



The Pelargos factory is based in Southern Greece and is a subsidiary of a larger company, ELAIS S.A. It produces canned tomatoes and other tomato products and employs 42 full time workers.

Pelargos was founded in 1926 and is both economically successful and considered by the local community to be a valuable asset. It holds the ISO 9002 certificate and is currently working towards obtaining the International Safety Rating System (ISRS).

work schedules if they have personal problems. Management is also flexible towards working parents. Employees are happy with this system and have voiced no complaints.

Statutory health and safety regulations

Pelargos conforms to Greek OHS legislation. The company employs an on site safety engineer, but all employees are familiar with the fire drill, operating the fire extinguishing system and have received first aid training. An occupational doctor visits the factory every week. The factory is inspected regularly by the regional health and safety inspectorate and everything has been found to be in good order. Production units in Pelargos are ergonomically designed for maximum comfort and are heated during the winter months. All equipment is tested regularly. Staff can relax in the works canteen during their lunch breaks; facilities for storing personal belongings and an area for changing into work clothes are also offered. All other statutory requirements are met in order to ensure the safety and well-being of employees. For example:

Employee participation

Occupational health and safety and workplace health promotion fits into the Total Quality Management ethos. Employees participate in the decision making process and look at ways in which their working conditions and health and safety can be improved. All decisions are made following consultation between employee representatives and management. Employees can also comment on health and safety measures and make suggestions by filling in a form called "Opportunities for Improvement". All decisions are made following consultation between employee representatives and management.

Employee friendly work patterns

Staff work three shifts at the Pelargos factory, including a night shift. However, employees can alter their



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- n Smoking is banned in the factory areas.
- n Fire extinguishers are sited throughout the factory and offices.
- n There are emergency exits in all working areas and offices.
- n Production units are spacious, well lit and properly ventilated.
- n Production units are cleaned regularly and undergo professional fumigation which takes place on a regular basis and is monitored by the safety technicians.
- n Production is mechanised and semi-automated so that employees only come into contact with the product when absolutely necessary.

Taking responsibility for OHS

Pelargos has a written policy on Health, Safety and the Environment. Responsibility for OHS is shared between employees, company management, occupational health and safety officers, safety engineers and the occupational doctor. Good communication between these parties has resulted in improved safety and enhanced employee satisfaction. Employees take an active role in health and safety issues and there is an encouraging level of attendance at seminars and health and safety committee meetings. Employees are given the opportunity to suggest improvements and have made a valuable contribution.

Workplace Health Promotion

Workplace health promotion is dealt with jointly by the company's senior health and safety officers and the occupational doctor. Employees undergo pre-employment medical examinations and follow-ups. Based on these examinations and on employee suggestions, workplace health promotion activities have been organised.

The WHP programmes carried out at Pelargos have been well received by staff. These include:

- n First aid training
- n Seminars on earthquake procedure
- n Seminars on correct use of fire extinguishers and safety procedures in the event of a fire
- n Training seminars on lifting techniques
- n Personal hygiene
- n Information on working on a personal computer, avoiding eye strain etc.
- n Seminars on dealing with stress
- n Oral health promotion programmes.

Welfare related activities

Pelargos provides private medical insurance for all employees and their families (which also covers dental costs) as well as paying the compulsory employer's contribution to the National Insurance Fund (IKA). Company policy supports the

reintegration of long-term sick employees into the workplace (although such cases are rare). The company has a positive attitude towards employing disabled people and has employed disabled staff in the past.

Pelargos co-operates with local authorities on environmental issues such as dealing with industrial waste.

Positive Results

Employee satisfaction has risen steadily following the implementation of health and safety measures. Occupational accidents are rare and the company has experienced no serious or fatal accidents in recent years. Absenteeism due to occupational sickness is minimal and a low staff turnover reflects employee satisfaction.

Occupational health and safety officers are already working towards the design and implementation of further workplace health promotion programmes such as screening for breast and cervical cancer and seminars on heart disease and diabetes. Future plans include the building of an athletic centre for use by Pelargos employees.

ZENECA

Zeneca is based in an industrial region close to Athens and employs 32 people. It produces pesticides and public health products. In 1999, it was listed among the 100 most successful companies in Greece. Zeneca was one of the first companies to obtain ISO 9002 and was also given an award for its excellent performance in safety, health and the environment. The company is not part of a supportive structure.

Employee participation

Zeneca has a policy of involving employees in work related matters. Discussion on OHS problems is encouraged and suggestions welcomed. Employee knowledge and expertise is valued highly and it is understood that everyone has an important contribution to make. Many important health and safety improvements have come about as a direct result of consultation with staff. Small tokens of appreciation are given to employees who suggest practical solutions to problems within the company. Although regular meetings with staff and management take place, the vast majority of employees express their ideas informally with factory management.

Statutory health and safety regulations

Zeneca employs an on site safety engineer, an occupational doctor and employee workplace health and safety representatives. Every possible precaution is taken to secure employees' health and safety, especially as Zeneca is involved in the repacking of potentially hazardous chemicals. Special precau-

tions regarding such chemicals include:

- n Provision of emergency equipment for use should a worker come into contact with chemicals
- n Cleaning all production areas with special machines at the end of the working day
- n Preventing contaminated water leaving the site
- n Providing a separate exit in the showers so that workers cannot carry chemicals home
- n Destroying all chemical storage containers safely on the factory premises.

Feeling safe at work

Workers report that they feel safe working with Zeneca. Management believes that this is due to a number of factors, including:

- n Good communication between employees and management
- n Frequent seminars on health and safety issues
- n Information signs throughout the factory reminding workers of safety measures and potential hazards.

