

RDW - ON A HEALTHY AND SAFE COURSE (THE NETHERLANDS)

1. Organisations involved

- RDW - Dutch Centre for Vehicle Technology and Information



- TNO

2. Description of the case

2.1. Introduction

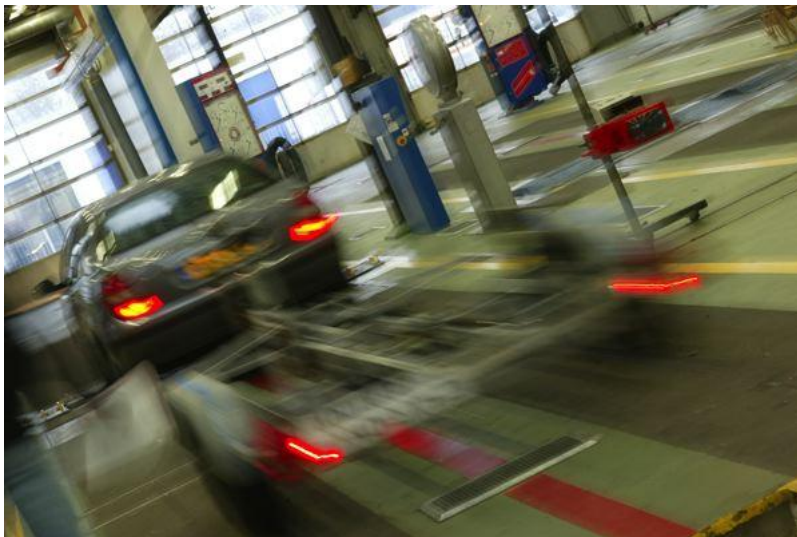
RDW¹ is the Dutch licensing authority for all vehicles on the public highway, ranging from passenger cars, company cars (and other fleet vehicles) and trucks to motorbikes, mopeds and scooters. RDW sees to it that all these vehicles comply with the safety and environmental requirements and falls, in that respect, under the responsibility of the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment.

RDW has, in fact, four core tasks, which are closely interwoven:

- Licensing: to bring legal vehicles and vehicle parts onto the Dutch and European market.
- Supervision and testing: monitor RDW-approved companies and check the technical condition of vehicles.
- Registration and provision of information: collect, save, process and manage data about vehicles, their owners and vehicle documents and provide information to those interested in this data.
- Document delivery: issue documents necessary for the vehicles or their owners, such as vehicle registration documents and driving licences.

Pictures: RDW has four main core tasks: licensing, supervision and testing, registration and provision of information and document delivery

¹ Since becoming independent in 1996, the RDW has dropped its former title of 'Rijksdienst voor het Wegverkeer' ('Dutch Department for Road Transport') and is now known as 'the RDW Centre for Vehicle Technology and Information', or simply 'the RDW'.



Close on 1,500 people work at RDW. This at 21 sites, spread throughout the country. There are four main divisions within RDW: Vehicle Technology (VT), Registration and Information (R&I), ICT and STAF (support departments). In the head office at Zoetermeer, as well as in the offices at Veendam, Groningen and Zwolle, mainly office work is carried out. Next to these offices, there are 16 RDW authorised test centres with technical workers (performing the technical vehicle controls) and administrative personnel. There is another test centre at Lelystad ('Test Centrum Lelystad', TCL), which is an independent vehicle-testing laboratory with a unique combination of services and products under one roof.

Until 2009, the policy on working conditions and absenteeism at RDW was shaped mainly from a statutory framework, with the spotlight firmly on risk management (based on risk assessment) and on support during sick leave monitoring and reintegration. This approach was successfully implemented within RDW, with a positive balance between investments and income in comparison with other labour organisations of the same size. The main indicator in that regard was the rate of sick leave (4.7% in 2009; 4.5% in 2011).

