A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO WELLBEING AT WORK
AT S.C. MENTOR SRL CRAIOVA

1. Organisations involved
S.C. MENTOR SRL

2. Description of the case
2.1. Introduction
S.C. MENTOR SRL is a successful example of a holistic approach to wellbeing at work in the clothing/workwear manufacture sector in Romania.

In adopting a holistic approach to achieve wellbeing at work, the company primarily had in view to develop each individual’s full potential at the workplace as a key factor of success for the company as a whole (increased productivity and turnover, improved image in the market, increased motivation and stability of the workforce).

Additionally, this approach has addressed both the individuals and the employer, with positive effects at the company and the societal level as well. An effective two-way communication among the employees and the company management is essential in this respect.

S.C. MENTOR SRL is a private company set up in 1992 on the basis of Romanian capital. At present, the company is among the top domestic manufacturers of clothing/workwear e.g. military, police and firefighters uniforms, personal protective equipment destined to the Romanian and foreign market. The company headquarters is situated in Craiova, one of the biggest towns in the South–Western part of the country.

Since the beginning of its presence onto the Romanian market, the company has focused on diversifying the range of high quality products and services. At present, its customers account over 300 in the country and abroad. Among the most significant customers one can mention the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Public Health (medical units such as big hospitals and clinics, the Ambulance Service), the Romanian Police Force, the Community Police, the Romanian Mail Services, Ford Romania, Heineken Romania, Nuclear Electrica S.A., S.C. Hidroelectrica S.A., Eon Gaz Romania.

Consequently, the company turnover has constantly increased e.g. in 2008, S.C. MENTOR SRL turnover exceeded 1.2 million euros.

S.C. MENTOR SRL has over one hundred employees out of whom 90% are women. Therefore, the company has manifested a permanent commitment on adapting its occupational safety and health (OSH) policy and all the personnel related measures to the female workers’ needs.

2.2. Aims
The company has developed a holistic approach meant to provide wellbeing of the workforce through a series of complementary occupational safety and health (OSH), workplace health promotion (WHP) and organisational measures that also contribute to the company’s success, productivity and image towards its customers and subcontractors.

The major aims of this approach are:

- Enhancing the implementation of the integrated management system meant to ensure safer and healthier workplaces all over the company
Maintaining the ‘Zero’ work accident goal as part of the company’s OSH policy
Developing a solid preventive policy at the company level
Having a healthier and more satisfied workforce through an effective wellbeing promotion within the company
Meeting the female workers’ particular needs at work through well-targeted and adapted OSH and WHP measures
Improving workforce stability within the company and at regional level
Increased productivity and a bigger turnover of the company
Efficient organisational measures meant to support the wellbeing policy of the company
Improved top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top communication within the company
Increased workforce participation and consultation
Leadership commitment to ensure the workforce wellbeing irrespective of the workplace in the company and the work tasks assigned
Improved image of the company onto the domestic and foreign workwear manufacturers’ market
Improved relationships with the company’s customers and subcontractors.

2.3. What was done, and how?

The holistic approach developed by S.C. MENTOR SRL to reach wellbeing at work for its employees has been put into practice through a combination of policies that concomitantly address the prevention of work accidents and illnesses including the identification of workplace related hazards, risk assessment and workplace health promotion.

The development of workers’ abilities in accomplishing the work tasks has been also addressed through adequate training, a judicious human resources management, organisational measures, a good bottom-to-top and top-to-bottom communication, effective consultation of the workers.

Workplace health promotion is particularly addressed by the company’s measures, with emphasis on the female workers’ health surveillance as 90 percent of the employees are women. Ensuring the employees’ physical health and psychosocial needs is considered as a key factor to attain the workforce wellbeing. Adequate measures and a consistent financial support have been provided by the company on this purpose.

**General OSH measures**

The company has developed a number of initiatives meant to provide healthy and safe workplaces through a solid preventive policy.

A key initiative consisted of putting in place the integrated management system (Quality/OSH/Environment) that allowed an improved risk management within the company and healthier workplaces.

The measures taken by the company leadership for the implementation of the integrated management system have been as follows:

- Significant investments in machines and equipment of the last generation, and modern manufacturing processes
- The use of high quality certified raw materials provided by the best suppliers of the market
- The use of ecological materials both at the product manufacture and for the employees (workwear, personal protective equipment)
- All the company products are certified by Romanian and/or EU bodies
Periodical OSH training has been delivered to the workers in accordance with the provisions of the law, on a regular basis, but also whenever necessary, mostly when a new machine or equipment has been purchased.

In addition, OSH sessions have been organised on various topics arising from the workers’ needs and suggestions when confronted with particular work situations and/or new risks. They were mostly conducted as open debates to determine a behavioural safety orientation of the workers.

Worker consultation, on a day to day basis, on the workplace related problems has been highly encouraged (e.g. face-to-face communication with the OSH representative and the workplace supervisors, and anonymous written messages introduced into a box placed on the company premises).

The bottom-to-top/top-to-bottom communication is encouraged in the company through open discussions, debates with the OSH representatives, the workplace supervisors, and the company management.