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Exemplary working conditions
The factory is designed ergonomically throughout. Recent office refurbishment provided more space, while colour schemes were chosen by employees. Production units are spacious and well ventilated but warm in winter. Free coffee and soft drinks are available during the employees' 30-minute break. The company also provides employees with their own lockers and a separate room for smokers (although smoking is prohibited within the factory). Work schedules can be organised to suit working mothers and those who live far away from the workplace. Training is an important feature at Zeneca and staff are encouraged to attend seminars and courses to update their skills and keep up with technological developments. The occupational doctor, technical safety personnel and chemists have been on training programmes relating to their occupational health roles within the company. When new employees are taken on, training is provided on dealing with chemicals and the safe use of equipment. Their performance is closely monitored once they start work.

Workplace Health Promotion

WHP projects are overseen by the occupational doctor and a senior manager. Tests such as measuring blood pressure are performed by the doctor, usually on the request of staff. Personal medical profiles

are then kept on record. A number of health promotion programmes have been implemented: stopping smoking, safe driving, healthy lifestyle, HIV/AIDS, fire safety and safe lifting techniques. These have been well received by staff.

Welfare related activities

Zeneca provides private medical insurance for all employees. The long-term sick are supported and help is given to rehabilitate them in the workplace (although such cases are rare). In one case, a chronic alcoholic employee was given medical treatment and counselling to help overcome this problem. This employee still works at Zeneca despite past medical and personal problems. The company also operates a positive policy towards employing disabled people. Company expertise on chemical production, safety and water sewage treatment is shared via lectures to other pesticide industries and universities. Zeneca enjoys a good relationship with the local community.

Drawing conclusions

No serious or fatal accidents have occurred at Zeneca in the last 15 years. Staff turnover is low; many employees stay with the company until retirement age. Absenteeism due to occupational illness is also very low. This points to a strong link between good workplace

health and safety policies and a high standard of employee health and personal satisfaction.

The most important factors needed to achieve this are good communication channels, a willingness on behalf of management to co-operate with employees and listen to their proposals and criticisms and good working conditions.

However, Zeneca believes that SMEs need greater support from the government if WHP is to flourish. Establishing health and safety networks and dissemination of experience and information is also essential, as is closer co-operation with universities and colleges.

Chion is a family owned company based in Patras, 200 km from Athens. It produces table salt and distributes it to the market in approximately 80 different packages. It has been in operation for 60 years and employs 33 full time workers.

Chion enjoys considerable economic success and rates 3rd in the Greek salt market. In 1998 it was awarded ISO 9002. OHS authorities see Chion as a well-established company that provides a good working environment.

Employee Participation

Employees are included in the decision making process. The company is very informal and communication is good, staff can easily talk with owners and management as they are in the workplace on a daily basis. Employees feel free to discuss their problems and reach a satisfactory conclusion. The fact that many people have been employed here for a long time also contributes to the friendly atmosphere. This kind of environment encourages the exchange of ideas.

Flexible work patterns

Staff work day shifts at Chion. Occasionally demand for increased production necessitates extra shifts at night. Employees are happy with this system as they alternate between the two shifts. When problems arise, employees can change their work schedule. Management is also sensitive to the needs of working parents and is happy to be flexible.

Statutory health and safety regulations

Chion conforms to Greek OHS legislation and the operation is regularly inspected and approved by government health and safety inspectors. A senior manager is responsible for implementing health measures in the factory. There is also an on site safety engineer and employees have workplace health and safety representatives. Because Chion has fewer than 50 employees and is not involved in chemical production there is no obligation under Greek law to employ an occupational doctor.

All possible precautions are taken to secure employees' health and safety, including:

- n Fire extinguishers throughout the factory and the offices
- n Emergency exits in all working areas and offices
- n Spacious and well-ventilated production units
- n Regular cleaning of production units
- n Production and packaging is mechanised and employees do not come into direct contact with the product. All employees in the production units wear special uniforms and protective caps
- n A technical supervisor trained in safety issues and skilled in oper-



ating the technical equipment used in the production units is always on hand

- A readily accessible first aid kit is provided.

Responsibility for OHS

Safety is an important issue at Chion and the company ensures that supervisors are well informed on health and safety matters. Signs warning employees of potential hazards have been placed around the building.

Excellent working conditions

Chion operates from a spacious new building. Production units are ergonomically designed and are well ventilated in summer and warm in winter. Special attention is paid to correct lighting especially during the night shifts. Offices are also spacious and ergonomically designed with heating in the winter and air-conditioning in the summer. Production areas are kept clean and litter free. Employees take regular ten-minute breaks in special rest areas where they can also store their personal belongings and change into their work clothes.

Updating skills

New staff are given detailed introductions on how the plant operates before starting work. Because the company has to maintain its competitive position in the salt market

production technology and equipment is frequently updated.

Employees go to lectures and seminars to learn how to use this new technology and some also go abroad to further their expertise.

Workplace Health Promotion

Although Chion does not use any flammable raw materials, all staff are familiar with fire safety routines. Employees are also tested for skin irritation and respiratory problems that could be associated with salt production. Smoking is banned. Chion has not yet developed any other workplace health promotion activities, nevertheless it is still regarded as a model of good practice because the company recognises the importance of workplace health promotion and the benefits to be derived from it. Proposed WHP programmes include stopping smoking, healthy living, and training seminars on correct posture and lifting techniques. Chion became aware of WHP while working towards the ISO 9002 certificate with the regional health and safety inspectorate. This point is made in order to draw attention to the importance of providing companies, especially small companies, with information on OHS and WHP and to help management explore the possibilities of designing and implementing specific programmes. In most cases owners, particularly owners of well-established and successful companies, have a very positive attitude

towards developing OHS and WHP.

