

# SHE Leads Safety:

## *Conversations That Inspire*



### FEATURED LEADER

## Rashmi Goyal

General Manager - Safety & Health | Schindler India Pvt. Ltd.

18+ Years of Experience | Biomedical Engineering Background

A passionate advocate for safety culture transformation, Rashmi has spent nearly two decades shaping how organizations think about risk—not as a compliance checkbox, but as a human responsibility. Her journey from biomedical engineering to EHS leadership reflects her unwavering belief: every worker deserves to return home safely.

## PEOPLE FIRST, SAFETY ALWAYS

### Q1 What initially drew you to EHS?

A biomedical heartbeat pulled me in: As a Bio Medical Engineer, I studied instruments that save lives but saw how preventable risks steal them. In any industry, where hazards meet humanity, I found my calling—to fuse science with soul, ensuring every worker returns home safely.

Early in my career, I realized that behind every incident statistic is a real human story—someone's health, livelihood, or family impacted forever. That realization shifted my perspective from compliance to purpose and self-commitment. EHS gave me a platform to influence decisions, design safer systems, and ensure that people return home safely every day.

Over the last 18+ years, what continues to draw me to EHS is the ability to create lasting change by shaping culture, not just enforcing rules.

### Q2 What emerging risk or trend will most shape the future of EHS?

The future of EHS will be most shaped by the convergence of human factors, mental well-being, and rapid technological change. While traditional physical hazards remain, organizations now face risks related to fatigue, stress, aging workforce, competency gaps, and remote supervision.

National safety Council of India Initiative....

The EHS function must evolve from hazard control to risk intelligence—integrating data, behaviour, and leadership decision making to proactively prevent harm in increasingly complex work environments.

The changing workforce presents another layer: four or five generations working on the same floor, each with different learning styles and risk perceptions. One-size-fits-all training doesn't work.

Understanding where each employee is in their safety journey is something our field still hasn't fully cracked. The organizations that thrive will integrate safety into strategy, not treat it as a checkbox.

---

### **Q3 What skills outside of technical safety knowledge have been most critical to your growth?**

The most critical skills have been listening, influencing without authority, strategic communication, emotional intelligence, and business acumen. Technical safety knowledge earns entry—but leadership credibility comes from understanding business pressures, listening deeply, and translating risk into language that resonates with senior leaders and frontline teams alike.

Listening first. The people closest to the work know more about the hazards than I ever will from a walkthrough. My job is to ask the right questions, shut up, and hear the answers. Some of the best solutions I've seen came from frontline workers—I just helped remove the obstacles.

Influence without authority: EHS professionals rarely have direct control over budgets, schedules, or headcount. You must build relationships, make a compelling case, and connect safety outcomes to what leadership already cares about—productivity, retention, reputation, cost.

Translating between worlds: I spend half my time in steel-toed boots and half in boardrooms. Being able to explain a risk in language a CEO cares about—and then turn around and have a credible conversation with a crew lead—is essential.

Resilience: You will have setbacks. Incidents happen. Programs stall. You learn to process it, learn from it, and keep moving. Over the years, my ability to build trust, manage change, and navigate difficult conversations has been far more impactful than any single technical qualification.

---

### **Q4 What does effective safety leadership look like in practice not theory?**

Effective safety leadership is demonstrated through daily behaviours, not slogans. In practice, it means leaders who consistently prioritize safety even when schedules are tight, who are visible on sites, who ask thoughtful questions, and who respond to incidents with learning rather than blame.

It's about empowering people to stop unsafe work, acting decisively on reported hazards, and holding everyone—including leadership—accountable. Real safety leadership is measured by actions taken when no one is watching.

In practice, it means: Safety is on the agenda—every meeting, every project discussion, every review. Leaders ask questions and listen—not just to safety professionals, but to the people doing the work. People can raise concerns, stop work, or admit a mistake without fear of retaliation.

The best leaders I've worked with treat safety as a condition of doing business, not a department.

---

## Q5 When women lead safety, what changes for people, workplaces, and outcomes?

When women lead safety, there is often a noticeable shift toward inclusion, empathy, and open communication. Workers tend to feel more comfortable raising concerns, near misses are reported earlier, and conversations move beyond compliance to care.

This human-centred approach strengthens psychological safety, improves workforce engagement, and ultimately leads to better safety outcomes and more resilient organizations. Diverse leadership perspectives make safety stronger and more sustainable.

Women often invest time upfront earning trust, which pays off when you need frontline workers to speak honestly about hazards. Mental health, psychological safety, work-life pressures—women leaders tend to integrate these into the safety conversation rather than treating them as separate. When leadership reflects the workforce, people are more likely to feel heard—and more likely to contribute ideas.

## Q6 What has been your biggest challenge as a woman in EHS, and how did you overcome it?

One of my biggest challenges was establishing credibility in male-dominated operational environments early in my career. I felt pressure to prove I belonged—especially on job sites where I was often the only woman. I tried to be tougher, louder, more aggressive. It didn't work. It wasn't me, and people could tell.

The turning point was realizing that my strengths—asking questions, building relationships, listening—were the job. I didn't need to out-macho anyone. I needed to be credible, consistent, and genuinely curious about the work.

I also learned to speak up—even when I was nervous. Early on, I'd hesitate in meetings, second-guess myself. Over time, I forced myself to raise my hand, offer my perspective, and trust that my experience was worth hearing.

Mentors helped. Finding other women (and men) who'd navigated similar paths gave me a sounding board and reminded me I wasn't alone. I try to pay that forward now.

I overcame this by being consistently prepared, technically sound, fair in decision making, and unwavering in my principles. The reality is: there are still moments when I'm underestimated, interrupted, or overlooked. But I've learned that doing excellent work, staying curious, and building strong relationships earns respect over time—and that's what lasts.

*“What continues to draw me to EHS is the ability to create lasting change by shaping culture, not just enforcing rules.”*

— Rashmi Goyal