



# President's Message

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## Conversion

Hey Everyone,

Today I would like to touch on the concept of:

**Conversion** [ *kuhn-vur-zhuhn, -shuhn* ]

Conversion is an act where one or more “things” are transformed into some other “thing.” Whether one uses the word “conversion” or “transformation,” the change itself is ubiquitous. As Society president, I’ve undergone a lot of conversions, from revering the staid tradition of our Society ways, to weighing out the points where modernity needs to creep in, to leveraging high-risk options for delivering the International System Safety Conference (ISSC) virtually in a “COVID-rich environment.” All of our lives are literally powered by conversion, from the oatmeal we eat to run our bodies to the lane changes we make while driving to the supermarket. Our vehicles, our appliances, our tools, even our very profession hinges on conversion as the fulcrum.

The question has never really been, “Should we change?” but instead, “*How* can we change?” Conversion itself is the engine that unfolds our lives. Society is in perpetual conversion, pressing the boundaries of speed and technology, shifting the focus of entertainment, plastically adjusting to pandemics and politics. Our practice has changed from — I’m dating myself here — mimeographed forms for capturing FMEA data with pens and pencils to the use of “mainframes” with terminals, to personal computers, to networks and servers, to cloud-served solutions that enable tablet and phones, eye-tracking “mice,” voice recognition and even spell check. No one reading this message works the same way today as they did 10 — or even five — years ago.

Faced with the perspective that conversion is enabling — but has no inherent preference — for change results, we can:

1. Work to restrict or limit change
2. Observe and react to change, or
3. Facilitate change

In fact, we do all three all the time. Migrating from one situation to the next skillfully involves measuring our steps and carefully and mindfully observing while grasping the conversion and implementing.

ISSC conversion is an ongoing process. Our virtual conference delivered more than 70 hours of content and was attended by more than 160 people. Three keynote speakers sketched out where we’ve been, and where we are going, as a profession. Roundtables and workshops began dissecting the bits and pieces we will need to embrace, examine and moderate to move into our next-level 21<sup>st</sup>-century practices.

None of them mentioned mimeographed forms.

Instead, the content addressed complexity, artificial intelligence, distributed networks, drones, epidemiology, better ways of characterizing risk, foundational elements of practice that are not captured in standards or addressed in training, and other topics *du jour*. The conference was a conversion from our traditional conference to a digitally delivered event experience that addressed the conversion of our practices that must occur to support the ongoing conversion of our lives on this planet. It did all this while still delivering standardized training that industry can depend upon to support system safety practice.

I invite you to consider *how much* change — instead of *whether* to change — when considering your practice. I invite you to participate in conversion. Visit our website and volunteer. Find out how your company can participate in the Initiatives developments. Reach out to your Chapter and forge some deeper connections. Start doing these things differently today. Share your *JSS* with a colleague. You cannot steer a car that is sitting still. It’s time to change it up. *Be the conversion.*

Best Regards,  
Russ