Welfare related activities

Chion provides insurance for its employees through the compulsory contribution to the National Insurance Fund (IKA). Company policy supports the rehabilitation of the long-term sick, although such cases are very rare. Staff members who live a long way from the factory have their travelling expenses reimbursed. The company has a positive attitude towards the disabled and currently employs a disabled person.

Reaching conclusions

No serious or fatal accidents have occurred at Chion and absenteeism due to occupational sickness is very low. Extremely long employment periods (sometimes a person's entire working life) indicate high levels of employee satisfaction. Both employers and employees enjoy the benefits of better occupational health, improved work satisfaction and economic growth. These factors have created a fertile ground for future development of OHS and WHP.

Member of the Linde Gas Group

ISAGA is a natural gas producing company employing 34 permanent staff (23 men and 11 women). Over a third are specialists in their field, but still receive on-going training. This company is the only one of its kind in Iceland, it therefore controls the entire market. The enterprise works in close co-operation with the Occupational Health and Safety Administration, and their representatives inspect conditions, machinery and safety equipment regularly

About the company

When the company changed hands, a number of developments were made because the new owners were very concerned with safety issues. It is company policy not to cut costs at the expense of health and safety and the environment. In fact, the new managing director's first priority was to hire a manager to oversee safety and environmental issues and to look at quality matters.

The management firmly believes that creating a good and secure work environment creates better employees. A great deal of money has been spent on improving working conditions and work procedures so that employees are less likely to suffer from physical problems. An environmental project to make the company more ecologically sound has also been completed.

Maintaining high morale

Each employee has a personal interview with his manager once a year to discuss the situation at work. Those who feel their work-

load is too heavy get help, anyone who feels under employed can have extra projects to work on. At times when the workload is at a peak, extra manpower is provided.

The company also rewards staff by organising annual parties and a variety of entertainment. Employees also make payments to an 'art fund' for buying paintings to hang in the workplace. These are exhibited for 6 months, then employees enter a draw and the lucky ones get to keep the paintings.

Health and safety in the workplace

The company uses an electronic database to catalogue its health and safety and environmental activities. Employees are informed of new developments via e-mail. If the employees are concerned about anything, they can easily inform the safety committee (employees are obliged to take action). The company employs a safety manager and runs a safety committee, even though this is not required by law. The company is now planning to establish a quality management system too.

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Employees' access to healthcare and safety services

A doctor looks after employee healthcare. Employees have access to hearing tests, influenza vaccinations if they want them, blood pressure checks and cholesterol level tests plus consultations on these and other health matters. The company works closely with the Occupational Health and Safety Administration and there is a company safety committee on site that employees can turn to.

There is a canteen on site too. The entire workplace is also smoke free, and the company encourages staff to quit smoking by paying for products such as patches that will help them give up.

Special welfare projects

- n End of employment agreements have been made with employees.
- n Employees have been given financial assistance and helped to return to work after illness.
- n The company made provisions for an employee who had to leave his job permanently because of health problems.

The company also supports people in the community e.g. by giving donations to help with the education of high school students (the company plans to set up a permanent grant fund) and runs an innovation competition for young people.

Employee satisfaction

The employees are working in a high risk environment and it gives them a feeling of security to know that safety is taken seriously. The company focuses largely on safety matters, unfortunately health promotion hasn't been accorded such enthusiasm to date. However, employees are generally quite satisfied and there is little illness.

A successful enterprise

The business has grown. The owners feel that a caring image reflects well on the company and has a positive influence on its customers. Safety measures that affect the customer directly have also been given priority, which has further enhanced the company's image. Through the efforts of the company, staff have become more health conscious.

Plans for the future

The organisation wants to carry on developing its health and safety policies and to continue with staff training so that their skills can be updated regularly. The enterprise is well aware that its success is dependent on good staff and that employees are its most valuable resource.

Tips for other enterprises

Involve the employees because they have the knowledge and the experience to come up with effective solutions to problems.

Reykjavík Graveyards

Iceland



Kirkjugardar Reykjavíkur (Reykjavík Graveyards) is a service enterprise, employing a permanent staff of 27 (22 men and 5 women), most of whom work full-time. Although half the staff are specialists in their field, extra training is still provided. The enterprise is publicly owned and controls half the Icelandic market. The company uses the services of a private healthcare provider.

About the company

The company became interested in workplace health promotion during the summer months. Maximum staffing levels are required over this period, but absenteeism was high. As the company believes that investing in a good working environment is amply repaid by the benefits of a happy, stable workforce, it decided to address this problem by hiring a private healthcare company.

In a specialist operation such as this, it is very important to keep employee turnover to a minimum, so a great deal of money has been spent on improving working conditions and work procedures, in order to encourage staff to stay with the company. A bonus system was introduced during the summer season as a further incentive.

To help the staff feel included in the decision making process and to give them a chance to voice their opinions and share any grievances, informal lunch meetings are set up from time to time. The main points from the previous meeting are also discussed to ensure that the measures agreed upon have been implemented. Staff lose confidence

when improvement proposals are not put into practice.

Staff are also encouraged to improve their skills and the company pays for courses, whether or not they are directly related to the graveyard business.

Maintaining good morale

The company makes an effort to listen to employees and to take their needs into consideration. Communication is essential if a good relationship is to be built up between employees and management. An effort is made to provide pleasurable experiences for the staff. For example, there is an annual barbecue during the summer, work stops at noon and the afternoon is spent playing games. The works council also organises an annual staff trip.

Health and safety at the workplace

All the supervisors have been sent on a health and safety course organised by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration. It is made clear to staff from the outset that they are responsible for



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the tools and equipment they work with. The company also employs a safety manager and employees are actively encouraged to use safety equipment.

Smoking is not permitted in the workplace. Financial support is provided by the company for physical exercise programmes. It also subsidises physiotherapy and rehabilitation programmes and employees have access to counselling.

