

# WOMEN OF DISTINCTION



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**E**xpert Process Safety and Risk Management Consultant Rene' Murata is passionate about creating secure work places that allow employees to thrive. She is achieving her goals as CEO of Risk Integrity Safety Knowledge, Inc. (d.b.a. RISK, Inc) — a global safety consulting company offering a full range of technical consulting, training, and staffing services.

Founded in 2011, RISK offers industry-leading experience in risk management and process safety management program development as well as compliance services for a wide variety of clients. As CEO, Rene' wears many hats. One of those hats is the responsibility for maintaining long lasting client relationships. She works closely with clients to ensure they are receiving the high-quality services that they require.

*“Knowing that people are going home to their families every day, and we may have had something to do with it, keeps me in this career. I especially enjoy when someone on my team has an ‘ah-ha moment’ and they suddenly understand why I do what I do. I have worked with a variety of personalities — not all receptive to a woman in my position. I have found that honesty, integrity, and patience have served me well. However, because I am constantly working to increase my knowledge and understanding of this industry, this desire to learn has translated to a work product that is held in high regard for quality and consistency.”*

Another hat Rene' wears is providing continued education for her team. At RISK, this means both professional and technical training for everyone. Training for the team includes attending industry conferences, professional development seminars, monthly internal training sessions in which team members are encouraged to take a turn training everyone else in their expertise as well as one-on-one mentoring.

*“I believe that providing a collaborative environment that encourages sharing of experiences and knowledge, in addition to continued education, helps create a strong healthy workplace that can then provide quality services to our clients.”*

Rene' holds a Bachelor of Arts in Physics and a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Southern Oregon University. She started her career in 2005, as an assistant engineer at an electrical firm within the Research and Development department, where she developed internal safety and environmental compliance policies and procedures for the firm.

Then, in 2006 she moved to California where she started working in a refinery as an office assistant. Within two years she was promoted to Engineering Assistant, and then to Assistant Engineer. She encourages those aspiring to enter into the process safety industry to gain experience in the field in order to truly understand the value of a healthy process safety program.

*“The insight that a person can receive by simply knowing and understanding the equipment that is being discussed, the potential issues and challenges that a corporation faces in developing a healthy program as well as an appreciation of the relationships that develop between the people that work in such intense conditions is indescribable. It cannot be duplicated in the classroom.”*

Family is a constant inspiration for Rene'. Shortly after starting as an assistant engineer, her husband was involved in a hazardous work-related incident, prompting Rene' to dedicate her career to improving process safety. During that same timeframe, she was inspired by her father, to return to school where Rene' earned a Master of Business in Global Enterprise Management from Jones International University in 2008.

*“My father was always upbeat and enjoyable to be around; no matter what life threw at him and he was always in learning mode. Late in life, he went back to school; pursuing a lifelong dream. He passed away before he completed his goal of obtaining a PhD. However, in his passing, he left a legacy of learning and a belief in the adventure that life has to offer.”*

When she is not at the office, Rene' enjoys a healthy and adventurous lifestyle. She is vegan, who is passionate about cooking and baking gluten-free meals with her grandchildren. The family regularly travels to exotic locations to explore, swim, hike, bike, and ski.

*“I believe in adventure and I live and treat everything in my life accordingly. This, I believe, has contributed to my overall success. I want to leave a legacy much like my father, one that speaks to the joy of learning and living.”*

# Q&A

**Q: Why do you feel that your business is relevant in today's world?**

*A: We work with companies that have large quantities of hazardous chemicals that, if released, could cause damage to personnel, the public or the environment. We assist our clients in the development, maintenance and improvement of their process safety programs; working with them on multiple levels to help identify solutions that are feasible and manageable for them.*

**Q: What are some of the challenges you face as the CEO?**

*A: When I started the company, I was (and still am) newer to the industry. I have had to establish myself as someone who is knowledgeable in the industry, and establish the company as different from my competitors. I have done this through focusing on the quality and consistency of our product from one facilitator to the next and by focusing on building relationships with our clients, making sure to understand their needs from a holistic view. This approach sets us apart from our competitors.*

**Q: What is it like working in a traditionally male industry?**

*A: Having majored in math and physics, both traditionally male dominated subjects, I am comfortable with male peers. I have earned the respect of the teams I work with by focusing on quality. In addition, the industry is slowly shifting as women gain support and mentoring. Last year marked the launch of Pink Petro, a social media site dedicated to networking, support and mentoring of women in the energy industries. I am proud to be a role model for other women in this field.*

**Q: Did you need a special degree or certification to work in your industry?**

*A: You definitely need a background in chemical engineering or related technical field. However, the desire and ability to learn is just as important. You also need strong people skills because your role is to bring together the combined knowledge of a team of specialists at an industrial facility and use that knowledge to assess the risks. Having said that, there are companies that require an Engineering degree or 10 years industry experience.*

**Q: Are there on-going training requirements?**

*A: Technically, no. However, I, personally, have a strong belief in on-going training. So, within our organization, yes. We have a QA/Training Manager that oversees the training and mentoring of all employees. We have monthly training sessions in which we cover an area where we see opportunities for growth. During these sessions, everyone is encouraged to ask questions and share ideas. We also support our employee's growth through attendance at industrial conferences and outside training classes. I believe, though, that the industry is moving toward requiring some kind of certification in order to do this type of work and I would be supportive of that.*

**Q: What is your average day like?**

*A: Mine can be crazy and depends on whether I am onsite with a client or not. If I am onsite, I am leading a multi-disciplinary team through discussions about the potential hazards of their plant and helping to identify safeguards already in place, or making a recommendation for additional safeguards. If I am not on site, my day consists of a balance between phone calls with my marketing department to discuss business development opportunities and my QA/training department on how a particular employee is growing, or on what new training modules we want to create for the team. If I am not doing that, I am often talking with our clients about challenges that they face, and options on how they might address them.*

**Q: What is it like being at industrial sites?**

*A: I find it fascinating. Being a science geek, going to some of these industrial sites is like walking into a giant chemistry set. It never gets old for me. The different processes, technology and equipment are interesting.*

**Q: How do you handle the extensive travel your role demands?**

*A: We work hard at RISK to have a work/life balance. When scheduling, we plan home time for prep and reports. However, the reality is that there is still a lot of travel, about 50-60%. I have a supportive family that travels with me when and where possible. My husband works with me handling payroll and invoicing, so his job allows him to travel.*

**Q: What is the future of your company?**

*A: Currently, we are expanding into South America. Many of our clients have divisions in South America and they would like to use our services there. However, for some sites, the expense of flying a consultant from the US can be prohibitive. By opening an office, and providing the same level of training, mentoring and QA, our clients can be assured of receiving the same quality to which they are accustomed.*

**Q: In all of your travels, where is the most exotic place you have been for work?**

*A: I have gone and worked in Chengdu China and in Sao Paulo Brazil. I loved them both.*