

2,556 companies with 3,426 employees belong to VSSM (Swiss Association of Carpenters and Furniture Manufacturers) and it is one of the largest trade associations in Switzerland. Most member companies are small businesses.

The association is headed by a central committee, which employs 50 staff. The association is also responsible for training its members and runs a number of training centres. The training system, both for basic and further training, is very up-to-date and a very open and adaptable modular type of operation. The trade association works in co-operation with many companies. It consults Suva (the Swiss accident insurance institute) for expert guidance.

Network

Suva is based in Lucerne and represents Switzerland and Liechtenstein in the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion. After Suva gave a workplace health promotion presentation to VSSM, it was agreed that efforts should be made to bring WHP to the company. Suva supported this project on many levels, but activities were always planned with the intention that VSSM should be able to operate independently eventually.

How Suva supported the company:

- n Preparing and supporting all meetings relating to the workplace health promotion project

- n Establishing structures and procedures to facilitate the integration of workplace health promotion into the initial and further training programme
- n Planning individual modules
- n Setting up the training programme for the mediators
- n Bringing in an industrial psychologist
- n Planning and running basic workshops
- n Supporting the working groups and helping with planning activities
- n Offering support in identifying problem areas, setting targets and subsequent evaluation
- n Planning a time schedule for implementing proposed measures
- n Selecting appropriate outside support.

Activities are carried out on site with an advisor and a trainer. An industrial psychologist and a marketing specialist can be consulted when needed.

Putting WHP into practice

Although everyone is optimistic that WHP can become part of company ethos, finding an effective way of introducing it is considered



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to be a bigger problem than practical implementation. Translating proposals into action needs to be as smooth running and simple a transition as possible. In order to introduce the concept of WHP to the company, a game depicting a game of golf was designed. The 18 holes were replaced with 18 questions about workplace health promotion. If the questions are answered correctly, the game can continue, if not a "detour" must be made. If a staff member cannot answer any of the questions, he is encouraged to talk to the manager. He then receives full written information about every question.

Measures already taken:

- n Verbal information for the VSSM area heads of careers training
- n Verbal information for the VSSM central committee
- n Establishment of a working group in which employer and employees are represented
- n Workshops and meetings organised
- n Developing the workplace health promotion "game"
- n Planning a time scale for implementation
- n Organising training for the mediators.

Make the healthy way the more humorous way

Two levels of action have taken place:

1. WHP has been integrated into the association teaching syllabus and examination regulations. Teachers are undergoing training as mediators by Suva.
2. WHP has also been integrated into all the association companies. WHP is to be introduced in addition to the measures already stipulated by law. Emphasis should be placed on a humorous approach with the help of a game of golf named "Hole in One". Once interest is awakened, it should be spontaneous and fun to play. The following aids are available:
 - n "Playing field" poster of a golf course with 18 questions. It should be displayed somewhere easily accessible, e.g. in the cloakrooms, canteen, WC door.
 - n 18 answer cards explaining the questions should be hung in a folder. If a player has further questions, or would like further explanation he should contact the supervisor. This encourages the communication process.
 - n The person responsible, normally the company owner, is provided with comprehensive background material to the 18 questions.
 - n Every employee in each of the companies belonging to the association, receives a special game to keep as a reminder of workplace health promotion.

Conclusions

An association such as VSSM is involved with many companies so it is an ideal point of contact. The association and its training centres are already well known and recognised by the companies. It is well placed to involve a large number of SMEs and for regional VSSM staff to provide support and assistance. Without this kind of backing, companies tend to be reluctant to undertake reform, particularly when there is no legal obligation. Ideally, employee representatives should not only support the project but take an active role. Everyone involved in the project believes that the chosen method is a positive way of bringing workplace health promotion to SMEs. However, the success can only be assessed after the implementation. Involvement of both employer and employee is essential. Involvement of experts such as industrial psychologists and marketing specialists is to be recommended. Because the association structures and decision making processes need to be taken into consideration, all the activities take much longer than they would in individual companies where often only one person makes the decisions.

Titan AG

Titan AG is an automobile service business based in central Zurich. It is one of the main contract partners to BMW Switzerland AG and recently became the general importer of the new BMW scooter. The company is divided into departments, each with its own head who reports to the director at weekly meetings.

WHP – finding answers

Following a workplace health promotion presentation given by Suva (the Swiss accident insurance institute), the director of Titan AG contacted the organisation's experts. He felt that there was potential to improve both the relationship between employees and management's behaviour towards staff. Before setting a plan in motion Suva discussed the way the company operated, its products and philosophy, so that a sustainable structure could be created. Although Suva provides support, ultimately the company has to function independently.

Suva's contribution:

- n Preparing and supporting all meetings relating to the workplace health promotion project
- n Establishing structures and procedures for the integration of workplace health promotion
- n Preparing and running workshops in co-operation with management and working groups
- n Providing support for the working groups and helping to plan activities
- n Identifying problems, setting targets and evaluating results
- n Assessing the situation via questionnaires and interviews and

evaluating the results before recommending appropriate measures

- n Supporting the measures and monitoring them with regular assessments and evaluation discussions with management and selected employees.

The activities were carried out on-site with a consultant and a trainer. An industrial psychologist and a quality consultant were available for consultation when needed. The training module "team building and inter-departmental co-operation" was applied.

Planning the project

Suva's programme ran as follows:

- n Informing management about the project
- n Informing the entire staff about the project
- n Appointing an internal working group and training an appropriate staff member as a mediator
- n Drawing up a report using a SALSA questionnaire (salutogenic subjective working analysis) and circulating it to all employees
- n Holding a series of interviews (fourteen in total), based on the questionnaire
- n Analysing the results compiled by the working groups



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- Compiling a list of improvement measures with the working group, prioritising these and suggesting them to the directors.

Translating ideas into action

Following analysis of the questionnaires and the interviews and having looked at the priorities set out by the internal working group, the following issues were identified as needing urgent attention:

- Inter-departmental co-operation
- Management behaviour towards staff
- Personal relationships among staff
- Information policy
- Design and cleanliness of the rest rooms
- A two day workshop attended by management aimed to fulfill a number of further objectives too
- Integration of WHP measures into company policy
- Improvement of supervisor and management leadership style
- Improvement of inter-departmental co-operation
- Promotion of team spirit and co-operation.

