

Involving employees in improving health and safety KOVOKON Popovice Ltd.

1. Organisations involved

Kovokon Popovice, s.r.o.



2. Description of the case

2.1. Introduction

Kovokon is registered since 1990. It started as a small company and it has been steadily growing over the years. From the very beginning it specialised in serial production of precise metal components. The range of machines owned by the company had been gradually growing to a wider selection including universal machines used for occasional orders as well as for production of spare parts for multicar vehicles (transportation trucks that can carry other vehicles). Just as with most small new companies in metalworking, the level of KOVOKON's competitiveness in its beginnings was quite low.

However a major change occurred in 1994, when KOVOKON started applying modern technologies, enabling innovations of the current product range, particularly in the field of precision of processing, and in reaching the desired shape with a leap in productivity. The company has invested in the technological modernisation of their facilities and addressed prestigious potential customers with whom it still works in partnership.

In 1998 KOVOKON Popovice, Ltd was established by joining the operations of four independent entrepreneurs – a father and his three sons. It now belongs to the medium enterprises category. In 1999 the ISO 9002 quality management system was successfully introduced and later, in January 2003 the newer ISO 9001:2000 improved the quality of the supplied parts and helped winning some new clients. In 2004 the quality management system was upgraded once again to ISO/TS 16949:2002 and in 2005 to EMS ISO 14001:2004.

The improvement of quality, safety, health and environment was established in the strategy of the company in 2002. The major initiative came from the company's management. The main reasons were and still are:

- To avoid that employees have to stay at home due to injuries and illnesses;
- Saving the funds for various damages and additional costs for compensation of missed working time;
- A competitive advantage, based on the balanced capacity and the established safety and health system

The project and its implementation are based on decisions taken by the management, without any pressure from external parties. The initiative is supported by the company's employees. The company

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won the “Investors in People Award” and the “National Award for quality” in particular because the employees were involved.

2.2. Aims

The aim of the safety programme is to continually improve the quality and performance of the business. This way current customers can be retained and new customers can be won.

The 4 underlying activities of the programme are:

1. Less manual handling and therefore less risk of injuries by introducing a robotized workplace.
2. Enhancing Leadership, Organization, Recognition & Assessment as well as controls by implementing the five step programme, aimed at managing health and safety in 5 steps for four main categories.
3. Improving communication within the company and assessing the activities and capabilities of the workforce by introducing the concept of “Investors In People”.
4. Optimising the organisation’s performance by implementing the EFQM Excellence model assessment. This is based on: key results, customer results, people results and society results. The focus in this programme is on leadership driving the strategy that is delivered through people, partnerships, resources, processes, products and services.

2.3. What was done, and how?

There are 4 main activities to be distinguished:

1. The robotised workplace:

To reduce the manual handling of loads a robotised workplace has been implemented. This was pursuant to the legislation in force.

2. The “5 Steps Programme”:

Employees were familiarised with the “5 Steps Programme”. The five steps for managing health and safety are applied to each of the 5 elements of a health and safety programme: leadership, organisation, hazard recognition & assessment, control activities.

The five steps are :

- Set standards, for example on eye protection equipment, safety footwear or office ergonomics.
- Communicate these standards and expectations, for example through training, notices on bulletin boards, email or meetings
- Train: managers, supervisors, and workers all receive health and safety training as appropriate for their jobs. The training should be ongoing.
- Evaluate to make sure that standards and expectations are being met. Techniques to do so include interviews, observations and inspections
- Acknowledge success & make improvements. Employee efforts to maintain safe behaviour and conditions should be recognised and acknowledged

3. Investors in People

‘Investors in People’ Standard is a flexible and easy to use assessment which helps organisations transform their business performance by targeting chosen business priorities. It focuses on the ability of a company to effectively lead and develop its employees. Implementation of ‘Investors in People’ includes defining performance targets and key priorities in relation to strategic personnel management and integrating these in all the work processes.

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The assessment is simple as it is entirely based on interviews with people from across the organisation and it doesn't require any paperwork or form-filling. Directors, managers and members of staff are all interviewed for approximately 30 minutes. The style of questioning is open, to encourage people to speak freely. Questions are based on the key priorities that are determined in the first step and are for example about the role of the job, communication between colleagues, attendance of meetings, training that has been received as well as strengths and difficulties in working in this company. By participating in these interviews employees are able to give their opinions and are thus more involved. The 'Investors in People' approach also helped to persuade managers of the need to develop their own management skills and to understand the value of supporting staff.

Investors in People helps organisations reap substantial bottom line rewards during times of economic downturn.