So does this risk management approach suffice? Just like many other (Dutch) organisations, RDW has many challenges to face. Firstly, RDW has to contend with its ageing employee population. RDW is also confronted with sweeping changes, such as fast-changing technological innovations, market trends and increasing globalisation. Fuelled by the ambition to remain a first-mover in European regulations relating to motor vehicles and driving licences, RDW sets high standards for itself. These goals and ambitions of RDW, and the aforesaid environmental factors and challenges, mean that RDW-employees are kept on their toes in their job: people have to adapt repeatedly and quickly to keep up with developments and changing job requirements. Essentially, RDW has to ensure that all employees can continue to function optimally and sustainably. With that in mind, RDW is constantly striving to elaborate its human resources (HR) policy and incorporate more preventive measures in its health policy.

2.2. Aims

RDW intends to develop into a High Performance Organisation (HPO)². To that end, a HR strategy was followed for the period 2007-2011. This was - after the requisite evaluation and fine-tuning – extended in a HR Strategy for 2012-2017. Within this framework, RDW also intends to switch from the rather reactive policy on working conditions and absenteeism (aimed mainly at preventing ill health) to a more preventive and proactive policy, aimed at promoting the good health of both employees and the company. A healthy organisation, in this regard, is one whose corporate culture, the management, the work climate, and other business practices create an environment in which the good health, effectiveness and high performance of employees and company are fostered.³ Health (defined as a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing) is then seen as a source of human performance. Hence vital and healthy people are essential for higher productivity, first-class customer service and innovation. In today's knowledge-driven and networked economy, employers need people who are mentally resilient and capable of handling staff; key requirements for human performance, both at work and in private life.

² A High Performance organisation is an organisation that achieves financial and non-financial results that are exceedingly better than those of its peer group over a period of time of five years or more, by focusing in a disciplined way on that what really matters to the organisation (de Waal, <http://www.hpocenter.com>)

³ See also: European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP), <http://www.enwhp.org/>.

2.3. *What was done, and how?*

In the HR Strategy 2007-2011, four themes were put forward, namely (1) employability, (2) internal and external cooperation, (3) customer-focused approach and thinking, and (4) respond fluidly to a changing job market and societal trends.

As far as the first theme is concerned - ensuring the sustainable employability of all personnel - RDW has, in recent years, taken initiatives in several domains of HR activity. Among other things, attention was paid to strategic personnel planning, the self-development of management and staff, as well as improving working conditions and setting-up a vitality programme. 'Integral health management' is the key phrase on that score.

Integrated health management

Fuelled by the ambition to grow RDW into a HPO, it was decided, in 2010, to embrace the concept of 'Integrated health management' (IHM). IHM is the systematic management of the health and vitality of both employees and the company. Besides promoting the vitality of individual employees, the health and vitality of the organisation is also a main objective of IHM (refer also to BOX).

Integrated Health Management (IHM)

In order to make health strategically more important to organisations, and thus to approach and manage these issues in a more integrated way, TNO Quality of Life has developed the Integrated Health Management (IHM) concept (see e.g., Zwetsloot and of Scheppingen, 2007; Zwetsloot et al. 2010). This approach is aimed at reducing the costs of sick leave and worker disability and at the same time increasing the productivity and resilience of the company and its employees. In the IHM approach, the value of health is seen as a key element of corporate policy. There are seven major areas of IHM development, the inter-relationships between them are essential for the success of the process:

- 1) health as a strategic company interest;
- 2) the realisation of a healthy primary process;
- 3) a safe and sound physical (work) environment;
- 4) an inspiring social (work) environment;
- 5) vital and healthy people;
- 6) a sound relationship with the direct organisational environment and local community;
- 7) healthy products and/or services.

This IHM approach suggests that health management not only needs to focus on the worker's health, but also on the organisational health (i.e. the ability of organisations to stay vital in its environment and perform well). With this, IHM serves a parallel interest (health and business) and increasingly is seen as a part of the organisation acting responsibly (i.e. a vital aspect of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)).

Meanwhile, to underline the business perspective, the assumed mutual interaction between the health of employees and the health of organisations is called "healthy business".

As a start, a business case and a framework document entitled 'RDW - On a healthy and safe course' was drawn up, with the support of TNO. The initiatives of a proactive health policy are set out in this document, including the expectations, originating from that policy, that apply to all RDW employees.