Efforts were also made to find ways of integrating workplace health promotion into company management processes, redesigning work systems in the garages, introducing the new product (BMW scooter) into the sales, service and maintenance departments and establishing a publicity campaign to update all staff on the project's progress

(monthly newsletters and an information board in the cafeteria).

Achieving the desired result

The management at Titan AG immediately pledged their support for Suva, having already recognised the need for improved staff relationships. Suva's list of proposed improvements was approved by management and the project was set in motion without delay. Before starting on each activity, the situation at the outset was recorded and individual objectives identified. An evaluation took place every six months so that progress could be assessed. Preliminary results and the response from staff at all levels show that positive strides have been made. The most significant being a tangible improvement in the working atmosphere. The reaction to the implemented WHP measures was positive too. Employees reported improved well-being. However, it is too soon to tell if the project will be successful in the long-term. These results show that this is an effective method of integrating workplace health promotion into an SME. However, the success of the venture is dependent on a number of crucial factors: the mediator can only function effectively if the right person is chosen for the job; the whole project can only be successful if it becomes part of the daily functioning of a company and is wholeheartedly supported by the director.

WHP – a wider context

Workplace health promotion is not yet widely embraced. Its chances of success are improved, as mentioned earlier, if the owner or manager is co-operative and supports the project. WHP is also more likely to be well received in a company where positive personal relationships and good verbal communication already exist. At present, Suva cannot advertise its services for legal reasons. If workplace health promotion is to reach a wider circle of SMEs, a comprehensive advertising campaign is needed. An effective network is also essential for the implementation and integration of workplace health promotion.

Suva identified the following key points as prerequisites for success:

- For the mediator to successfully lead an internal working group he or she must feel a genuine commitment to the task and not feel pressurised by management.
- Management should have a positive attitude to workplace health promotion, set an example and give active support.
- Workplace health promotion should not be regarded as a one-off project. It needs to be integrated into the structure of the company if it is to be sustainable.
- An expert organisation has to be available for consultation and regular contact must be maintained between the SME and the experts.

suvaPro suvaCare suvaRisk suvaliv!

The Swiss accident insurance institute (Suva) is a financially independent non-profit making organisation employing 2203 people. The head office is in Lucerne and it has 22 agencies throughout Switzerland.

Suva insures around 1.74 million employees in 106,367 companies against occupational and non-occupational accidents and occupational illnesses. Suva also provides accident insurance to the 140,000 unemployed in Switzerland.

- n To support the organisational units with awareness campaigns, training measures and information
- n To optimise health promotion activities
- n To develop health promotion models.

Bringing in WHP

In 1993, Suva decided to develop a strategy for introducing workplace health promotion to the organisation and for providing specifically tailored advice on WHP for production and service enterprises.

Suva started off by drawing up a framework programme to integrate all 42 organisational units into the internal health promotion project. The first pilot project was launched at the end of 1996 in an agency with a staff of 130 and five more followed in 1997. The success of these was evaluated by an external company. Since then, 26 of the 42 organisations have become involved.

Aims of the internal WHP project:

- n To enable the organisational units to incorporate health promotion into their daily working lives

Making progress

Each organisational unit involved in the project was classified as a small or medium sized enterprise and given a budget of approximately CHF 22,000 (about 14,300) to carry out initial measures and to finance external expertise where necessary. For analysis, implementation and evaluation purposes, each unit was dealt with autonomously.

Working towards solutions

Two employees from each unit were trained as mediators. They led the team for the duration of the project and maintained responsibility once it had been integrated as a process. Working groups were also set up. A SALSA (Salutogenic subjective working analysis by Schwager and Udriš) questionnaire was used to assess the situation.

Sample action plan

<i>Activity and aim:</i>	<i>Action guidelines:</i>
Assessment of office ergonomics and passing on of results to employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training two staff members in ergonomics • Checking the ergonomics of the office infrastructure • Eye test and eye-pressure measuring for all PC users
Improving existing management methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training management personnel in better techniques and improving communication with employees
Helping employees cope with stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing information on stress and helping individuals to enhance their personal ability to manage stress • Support from internal/external expert
Helping employees to deal with conflict situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasise each employee's strong points and contribution to the team. • Improve positive communication to create a happier working atmosphere in the department

Approximately 85% of these were returned, which was an excellent result. Interviews supplemented the findings from the questionnaire. It was therefore possible to produce both quantitative and qualitative evidence. The working groups analysed this information, identified and prioritised problems, drew up list of measures and a time plan for implementation.

Levels of success varied considerably from unit to unit, which was only to be expected. Some employees are more willing than others to commit to this type of project.

Creating healthy working conditions

Despite the fact that on occasions the project was too brief for concrete measures to be introduced, many employees reported a degree

of improvement in their working conditions. However, it proved difficult to solve the problem of reducing the work load and dealing with time pressure. Nonetheless, creating a better working environment was a tremendous achievement.

It has to be noted that WHP issues and the reality of the demands of the working world are at odds with one another. This dilemma needs to be resolved if WHP is to maintain credibility.

Improvement in health and well-being

As far as health and well-being are concerned, Suva's expectations were not met. A mere 27% of the employees questioned thought that their health had improved since the project began. A possible reason could be that the employees

already enjoyed good health, so there was no noticeable improvement. Well-being fared better ... 42% of those questioned reported an improvement in their well-being. This is an encouraging result, as according to the WHO, well-being is an important element in health; it also corresponds with the broad definition of health adopted by Suva.

Bringing the health promotion philosophy to the workplace

Greater emphasis is now placed on psycho-social issues such as stress management, team-spirit and reducing the work load and both staff and employees are working towards achieving this. The health promotion philosophy has been taken on board pretty much comprehensively and only a few people failed to understand the concepts behind it. Almost 90% of the workforce are familiar with their health promotion contact person. With the ground work in place, further measures can now be put into practice and consolidated on a long-term basis. However, only 52% of the workforce have ever spoken to their supervisor about health matters and only 25% have come to an agreement on a health objective within the framework of the MBO (management by objective).



