

OIRA FOR A MULTINATIONAL COMPANY

General information

Country/: Germany/Europe

Available language: German/English

Sector covered: automotive sector



Initiator/organisations involved

Multinational car manufacturer

EU-OSHA

Description of the case

In 2017 EU-OSHA received an unusual request. A multinational car manufacturer was interested in the OiRA software and wanted to evaluate if the software would be suitable for it to adapt and use to support the risk assessment process across the whole company. In the following EU-OSHA explained the origin of the software ([see also the Dutch case study](#)) to the company's occupational safety and health (OSH) manager and provided the company with several contacts so it could enquire further about whether the software would be of interested to it.

Even though multinational companies face different challenges from micro and small companies when it comes to complying with OSH requirements in general and risk assessment in particular, the interest from a multinational company in the OiRA software implies that there are more

parallels between large and small companies than expected. While multinational companies have more resources and a department solely dealing with OSH, they still need to make sure that the appropriate knowledge is getting to and that there is an awareness of OSH in each small unit, with such units often not having more than 10-20 employees.

Aims

In the months that followed, the company's German OSH department carefully investigated the software and the possibilities it offered for its own purposes. This process not only included a thorough examination of the usability of the software for the company, but it also included a comprehensive comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of several other options, such as developing software from scratch or buying a commercial software licence for all of the workplaces concerned. The company finally decided to invest in a pilot programme, developing its own risk assessment tool based on the content management system (CMS) of OiRA. Since OiRA is based on [Plone](#), which is an open source content management system (CMS), all the information needed to develop such a pilot programme is freely available to everyone. To adapt the CMS to the company's purposes, however, sufficient information and computer technology knowledge was necessary.

What was done and how

The car manufacturer adapted the software for a testing phase within the company, based on a pilot version very similar to the original OiRA system and layout, but that included certain changes that were necessary to make it fit better to the company's needs and requirements. For this test version, the content of existing risk assessment surveys of the company had been transferred to the online pilot version.

The adapted system was then tested widely throughout different departments of the company, involving health and safety experts, trade union representatives, heads of department, team leaders and many more. Based on the positive and constructive feedback from the stakeholders consulted, several amendments to the software were implemented to adapt the software to the company's way of working and dealing with OSH. This included layout improvements for better usability but also the development of new features.

What was achieved

Before implementing the OiRA software, risk assessments in the company were conducted in diverse ways across departments and work sites. Normally, each team leader and/or foreperson had to carry out a specific risk assessment for the area under their responsibility with the involvement of the health and safety representative. These risk assessments were done from scratch for each unit/area, and the respective head of department had to find the most suitable way to merge the information from the different risk assessments to give a proper overview of priorities, measures, etc. The company's German OSH department decided that better coordination would ensure a more synchronised approach and would limit the role of the task leader to double checking that the risk assessment done for the whole department was valid for their team as well.

The newly implemented OiRA software now allows each head of department to perform a general risk assessment for the whole department. This risk assessment is then automatically available to the different units in the department. Forepersons or team leaders need only to revise and adapt the general risk assessment where necessary to specific aspects in their area of responsibility. At the same time, the OSH department gets a differentiated overview of risks in the company and of how they are dealt with. Based on this, better figures are obtained on the status of OSH and the implementation of measures throughout the whole company. Specific measures can then be taken for areas identified as being in need of improvement. The OSH department developed several 'modules' — chapters of content dealing with different areas of risk assessment. These modules were then grouped into different tools for different areas of work. Risk assessment for pregnant and nursing women was the first tool that was developed and piloted. Based on a new national regulation that came into force on 1 January 2018, new procedures needed to be implemented in the company. Thanks to the new software, a new synchronised risk assessment for pregnant and nursing women could be implemented across the company, and more than 2,000 risk assessments were finalised annually.

Problems faced

Before the software was implemented, doubts over the suitability of the software were raised by some worker representatives. Their main concern was that the software might replace effective OSH working groups that had been set up at specific sites within the company to make sure that all workers in the company were involved in OSH.

During the testing phase, however, it turned out that the way the software was built gave additional opportunities for all those involved to consult the information entered into the system. This additional information proved to be helpful in supporting the OSH working groups in identifying issues for discussions and in finding practical solutions.

Success factors

During the implementation phase, a special effort was made by the OSH department to include pictures displaying the risks described. This process turned out to be another valuable opportunity to involve employees and safety representatives and to pay additional attention to OSH in the company.

Staff had been asked to provide pictures of the different risks in their workplaces, and the OSH department was surprised by the number of responses and pictures sent by staff from all over the company. The OSH department believes that this process of collectively providing pictures also helped to generate positive momentum and remind all staff of the importance of OSH in the company and its daily processes.

Future steps

After finalising this first important step of launching the software across the whole company, the focus is now on the development of a feature to follow up and control the briefing of subcontractors working on company premises. This feature will allow relevant company personnel to check whether or not each subcontractor working on-site has carried out the correct OSH briefing among its employees and whether or not the subcontractors' have accepted the OSH standards and their employees have been suitably trained in these standards.

Following this, the company plans to roll out the software step by step in several languages, enabling it to include company sites in different countries. The multilingual capabilities of the content management system, based on the 16 languages used by EU-OSHA and its partners, are a helpful feature in ensuring the success of this project.

Transferability

There are two aspects to the transferability of the current case study. First, the software improvements in the OiRA CMS made by this multinational car manufacturer are now freely available for everyone to use. The content management system is based on open source software, which enables EU-OSHA to take the feature developed and make it available through OiRA to all its national partners. This means that EU-OSHA and the whole OiRA community, as well as others using the content management system (the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment; see [here](#) for more information), can benefit from any improvements made to the software by this company.

Second, the approach taken is transferable to any large company looking for software to manage risk assessment across different departments in an organised manner. Of course, this would mean a certain amount of investment in adapting the software to the company's own approach. However, in a second step this could also lead to a community of OiRA CMS users working together on these software improvements. The company has emphasised on several occasions its interest in sharing and willingness to share not only the Plone-based development code but even going further and providing information on the structure and aspects covered by its risk assessment modules.



Costs

The company had several reasons for opting for a content management system based on OiRA. It was looking for a new software solution for dealing with risk assessment and OSH. Other automotive companies have often invested plenty of resources (financial as well human resources) in developing their own software, or have bought licences for software offered by external contractors, which then includes annual licensing costs for thousands of workplaces. Among other advantages, OiRA not only makes a highly individualised approach possible, but also makes it possible to use a multilingual approach; as such, it is a very suitable solution for multinational companies. Finally, it also turned out that opting for OiRA was the cheapest solution for this company, considering that the major part of the already developed content management system could be built upon.

Evaluation

Even though the software was originally developed to support micro and small companies, this case study proves that OiRA is more versatile than that and can be used beyond its original purpose. There are plenty of opportunities to enlarge the OiRA community, not only by more national partners from EU Member States joining, but also by raising interest in the wider OSH community.

Further information...

<https://oiraproject.eu/en/>