

WORKING WELL @ NATIONAL GRID

1. Case metadata

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▪ **Abstract:**

Issue

In 2008, National Grid (a power transmission and gas distribution company) identified that globally sickness absence costs the company £30.9 (c €37.1) million per year with the main causes for absence being musculoskeletal and stress related illness. Given the cost of sickness absence, National Grid was motivated to improve employee's overall health and wellbeing. Adhering to their company values National Grid also wanted to improve employee engagement and motivation and in return reduce the business costs associated with ill health. This was achieved through effective identification, specialist support and targeted health promotion and health improvement programmes.

Action

A four-year wellbeing strategy was developed and implemented. It focused on increasing employee engagement in health and wellbeing programmes, introducing Wellbeing Champions and using the data, information and employee feedback from the programmes to inform and target future wellbeing interventions. Over time six 'Pillars of Health' were identified as areas to focus on:

- occupational health management;
- stress and mental wellbeing management;
- musculoskeletal function;
- cardiovascular risk;
- cancer awareness;
- personal energy management.

Results

To date National Grid has realised several of their strategy aims reflected by:

- an increase in the employee engagement ratings - an 8% increase since the programme launch;
- the number of employees opting into health promotion interventions - 61% electing cardiovascular risk health screening, 57% tracking health metrics via Health Kiosks (on-site health checking facilities), 30% engaging in lifestyle changes programmes;
- the introduction of specialist support programmes - including the roll out of soft tissue injury prevention programmes, and the development of a global approach to mental wellbeing and associated stress management strategy, including improved identification processes and specialist support tools.

National Grid has also recorded a significant reduction in sickness absence, resulting in a cost saving to the business of £8.9 (c €10.7) million over two years. Absence levels are now below the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) utility norms (National Grid average working time lost per year – 2.82% vs. CBI industry norm of 3.8% (20/10/11)).

2. Organisations involved

National Grid

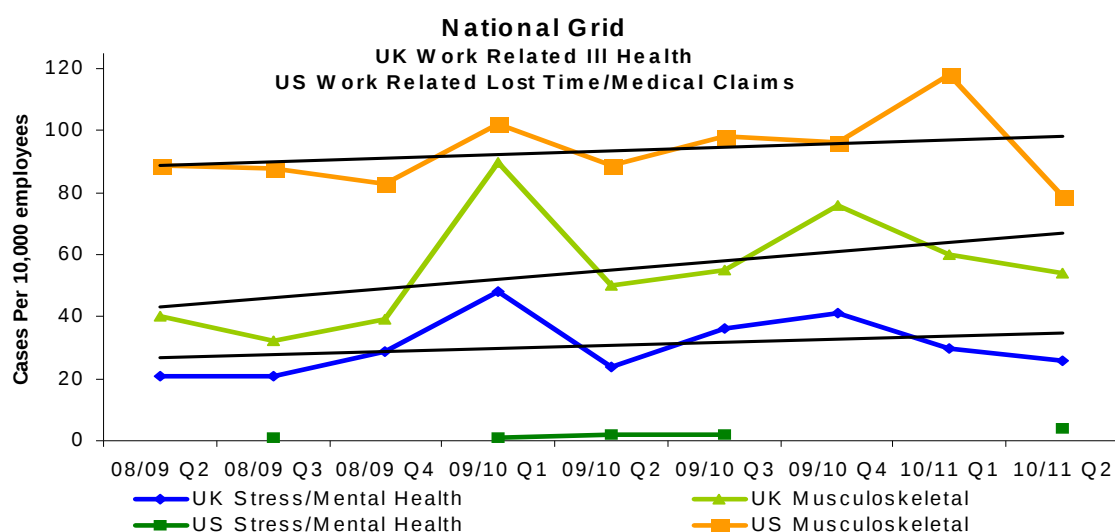
3. Description of the case

3.1. Introduction

National Grid owns the high-voltage electricity transmission network in England and Wales and operates the system across Great Britain. It owns and operates the high-pressure gas transmission system in Britain and its distribution business delivers gas to 11 million homes and businesses. It has over 10,000 employees who are geographically spread with 6,000 office based and 4,500 field based. These employees operate in a wide variety of working environments such as roads, vehicles, customer homes, customer land, control rooms, call centres and offices.

In 2008, National Grid identified that globally, sickness absence costs the company £30.9 (c €37.1) million per year, with the major causes for absence being musculoskeletal and stress related illnesses represented by the top reasons for referral into its occupational health office (Figure 1).