CONRARDY furniture is a family owned business employing 15 people. All employees have long-term contracts. A good working relationship has been built up between the owners and the staff.

An inclusive policy

The ethos of the company is to involve employees in the planning and decision making process to give them a sense of ownership. All staff members meet on a weekly basis to discuss the planning of the week ahead. These meetings also provide an excellent opportunity for discussing new ideas and looking at ways of improving the site, for instance creating a better system for storing stock, improving equipment and creating more effective work systems.

Looking after employees' interests It is important to balance the demands of working life with the needs of employees. Being flexible suits both the employer and the staff. One example of flexibility working for everyone occurred during a recent slack period. Staff were given the option of taking unpaid leave, although there was no pressure whatsoever on anyone to do so. Four staff members chose to take extra leave.

When the factory is very busy meeting large orders, staff are under immense pressure. Ways of alleviating stress have been looked at carefully. Employees have the option of working overtime, dead-

lines are discussed with customers to see if these can be extended without causing inconvenience, sometimes extra workers are drafted in to spread the workload.

Creating a happy working atmosphere

Efforts are made to create a pleasant and positive working environment. Staff tend to be more motivated and productive when they feel that their wellbeing counts.

Staff enjoy activities together outside the workplace. For instance, the company organised mountain bike rides during the summer. Other summer activities include long weekends away where staff enjoy activities like sailing. Events like these serve a dual purpose – staff have a good time and strengthen their personal relationships which subsequently helps them work together more effectively as a team.

Every Friday the plant shuts at lunchtime, so employees have the benefit of an extended weekend break. At the end of each working year, a party is laid on for staff.



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Training and qualifications

The company is committed to improving staff skills. The owner attends seminars and there is ongoing training for all staff members too. Specialist instructors are brought in to teach correct lifting techniques when moving heavy loads. This is carried out under the authority of the government accident insurance organisation Association d'Assurances contre les Accidents (AAA).

There is also a commitment to the continuous improvement of working conditions (including upgrading equipment) and work flow. This area is looked at regularly and a number of improvements have been made.

Working equipment

Efforts are made to ensure that the working equipment is in good order. Improvements have been made to the storage racks to make product handling easier and to avoid excessive strain; lifting equipment has also been introduced to cut down muscular-skeletal problems.

Responsibility for OHS matters and environmental issues

The entire team shares the responsibility for OHS matters and training is given. Access to relevant

health and safety services is provided and information is gathered through specialist magazines, exhibitions and via the media. A risk assessment booklet written by the AAA is given to every worker when he or she starts the job. There is no statutory requirement to supply personal protective equipment, but the owner covers 50% of such costs.

Tropical hardwood isn't used in the company's manufacturing processes because of the environmental impact of using this kind of raw material

How are health and safety related behaviour patterns dealt with? Smokers have the right to tobacco breaks, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. Six workers decided to stop smoking on their own volition, but with encouragement from the company. Problems with alcohol are dealt with in an open and honest way. Three staff members had drink related problems and both the owner and their co-workers helped them through their difficulties.

Specific welfare related activities

The owner of the business has a strong social conscience and is concerned with the welfare of staff. Good employee health is not looked at purely from a physical point of view, but also in terms of wellbeing and job satisfaction.

Employee satisfaction goes hand-in-hand with good health. It is also clear that a good working atmosphere is good for business. While welfare measures cost money, these are more than outweighed by the benefits.

Customer satisfaction is also crucial to the success of the company. Customers' opinions are sought and heeded. If any complaints are received these are reported immediately and dealt with. Complaints are very infrequent though.

Better health – better business

Generally speaking, employees enjoy good health. There is very little occupational illness and absenteeism is low. Health and welfare related activities have improved business results.



SUDGAZ is an energy distribution company supplying natural gas. The regional municipalities, 15 in total, are shareholders in the company. A staff of 62 all have long-term contracts.

SUDGAZ runs a training initiative aimed at introducing young people to the workplace. The students work on site. The manager is well aware that bringing students to the workplace is a time-consuming process, but feels that this is good practice and is of considerable benefit to the young people in the area.

respected they are more motivated and productive. He encourages staff to participate in leisure activities such as bike rides, football, tennis and table tennis. Enjoying social events together helps staff to bond. Some staff members also take part in the European bicycle ride organised by the International Gas Congress, and held every three years. This also contributes to the social cohesion of the workforce.

A valued workforce

The director is keen to make employees feel that they are an integral part of the company. To improve communications and establish strong personal relationships, he tours the site on a daily basis. Workers are encouraged to make suggestions, these are approved by management and implemented swiftly.

There are times when work can become stressful. If staff are under extreme pressure, work is carried out by subcontractors.

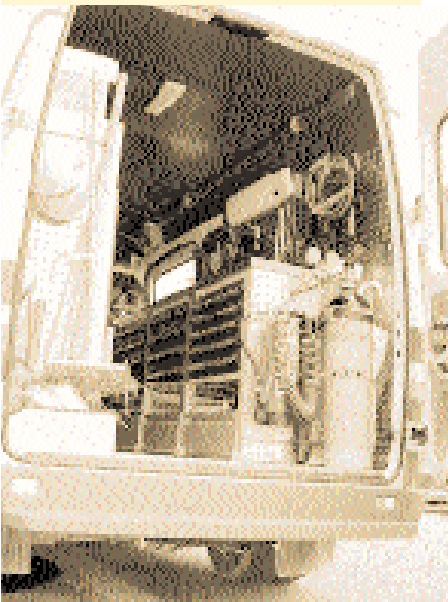
Creating a positive work environment

The director is well aware that a positive working atmosphere is a vital part of a successful business. When staff feel appreciated and

Achieving better working conditions and improving safety

Since safety issues have been under the spotlight, the accident rate has dropped dramatically. A number of measures have been introduced to improve workers' daily lives. These include: purchase of a special device similar to a lifting-beam for moving gas-pipes; provision of wet weather gear with integrated fire-protection and fluorescent stripes for all staff, along with the provision of safety helmets.

