

*Point Product Ltd is a family owned electronics business employing 41 people. All staff are employed on a full-time basis and more than half have received vocational training.*

### ***Building up a healthy enterprise***

Employees are divided up into teams. These should meet once a week, but in practice this does not always happen. The entire staff meet up on a monthly basis, however this is not an interactive session, but more of a one-way lecture-type meeting with just a few questions coming from the staff.

Employee relationships have been looked at closely in recent times. Steps are taken to prevent arguments escalating and if a bad situation seems to be developing, things are sorted out quickly.

A suggestion box for improvements was set up four years ago and to begin with many contributions were received, but there has been nothing now for over a year. This is because the staff lost heart when none of these ideas were acted upon. The company recognises that it failed in this respect and wants to address this problem.

### ***Balancing job demands with employees' needs***

Staff work flexitime and parents are encouraged to arrange their working hours to fit in with their

children. Extra free days, over and above normal leave, are given to all employees. The company is at pains to build up a more caring atmosphere and to make its staff feel valued.

The atmosphere at work has improved thanks to changes made to the hierarchical structure. Originally the work culture was very traditional, with a fairly rigid chain of command. Things have now changed. Six separate teams work independently and have greater control over their daily routines. Staff members have also been on team-building courses. Other educational and vocational courses have been set up too.

### ***Making on-going improvements***

The company has recognised that its staff have a valuable contribution to make and that their opinions need to be taken into consideration if a happier working environment is to be created. For this reason, staff are consulted before changes are made. For instance, a great deal of work has been carried out to improve ergonomics. Recently every employee was supplied with a new office chair. Staff were given the opportunity to try out three different options before



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selecting the one that suited them best.

Conditions have improved a great deal recently in terms of a pleasant physical environment too, as storage space has been converted to work space. Each team was allowed to plan their work area to suit their particular needs. Staff appreciate being consulted in this way.

### ***Why introduce workplace health promotion?***

Workplace health promotion was brought in to address the problem of a fairly high sick leave rate – between 12 and 15 per cent. An offer of help from the Finnish Institution of Occupational Health was taken up and the “Prime-age”-project launched.

The company wanted to focus on reducing sick leave by bringing in preventive practices. As a result the amount spent per individual on occupational healthcare has gone up, however these costs are infinitely less than those incurred by sickness absence.

Within the “Prime-age”-project emphasis is placed on physical exercise: making use of the gym, skiing, walking, swimming. The company has set money aside to subsidise these activities. However, motivating people to take up the opportunities provided can be diffi-

cult. People tend to start off enthusiastically but fall by the wayside as time goes on.

All staff are offered private medical insurance from the company, but here too, by no means all staff take it up.

### ***Creating a better atmosphere***

Employee satisfaction is much better now that efforts have been made to improve the work environment and their health. Although the pay is not that good and a big gap still exists between management and general employees, the work atmosphere has changed and this is important. Significantly, staff now feel happier about coming to work in the mornings. Productivity has also improved.

The sick leave rate varies from seven to eight percent and is sometimes even as low as 5 percent. Overall, the situation is improving each year.

### ***Looking ahead***

The company is committed to making further improvements. One health measure soon to be introduced is the fitness test. There will also be increased focus on training and upgrading skills, this will be of mutual benefit to the staff and the organisation.

There will also be greater opportunities for staff to make a contribution to the way in which the company operates and to make suggestions. In the past, the ideas put forward in the suggestion box weren't acted upon, so staff stopped contributing. This won't happen in the future. Staff will also be encouraged to talk if they have a problem.

The company has learnt an important lesson in looking after staff: the organisation functions better when it is less rigidly hierarchical; employees' expertise and opinions should be taken on board as they are of immense value. Staff should also enjoy greater personal autonomy.