

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).