

**"The (Safety) World is (not yet) Flat"**  
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The continuous advancing journey of globalization or business' relentless search for new markets and less expensive suppliers has gotten even more drastic. This global change has been made much easier by lowering of trade and political hurdles and, of course, by rapid technological advances in communications and transportation networks. It will eventually make "The (Safety) World Flat".

Before the Safety "stakeholders" get upset by these remarks, I suggest, read on.....

Borrowing the title from the best seller book, "The World is Flat", by Thomas Friedman, the title relates to the term Flat as, "the playing field being leveled" or flattening. It's so true in most everything produced today, certainly true in our Safety industry, although many "stakeholders" still do not or will not recognize or accept it.

As Friedman writes, ".....intellectual work, and intellectual capital, can be delivered from anywhere - anytime."

So, how's that now any different than in today's safety "arena". The same rules which have drastically changed globally, apply here, too....the game's the same....."Flat".

The marginal differences in QUALITY, which used to be wide, are narrow.....VERY narrow, due to a level playing field.

The marginal differences in SERVICE, which used to be wider, too are narrow.....VERY narrow, due to a level playing field.

The marginal differences in PRICE, which too, used to be wider, are narrow.....you know the rest.....

Value, Speed, Convenience and Specific Solutions.....yep, those, too! VERY narrow.

Today ALL are "givens" (and have been for some time) but, today much narrower than ever. And getting more so.....

And, today (tomorrow, too) there is more competition than ever but, now - from all around the globe, not just across the street or around the corner.

Good.....well, good for the end user, the consumer who certainly is the big, end "driver" in this new flat world but, not the only "driver".

Flat is good, IF.....

Flat is good, IF - you are a part of Flat - Not good, if Not.

Compatibility is Flat - Incompatibility - Not.

Music is Flat (no pun) - Rap - Not (just kidding - I think).

Metrics are Flat - Metrics & Imperial - Not.

Celsius is Flat - Celsius & Fahrenheit - Not.

International is Flat - National - Not.

International (ISO) Standards are Flat - ANSI, CSA, BSI, DIN, etc. - Not.

Language is becoming Flat.

Currencies are becoming Flat.

So, what are some of the strategies?

One, for sure, is Global Safety & Health Harmonization and encouraging U.S. "stakeholders" to participate - more.

To participate and have major rolls in more events such as the World Safety Congress sponsored last fall by National Safety Council in conjunction with the National Safety Congress in Orlando, FL.

Additionally, to encourage participation of stakeholders in more projects such as:

GHS (Globally Harmonized System) for the classification and labeling of chemicals by 2008.

REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorization of CHemicals) which will most likely be implemented at the same time as GHS.

Control Banding, the complementary approach to protecting worker health by focusing resources on exposure controls.

U.S. leadership role regarding international standards setting input to include OHSAS (Occupational Health & Safety Assessment Series) 18000 series.

Continued expansion of OSHA/ANSI Safety & Health global influencing practices.

Re-focusing U.S. manufacturers' expertise in Research & Development.

Re-focusing on emerging markets, utilizing expertise to begin with the end user.

Re-fining quality control to reflect the narrower margins of error.

Re-fining actual services rendered as value.

Re-fining cost margins and sourcing as necessary to compete.

Re-consider continuing educational opportunities to broadening margins of difference.

Re-establishing deeper relationships throughout channel.

In conclusion, this "flattening" of the world, of course, isn't the end....it's the beginning..... of new actions, challenges & opportunities, with new partners, many mentioned above. But, new dangers also exist. How you balance the right mix for you and now more quickly than ever will determine your position for tomorrow.

We are all being strongly challenged. But, we are at our best when we are challenged. I am challenged. Are you challenged? Where do you fit in the Global community?

Think about it  
George J. Hayward