To produce this document and, in doing so, create the broadest possible base, a whole preparatory phase was needed, in which RDW cooperated closely with the Platform for Occupational Safety and Health, the ARBO (Health & Safety) contacts, representatives from all divisions, the works council and the external occupational health & safety service.

A recurrent theme in this document is that regular dialogue is needed between managers, employees and the occupational physician on what the employee requires to be optimally employable. Personal leadership is the key consideration here. By engaging in dialogue at an early stage, the parties can look jointly for temporary changes to the work schedule and sick leave can be limited or, in some cases, avoided altogether.

The framework document is composed of three parts:

- Part 1: the goal(s), duties, areas of competence and responsibility of the different parties concerned (management, executive staff, employees, the works council, human resources management (HRM), the occupational physician and occupational health and safety professionals), the structural consultative bodies and other possibilities for discussing someone's health and employability, and the specific health-enhancing activities at both the individual level (the employee's fitness for work, health checks and preventive medical examinations) and at the level of the organisation (a healthy work climate and organisational culture, namely: drawing up a normative framework, promoting regular dialogue, fostering the desired conduct and exemplary behaviour by management).
- Part 2: the basic assumptions and underlying motives, as well as the history of policy-making on health at RDW.
- Part 3: implementation and continuous improvement, focusing particularly on monitoring and performance indicators.

Why 'RDW - On a healthy and safe course'? (extract from the framework document)

Wellbeing at work and finding work pleasant matter to us all. Being physically, mentally and socially in the pink helps you get more joy from your endeavours. Physical fitness and mental resilience afford opportunities and make you self-reliant, e.g. when taking up new challenges (both at work and in your private life). It's also important to consider the long-term picture. To continue working well into old age, it's important to make conscious choices that befit you and are important to your future career. Working safely and healthily is not something you do for others, but for yourself! You could also be a role model for others. Your behaviour may dictate your future and that of others. To continue working into later life, healthily and with job satisfaction, it's your move... and everybody's move!

Because of the inherent differences between the divisions, there's no point striving for group-wide uniformity of policy-related activities. Consequently, the policy is fleshed out into specific plans or activities either centrally or decentrally (divisions/departments). Set down centrally are the general focus and the use of steering mechanisms. These are fleshed out and made concrete decentrally.

The framework document 'RDW - On a healthy and safe course' was approved on 25 May 2010 and ratified by the management of RDW. As 'RDW - On a healthy and safe course' is a policy *for* and *by* employees and the commitment of all employees is essential, proper attention was paid to communicating this document proactively. Besides the popular modes of communication, like the intranet, this document (and future developments in the policy) were also explained verbally. The HR department, the ARBO (Health & Safety) coordinator and the ARBO contacts were deployed to visit the various divisions/departments and to brief the executive staff and employees concerned about

(the changes and consequences of) this policy. The framework document was discussed as well in the social medical teams (SMTs)⁴ of the different departments and divisions.

Described below are some HR initiatives set up as part of the new policy: 'RDW - On a healthy and safe course'. It concerns the vitality programme, a pilot project on 'The New Works' and RDW policy on aggression and smoking.

Vitality programme

Since, in the strategic objectives of RDW, it states that RDW must invest continually in its personnel to keep employees sustainably employable, RDW's Management gave its fiat in late 2010 to gauge the feasibility of a vitality programme for the workers.⁵ The preconditions for this were that such a programme should include the regular, statutory medical examination for display screen users or operators, and it should also yield more insights into workload perceptions and lifestyle effects, among other things.

A vitality programme should, ideally, support employees to remain or become vital. So besides physical health, this was explicitly about the worker's mental balance. The preconditions for a programme of this kind were it had to have a really low threshold of participation, guarantee the privacy of the participants, and have a wide service offering.

The promise and hope here is that increasing workforce vitality will lower sick leave and may cause productivity to rise, and as such support sustainable employability.

The HR department examined two vitality programmes and checked to what degree they fulfilled RDW's wishes and requirements. Based on this analysis, HR gave management its recommendation. Subsequently, Menzis' 'You Plus' programme was chosen. Commencing 2012, it is offered for a trial period of one year to all RDW-employees. After one year it is evaluated and, based on the results, the Management Team of RDW is asked to decide on whether to extend the vitality programme by a further two years or not.