The ‘Zero’ work accident goal has been successfully attained i.e. no work accident has been registered since the company setting up in 1992 till present. Where incidents occurred, they were investigated and conclusions drawn from them to improve the existing work processes and eliminate/reduce the workplace related risks. Adequate training has been also delivered whenever necessary.

![Picture 1: Employee periodical training](image)

Efforts have been constantly made by the management of the company to purchase new machines and equipment and provide modern technologies to cope with the manufacture process requirements. In the recent years, European funds have been accessed on this purpose thus allowing the renewal of the entire manufacture flow. This resulted in reduced risks for the workers and higher productivity as well. The company leadership commitment and the positive results obtained by the company highly contributed to the accession of these European funds.
Case studies – A Holistic Approach to Wellbeing at Work at S.C. Mentor SRL Craiova

Picture 2: Computer-aided flow design

Picture 3: Fully automated pocket making machine replacing a complex and time-consuming manual operation

Specific wellbeing at work initiatives

Workplace health promotion measures
The workers’ health surveillance has been carried out through a series of measures that include:
- The occupational medicine physician of the company ensures the periodical medical check-ups of the employees twice a year even if, in accordance with the legal provisions, it should be made once a year only. General medical consultancy is also provided by the occupational medicine physician for most of the employees as a family doctor (unless some of the employees see a family doctor from outside the company).
When checking the general health condition of the employees, the occupational medicine physician also provides advice on a healthy lifestyle including: healthy diet recommendations as most of the employees have a sedentary life, adequate support and advice in fighting tobacco smoking, etc.

Specialised medical assistance for the company's employees has been also provided on the basis of partnerships with local medical units such as:

- Since over 90% of the employees are women, the company recently set up a partnership with a clinic of obstetrics-gynaecology in Craiova; this clinic provides specialised medical assistance for the company's female employees, free of charge.
- In June this year (2012), a team of ophthalmologists carried out a speciality medical screening of all the employees, on the company premises and free of charge. This made possible the early detection of any eye disease of the workers and the assessment of their visual acuity through modern medical apparatus.
- Moreover, this initiative of the company in terms of health surveillance ensures significant savings of time and money for the employees. As most of the work tasks imply a keen visual acuity of the operators, a partnership was set up between S.C. MENTOR SRL and the Clinic of Ophthalmology to provide employee check-ups on a regular basis.
- The use of ecological materials, both at the product manufacture and for the employees' workwear and personal protective equipment (PPE), contributes to a significant extent to the mitigation of the workplace related risks for the workers.
- The company covered the rehabilitation costs for those workers who experienced serious illnesses and/or occupational diseases when these costs were too high and could not be afforded by the employees themselves or by their families.
- Employee reintegration has been ensured whenever necessary at S.C. MENTOR SRL through adequate return-to-work assistance e.g. work adjustment, personal support, adequate training, development of new skills. Two distinct examples may illustrate a series of reintegration measures taken by the company:
  - Return-to-work assistance was provided for an operator who suffered a knee surgical intervention that disabled her to accomplish the work task assigned prior to the operation (pressing a machine pedal with the injured foot). A new workplace was provided for the operator when she returned to work on the basis of medical evaluation and workplace assessment. The new workplace did not imply the use of the injured foot as a complete recovery could not be expected. Adequate work adjustment training was also provided to the female worker to acquire the necessary knowledge and develop new skills for the accomplishment of the work task assigned.
  - A job retention measure is to be mentioned for an employee from the ironing section. The operator suffered a nasal surgical operation and could not longer return to the old workplace because of the steam effects upon the worker's health. The operator was temporarily assigned another worktask with no negative effects for her health at the packing section. The worker took over the former workplace within the ironing section after the complete recovery ascertained through a rigorous medical evaluation.
- A lunch break is provided for all the employees at noon and additional short breaks as well, at every two hours, for relaxing, free movement, etc.

Organisational measures
Efficient organisational measures have also been put in place to support the wellbeing of the workforce policy developed by the company such as:

- S.C. MENTOR SRL showed a particular care to facilitate the transport of its employees to the workplace and back home, and thus to reduce the time they have to spend with the transportation
(most of them come from various villages in the neighbourhood of Craiova town). The actions taken by the company in this respect were the following:

- In 2007, S.C. MENTOR SRL concluded a contract with a transportation company to operate on the routes requested by S.C. MENTOR SRL in accordance with the employees’ needs, with no costs for the employees. In addition, a management study was carried out to evaluate the financial resources of the company in order to purchase its own transportation means (buses, minibuses) for the employees. This initiative was recently put into practice at S.C. MENTOR SRL and the employees’ transportation is now carried out with the company’s own transportation bus, free of charge for the workers.

- The bus is provided with modern facilities such as air conditioning (the region is highly affected by unfavourable climate conditions, e.g. long and cold winter time, hot summer time with canicula exceeding three months a year), comfortable seats, special facilities for luggages. It also covers to the largest extent the transportation requests of the workers in terms of the transportation routes, and the most convenient bus stops for the best possible connections where necessary.