The company's "task-force engines" have been improved, one vehicle operates like an on-site office and carries comprehensive diagrams indicating the location of pipelines. Safety measures relating to gas leak detection have been



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upgraded. Gas leak detection devices are no longer carried by the operator but transported on a secure two-wheel system. All old gas meters are being replaced and a policy of renewing meters every ten years has been brought in.

Preventive training and first aid instruction relating to gas leaks is given to all subcontractors and to all excavator operators employed by the construction companies. Upon completion of training each individual is given a certificate and an identity card carrying important phone numbers i.e. emergency services; a special sticker is also attached to the operator's excavator. This means that legitimate, fully-trained operators can be recognised at a glance during routine site checks.

Office based staff enjoy the benefits of a modern, spacious working environment. Employees are encouraged to personalise their work space with posters, radios etc.

Responsibility for OHS matters

The company meets the required occupational health and safety standards. A staff member has been appointed to oversee health and safety measures at the plant and on construction sites. The sites where licensed excavator operators work are inspected regularly. Due to the expansion of the city, the plant is now located in a busy area.

A clear delineation between the working unit and the pavement has been established to prevent accidents.

Dealing with health and safety related behaviour patterns

All employees are certified as non-smokers – a fact vouched for in their employment contracts. The company operates a policy for reintegrating the long-term sick into the workplace. This policy was implemented both for compassionate reasons and to keep skilled workers within the company. The costs of rehabilitating staff are less than those involved in training new people. Valued members of staff also make a contribution that cannot be assessed in direct financial terms.

A satisfied and healthy workforce

It is important to make workers feel as though they matter to the company. Personalised offices give staff a sense of belonging and help them feel as though their individuality counts. Team logos on delivery vans serve a similar purpose. Company activities involving all workers help create better team work. Employees are satisfied at SUDGAZ, a fact reflected in the low staff turnover.

Compared to the other three similar companies operating in the

country, SUDGAZ employees are in particularly good health.

Keeping the customer happy

The company is committed to providing a high standard of customer care. Very few complaints are received, indicating that this policy is paying off.

Making plans for the future

The company plans to repeat the first-aid training programme carried out in 1998 in order to refresh participants' memories and update skills. The fire brigades in all the municipalities involved in the regional gas-supply-net will receive further training too.



Maison Steffen is a family-owned butcher's enterprise employing 25 people – 18 men and seven women. All employees have long-term contracts. Quality and customer satisfaction is a priority. A serious financial investment has been made in order to achieve the highest possible standards.

Improving health and wellbeing

The employees feel that they are part of the business as they are brought into the planning and decision making process. Every week staff meet for a briefing and twice a year all staff meet up to discuss a wide variety of work issues. These meetings are open and informal so that staff feel able to make a contribution. Good communication channels are considered to be essential and staff can approach the owner at any time if they are experiencing difficulties.

Good working relationships are important too, and these are maintained by effective conflict management techniques and by encouraging a sense of camaraderie and team spirit. Everyone eats breakfast together, for example. This communal meal is provided by the company and includes healthy options such as freshly squeezed juice.

The employer takes the trouble to accommodate staff needs within the busy work schedule. In cases of extreme work overload, a client's order might be refused to avoid excessive pressure being placed on the staff.

A number of other small but important gestures contribute to the staff feeling valued, for instance providing a laundry service for dirty work clothes.

Continuous upgrading of skills

The company believes that training should be ongoing and that broadening staff skills is a contributory factor to a successful business. The staff skills base is maintained and improved via annual training schemes. This training takes place internally, however, the company has taken part in the LEONARDO project "training as a strategic tool for business development".

Creating better working conditions

Workers are consulted about their working environment and any problems they experience with it. Steps are taken to address the issues brought up by employees and a number of improvements have been made as a result. These include purchase of adjustable tables that can be altered to suit individual needs and trolleys for transporting heavy loads. Another measure brought in to cut down

the risk of muscular-skeletal problems was an overhead crane system for lifting heavy goods. Stairs have been replaced with ramps to make transportation of produce easier. The employer has also purchased personal protective equipment for all staff.

Meeting occupational health and safety obligations

The company meets statutory requirements on OHS and access to relevant services is provided for all workers. When individuals start work they are given an information file on OHS matters relating specifically to their profession.

An external audit is carried out twice a month by a veterinary surgeon. A variety of measures – beyond those required by law – are also implemented. In order to protect the health of employees, smoking is banned in the communal dining area.

The company's efforts on behalf of staff resulted in its being nominated for a Good Practice Award 2000.

The benefits of caring for staff
The company believes that taking preventive action where health is concerned contributes towards prosperity. A happy, healthy workforce is a productive one. Initial financial outlay is more than repaid by long-term benefits such as low absenteeism and high productivity.

Because staff are well looked after and feel valued, turnover is low too. In 2001 four staff members will be given a gold watch to mark ten years of employment with the company.

Guaranteeing customer satisfaction

In a business like this customer satisfaction is of immense importance. Customers are very happy with the service they are getting and appreciate that such great emphasis is placed on high quality, however their satisfaction is never taken for granted. Should a complaint be received, it is taken very seriously and is dealt with immediately. The company believes strongly that it cannot flourish if the needs of its employees and customers are ignored.

Improving health

Although the employees enjoy very good health and absenteeism is low, the company makes a point of looking at ways in which health and well-being can be improved. Like training, maintaining health is an ongoing process and the company cannot afford to be complacent. The company is convinced that a healthy, motivated workforce makes an invaluable contribution to the continued success of the business.

Developing plans for the future

The business has grown enormously since it was set up more than a decade ago. At the start the owner and one partner ran the entire operation, now the company employs 25 people. Lack of space has become a major problem with the expansion of the business, so there are plans to move to a sophisticated, modern and spacious plant as soon as possible.

BGZ Wegvervoer (Road transport) is an intermediary organisation dedicated to improving working conditions and creating better health policies in road transport companies in The Netherlands.

Nearly 5000 companies (85 % of transport companies) with approximately 100.000 employees buy their occupational health care via a collective contract with BGZ Wegvervoer's occupational health services. The majority of these companies are SMEs.

