



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.