![Picture 4: S.C. MENTOR SRL employee bus station in front of the factory](image)

- The above transportation facility saves employees’ time and money and allows a more flexible work programme, especially when there are increased product demands from the customers implying supplementary working hours.

- A gender sensitive approach has been currently developed by the company management given the preponderance of the women employees accounting over 90 percent (e.g. specific medical assistance, an OSH policy constantly addressing the female workers’ needs such as tailored PPE to meet the female workers’ sizes, adjustable workplaces adaptable to the women height/weight and pregnancy, etc.)

- Pregnant women may also ask for work breaks and medical assistance on the spot whenever necessary.

- Workers’ rotation is also carried out to avoid routine work, where possible.

- Frequent team building actions are organised on a regular basis or to celebrate special events such as the 20th anniversary of the company on the Romanian market in 2012.
The employees, especially the young workers, were given the company support to develop their working abilities. Therefore, they could ask for a change in the workplace and/or the work task assigned whenever they found themselves more suited to a different workplace/worktask in the company. Adequate training and coaching were provided to the young workers in such situations to help them cope with the new worktask requirements.

2.4. What was achieved?

- The ‘Zero’ work accident goal as provided in the company’s OSH policy was successfully attained (no work accident since the company setting up in 1992). Meanwhile, all the incidents have been constantly reported and investigated and lessons have been learned to eliminate or reduce the workplace related risks for workers’ safety and health.

- The workers are constantly encouraged to report any incident with no fear of blame and their suggestions on the improvement of wellbeing at work and the working conditions have been considered when setting up the company preventive policy.

- A collaborative safety culture was created within the company with positive results in terms of workers’ behavioural safety, awareness raising on the workplace related risks for the employees’ health and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle in general.

- The employees’ health condition has continuously improved as showed by the constant decrease in the sick leaves registered (mostly for common illnesses). This is due to the permanent access to medical assistance ensured on the company premises and the specialised medical services provided free of charge for the employees. Therefore, since 2007, the costs of the sick leaves decreased by 8 to 10 percent yearly.

- A stable workforce and less fluctuations of the company’s employee number have been reported thus allowing S.C. MENTOR SRL to meet its customers’ demands whenever necessary through a highly qualified and satisfied workforce. A large majority of the employees (approximately 80 percent) has worked at the company ever since its establishment occurred 20 years ago while a significant percent of the young workers has between 7 to 4 years seniority at S.C. MENTOR SRL.

- The company registered an increase in productivity and a good image in the domestic and foreign market.
S.C. MENTOR SRL encouraged the adoption of its gender sensitive policy by its customers and subcontractors e.g. the manufacture of workwear for the medical sector personnel adapted to the female workers’ sizes and specific needs (e.g. the National Ambulance Service).

All the company products are certified by Romanian and/or EU bodies.

S.C. MENTOR SRL was awarded numerous prizes by domestic and foreign bodies/organisations in the recognition of its efficient initiatives addressing safer and healthier workplaces, a satisfied workforce, high quality products, a leading position on the market. On November 3rd, 2011, the company was awarded the ‘Top 2010 Company’ Prize offered by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Dolj District. The company achievements in terms of health and safety played an important role in obtaining this recognition at regional level.

![Picture 6: The ‘Top 2010 Company’ Prize (November 3rd, 2011)](image)

### 2.5. Success factors

A key success factor of the S.C. MENTOR SRL holistic approach in reaching workforce wellbeing consisted of the company management commitment in promoting a coherent and constant policy on this purpose. This policy includes effective OSH, WHP and organisational measures.

Adequate financial resources have been allocated to support these initiatives of the company thus ensuring their efficient implementation.

An effective two-way communication between the management and the employees played an important role as well. It made visible the workers’ concerns and suggestions to the decision making factors of the company. Therefore, adequate measures have been taken for the improvement of wellbeing at work, including workplace health and safety, medical assistance and financial support for the employees.

The company management commitment towards wellbeing of its workforce has been a key success factor as well. The top management policy considered the wellbeing of the employees as being a crucial factor in attaining its economic and financial objectives. Nevertheless, this also contributes to the company image in its relations with its clients and subcontractors.

A healthy and satisfied workforce represents the essential condition to obtain high quality products, an increased turnover, reduced costs with the employees’ medical care and sick leaves, higher demands from the customers, a leading position in the market.
2.6. Further information

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3.7 Transferability

The holistic approach developed by S.C. MENTOR SRL constitutes a positive example of combining an efficient risk management system with measures particularly addressing wellbeing at work and the gender sensitive policy promoted within the company.

The positive feedback obtained has been shared with various companies of all sizes and similar sectors of activity, including S.C. MENTOR SRL customers and subcontractors, to help improving the health and safety conditions and wellbeing of their employees.

Thus, the gender oriented policy promoted by S.C. MENTOR SRL for its female workers has been adopted by a consistent part of the company’s customers and subcontractors. The customers from the medical sector (big medical units, the National Ambulance Service) were particularly encouraged to provide adapted work clothing for the medical personnel mostly constituted of female workers.

The role of a satisfied workforce in encouraging the stability and reducing workforce fluctuations at the company and regional level contributed to the transferability potential as well.

3. References, resources:
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