

Coverguard partners with WorldSkills France: "In this competition, every second counts ! The right PPE is essential if champions are to work and compete in the best possible conditions, without taking risks."



Hervé Zipper, CEO of Coverguard and Yves Antier, Vice-President of Partnerships at WorldSkills France.

In 10 days, the 47th WorldSkills National Competition kicks off in Lyon! It's an important week for the 800 young people who will be competing in nearly 70 different trades. The French team winners will compete at the world competition in Lyon in September 2024. It's also the start of an unprecedented adventure for Coverguard: the launch of our partnership with WorldSkills France and our commitment to providing all competitors - and their technical entourage - with the workwear and PPE they need to compete safely. Hervé Zipper, our CEO, and Yves Antier, Vice-President of Partnerships at WorldSkills France, are very proud of this collaboration.

National selection for the WorldSkills Lyon 2024 global competition begins in Lyon in just a few days' time. Are you ready to start the competition?

Yves Antier: As far as the organization is concerned, everything is already well advanced, of course. We're confident that the event will run smoothly. It should bring together a huge number of young people, probably more than we had anticipated. We're already expecting over 25,000 visitors. For their part, the competitors are preparing intensively. Remember that it's the new French team, a team of some sixty youngsters who will emerge from this national competition.

Hervé Zipper: For our part, we've done a lot of anticipation work. We've put together packs not only for the French team, but also for the surrounding experts and volunteers. The aim is to provide them with protective equipment so that they can work and compete in good conditions. The packs contain clothing, shoes, gloves and all the other equipment needed for protection and performance.

"Young people who compete need to adopt the right reflexes right from the start of their professional lives"

It's an important and symbolic partnership for all of you...

Yves Antier: Absolutely! It's very important to have manufacturers on our side. In particular, manufacturers like Coverguard. Young people who are competing need to learn the right reflexes right from the start of their professional lives. And then, through competition, they give an image of their profession. So they need to know how to protect themselves properly, and we're delighted to be able to support them in this aspect with a partner like Coverguard, a French PPE designer based in Lyon.

Hervé Zipper: Indeed, this notion of proximity is essential for us. Coverguard is very proud to support and accompany the French team in this international competition. Especially as the final will be held in Lyon in 2024. It's important and natural for us to take part in this type of local event. Safety reflexes are acquired at the very moment when young people are learning their trade. WorldSkills also gives us an opportunity to get closer to the training centers behind the event, with whom we'd like to be able to exchange ideas on safety practices. The other important aspect is visibility. As in sport, these young professionals set an example. Especially when you know that thousands of spectators will be coming to watch them compete! So they have a duty to set an example. It's our role to equip them effectively so that they can show and give the best of themselves.

"To be able to improve our equipment, we need to understand the business and work alongside the people who do it".**What values do Coverguard and WorldSkills France have in common?**

Hervé Zipper: Since I joined Coverguard in January 2023, we've done a lot of work on the brand and we've defined three values, which are linked to this competition.

First of all, there's the idea of surpassing oneself, but also of improving oneself by constantly questioning the way we do things.

There's also the proximity we've just been talking about. To be able to improve our equipment, we need to understand our professions and work alongside those who practice them. We don't claim to be making breakthrough innovations, but we are deeply convinced that by being as close as possible to the reality of the trade, sometimes with details, we will be moving in the right direction. In this way, we'll give these young people a feeling of comfort, of no longer being in a risk zone, so that they can concentrate on their know-how and their job. That's why we're going to integrate these young competitors into the development of our products, within our Coverlab, to adapt them as closely as possible to their needs.

Finally, what unites us is responsibility. Ours is to ensure that professionals no longer injure themselves while working. So we have to explain, train and support them, thanks to competitions like WorldSkills.

Yves Antier: The values that unite us are also those found in entrepreneurship: courage, determination and humility. We're happy to share them through our competitions, thanks to the support of the companies and training centers that take part in these events.

Do you think good equipment can contribute to victory?

Yves Antier: Every second counts in our competitions! If you have to put on a mask that doesn't fit properly, if you have a glove that doesn't protect you and you injure yourself, the penalty is immediate. Indeed, for me, this equipment is fundamental, as is everything that surrounds the competitor at the moment of their performance.

Hervé Zipper: Bad equipment can clearly penalize a champion. There have been great innovations in materials. Even 15 years ago, gloves that were as close to the skin as possible didn't exist. Today, you have F-level cut-resistant gloves, which are the highest levels of protection. Thanks to advances in technology, PPE reduces fatigue and therefore risk, improves comfort and enhances agility. All these contribute to performance.

Nearly 70 trades are represented at the WorldSkills national competition. Is this an opportunity to raise the profile of a number of sometimes overlooked manual trades?

Yves Antier: The reason for having WorldSkills France competition is to support all these young people, to help them grow, so that they can take pride in and desire to pursue trades that are often overlooked. We give everyone a chance to realize that these are magnificent trades, and that they can be a lot of fun. The equipment a young person wears is part of their pride and joy in their work. For me, PPE is essential because it allows them to concentrate solely on what they're doing, without having to wonder about the risks that might arise if they weren't protected.

Hervé Zipper: Of course these jobs are essential. We have no reason to exist if we don't have people working in these fields. Our job at Coverguard, by protecting them, is to enhance their value. I'm always very impressed to see young people excelling in these professions. WorldSkills is about youth and excellence. This generation offers us a message of hope and value.

"We have a common goal with WorldSkills France: to reduce risks and improve working conditions for young people".

A new feature at this year's WorldSkills is the participation of people with disabilities...

Hervé Zipper: We're delighted to support the entry of people with disabilities in this competition. As in sport, it shows that disability doesn't have to be an obstacle to performance and excellence in a profession. What I really like about WorldSkills is that gender and individual circumstances don't make any difference. What counts is the craft and the performance.

Yves Antier: Last March, we staged the world's first event of any kind, in which people with disabilities competed on the same site as other people, side by side. We're no longer talking about disability, but about talent. We're going to do a lot to increase integration along these lines.

Coverguard will equip all competitors. But the partnership doesn't stop there...

Hervé Zipper: Indeed, our teams will be on hand to meet and share with all the professionals, competitors and their entourage. We have a common objective with WorldSkills France: to reduce risks and improve working conditions for young people. We cannot allow people to lose part of their physical integrity while working.

So yes, we'll be there, and we want to get this message across. Beyond the brand, what really matters to me is working on the notion of safety and protection. One of our aims during this competition is to be able to identify in a very simple way, for each trade, the minimum equipment to be worn to carry it out.

You too, Yves Antier, will be present next week at the national competition. Is your equipment ready?

Yves Antier: (Laughs) Yes, I've got my safety shoes, everything's ready! It's true that we're all very excited. These are going to be some pretty extraordinary events, and we're going to make sure that all the competitors are perfectly protected, that they don't have any accidents, and that they bring home as many medals as possible.