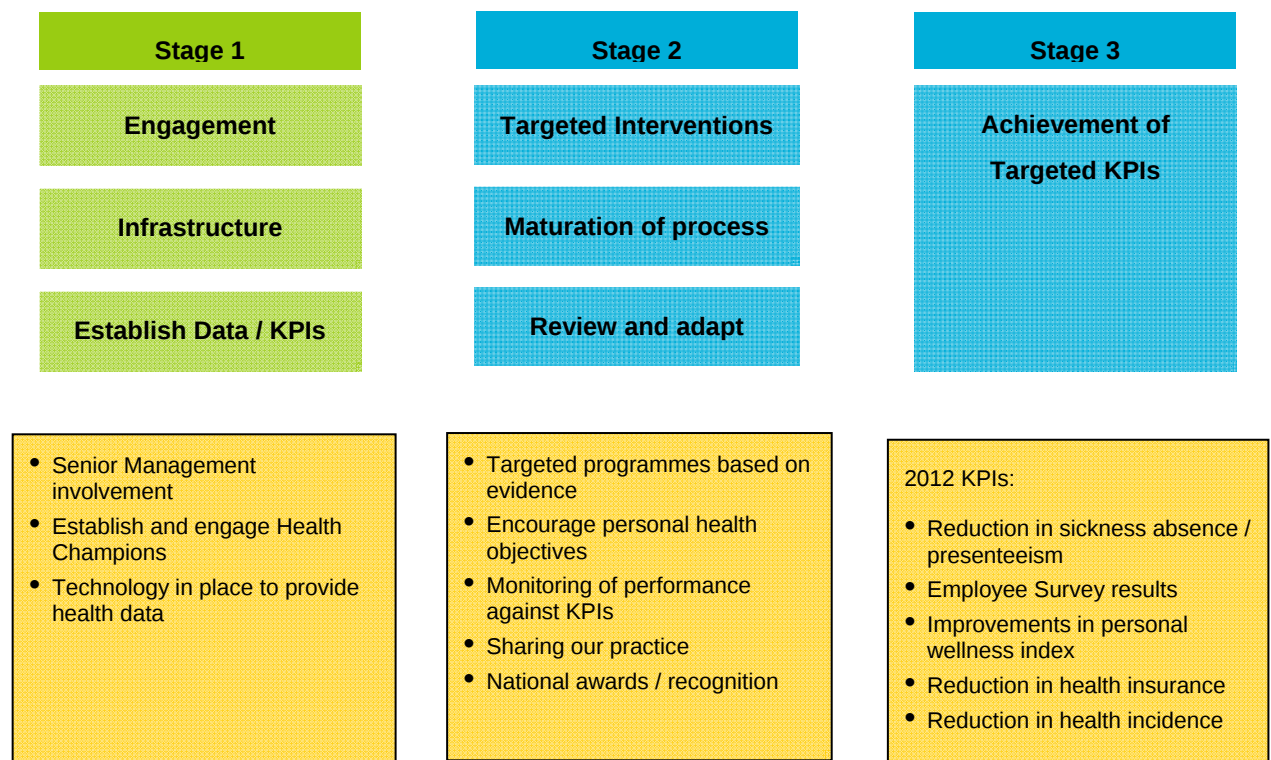
Figure 1: Occupational health referral data per 1000 employees



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The average age of National Grid's employees is 46, combined with the absence costs, a general increased awareness around human factors in safety performance, and the commitment to remain a responsible employer, a decision was made to implement a wellbeing strategy and associated proactive support processes that engaged the current workforce whilst addressing the business issues (musculoskeletal/stress and performance). National Grid's four-year staged wellbeing strategy is outlined below (Figure 2).

Figure 2: National Grid's 4-year wellbeing strategy



National Grid's four-year strategy aims to:

- engage (educate and encourage personal ownership of health and wellbeing);
- address business issues via specialist support programmes;
- use processes/program data (outputs) to enable business to target and manage health and wellbeing, including assessing impact against key performance indicators (KPI's) outcomes.

3.2. Aims:

National Grid's aim is to provide a workplace environment where employees can flourish through improving their health, engagement and wellbeing to the mutual benefit of themselves, their families and National Grid.