Money invested in healthcare is considered to be money well spent as a healthy, happy employee gives a better service and is more efficient. Once the company improved healthcare, illness decreased and the employees' attitudes to work improved and they became more positive and satisfied. The enterprise has not assessed the situation fully, but sickness related absenteeism has dropped, to a certain extent at least.

Employees' access to healthcare and safety services

The enterprise has a healthcare contract with a private company that effectively meets employees' needs. Psychological provision is taken into consideration within this, and counsellors are on hand so that employees can discuss health or personal problems.

The enterprise works in close co-operation with the Occupational

Health and Safety Administration and their representatives check conditions, machinery and safety equipment regularly. There is no specific quality certifying system, but machinery is reviewed annually.

Special welfare projects

- n Additional counselling services are provided for employees needing extra help and access to a psychologist is also provided.
- n The company employs a disabled worker.
- n Former employees are invited to the company for an annual visit.

Employee satisfaction

Generally speaking the employees are very satisfied with their work and staff turn-over is low. Staff are also happy with the health promotion project and absenteeism has fallen. The bonus system has also contributed to reduced absenteeism.

Plans for the future

Health promotion has been adopted on a permanent basis and efforts will be made to build on what has already been achieved. The results of work carried out so far have been extremely positive. Employees have responded well and are accepting greater responsibility for their own health.

A good image

This organisation believes that by caring for its staff it has enhanced its public image.

Tips for other enterprises?

- n Give greater consideration to employees' needs
- n Improve internal communication channels
- n Build confidence between employees and management through staff meetings. Management must listen to employees' arguments and ideas before finalising decisions on new investments.

Health Promotion Starts With You Iceland



The healthy town initiative 'Health Promotion Starts With You' was launched with the aim of encouraging entire communities to improve their health and well-being by taking health promotion into their own hands. It was also hoped that other towns would be inspired to follow suit. Húsavík was chosen to take part in the healthy town initiative. It has a population of around 2.500. This was the first time for it to be involved in this kind of project.

Working Together for Better Health

The 'Health Promotion Starts With You' – project is a joint initiative between the state (the Ministry of Health and the Directorate of Health) and the community, with funding coming from both sources. It focuses on improving individual lifestyles and creating a better health profile by adopting a preventive approach and encouraging individuals to be proactive regarding their own health.

the population by encouraging people to recognise and ultimately avoid health threatening lifestyle elements and to embrace those that promote good health.

As the aim was to motivate the entire community, the project manager decided it would be best to kick things off with something that had a broad appeal and carry on in a similar vein, launching events that would enthuse large sections of the community.

How the project was set in motion

When the "Health Promotion Starts With You", project was launched in Iceland, each town was allocated a special project manager and a management committee to organise the day-to-day running and develop a strategy for taking the initiative forward. The Ministry of Health and the town itself provided financial backing, but members of the management committee were not paid a salary.

The management committee met regularly to work through a wide range of suggestions and put together a broad and varied range of events. Between the years 1994-97, 33 projects were launched. These included lectures on sporting activities, diet and drugs, as well as family-days, car-free days, workplace health promotion and much more. The response was good to start off with and during the 1994-97 period the community was actively and enthusiastically involved. However beyond that interest began to dwindle. Enthusiasm for the project could not be rekindled despite it being heavily promoted via advertisements and

The project aimed to motivate the community as a whole. It worked towards improving the health of

Húsavík

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considerable press coverage in the local newspapers.

When Husavik became a health promoting town a private company was contracted to carry out health promotion activities at the workplace. Great hopes were placed on the expertise that this company could bring in terms of WHP. Workplace health initiatives included lectures on a variety of subjects, measuring of employees' heart rate and consultation with physiotherapists.

Sadly, in Husavik, the project has not produced the results hoped for. The goals it set out to achieve were too broad and too ambitious and the private company responsible for health promotion at the workplace did not live up to expectations.

A less than successful outcome

The project failed to produce the desired outcome for a number of reasons. Sustaining public interest in the long-term proved to be difficult. The project's goals were certainly too ambitious and its remit was far too broad. Furthermore the private company contracted to run the occupational health promotion programme proved to be a major disappointment. Many employees reported that they were unhappy with the company's approach. They felt that the manner in which the information was delivered was pompous and that the lectures

were far too wordy and long-winded. They also felt alienated by the fact that the company placed heavy demands upon them in terms of their input and personal commitment. However, the work carried out by the physiotherapists generated a more positive response and was universally well received.

The community has therefore decided to terminate its contract with the private company. Not only did it fail to fulfill its obligations, its services were also thought to be too expensive.

Despite these shortcomings, the town is still a part of the healthy town initiative and the management committee has recommended that the project continues, even though there has been no activity at all for quite some time now. Ways of creating a better working arrangement will need to be looked at. For example, the project might be more successful if different elements of it were carried out by different companies, rather than the project manager and the management committee trying to implement a large-scale operation with such diverse and all-encompassing goals. There also needs to be more direct contact with members of the community to boost morale and motivation as well as increased contact with workplaces.



The Midland Health Board (MHB) is made up of 58 sites – each one effectively representing an SME. The objective of the WHP project is to improve employee health through stress reduction and prevention (on-site, work process related) and to improve their lifestyle. Reduced absenteeism is another objective.

Converse to the way such projects normally operate, MHB intends to use the experiences and practical knowledge generated by this project in order to adopt an entirely apt programme for its large organisations (hospitals).