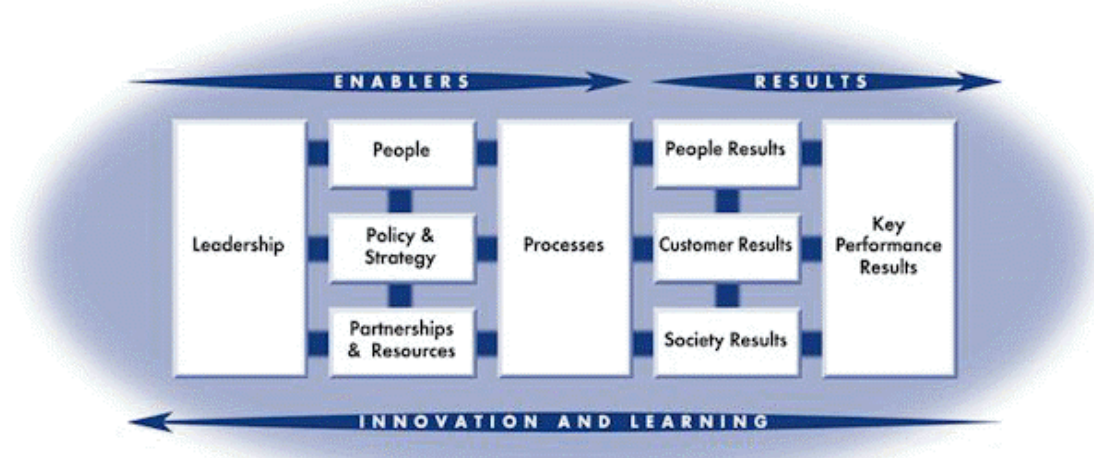
Source: Martin, L. and Elwes, R. (2008) *Investors in People: Realising Business Ambitions through People in Times of Change*, CIPD

4. The EFQM Excellence Model

The EFQM Excellence model is a non-prescriptive framework for understanding the connections between the work processes in an organisation and the results it is capable of achieving. It can be used as a tool to assess the company performances and to compare it with similar or very different kinds of organisation. By doing such an assessment the process and the results help to improve individual learning, to find strategic recommendations and to define areas of improvement.

The Model is based on the premise that results, defined by customer, people and society, are achieved through leadership driving the strategy. The strategy itself is delivered by people, partnerships and resources, processes, products and services. It is based on 9 criteria. Five of these are 'Enablers' and four are 'Results'. The 'Enabler' criteria cover what an organisation does and how it does it. The 'Results' criteria cover what an organisation achieves. 'Results' are caused by 'Enablers' and 'Enablers' are improved using feedback from 'Results'. The company has implemented the programme to optimize internal and external processes and performances and to be able to benchmark its own performance comparing it to other organisations.

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Besides these four activities, Kovokon also put effort in the certification of their management system. In 2008 the renewal of OHSAS 18001 Certification was attained. OHSAS stands for Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series. This standard is an health and safety management system specification and helps you in managing the risks.

2.4. What was achieved?

As is mentioned before the company is a two-fold holder of the Safe Enterprise Award. The system functionality is evidenced also by the decrease in the number of accidents within the company.

In the annual report "The requirements of occupational safety and health"- written in Czech - results and trends are recorded. In the first year after the implementation of the SHE (Safety Health and Environment) improvement strategy the number of injuries per 100 employees lowered by 75 %. In the following years the trend was not so significant but every year the enterprise achieves the established aim.

2.5. Success factors

Four success factors can be distinguished: employee involvement, cooperation with external parties, certification of core areas of management systems and internal expertise on risk prevention

First and foremost, all employees are involved. The enterprise has been honored as the winner of the Investor in People (IIP) award and as the winner of the Czech National Quality Prize. Especially the IIP award demonstrates the knowledge and full participation of all employees in realizing the strategic objectives of the company.

Another great asset for the company is the cooperation with regional labour inspectorates, fire rescue companies, hygiene service, and the department of environment of Kovokon. By proving to these institutions its will and effort to have all things in order, Kovokon gained their support and their advice. Today the company discusses all problems and operational issues routinely.

The company has core areas of management systems certified (Q, EMS, OSH). In 2008 the renewal of OHSAS 18001 Certification was attained. OHSAS stands for Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series. This standard is an health and safety management system specification and helps you in managing the risks.

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The fourth success factor is the internal expertise of KOVOKON on risk prevention. The company gained a certificate on professional competence in risk prevention indicating they have the knowledge and the resources for improving OSH issues. It was thus decided to manage the implementation of the safety improvement process internally which showed to be very efficient.

2.6. Further information

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2.7. Transferability

To sustain and improve quality and safety Kokovon has used existing programmes. The 5 steps programme, 'Investors In People' and the EFQM excellence model are all applicable in other medium and large size organisations as well. The involvement of both employers and employees is necessary for the programmes to be successful. It should also be noted that these programmes are not only aimed at safety, but at the quality and performance of the business in general.

References, resources:

- EFQM excellence model: <http://www.efqm.org/en/>
- 5 steps programme : http://web.thsao.on.ca/docs/five_steps.pdf
- IMP³rove: <https://www.improve-innovation.eu/>
- Investors in People: <http://www.investorsinpeople.com>