Introducing better services

Besides co-ordinating occupational health and workplace health promotion, BGZ Wegvervoer recognises the importance of assessing the success of implemented measures. As these measures need to have a practical application in the real world, resources have been allocated for monitoring and evaluation.

Building better relationships

BGZ Wegvervoer is determined to encourage better co-operation between the parties involved in occupational health and workplace health promotion. Relevant parties include transport companies (both employers and employees) and the regional occupational health services.

Launch of the "complete package"

A new and unique package for improving working conditions was introduced in January 2000. It adopts a more proactive approach to reducing (long-term) absen-

teeism and improving workplace health promotion. It includes identification of factors that might contribute to long-term ill-health, organising counselling and rehabilitation for sick employees and, if rehabilitation isn't possible, finding another suitable job for that person.

Companies are also offered an "on demand" package where each activity is paid for separately – this option tends to be favoured by larger companies. However, nearly 85 % opt for the complete package.

Provision of additional services

BGZ Wegvervoer provides a special service desk to answer queries from companies, employees and occupational health services. There is also a website providing information on a variety of topics including service packages and special courses for companies and their employees. BGZ Wegvervoer also develops specific material such as occupational health policies and absenteeism management plans. An occupational health & safety checklist for road transport companies has also been developed for businesses with fewer than 15 employees.



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Occupational health awards

From time to time BGZ Wegvervoer presents awards to companies with good occupational health and health promotion policies.

The "Healthier on the go" newsletter

BGZ Wegvervoer produces a bi-monthly newsletter called "Healthier on the go". This magazine is distributed to all road transport companies, occupational health services, roadside cafes used by drivers, associated organisations and to the home addresses of all member organisation employees (100.000). The newsletter covers developments in health and safety and workplace health promotion as well as issues such as ergonomic tests on truck cabs.

Other valuable services

n Road Transport information system

Data relating to occupational health and workplace health promotion (for example reporting rates of sickness and return to work) are fed into the computer information system (WIS). The data are statistically analysed by BGZ Wegvervoer and made available to members under the conditions imposed by privacy regulations.

n Training courses

A number of management training courses are organised on a broad spectrum of topics. Preventive health issues are covered extensively.

n Company research

Research has been carried out on stress in road transport and problems related to working with containers, pallet trucks and transport of livestock. Pilot projects are running in a number of companies.

WHP under the spotlight

BGZ Wegvervoer is placing increasing emphasis on workplace health promotion in addition to its existing work in occupational health. Regional managers are responsible for building up relationships with transport companies and occupational health services. These regional managers encourage companies to discuss their needs and to introduce improvements to the working environment. Demand for workplace health promotion is growing as businesses become increasingly aware of the costs of ill-health.

Education and training

BGZ Wegvervoer recognises that good communication with employees is essential. A number of presentations is organised throughout the country and efforts are made to ensure that meetings are easily accessible. Reduced rates are offered to members for all training activities.

Training of experts

Thanks to the special course for occupational health workers organised by the Netherlands School of Occupational Health in association

with BGZ Wegvervoer, the focus on workplace health promotion in road transport has increased.

Extensive research

Several methods are used to assess the success of BGZ Wegvervoer's approach. Every two years employers and employees are asked to fill in a questionnaire about the activities and services provided by the organisation. In-depth research is carried out to assess the success of BGZ's programmes.

The approach developed by BGZ Wegvervoer has attracted interest from organisations outside the transport sector. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment has commissioned a study to find out if this approach is transferable to other sectors.

During 2001 methods of tackling stress will be looked at. These will be tailored to suit the specific needs of individual companies. Large-scale research has been carried out in various transport companies and BGZ Wegvervoer has developed a number of training programmes as a result.

Adopting a practical approach to occupational health and workplace health promotion along with implementing a structured policy for rehabilitation and prevention of absenteeism has produced positive results. Health awareness in the transport and road transport industry is increasing and with it a demand for workplace health promotion.

Social partners in the motor vehicle and two-wheeler branch

Netherlands



The Bedrijfsraad (“company council”) for the motor industry is the consultative body and communication platform of employers’ organisations “BOVAG” and “NCBRM” and the unions “FNV Bondgenoten”, “CNV Bedrijvenbond” and “De Unie”. This consultative body oversees working conditions, safety and well-being at work for 12.000 employers and 84.000 employees in car and truck dealerships, petrol stations, car wash companies, car rental companies, caravan and trailer companies, salvage companies, motor repair companies and bicycle and motorcycle companies. The majority of these enterprises are SMEs.

An increased awareness of WHP SMEs rarely make full use of occupational health services. A collective agreement makes it easier to develop a tailor-made service better suited to SMEs. BOVAG has developed a system involving three different occupational health services that brings in tailor-made health promotion options alongside primary occupational health care. Nearly 40% of its members subscribe to this system.

As a result of these industry specific measures, awareness of WHP has grown and employers and employees in the motor vehicle and motorcycle sector are taking a more active interest in health and well-being than ever before.

Developing WHP

Research has revealed that only 30% of businesses have carried out a risk-evaluation and risk inventory – something they are legally obliged to do. A campaign encouraging companies to carry out a working conditions checklist was not very successful either. The

“company council” therefore decided to organise the “Occupational health care, take it seriously” campaign (1998-2000). A long-term approach was adopted with the aim of increasing awareness about working conditions and health promotion. An action plan was based on the results of questionnaires sent to employers and employees.

Making changes for the better

An external organisation was commissioned to develop the campaign. Four areas were singled out for attention and James Bond imagery used to highlight them:

- Dangerous substances: (under the heading “Not for your eyes only”). Drawing attention to the safe use and disposal of solvents, petrol, battery acid and coolants.
- External factors: (under the heading “Cold fingers”). This looked at the work environment including elements such as temperature, draughts, lighting and noise.

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- Pressure of work and physical strain: (under the heading “Dr Yes/Dr No”). This looked at both mental and physical stresses and strains.

- Safety (physical and psychological): (under the heading “You only live once”). Looking at safety in the workplace and well-being.

