

# IT'S NO ACCIDENT

**Kelvin TOP-SET MD  
DAVID RAMSAY**  
tells *RAIL* why the  
company is the  
leading authority in  
incident investigation

**T**here's much to be said for subscribing to the age-old maxim of learning from your mistakes.

And while this isn't stated verbatim in the official mission statement of the 30-year-old international company Kelvin TOP-SET, it is the most accurate summary of its purpose.

Set up by Ramsay in 1986, it teaches other companies how to investigate incidents, understand what causes them and prevent any reoccurrence. By showing its clients how to follow a clear, logical process to find the root causes of health and safety related incidents, it improves efficiency and, most importantly, protects people's lives.

Kelvin TOP-SET does this by offering three products - educational courses, software solutions and a consultancy service.

The company conducts about 60% of its business in the UK, but its services and products are also available as far afield as Australia, Russia, the USA and the Middle East.

Its biggest clients include global brands such as Tata Steel, Petronas and Imperial Tobacco, but 20% of its customers operate in the rail sector, including Amey and Transport for London.

Ramsay explains: "Most of our clients are big companies, but our methods and services work for the very smallest of businesses. A large company might completely book out one of our courses, whereas a smaller one might send just one or two people.

"What we do is very important, because there's no room for complacency. Things are changing all the time and technology can always go wrong in new and unforeseen ways.

"Relative to the rest of the world, health and safety in Britain is very good, but it's



important to keep an eye on the small things to prevent worse things from happening."

The Kelvin TOP-SET methodology can be applied to minor incidents or near-misses, but is fully scalable up to catastrophic incidents that have led to loss of life or large-scale economic and environmental damage.

In fact, both David Ramsay and his wife Lorna were hired to help investigate the causes of the largest oil spill disaster in US history in 2010, when an explosion on BP's Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico killed 11 people and caused immeasurable damage to the environment.

But it is more often applied to less significant events, such as trips, falls or near-misses, where more targeted lessons can be learned to reduce individual risks of reoccurrence.

As investigating serious accidents and incidents such as main line derailments has been the responsibility of the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) since 2005, the Kelvin TOP-SET methodology is most frequently employed to study incidences that are outside of this remit.

This might be a collision resulting in minor damage to rolling stock, or

↑ Kelvin TOP-SET has been teaching its clients to carry out effective incident investigation, helping to increase employees' safety awareness and understanding since 1986. KELVIN TOP-SET.

injury to four or fewer people, or where safety issues are deemed too localised to warrant an industry-wide investigation.

Ramsay adds: "If there is a serious accident, it is the duty of RAIB to investigate. But other companies might use us in a consultative capacity, to teach them how to avoid risks.

"The sort of thing we might look at is a shunting error, the potential for a derailment, or perhaps an incident in a depot that would not warrant the involvement of the RAIB.

"Our clients are often looking to take preventative measures to enhance their safety performance, as we tend to be far more proactive these days than reactive, as we were in the past.

"The perfect outcome of using our services would be if there were no more incidents that got as far as the RAIB.

"There are only a few companies in the world doing what we do, and we would rank ourselves as the best. We've been around for a long time and have spent a lot of money on product and service development to build up such a strong reputation."



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**DAVID RAMSAY, Kelvin TOP-SET MD**