3.3. What was done, and how?

When National Grid set its initial strategy and programmes, it held a series of employee workshops to understand what different groups of employees may like to see or expect. This was the first stage in creating employee engagement and ownership in workplace health promotion. Part of the first stage of National Grid's wellbeing strategy is to demonstrate senior management involvement and engage the workforce. This was achieved through the following:

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Senior management involvement

- 2009 – CEO replaced health and safety policy with a safety and wellbeing policy.
- 2010 – Senior manager workshops (top 200 managers) – 50% process safety training focused on wellbeing.
- 2011 - Director workshops (March – National Grid USA) titled 'Taking the stress out of Leadership', aimed at stress management and building resilient leaders and teams.
- Directors and senior managers funded and supported specific business unit's wellbeing interventions.

Employee engagement

- Wellbeing Champions were embedded across the business supported by an annual conference, to showcase business unit's wellbeing interventions.
- Health Kiosk (on-site health checking facilities) access – available across 22 sites (57% employees' accessed the kiosk; see Figure 3).
- Mobile vehicles used to deliver wellbeing health screening as part of National Grid's statutory medicals to field based employees (92% field based employees opted into health screening).
- Open access to a dot-com websites used to host information on lifestyle challenges.
- Health materials posted to work or home address.

The aggregated data from company medicals and Health Kiosks provided an initial outline of the health of National Grid's employees and the challenges that they faced. National Grid also implemented a Health Improvement Team made up of employee representative and line managers that helps steer the development of programmes to suit the differing needs of the workforce. National Grid then coordinated the formation of a network of 35 Wellbeing Champions that help bespoke and deliver national programmes for local use. Programmes are agreed with line managers and they in turn encourage their teams to join in by carrying out briefings at monthly Team Briefs. Data on engagement levels and outcomes are then fed back to line managers.

As part of stage two of their wellbeing strategy National Grid implemented the following bespoke workplace health initiatives:

Figure 3: Health Kiosk



National 'Better Physical and Psychological Health Campaign' (available to all employees)

1. Dedicated Occupational Health (OH) service - to respond to the diverse demands of the business including:
 - Risk based Health Surveillance/Fit for Task screening/Wellbeing screening (CVR);
 - Absence Case Management;
 - Referral into specialist fast track, work focused physiotherapy support services (Soft Tissue Injury Prevention Program);
2. Cardiovascular Risk (CVR) – to allow benchmarking/reporting, identify and support 'at risk' population, educate emphasising personal ownership around positive lifestyle change:
 - Health Kiosks – enabling employees to track key health metrics;

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- Proactive health screening – 'Cardiovascular Risk Assessments' (via the OH provider) outputs include personal employee health report, aggregated reports including health profiling and benchmarking against company/UK norms (National Health Service – obesity and physical activity report). The reports ensure that health promotion addresses issues that are identified within the population (physical activity, obesity and blood pressure);
- Periodic company lifestyle health challenges - focussing on health issues identified (via kiosks and CVR screening) – physical activity, exercise, weight management and nutrition;
- Access to information – variety of resources available via Wellbeing intranet pages (launched January 2009; See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Wellbeing intranet pages



National Grid's internal web pages provide significant education and information on health and wellbeing. Employees who cannot easily access these systems are provided with printed A5 booklets with similar information. This also enables alteration of the style of how the information is presented to better suite different types of workers. Employees can access all workplace health programmes during core working hours, for example health screening is conducted at work. Employees are anonymously surveyed via Kiosk and Cardiovascular screening to ensure programmes address their topics of interest.

3. Stress Management – to provide support ranging from the identification of risk, to the improved management and education for both managers and employees:
 - Access to Info – new intranet site created in September 2010 coinciding with communication cascade;

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- Employee/Manager Awareness workshops;
- Employee/Line Manager e-learning training - both packages form part of the learning catalogue for employees' development;
- Employee Assistance support service;
- Personal Energy Management training – band A/B managers;
- Global Mental Wellbeing approach - co-ordinated across National Grid's worldwide sites;
- Employee Survey – aligned to HSE Safety Climate Tool questions to provide an early indicator of workplace pressure across the business.

Better specialist support

1. Soft Tissue Injury Prevention Program (STIPP) – to address the issue of musculoskeletal ill health through improved treatment and proactive training:
 - Fast Track Physiotherapy advice and treatment;
 - Functional restoration – intense physiotherapy and psychological programme to return employees to work;
 - Advanced Manual Handling;
2. Active case management – to manage absence and support return to work:
 - Bespoke for Gas Operations to support managers including bi-monthly review of high potential cases.