Special meetings for employers and employees were organised and printed material distributed. Materials developed included a recognisable logo, a video, five leaflets and a CD-ROM for both employers and employees, information packages relating to each of the four categories listed above, posters and stickers, educational material for use in training courses, press releases and prizes for the best idea for creating a healthier work environment. An evaluation study was also commissioned.

Further developments

Regional meetings

Special meetings were organised for staff by the employer and employee organisations. All employees received a personal invitation to these meetings. Each of the four areas outlined above were discussed in depth.

Training schedules

The campaign has been integrated into the training schedule of “INNOVAM” (a training institute for

this sector).

Checklist for working conditions

The company council has developed two special checklists for the motor vehicle and motorcycle industry. Tools for carrying out risk inventory and risk evaluation have been developed for car and truck dealers, petrol stations, car wash companies, car rental companies, caravan and trailer companies, salvage companies, motor repair companies and bicycle and motorcycle companies.

Evaluation

A survey was carried out to assess the response to the campaign, the use of the checklist and the role of occupational health services. One important stride forward was identified: since the campaign began the number of companies carrying out risk inventories and evaluation has increased significantly.

Looking for further improvements

The “company council” believes that there is still much room for improvement in working conditions and workplace health promotion in the motor and motor-cycle industry. The first step is for all companies to fulfill their legal obligations, therefore bringing occupational health into the quality and environmental policy of their enterprises.

The campaign has seen some suc-

cesses however. As it provided practical solutions specific to individual needs it was relevant to many organisations. As a result recognition of the need for a health policy has clearly increased within the industry and the number of companies carrying out a risk inventory and evaluation has also gone up. There is a great deal more openness towards discussion of working conditions and well-being at work. Nevertheless, it is still a real challenge to get SMEs interested in workplace health promotion and to keep that interest going.

The “company council” has decided to continue with the campaign and develop it further as the response has been receptive and further work needs to be done.



Motorhuis Leiden is a middle-sized enterprise which has integrated workplace health promotion and occupational health care into its quality and social policy. Developing human potential and developing mutual trust between employees and management is a priority. As a result absenteeism rates due to sickness have been low for many years and employees are very loyal to the company.

The company generally initiates health policies but is very grateful for the support of the Company Council for Motor Vehicles and 'Arboned' (the occupational health service).

How the business operates

The Motorhuis group has a decentralised organisational structure made up of independent working companies which are responsible for their own business success. The group employs 850 people spread over 10 locations. The business described here is based in Leiden. Motorhuis Leiden deals primarily in Opel cars but also has an interest in American vehicles. It employs 200 people, some of them on a part-time basis. In addition to selling new and specialised vehicles, the company sells spare parts and has a garage for maintenance and repair and a car wash. There is also a sales and administration office. Economically, the company is very successful and has expanded over the last few years.

The benefits of a caring policy

Motorhuis Leiden believes that investing in people, maintaining good communication channels and developing sound health policies makes good business sense.

Motorhuis has a long tradition of encouraging a very human work culture. Management tries to be very open and is anxious to ensure that employees feel involved in all aspects of the organisation. It has worked hard to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

Introducing successful measures

An effective internal communication system has been developed. Good formal and informal communication channels are in place and the managers are very approachable. The company has a very active staff association which organises activities for employees. An internal computer network is currently in development. A staff magazine called 'Het koppel' (The link) is produced 5 times a year.

Opel Netherlands introduced a motivational programme in 1995 called 'Opel Difference' which focuses on quality and optimal customer service. Within this programme attention is paid to working conditions and workplace health promotion. The company attempts to balance the demands of the job with workers' well-being and satisfaction. Employees are encouraged to enhance their skills and are given extensive training opportunities. As great emphasis is placed on personal responsibility and decision-making, special motivational and training programmes are offered to employees so that they can further their personal development.

Motorhuis Leiden employs an occupational health co-ordinator who meets up regularly with occupational health co-ordinators from the other nine establishments. The company has a written policy statement for occupational health care, makes annual occupational health care plans and fulfils all legal requirements. The company often makes the first move regarding new and improved health policies but is also extremely grateful for the support provided by the Company Council for Motor Vehicles in developing these policies. Support from the OHS service 'Arboned' has proved invaluable and the occupational health doctor has also made a very important contribution. All the above have played their part in the company's low

rates of absenteeism due to sickness (which are much lower than those of similar businesses in the same industry).

Positive results

Tremendous emphasis has been placed on occupational health care and health promotion as well as caring for the mental health and well-being of employees. A caring company culture and approachable, employee-oriented management structure is seen as being vital to the success of the business. Staff display great loyalty to the company, to the extent that several employees who left to take up other jobs have since returned to their old posts.

In 1999 and 2000 a great deal of work was carried out to improve occupational health care and workplace health promotion. Prior to this, research was conducted in a number of areas, for instance, noise levels were measured in all workshops and potential risk factors in using solvents looked at. All the recommendations made were acted upon. Every employee is given the opportunity to visit the local hospital for a health check.

Consultations about work, work satisfaction and training are carried out regularly and talking about personal health is part of this. Motorhuis Leiden gives people the chance to develop by giving them

responsibility and by providing focused training programmes and courses. Employees are encouraged to voice their opinions. When people leave the company the reasons for this are looked at.

The very human, interactive approach adopted by Motorhuis Leiden has reaped dividends in financial terms, the company is very successful and profitable. As a result further health initiatives are planned along with a greater emphasis on health promotion measures, such as making the company a smoke-free zone.

The Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry (NHO) was established in 1989. Its aim is to improve working conditions and develop opportunities for all member enterprises and to foster economic growth.

NHO is made up of 15,800 member organisations. Most are small enterprises – 91 per cent have fewer than 50 employees and many of them are family owned. More than half of NHO members (52 per cent) come from service industries such as tourism, crafts, media and research. The others (48 per cent) are from industries like oil and building.

