was the catalyst for some really productive changes."

For more information on our Risk Engineers, please contact your local NTI representative.

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NTI helps transition a generational business.

Featuring Steven Alexander,
Heavy Motor Risk Engineer

Every business has its challenges, but the biggest issue facing one of NTI's large recycling customers was nothing to do with technology or energy supply or material inputs. It was a human question that many businesses have faced: succession management.

"The second generation of this family business is now starting to take over, and they've got a really different approach to the first generation," said NTI's Mobile Plant & Equipment (MPE) Steven Alexander.

While the previous generation had built the business from scratch, the second generation was striving for excellence in day-to-day operations, safety and risk management.

Steven saw one way to help facilitate this was to refine the existing incident reporting and investigation process and change the attitude towards reporting.

"It was just about building a framework to help understand whether an incident was due to cost or injury or downtime – things like that. And then giving recommendations on the incidents they should be tracking, and putting in a register to look for trends," they said.

"But it was also about building a culture where incident reporting is a positive thing. It's not blaming people; it's trying to understand what the drivers of these events are and what some of the contributing factors are, and just trying to eliminate them."

However, with existing approaches and staff all in place, broad, sweeping changes to the business were not the answer.

"We were able to identify opportunities for improvement, but they're iterative. They're bigger-picture things, like implementing verification of competency," Steven said.

"You want to be confident that your people are managing the equipment well, and you're also trying to upskill and remove bad habits because they do creep in."

Perhaps the critical insight NTI was able to provide was that *'the way it's always been done'* does not equate to *'the best way.'*

"Because the second generation was basically fostered within this business, they didn't really have a broader experience of what is normal, and what are some of the potential changes. We were able to make recommendations and instil them with confidence that these were worthwhile changes to make.

"With a lot of the engagements we have, the richness is really in the discussion – in trying to convey that we understand them but have a different way of looking at things.

"No industry is perfect, but they've all got little things they do that are beneficial to share. Whether it's mining, agriculture, civil construction or recycling, they all do things differently. And some of the knowledge that we can take and share across the client base are really helpful.

"Most people have got blinkers on, only focusing on what competitors are doing. But it's so beneficial to have that ability to go, 'Well, I wonder what they're doing in forestry, how do they manage this?'"

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NTI provides local solutions to a national business.

Featuring Steven Alexander,
Heavy Motor Risk Engineer

It will come as no surprise that a national, diversified agricultural business with properties all over the country has an enormous amount of equipment, from mobile plant and equipment to vehicles.

What struck NTI's Mobile Plant & Equipment (MPE) Risk Engineer, Steven Alexander, was the high potential this company had to reduce its overheads and increase its safety profile by taking a more whole-of-business approach.

"On some properties, some equipment had been sitting around for years. It was on asset registers, but head office didn't know it was just sitting unused in a field," they said. "They were paying insurance on this equipment, but there are other overheads as well, like registration and the holding costs for assets.

"So there's the potential to sell these underused assets, but with such a large portfolio, if a property was looking for, say, a grader and they happen to have a grader sitting at another property, why not just move it instead of buying another one?"

This single business was being run like multiple individual farms, each requiring its own equipment, rather than taking advantage of the industry's seasonal nature and the potential for savings by sharing equipment.

"There was a corporation-wide asset register at a high level, but it provided no insight into what was being used or how it was being maintained. It wasn't a whole-of-business approach.

"So, we discussed implementing an asset management platform with the management team."

NTI drew up a list of providers, and following a six-month pilot plan, the business rolled out the platform across its properties.

"The key benefit is that the business now has a better overarching understanding of equipment condition and utilisation," Steven said. "Something may be seasonal, for example, so they only use it for the dry months. So, they'll investigate the cost of transport and whether it's worthwhile to move equipment to different areas when they're not using it, to save on owning two of the same item."

At a more granular level, this has helped the business to manage smaller equipment costs – costs that can add up – but, more importantly, to a higher level of safety across the entire operation.

"They better understand parts and labour costs. Previously, the costing of parts and labour for maintenance, repairs, and rebuilds wasn't executed well. Now, head office has more oversight to ensure statutory tasks – such as annual checks and brake tests – are being undertaken.

"The business now has the oversight and ability to quickly pull up the platform and confirm, 'Yeah, we did that check three months ago. It's due for another in three months.'

"It's brought them ahead of the game in agriculture."

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