Project partners

The MHB WHP project is a partnership between the Department of Health and Midland Health Board enjoying support from a private research consultancy. Additional benefits will accrue from the expertise to be made available by the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Developing effective procedures

The project features a number of successful strategies, notably a co-operative partnership approach between public and private sectors. Internally, the project demonstrates the importance of organisation-wide support structures for the success of WHP. An action group was formed, thus ensuring that the project has adequate support structures throughout. The project is well grounded, being based on a thorough needs assessment, which identified action priorities in the areas of stress reduction and

employee lifestyle improvements. During the course of the project, due attention was paid to the concept of sustainability which was buttressed by employee empowerment. Employees are involved in initiation, planning, and conduct of the WHP project and all related activities. A conscious effort was made to provide all necessary conditions for genuine participation of the staff in the WHP project as the best way to ensure their ownership of the project. In addition, appropriate measures are undertaken to ensure that the project will be sustained in the long run.

Systematic needs analysis

The project action plan was based on careful and comprehensive needs analysis. The main instruments used were research based methods, carried out internally (i.e. qualitative type of research using mainly seminar type discussions and quantitative research using questionnaires to survey the health and lifestyle behaviour of the MHB staff). In addition, various documentary research techniques were used to complement the above. One of the products is the audit of sick leave conducted in selected locations.

Establishment of co-operation and communication structures

One of the earliest sets of activities to be undertaken was to establish co-operation and communication structures for the WHP project. Thus a network has been built of people with an interest and stake in the health improvement process. Another integral part of this process was to raise awareness regarding the rationale and relevance of health improvement and to communicate and promote the whole concept of the WHP project. All appropriate channels and reporting relationships for the project were established at an early stage. The initial announcements were made using letters, meetings, posters and poster addendum to payslips (so-called "pay stuffers") where the target audience receives information together with their pay cheque or pay slip. Further details on the project were communicated using newsletters, presentations, seminars and workshops.

Information on project objectives

There are two main project objectives, which are of immediate concern, as identified during the needs analysis phase. The first one concerns stress management/reduction/prevention on site which could be classified as primarily work and process related. The other one focuses on employee lifestyle aiming to promote exercise and make

it a standard feature of employee lifestyle. As far as the stress prevention aspect of the project is concerned, it was decided to tackle work stress at the source, dealing with issues such as problems in work relationships and problems due to factors intrinsic to the job. A detailed plan for an exercise programme was worked out and has been implemented. Instructors who could carry out classes were selected. These individuals were given additional training in Health Promotion. As far as particular exercise activities are concerned, hill-walking and circuit training exercises were prioritised, together with stretching exercises. An important aspect of this segment of the project were educational classes, highlighting what constitutes physical activity, benefits of it, and appropriate goal setting. Finally, various motivating techniques and tactics were used, from "one to one" assessment and empowering sessions to peer support / events.

Positive Results

A notably effective feature of the project was its "hands-on" approach, with the emphasis on learning through doing. This, among other things, particularly illustrates the practical value of the thorough methodological approach to the whole project. At the same time, the project has managed to demonstrate the usefulness of the theoretical models used (for exam-

ple, models of health behaviour designed by Prochaska and Clemente applied to physical activity).

Evaluation has already been carried out with respect to the exercise programme, mainly relying on first hand self-reporting by the participants in the programme, with encouraging results. In addition, this segment of the WHP project has been thoroughly examined and analysed, using various theoretical perspectives (e.g. using models of health behaviour applied to physical activity).

Future perspective and commitment

Due attention was paid to the concept of sustainability of the project (which is somewhat related to the previous one of ownership). It was envisaged that the best way to ensure that the project will be self-sustaining was to fully empower employees to participate. This empowerment was achieved through identifying and training employees capable of organising and conducting the required aspects of the project. Of course, this process had to be accompanied by adequate delegation procedures and facilities provision, and could only be conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust.

Work and Health in the Irish Construction Sector Ireland



The project objectives were to introduce a positive health care policy and promote a healthy lifestyle amongst construction industry workers. Project partners were the Irish Cancer Society, the Construction Employees Health Trust (CEHT), the Irish Heart Foundation and the Construction Group of Unions.

Background of the project

The construction industry in Ireland is characterised by a myriad of contractors and subcontractors which are by and large, SMEs. Permanent contracts are rare. Given this situation, the best strategy to ensure that SMEs and their employees are reached is to adopt a so-called “shot gun” targeting approach to WHP, essentially undertaking an industry-wide campaign, with the focus on directly targeting all workers engaged on selected building sites. The main findings highlighted that some general health indicators of construction industry workers were relatively poorer than national averages e.g. obesity levels, cholesterol levels, and the prevalence of smoking - on average 44% of them smoked, while the national average was 31%. An unhealthy diet (literally saturated with a high fat and irregular meals), was another serious issue. Given the nature of their work, they were more susceptible to skin cancer than other workers, and this provided rationale for launching three annual industry-wide skin cancer campaigns. It is worth noting that skin cancer rates in Ireland are amongst the highest in the world.

Project infrastructure

A close co-operation was established with the Irish Cancer Society and the Irish Heart Foundation, who provided expertise and staff. This required setting up a new infrastructure whereby all service providers work together. Employers’ permission had to be secured in order to facilitate health screening on sites during working time. Less formal but more relevant support also had to be obtained from various “gatekeepers”, particularly from foremen on the respective sites.

Needs analysis

Quite extensive research has been undertaken in order to detect and adequately address the needs of construction workers. Thus, initial health promoting initiatives undertaken by the CEHT were based on a careful examination of construction workers’ circumstances.

Action areas

- n Annual industry-wide skin cancer campaigns
- n On-site health screening
- n Data gathering arising from health screening programme

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- n Research project “Patterns of Ill-Health in Irish Construction Industry Workers” .