⁴ The SMTs explore opportunities for the reintegration of employees who have been on sick leave for relatively long periods of time.

⁵ A programme that supports the process when increasing vitality. By 'vitality' is meant: "bubbling over with energy, feeling fit and strong, shows great perseverance, tireless, has great mental resilience and ditto stamina".

Menzis' You Plus (MYP)

This is an online coaching programme that offers a full suite of services to increase employee vitality. It is based on the latest insights in the fields of lifestyle and prevention, in which the employees' own responsibility for their good health and self-development is key.

It's a personal digital environment only accessible by the employee himself (accessible 24 h a day, over the internet). Once the employee has logged in, for the first time, in his own work environment, that session will start with a digital interview. This affords the employee a better insight into his personal situation. This is followed, for the employee personally, with a digital report, complete with expert advice and suggestions on his health and vitality. Based on that advice, a wide range of online modules is offered, one or more of which the employee can set to work on. The programme is a continuous process in which the participant is regularly reminded to avail himself thereof.

In addition, about six times a year a topic related to workplace health promotion (physical exercise, nutrition, smoking, alcohol, mental health) is highlighted at organisational level, supported by frequent communication and actions. As a first topic, work stress was selected. Employees can voluntarily participate to a workshop where practical tips and tricks are provided. If people want to know more, they are referred to the MYP programme for further coaching.

When there are enough participants (at least 25 people), managers get a view on the use of the programme via the 'managers portal'. At central level, a view can be obtained of the specific interest and needs of the participants, which helps to support specific actions.

The 'New Works' pilot

The 'New Works' pilot project started at the ICT Division in 2010. The aim of this approach is - together with a new work environment - to introduce another way of working, in which office work can be done irrespective of time or place, with more scope for adjustment by the employees themselves, a coaching role for executive staff and a good work-life balance. They choose to use a participative approach, in which a working group with representatives of the organisation jointly developed and implemented the 'new work' concept. A new desking concept was introduced, with nothing but flexible workstations. Via informal meetings, according to the concept of the 'world cafés' (as they were called), employees could exchange ideas on what these changes would mean for them exactly. These meetings went down well with the employees and have helped establish a platform, which commands popular support, for the transition from fixed, 'own' workstations to the system of flexible desking. The central idea behind this new housing concept is to apply less rules, but start from clear values and norms.

Policy centred around aggression

To hone employee skills in dealing with emotions and aggression, RDW has both an online learning module and skills training on these topics. The bespoke training courses are held in RDW's own offices. Via the online learning module, participants develop a theoretical base for handling emotions and aggression. Every RDW employee who interfaces with customers is obliged to follow this learning module and successfully complete the final test. After the learning module comes the skills training to put the theory into the practice. The manager himself chooses which mode of training dovetails best with the team. It's a short, intensive training in which the skills for handling emotions and aggression are discussed. The first courses took place in 2011, and got a very favourable response (and were well-received). Participants perceived the training as very useful in their own work situations.

RDW also has a contract providing 24-hour employee assistance in case of traumatic events. In case of an incident, professional psychological help can be available within two hours. This service was first used in 2012 and evaluated as very helpful.

No-smoking policy

The social trend to discourage smoking *and* the strategic choice of IHM, have led to a change in the no-smoking policy at RDW. It was therefore decided to make all RDW branches smoke-free by 2012. This happened step by step. A precondition for closing indoor rest areas for smokers is that smokers are offered a viable alternative smoking spot outside the building. This was realised in 2012 at all RDW sites.