Goals and strategies

NHO is working towards:

- Putting the spotlight on health, safety and the environment
- Raising politicians' awareness of working life in small businesses
- Reducing the burden of red tape
- Securing more flexible working arrangements

The NHO's Working Environment Fund

Annually, NHO's Working Environment Fund grants up to 40 million NOK to support projects aiming to improve the work environment in Norwegian business and industry. It is stressed that the experiences made from the projects will be spread out to other enterprises and businesses that may find them useful. NHO claims that the fund will increasingly stress projects emphasising the importance of the workplace as a positive health promoter.

NHO Projects

NHO runs a number of projects in conjunction with the authorities, research institutions and trade unions. Examples of these include:

■ **EGA-DUA**

This is a joint project between NHO and the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions (LO). Emphasis is placed on involving employees in the day to day running of the business and results show that staff take an active interest in how the business operates. A great interest has also been shown in creating a health promoting work environment and good quality production processes.

■ **Good health makes good business**

This project looked at how effective, relevant HES (Health, Environment and Safety) could be brought to SMEs. 60 small businesses took part in the project and methods of tailoring HES to the needs of small organisations were developed.

■ **Reducing sick leave (SYPRAS)**

The focus here was on reducing absenteeism and improving well-being and productivity. Businesses from four different fields worked together to identify "best practice".



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HES work in the federations

The Working Environment Fund finances HES consultants within the federations. Together the federations and the HES consultants work to create a better and more health promoting work environment in the member organisations.

The following activities are being carried out:

n *National Federation of Norwegian Fish and Aquaculture Industries (FHL)*

This organisation represents 542 members. It looks after their interests relating to trade policy, wages, working conditions and HES. Several concrete projects and initiatives are taken in the field of multi-cultural work environment in the fishing industry, establishment of environment committees, EGA-DUA projects including four enterprises and a joint HES project in Båtsfjord involving seven pilot enterprises.

n *Norwegian Hospitality Association (RBL)*

The Norwegian Hospitality Association (RBL) is the unifying organisation for enterprises within the Norwegian hospitality sector. RBL has approximately 2,250 members with a total of close to 50,000 employees. 96 per cent of the member enterprises have less than 50 employees - 85 per cent have less than 20 employees. In several projects they are working out guidelines and information focusing on how to perform a good practice regarding the work environment.

n *Federation of Norwegian Building Industries (BNL)*

BNL looks after approximately 3,000 member organisations. About a third have less than five employees. BNL employs three HES consultants who have extensive experience in health, safety, the environment and quality assurance and can help member enterprises with advice on how to make HES work and how to achieve good results from it and guidance on occupational health services and HES legislation.

n *Federation of Norwegian Food and Drink Industry (NBL)*

NBL organises conferences, runs projects, offers consultancy and prepares and sells various HES material. The relationship between the working environment and sick leave is one of the most pressing issues it deals with.

Valuable and productive projects

Many of the projects have used HES as a tool for improving competitiveness. Good health and a good working environment are important factors in increasing productivity and profitability. There is also a potential for making considerable savings by improving HES standards. NHO stresses the importance of identifying effective measures and passing this information on to as many of the member organisations as possible. SMEs often experience problems in handling vast amounts of red tape. Many projects have addressed this and work is in progress to develop

simpler systems for SMEs.

The EGA-DUA project, which NHO and the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions are working together on, involves 25 enterprises in different business areas. The project focuses on ways of making work more health promoting.

Reaching SMEs

The workload is heavy in most SMEs and employees are used to shouldering responsibility and performing a number of roles. In order that employees feel encouraged to participate actively in projects, they must be realistic and meaningful and the aims have to be credible. It is important to develop individual solutions that suit individual enterprises.

WHP in SMEs: looking to the future

NHO wants to prioritise initiatives that emphasise the workplace as a health promoting arena. It is of major importance to pass on good initiatives so that other businesses can benefit from them. Examples of positive initiatives include:

- n Developing methods of helping older employees to remain in employment as long as possible
- n Helping employees on long-term sick leave to return to the workplace wherever possible rather than having to rely on benefits
- n Developing workplace initiatives that will benefit employees both physically and mentally via individual and organisational adjustments.

The Crisis Centre in Fredrikstad Norway



The crisis centre in Fredrikstad provides a haven for women and children suffering domestic violence and is part of a network of shelters established 21 years ago. Advice and support is offered, but the emphasis is on helping people to help themselves. The centre has a staff of 12. It also operates a 24-hour telephone service.

Like most crisis centres, this one is run by a private organisation as a subsidiary to public services. Half the funding comes from the state and the rest of the budget from the municipalities of Fredrikstad and Hvaler.

Domestic violence in Norway

In 1998, 51 crisis centres had 2.200 women and 17.000 children through their doors – totalling some 80.000 overnight stays. In addition to providing a safe house for sufferers of domestic abuse, these shelters try to address the gender bias that legitimises domestic and sexual violence.

Workplace health promotion in the crisis centre

Providing support for traumatised women and children can be very demanding for staff at the shelter. They are constantly dealing with people whose situation is desperate and have to face the challenge of turning despair into something positive. For staff to be able to cope with the huge demands placed upon them, they too have to feel nurtured. Staff welfare is a major concern and the centre

works hard to create a supportive structure.

The Fredrikstad centre is owned and run by the Blue Cross Fredrikstad and is a member of the Norwegian Association of Crisis Centres. It also belongs to an employers' organisation, the Federation of Commercial and Service Enterprises. Employees' wages and working conditions are fixed according to current agreements.

Developing effective working relationships

An open working environment and close co-operation between staff is essential if a high standard of care is to be provided for abused women and children. In a sensitive environment such as this, a good rapport between staff is vital.

Staff meetings are held every month. Everyone contributes to the discussions on the running of the centre and how things can be developed in the future. This helps create a sense of ownership among employees that is so important to a small operation where every person counts. Work is also divided democratically so that everyone has to do their fair share of good

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and bad jobs. The crisis centre is a progressive organisation and staff are encouraged to enhance and update their skills.

Meeting employees' needs

Two years ago, as part of a training course, the shelter manager had to ask employees to give an evaluation of the shelter's managerial style and how this could be improved upon. Staff said that they wanted to feel recognised and valued and have their opinions listened to. These requests were responded to, with good results. Employees are looked after in a number of ways, for example:

- n If someone is having problems in their private life they are offered advice or therapy. Changes in the work schedule and workload can also be arranged to ease the burden.
- n Consideration and thoughtfulness are important too. If someone is ill they are sent flowers and get well cards. Following sick leave staff are eased back into the workplace gently.