Steering a successful course

Due to the prevalence of a particular type of macho style culture, negative peer pressure often operates, reducing responsiveness to health promoting advice. Therefore an important facet of the strategy was to have confidential, “one to one” consultations. Conducting these proved to be a very rewarding exercise indeed. The majority of construction workers generally have very low GP consultation rates and these sessions were used to compensate for that. Some of these individual sessions were effectively counselling sessions as well, with individual workers, once reassured about confidentiality ‘opening up’ and discussing other pressing issues for them (e.g. family problems, alcohol problems, etc.). Given the construction industry workers’ circumstances and their lifestyle, the partners in the CEHTs WHP initiative (the Irish Heart Foundation and the Irish Cancer Society) appear as natural allies in this health promoting project. These partners initially highlighted some nation-wide health issues and concerns, which were subsequently used as a basis for formulating health-promoting campaigns for construction industry workers. Thus this co-operation highlighted the need for action regarding coronary disease prevention (according to national and

international data, Ireland has one of worst records in Europe in the area of coronary disease). Similarly, given the prevalence of male workers in the industry, the need for action regarding so called “male cancers” has also been identified. This data in turn was used to formulate a “quit smoking” campaign. This campaign was organised in the conjunction with the Irish Cancer Society who provided support and monitoring to the participants (who have volunteered to take part). The “quit smoking” campaign even incorporated a piece of clever marketing - one of the participants won a holiday abroad for two weeks. The CEHT has research findings regarding sickness patterns in the construction industry in the last three decades. There is no doubt that these findings will be valuable for designing future health promoting initiatives.

Developing an effective strategy

A number of implementation strategies proved both effective and successful. Probably the most effective strategy was directly targeting construction workers at their workplaces, and offering convenient, free health check ups, health education, advice and consultation.

Factors contributing to the success of the project included:

- n Easy access to the WHP programme and its general inclusiveness (it is open to all regardless

of the grade and position held)

- n A participative set up and partnership framework between trade unions (construction industry trade union), public bodies (Department of Health and Children) and voluntary health promoting bodies
- n No direct cost involved to either employees or employers
- n Minimised disruption to the workflow (enhancing the acceptance by employers)
- n The absence of any “hidden agenda”
- n Realisation that the WHP positively contributes to profitability via employee performance
- n Good image of the partners in the WHP project (The Irish Cancer Society, the Irish heart Foundation)
- n The type of delivery of the WHP programme – focus on face to face approach
- n Getting all relevant players ‘on board’.

Looking at the results

It is too early to ascertain whether the state-of-health has been improved, as there is no hard data available, but anecdotal experience and feedback are very positive. This was communicated to the CEHT by all parties involved. The whole project is designed to be self-sustaining and all partner organisations are fully committed to furthering the activities undertaken thus far.

Preventing Stress in Teaching Ireland



The Preventing Stress in Teaching project aims to control the effects of work on health, in this case by identifying and advising on stress, and seeking to mitigate and eliminate this occupational work hazard.

The major enablers for the success of the Preventing Stress in Teaching WHP project were the two teachers' trade unions i.e. their executive staff and research officers. In addition, the project was designed to maximise the involvement of teaching staff and trade union members.

Background

The origins of this project can be traced back to 1991, when teaching trade unions in Ireland funded a major study of stress in the profession, undertaken by the Work Research Centre (WRC). This study, significant in itself for highlighting the negative repercussions of occupational stress, has also provided an initial grounding for the current WHP project i.e. it represented an extremely thorough needs assessment, which has identified action priorities in the area of stress prevention.

Working conditions conducive to good health

The first step for the pilot phase of the programme was the selection of schools that would participate in the project. Four schools were selected, paying due attention to all relevant factors. Thus their

resources and funding varied from publicly funded schools (directly from the Department of Education) to privately funded (so called "fee-paying" schools). Attention was also paid to their location (e.g. rural versus urban, big city versus town), size (schools varied in size, from 18 employees to 60 employees) and the socio-economic background of students. In the Irish context, there is another interesting typology of schools, which are divided in terms of their background on denominational (secular) and religious schools. In addition, pupils' gender can be another cleavage, with religious schools tending (this was particularly the case in the past) to be "all-boys" or "all girls" schools. Of course, the willingness and commitment to participate in the work of the project were crucial selection criteria for these schools and their teachers.

Once instituted, it was envisaged that an effective stress prevention programme would yield the following benefits:

- n Improvement in teachers' health and job satisfaction
- n Development of a stress prevention policy
- n Improvement of the social climate in the school
- n Improvement in the quality of teaching

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- n Improvement in absenteeism rates
- n Improvement in the general work environment
- n Improvement in the problem solving capacity of each individual school
- n Establishment of a continuous process of stress prevention.

These objectives were to be achieved using a methodology which would only require a minimal outside assistance.

Establishment of co-operation and communication structures

The project preparatory phase included building a network of people and organisations with an interest and stake in the health improvement process in teaching. This step resulted in insurance companies coming on board, offering funding, as well as their political support. Another integral part of this process was to raise awareness regarding the rationale and relevance of stress prevention with regard to health improvement. Finally, an important feature of the project was the continued support extended to the participating schools and their teachers throughout the duration of the project, culminating in training sessions for teachers in order to equip them with the “know-how” required for the running of the project.

Developing successful strategies

The Preventing Stress in Teaching project illustrates how a workplace health promotion project can attract interest and support from commercial agents. Another successful feature of the project was the availability of support structures for teachers, such as training and general support throughout the pilot phase being extended by the WRC. Furthermore, the sense of ownership over the project by the participants has been maximised because teachers have been actively involved and consulted throughout all relevant phases of the project. Crucially, teachers themselves will now entirely take over the running of the project. One measure currently being implemented is the formation of a panel of trainers to help facilitate nation-wide adoption of the stress prevention methodology. This is the ultimate step towards a comprehensive application of the methodology and, subsequently, wide-scale institution of the stress prevention policy.