Better relationships & better work – to create a supportive and engaging work environment that promotes communication and social connections:

- Family provisions policy (maternity, paternity, adoption, statutory parental break, enhanced parental break, childcare break and allowance);
- Flexible Working Policy, sabbatical policy, flexi benefits, buy/sell holidays;
- Further Education Policy;
- Support Networks/ Employee lead networks - Families@work, Women in Networks, One, Enabling, Pride, Faith@work;
- Flexible benefits options (salary sacrifice) – private medical insurance, critical illness insurance, dental insurance, childcare vouchers, health assessment options;
- Inclusion & Diversity Policy – including processes to facilitate education management and provide guidance on specific faith events.

Knowledge sharing & networking

- National Grid shares its resources and programmes with their contractors and agency employees and their management teams wherever possible;
- National Grid is often requested to present at national and international conferences to talk through its approach and progress in developing and implementing effective programmes;
- National Grids health programmes are often team based which enables employees to meet and support each other outside of normal business process. Feedback from employee satisfaction surveys suggests that this part of the programmes alone adds significant value to team dynamics when the participants return to business duties by having built better relationships;
- The web based programmes often have a social networking element to them where participants can communicate with each other, monitor progress and challenge each other to make improvements or carry out activities such as lunchtime walks.
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3.4. *What was achieved?*

- National Grid's combined Workplace Health programmes have resulted in reduced sickness absence. Since the launch of the health and wellbeing strategy in 2008 to the present day, National Grid have recorded a significant decrease in absenteeism, equating to a 35,000 reduction in the total number of absence days estimated to result in cost saving of £8.9 (c €10.7) million.
- Soft Tissue Injury Prevention Program – The pilot of fast track, work focused physiotherapy available to 400 field based employees resulted in 20 cases using the service in a six-month pilot in 2010. This demonstrated a cost benefit of a 280% return on investment compared to no intervention. This programme is now being rolled out across all of National Grid's 4,500 operational employees.
- Stress management strategy – Over a thousand employees so far have been through stress management workshops and have been given access to e-learning training. National Grid Directors attended a Leadership Workshop, part of which was focused on their personal resilience and stress management and how to lead high performing resilient teams. It also signposted the process of support that is being built within National Grid.
- Cardiovascular risk – 727 office employees have so far been identified as *at risk* and have followed up issues with their doctor and 22% of this high risk group has opted to undertake a follow-up health screen.
- Productivity measures vary across National Grid's area of business, however National Grid's workplace health programmes have contributed to business measures by ensuring the majority of employees are at work and performing. They are currently undertaking research on its programmes to establish their effectiveness at improving employee health and then to look for evidence that employee performance has also been influenced positively.

Employee engagement

As well as the significant decrease in absenteeism there has been a significant increase in employee engagement. One of the strongest reflections on the success of National Grid's health and wellbeing strategy is the engagement and associated impact on the employee engagement scores within the annual employee survey. National Grid has recorded an 8% increase in employee engagement (Engagement Index – 70% favourable) when comparing 2008 data to that found in 2010. In 2010, the company achieved a 95% response rate up from 92% in 2009.

Further breakdown (2010 compared to 2008):

- I am proud to work for National Grid - +8% (73)
- I would recommend National Grid as a good place to work - +7% (73)
- I am personally motivated to help National Grid be successful - +3% (75)

Additional achievements include:

Cardiovascular Screening

- Greater awareness of cardiovascular risk and associated lifestyle factors underpinning personal risk profile – 61% population opted into screening of those:
 - o 90% respondents were, as a result of undergoing a health screen, more aware of their health status;
 - o 85% attendees reported that, based on the test results, they were given lifestyle advice, which could be used to influence their health;
 - o 67%, as a result of attending the health screen, would be making lifestyle changes;

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- Cardiovascular risk screening resulted in the identification of an *at risk* population, as a result a follow-up process has been established for office based employees, including a 3 month follow-up survey and an offer of re-assessment including extended lifestyle coaching element;
- 3 month follow-up survey outcomes (as of 02/03/2011):
 - o 74% did follow-up with local family doctor/practice nurse;
 - o 34% of those follow-ups resulted in a clinical diagnosis and medical intervention;
 - o 65% of those that did follow-up with their doctor received further lifestyle advice;
- Follow-up health screen outcomes (office based - as of 02/03/2011):
 - o At the follow-up health screen the number classified as *at risk* (advised to consult with family doctor) had decreased by 52% (209 reduced to 100).