Developing a relationship with the community

The crisis centre is run from a private house in a residential area. Generally speaking, people are sceptical of having a crisis centre on their doorstep, but in this case

neighbourly relations are excellent. The centre has made a point of involving the community and has invited everyone in the area to a discussion session.

The centre is very active in terms of raising awareness about domestic violence and creating a better understanding of this issue. Awareness campaigns also serve as a marketing tool, alerting women to the centre's existence, so that they know where to turn when the situation at home becomes untenable. A good relationship has also been developed with the press and the centre's work is often highlighted in a positive way. Contact has been established with the police as well as with the casualty department at the hospital. Lectures on domestic violence and the centre's work have been given to both the above and practical experience is offered to trainee social workers, police officers and nurses as well as pupils from the local comprehensive school. A leaflet has also been produced for survivors of violence and their families.

Occupational Health and Safety

The centre has an arrangement with a security firm called Securitas, so that help is at hand if a situation becomes hostile. There is also a fire alarm system with a direct connection to the Fire Brigade. The centre is connected to the local occupational health ser-

vice, Volvat OHS, and receives advice on developing a health promoting working environment.

Results

The crisis centre is a small operation with limited financial resources. The centre leader works hard to create an organisational culture that promotes health and safety for everyone. A caring atmosphere has been developed and staff know that they can expect support if the work becomes too stressful or when problems arise in their private life. Despite the pressures inherent in this work, the centre has made positive strides in promoting good health for both the women and children who use its services and for employees. Staff turnover is very low which is surprising given the demanding nature of the work and the fairly low status it has within society. Employees also take great responsibility and pride in the way the shelter operates. The centre is highly regarded by sufferers of domestic violence and is seen as a safe haven. No formal evaluation of the crisis centre has been carried out, but these indicators show that this centre is a health promoting organisation both for the women who need help, and for the employees.

Båtsfjord – a society of good practice

Norway



The fishing community of Båtsfjord has formed a co-operative society where all the businesses (and the local authority) have joined forces to secure the village's economic development and prosperity. The community faces enormous challenges as export markets are far away and rural depopulation has created a manpower problem.

A supportive structure

The village of Båtsfjord makes a significant contribution to Norway's fishing industry. Although all the businesses that operate from here are in competition, they acknowledge that they all need to pull together for the greater good. Joint services have been set up: an occupational health service, a refrigeration plant (a vital asset as no single business could afford to set up this kind of operation), a training centre and Fishnet, a facility for looking at IT opportunities.

Båtsfjordbruket AS

Båtsfjordbruket AS is an SME within the fishing industry network. Established in the late 19th century, it was modernised extensively in 1981, with a further 15 million NOK (about 1,8 million) invested during the 90s to keep the business at the cutting edge. This investment paid off and the company has enjoyed tremendous prosperity in recent years.

Aims and objectives

Båtsfjordbruket AS aims to:

- n Develop and maintain a safe and health promoting workplace, a good working environment and to take environmental considerations on board
- n Achieve prosperity with high quality production processes and a top class product
- n Be flexible and adaptable to ensure future prosperity.

The business is up-to-date with all statutory requirements within production and process management and will continue to make improvements in the future.

The demands of the job

Each year the enterprise buys about 5 million kilos of raw materials. The fish is then filleted and 90 per cent of it exported to European and US markets.

Almost 50 per cent of the staff work on filleting. This is skilled work and demanding in terms of the speed required to keep up with production, but it is also monotonous, repetitive work that

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carries with it the risk of muscular-skeletal problems. Over the last five years, a great deal of money has been invested in improving working conditions, efficiency and hygiene.

Occupational Health and Safety and Workplace Health Promotion

The enterprise has fulfilled statutory requirements regarding occupational health and safety. It works with Båtsfjord OHS to fulfill legal requirements and to assess the working environment so that further improvements can be made. In recent years, about 3 million NOK (about 366,000) has been invested in welfare measures aimed at improving the work environment for staff – these include a canteen, sauna and kitchen facilities.

Employee participation

The employees are a very important resource to the company. As depopulation has resulted in a shortage of staff, offering good working conditions is vital for attracting and retaining employees. Employees can make a contribution to their working life via the Work Environment Committee, special working groups that are set up to manage important issues that crop up and meetings organised to discuss problems and make plans for the future.

Developing skills

The company is happy to see workers enhance their skills and encourages employees to go on courses. Many further education programmes are organised in conjunction with the Båtsfjord Educational Centre.

Cultural connections

To meet the company's employment needs, staff from a number of foreign countries have been taken on - workers come from other Scandinavian countries like Sweden and Finland as well as from Russia and Indonesia. Båtsfjordbruket AS makes a point of helping foreign workers feel at home, trouble is taken to ensure that this sense of belonging extends beyond work and into the local community as well. The company has made a conscious effort to ensure that foreign workers are integrated into the workforce and to develop a team spirit that flourishes despite differences in background and culture. Great efforts have been made to encourage everyone to take part in the various activities organised by the workplace for its staff: sporting events for example, Christmas parties, and the annual celebration when the sun returns in March, after 3 months of winter darkness.

The company also offers training courses and summer jobs to local schoolchildren in an effort to

encourage them to stay in Båtsfjord rather than leaving to seek work elsewhere as soon as they have finished their schooling.

Results

The fishing industry network is securing and maintaining a stable industry in a region where several businesses have failed because of the problems caused by distant markets and a lack of skilled workers.

All the organisations involved in the network benefit from it e.g. from the joint enterprises mentioned earlier and also from training provision for workers. This support structure helps all the businesses retain a place in the global market. The University of Tromsø has become involved too and has provided highly-qualified staff to help with the development of educational training in these businesses.

Båtsfjordbruket AS is a fine example of how an SME can use this kind of network not only to secure and maintain its own production and economic prosperity, but to create a happy and health promoting work environment where employees can participate in developing plans and strategies for the future.