Results

Though no formal assessment was undertaken, anecdotal evidence suggests that satisfaction levels were high and that the measures implemented during the stress prevention project were effective. All of the participating schools indicated that they had received benefit

from the project and that they would be willing to undertake similar measures in the future. In general terms, teachers found the methodology to be very useful in raising and addressing workplace stress issues.

Teachers’ satisfaction has been increased (this data relates to the four Irish schools where the project was piloted), not least because one of the most pressing issues for them has been tackled in a comprehensive manner. Limited tracking of the progress of stress prevention plans also took place, and it appeared that the actions taken were both feasible and effective.

Future perspective and commitment

As far as the future of the project is concerned, the efforts that have been made in this regard are beginning to produce the desired results. Sustainability of the project has been ensured by the effective take-over of the project by teachers themselves. The design of the methodology was sensitive to participants’ empowerment, and there is a scope for participants to design the best solutions for their own schools. This in turn should have a positive impact on the future commitments to the project.

Banca Agrileasing forms part of Cooperative Credit. 14 branches operate throughout the country. Banca Agrileasing was set up twenty years ago and offers exemplary financial options specifically aimed at meeting the needs of SMEs and craft enterprises.

242 people are employed at the bank. Nobody works night shifts and 15% of employees work part-time. All have a degree or have had some form of specialist training.

Maintaining good communications

Although members of the organisation only meet face-to-face once a year at the AGM, regular contact is kept up via the intranet. Keeping these communication channels open is seen as an important element in the successful running of the business.

At the AGM, the president runs through the main issues to have faced the company throughout the year and talks through the projects planned for the year ahead. These future aims and objectives are communicated to every employee before the meeting via the intranet. This gives everyone plenty of time to assess these proposals and make a contribution at the meeting if they want to.

Regular contact between the branches is also kept up via a twice monthly video conference, e-mail and a net newsletter.

Staff contributions are very welcome. All the employees are

encouraged to voice their opinions on how the organisation operates and to make suggestions as to how the workplace could become safer and healthier on a daily basis. All these suggestions are registered by the "Prevention and Safety Service" (SPS), and immediate action is taken to see what can be done to make the necessary changes. More complicated issues are discussed in detail before they can be put into practice, but things still move along quickly. Responding speedily to improvement suggestions is essential if the process is to maintain its credibility.

The SPS is also responsible for explaining the implication of new health related laws and regulations to staff. It produces comprehensive information leaflets that are distributed to all employees. The service also directly manages part of the intranet, providing a site where employees can access information on health and safety issues and guidelines relating to these matters.

The role of health at work: how it affects the enterprise

Last year the organisation made a commitment to reduce smoking among staff members. Information leaflets were handed out, meetings



organised and stop smoking programmes set in motion. Those who preferred to do so could attend an external quit smoking programme.

Emphasis is also placed on continuous training and a budget is set aside each year for courses and educational programmes.

Creating a pleasant working environment is a major issue too. The company is keen to ensure that the workplace is a safe, healthy and enjoyable place to be in order to get the best out of staff.

A number of facilities are provided. A canteen/catering service is available at each branch and special dishes can be prepared for those who request them. Sports facilities and relaxation areas are offered as are medical services.

If employees are off sick for a long time, efforts are made to find appropriate roles for them within the workplace that suit their state of health. For instance, it is possible for individuals to work part-time if the demands of working a full day are too great. Staff experiencing personal problems are also dealt with sympathetically. Last year one employee was allowed to work from home for a while and the company set up all the equipment to make this possible.

The role new technology plays in promoting health and safety is also looked at closely – for instance IT

makes it feasible for people to work effectively from home.

The company extends its health promoting activities to the wider community. A large proportion of employees belong to the Red Cross and the organisation sponsors a number of this charity's initiatives. The company also works closely with the fire service and the police to maintain the highest standards of security.

Looking at positive results

The company recognises that its workforce is its most valuable resource. It also firmly believes that a happy, healthy motivated workforce is something to be aimed for. Its philosophy is that satisfied workers produce better results. Motivated workers are also a crucial factor in keeping customers satisfied and for generating and maintaining new business. Implementing a policy that safeguards the health and well-being of employees reaps positive economic benefits.

No structured analysis of employee and customer satisfaction is undertaken, i.e. via questionnaires. However, as both these elements are considered to be so vitally important, they are under constant scrutiny, albeit informally.



BRUNELLO CUCINELLI
CASHMERE

Brunello Cucinelli S.p.A. Cashmere, was founded in 1978 and is part of the Brunello Cucinelli Group which consists of three plants manufacturing elegant garments for men and women. The workforce is very young – the average age being 33.8. Nobody works part time and there are no night shifts.

The economic situation at all three sites is good with a reported growth of 10% during 1999. Figures for the first part of 2000 look even better: 19-20% higher than for the same period last year.

An egalitarian approach

The company believes that equality and informality helps bring the best out in employees. The same democratic policy is applied in all three sites. Everyone is on first name terms. This employee-centred culture allows individuals to express themselves in a way that isn't possible in a strictly hierarchical environment. The management team is very keen to allow each employee to use his or her personal skills. In fact, when new employees are taken on, the company takes a very close look at the positive benefits that individuals bring with them. Personality is considered to be an important factor in terms of staff relationships too. As a happy working environment is enjoyed at all sites, management doesn't want a new employee to upset this balance by bringing a difficult personality into the equation.

Employees are actively involved in the planning and decision making process and are encouraged to voice their opinions. Twice yearly meetings are arranged so that any problems within the organisation can be discussed and resolved. When a problem is identified action is taken immediately to put things right. The situation is then reviewed two months later to see if the steps taken are working. Staff have an input into this process too. Very often these meetings are not necessary as the channels of communication are so good, staff can discuss problems with management at any time.

Employees have control over their working lives and the flexibility encouraged by the company means that they can arrange their working hours to fit in with family commitments. In fact, no formal permission is required if a staff member has to leave work early for family reasons.