Health Kiosks – Increased usage

- 57% of employees actively tracking health metrics via Health Kiosks (in 2010 - 5993 direct employees accessed Health Kiosk, 75% male to 25% female), with each employee averaging 4 uses per year (male – 4.94/female – 3.2);
- 216 individuals improved their BMI classification;
- 402 employees improved their blood pressure classification;
- 144 individuals improved their body fat percentage classification;
- 122 individuals improved their resting heart rate classification.

Shape up National Grid

Behaviour change lifestyle challenges (Shape up National Grid) - Continued increase in the number of employees opting into Shape up National Grid challenges, since the 2009 launch. 30% direct employees have engaged in annual Physical activity/Exercise/Weight management and Nutrition challenges (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Results of the Shape up National Grid initiative

Average Outcomes Per Participant

	All Participants	Completers
Weight Loss (lbs / %)	-4.8 / -2.5%	-7.4 / -3.8%
BMI Reduction (points)	-1.0	-1.2
Minutes Exercised Per Day	24	39
Pedometer Steps Per Day	5,460	8,629

Over 70.6% (1,089) of participants competing in the weight loss division lost weight, and 288 employees lost ten or more pounds.

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Average Outcomes Per Participant

	All Participants	Completers
Weight Loss (lbs/%)	4.3/2.3%	6.2/3.3%
BMI Reduction (points)	0.7	0.9
Minutes Exercised Per Day	30.5	40
Pedometer Steps Per Day	6902.1	8821.7

Over 90% (722) of participants competing in the weight loss division lost weight, and 134 employees lost ten or more pounds.

3.5. Success factors

It was important to gain 'buy in' from employees across National Grid in the health and wellbeing initiatives implemented. In order to achieve this, the Health and Wellbeing Manager and Wellbeing Specialists engaged with each business unit manager to identify key health and wellbeing issues specific to their area. Once the risk areas were identified then a pilot health improvement programme was agreed upon. For example, within the Gas Operations business unit, there was an issue with soft tissue injuries and musculoskeletal issues. A programme of soft tissue injury prevention was put in place. This pilot was agreed upon by the head of one Network within Gas Operations and was partially funded by them out of their budget. As they were involved in the planning process, they were motivated to invest financially. The Health and Wellbeing team monitored closely the return on investment of this pilot and was able to show a return of 280%. The managers in the business then became the advocates for the programme and they championed and promoted the pilot internally with their peers. This increased more 'buy in' and participation in each business unit.

Field based engineers traditionally have less access to Workplace Health Promotion Programmes. The 'Physical and Psychological Health Campaign' was available to all employees across the business. A collaboration with a national supermarkets which installed Health kiosks across their branches in the UK meant easy and convenient access for the field based employees to help them measure their health biometrics. This approach created an opportunity for National Grid to interact more with the health of the employees across the whole of the business and a unique way of encouraging those employees that are hard to reach to take part.

3.6. Further information

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3.7. Transferability

- National Grid shared best practice with their alliance partners allowing them to lift specific elements of strategy/interventions to suit their business needs for example the Health Kiosk network is made available to all employees including alliance partners, agency and contractor staff. To date, 3,694 non-direct employees used a Health Kiosk in 2010.

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- Additionally, Amec National Grid's west midlands gas alliance partner has adopted their Cardiovascular screening programme ensuring directly employed and contract employees received the same health screening programmes.
- National Grid is often asked to present at national and international conferences to demonstrate their approach and its progress in developing and implementing effective programmes.
- National Grid is also part of the occupational health and wellbeing committee at the Energy Network Association, and the Business in the Community (BITC) Workwell Practitioners Team.
- National Grid is part of Dame Carol Blacks Responsibility deal working group looking at the role OH in delivering wellbeing.
- Health promotion interventions and education at National Grid mirrors the key messages made by major charities (British Heart Foundation) whilst sticking to a health screening format that is recognised within the NHS (cardiovascular risk calculations). This approach allows effective signposting between company and government funded support programmes (NHS choices).
- National Grid's wellbeing programmes have been recognised by reaching the finals of the National Business Awards in 2009 and being 'Highly Commended' in the BITC National Workwell awards in July 2011.

4. References, resources:

- <http://www.nationalgrid.com/uk> - National Grid website (UK)
- <http://www.nationalgridus.com> – National Grid website (US)