2.4. What was achieved?

- RDW wants to grow into a 'High Performance Organisation' in which its employees are sustainably employable. A vitality programme in which the employee can flesh out his personal leadership, follows on logically from the elaboration of the business case by TNO and the framework document 'RDW - On a healthy and safe course'. With the vitality programme that's offered, RDW can flesh out and finalise RDW's proactive health policy, by facilitating individual health promotion and supporting a health-enhancing organisational culture.
- The 'RDW - On a healthy and safe course' framework document formed the basis for developing an organisational culture in which 'self-steering' (on health, safety and sustainable employability) is actively encouraged. For employees, this means, concretely, that they: (1) themselves, make the first move in flagging or highlighting issues of ongoing concern (concerning health, safety and/or sustainable employability) and/or rendering them debatable; (2) themselves, take an active role in the event of sick leave and prevent sick leave whenever possible; (3) are jointly responsible for creating a healthy work climate; and (4), where necessary, utilise facilities that facilitate healthy and safe systems of work.
- 'Working conditions' is a hot topic at all levels of the organisation and, within the business processes, it has become an increasingly axiomatic factor. The Platform for Occupational Safety and Health ('Arboplatform') fulfils a key role in this, along with the ARBO (Health & Safety) contacts and representatives from all departments/divisions. Also involved are the works council and an adviser from the external occupational health & safety service. Changes in business (or industrial) processes or office desking are discussed in the Platform for Occupational Safety and Health and compliance-checked against aspects that concern working conditions.
- Every year since 2001, VNU Media, a Dutch publishing company of business-to-business publications, has sponsored the 'Best Employers Survey' undertaken by the Intermediair Research Institute. The survey is conducted among ca. 100 companies in the profit and non-profit sectors and is composed of two parts: terms of employment and employee satisfaction (incl. the perceived work experience). In 2011, just as in the two previous years, RDW was voted 'Best Employer' in the non-profit sector. In the combined rankings for the profit and non-profit sectors, RDW came eighth.

2.5. Critical success factors and issues for attention

- It is still too early to make a thorough evaluation of RDW's IHM approach, including the implementation of the above described MYP programme. The most important success factor so far is however evident: the solid preparation. RDW's HR department has taken in this regard

an innovative and proactive approach. The preparation phase consisted of several steps: (1) evaluation of the absenteeism policy (2006), (2) decision to take the IHM approach (2007), (3) making the business case with support of TNO (2009), (4) drawing up a framework document 'RDW - On a healthy and safe course' with the support of TNO (2010), (6) selection of a vitality programme (2011), and (7) start of implementing the MYP programme.

- By making the business case in the preparatory stage, the estimated benefits of the new approach were made visible which was important to convince several people. Moreover, it was a guideline to the desired direction of the health policy to be developed.
- The vision of the approach, described in this case study, is clearly linked to RDW's Agenda to permanently invest in its personnel and the HR Strategy of sustainable employability. This ensures that the approach is strongly tied to the organisation's strategy and policies, and thus not dependent on one particular individual.
- As a change process requires a wide and strong support, the involvement and participation of all relevant stakeholders in each step is crucial. In addition, it might be helpful to rely in certain steps on the expertise and experience of external consultants.
- The Platform for Occupational Safety and Health ('Arbopatform') plays a pivotal role as ambassador, by ensuring direct contact between the local representatives and respective line managers. This however doesn't guarantee success - it is crucial to stay alert and respond promptly to every reaction. The HR Advisers have an important role as well, as they are the link between policy level and the daily practices on the work floor.
- One of the points for attention throughout the change process is the fact that RDW has a history within the Ministry, with a more conservative culture, making it difficult to give up certain acquired rights and habits. The new approach requires more initiative and personal leadership from its employees.
- Due to the geographical distribution of the different sites, it takes time to make decisions and fully implement new policies and programmes. It is often hard and time-consuming to repeat the same discussions at different levels and sites. 'Why should we do it differently?' is an often heard question.
- Many people were/are reluctant towards the vitality approach, as health is often considered as a private issue and not an employer's concern. It is however important that people are aware of the big financial impact of absenteeism due to ill health. RDW's management therefore decided to run an obligatory workshop in which the link between vitality and sustainable employability is made.

2.6. Further information

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2.7. Transferability

The case of RDW shows that the organisation development and health policy are meaningfully related and may be mutually reinforcing. The participative approach used by RDW provides a tailor made development of the health policy. It therefore is likely to be useful in other organisations as well, both in the public and private sector. Commitment from the top management for such a participative approach is a main prerequisite. An explicit link with the strategic policy, as well as a long term vision, therefore is needed.

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