Emphasis is also placed on developing skills via practical, ongoing training and employee and customer satisfaction is evaluated regularly.



A focus on good health and well-being

Management always puts the health and safety of the workforce first. However, every single person in the company is expected to take an active responsibility for health and safety too. Health promotion activities are regularly reviewed by the management team and the health of individual workers assessed periodically. Resources are set aside specifically for health and training purposes, however no definite sum is allocated as activities depend on the requests put in by staff. If a staff member is off sick for a long time, efforts are made to reinstate that person gradually, so that physical and psychological adjustments can be made.

Every year 40 employees (that is 25% of the total workforce) go on external courses on a wide range of subjects – ergonomics, correct posture and lifting techniques, fire safety, first aid etc. Over the last two years air conditioning systems have been installed and new computer monitors introduced. More comfortable desks and chairs have also been purchased following consultation with staff.

Before making any changes or installing new equipment employees are always consulted first. Management is keenly aware that changes to the workplace affect

staff most of all, so they have to be happy with each and every development.

Creating a happy working environment

The business is run along the lines of a family. Staff relationships are excellent and at the end of the year incentive bonuses are distributed equally regardless of the seniority of employees – a decision reached by staff members themselves. The atmosphere at work is extremely informal, yet highly professional.

Efforts are made to give staff as much time off as possible, at traditional holiday times like Christmas and Easter, the company closes two days earlier than other organisations.

Staff have a canteen where special meals can be prepared on request; break and rest rooms are also provided, and there is a works medical service.

The community and the business are strongly interlinked. Almost every family has at least one member working with the company. The company is very much aware that it is located in a beautiful part of Italy and it is concerned with maintaining the highest possible environmental standards. It has also donated money for a community

soccer pitch and has financed the restoration of a number of medieval buildings in the region. One building in particular, a former farm, is very significant as it has been turned into an attractive community resource where many cultural events are held. There is also a cafe there where local people enjoy meeting.

The Water Team S.r.l. is responsible for the entire cycle of water treatment: pre-treatment, processing, purification and recycling. High levels of purity are achieved and maintained by the internal chemical laboratory which is manned by qualified maintenance technicians and plant supervisors.

Eighteen people work here and all have a degree or have completed some form of professional training. Three work part-time but nobody works night shifts or is employed on a short-term contract.

Securing health and safety at work

At the end of 1995 official guidelines were introduced to safeguard health and safety at the workplace for all full-time employees plus anyone involved with the workplace on an intermittent basis. Employees are also responsible for contributing to their own health and safety by informing superiors of any problems that might jeopardise their health and wellbeing.

Involving employees

The enterprise bases its health and safety system on the OHSAS 18001:1999 quality certificate guidelines. Bringing employees into the decision making process is thought to play an important part in improving health and safety. Staff have a day-to-day understanding of the way the plant co-operates and have a valuable contribution to make. Staff are encouraged to make suggestions for

enhancing the working environment and these are taken seriously. Employees can either discuss their thoughts directly with management or make contact via e-mail or on the intranet. In addition to the annual general meeting (AGM), three monthly meetings are arranged so that staff can air their views.

Two months before the annual general meeting all the employees fill in a questionnaire anonymously. Forty-two questions touch on a number of areas: quality and improvement, organisation, relationships with other employees, pay, benefits, safety, communication, management, personal satisfaction, personal development. A questionnaire also goes out to the clients in order to ascertain their level of satisfaction.

At the AGM the results of the questionnaires are presented and discussed. Any problem areas identified are talked through openly and mutually acceptable solutions found.

Analysis of the questionnaires revealed that staff morale is quite high and that the atmosphere at work is good. Staff are also happy with their working conditions and





job security. Customers are satisfied with the service they are getting too. Despite these encouraging results the organisation is committed to continued improvement.

Last year (1999) the absenteeism rate was four days per employee and only one accident was recorded. Efforts are made to bring the long-term sick back to the workplace, and an official policy on this is in operation.

Health at work: taking things a step further

Improving the health of employees is seen as a positive aim, not only in financial terms by reducing absenteeism, but in terms of creating a pleasant productive workplace that staff enjoy coming to. When problems are identified a concerted effort goes into solving them and a budget is allocated for putting concrete measures in place. Emphasis is also placed on good training and staff are encouraged to further their skills.

Health at work is regulated by law, but within this organisation health and wellbeing is addressed over and above legal requirements: Measures have been taken to make the working day as comfortable as possible; employees have a canteen/catering service where good meals are offered and special diets can be catered for on request. Break and rest rooms are also pro-

vided, along with medical services. Programmes exist for bringing the long-term sick back into the workplace, but staff with personal problems are also looked after sympathetically too. For example, if a person needs to work part-time for a while, this can be accommodated.

Social events where employees can relax together are organised at least once a year. These special events include a family dinner.

The business extends its social arm into the community and sponsors a local cycle team and a number of social and cultural community initiatives. The enterprise also works in partnership with schools, colleges and universities and arranges visits to the plant and talks with staff.

Looking at the results

Absenteeism within this business is below average and staff turnover is low. This indicates that employee health is good and that job satisfaction is also high. As indicated earlier, analysis of the questionnaires suggests that morale is excellent and that there is a good working atmosphere and good relationships between staff. Job security is a factor that influences well-being and as prospects are good here, this has a positive impact on employees. In 1998 Water Team was the successful candidate and voted Italian Quality

Company; it was also awarded the EFQM European Quality Award both in 1999 and 2000 – the only Italian company to receive this distinction!

There is no evidence that this policy has improved productivity or that it is economically beneficial, but management will continue to focus on good health and a specific budget has been allocated to provide resources for health promotion activities over the next few years.