



## **WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND EMPLOYEES' PARTICIPATION PROGRAMME**

### **1. Organisations involved**

Oriflame Poland

### **2. Description of the case**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

Oriflame is an international cosmetic company. The company was established in 1967 in Sweden. Presently it works in 61 countries. Oriflame Poland has 289 employees in Poland, 1/3 of them are office workers, 1/3 are blue collar workers, and 1/3 are field staff. Especially for the field service personnel it is often difficult to achieve a good work-life-balance, since they are particularly prone to be in situations that make them choose between work and family. But not only for field service personnel work-life balance programmes are meant to be an important intervention in order to promote mental health.

#### **2.2. Aims**

The aims of implementing the mental health promotion programme at Oriflame were to create a healthy working culture in general. In more detail the intention was to improve working conditions, make returning to work from maternity leave easier, maintaining work – life balance and minimising the risks of stress. Work health promotion is aimed at improving working conditions to a maximum and it gives additional value to the already successful implemented risk management system.

#### **2.3. What was done, and how?**

There were a number of actions implemented in order to keep and improve the work-life balance of employees. Oriflame implemented a policy of not working overtime. The company puts emphasis on quality of work, not on staying late at work.

Also, there is a custom not to call employees after working hours or when they are on holiday, sick or maternity leave. Employees also have the possibility to work within a flexible working time system and after returning to work from maternity leave or from long term sickness employees can choose to work part-time upon the manager's approval.

Oriflame also offers the possibility to work at home if an employee for any reason cannot come to work, e.g. due to children's illness. In such cases employees are equipped with laptops, wireless internet and cell phones. However this concerns mostly office employees due to work characteristics.

The company offers to help employees with the financing of children's holidays. The financing amount is based on the level of employee's income, the lower the income the higher the financing. Furthermore there are different pro-family actions organised, like family picnics, presents for employee's children at National Children's Day, etc.

All actions are theoretically available for all workers however this depends on reality's limitations. Obviously, some of the actions described above can only be available for office-workers, as they can work from home unlike blue collar workers or field staff.

# CASE STUDIES

Besides the work-life balance focused actions, Oriflame Poland provides other interventions promoting mental health at work. Participation of employees when arranging changes at the workplace or within the work organisation is always ensured. Oriflame also conducts employee satisfaction questionnaires in order to identify the areas within the company that require improvement. One of the topics mentioned was the organisation of rewards and the general appraisal of employees as well as the recognition of their work. According to this requirement a project group composed of volunteers was set up, which aimed to create a new reward system. The group drew up categories of rewards, methods and criteria of nominations, frequency of awarding, and types and value of rewards. The group was divided into three groups, taking care of different topics:

- Presentation of the system in front of the board and getting the board's approval;
- Cooperation with an advertising agency for building up a strategy to ensure the best communication of the new system to all employees.
- Cooperation with legal department in the system's regulations.

This initiative and the high voluntary commitment from employees' side showed that willingness to participate, create and decide about the company's issues is very strong among workers.

Another focus of the company's policy of health and wellbeing of employees is their private life. This practice is reflected in offering help to employees in difficult life-situations, like e.g. illnesses of family members or marriage breakdowns, but also in celebrating child births or getting married. The company's support has got two forms: financial support and practical support (like for example the arrangement of legal advice).

Moreover, Oriflame Poland has implemented an introduction programme for its new employees. On the first day of work every new employee gets a welcome letter and the "Welcome to Oriflame" handbook, which contains all formal and informal rules being established within Oriflame. It contains information about the company itself, its strategy, mission, vision and values, as well as a list of photos and names of all employees, a contact list with the contact information of all employees that could be helpful at the very beginning of work, and general information about labour law. After having received the information papers all new employees take part in an introductory training, containing two phases: 1. Meeting with managers who are presenting the work and objective of their department 2. Deepened training –, which includes meetings with departments or individuals that are fundamental especially for new employees. In the last stage of introductory programme a mentor will be allocated to every new employee. Mentors are generally persons that have been in the company for a long time. They are supposed to give intensive support to their new colleagues wherever required. All these actions are aimed at reducing stress at the beginning. These actions make an independent start easier.

## **2.4. What was achieved?**

- Employees feeling satisfied with their workplace
- Employees having more time for their families
- Employees having sense of control over their workplace
- Employees are more motivated and feel greater commitment to their work
- In 2009 Oriflame Poland was rewarded by Great Place to Work Institute Poland as one of the Top 10 companies (scored 9th place). This outcome is very important, because part of this survey was based on employees' opinion polling. This part, called "Trust index", contains 58 questions about reliability, respect, honesty, pride and companionship regarding the company and management.
- Oriflame Poland was rewarded twice in a row as Friendly Company (1. place) by KOMPAS – a national Polish survey carried out among Polish students. – 2008, 2009

## **2.5. Success factors**

The participative approach Oriflame took in order to improve the working conditions was very successful. The way of including employees, asking them for their priorities on changes at the workplace and even actively integrating them in the follow-up process, like it was done with the rewarding system, resulted in a very positive feedback and in measures being welcomed by all employees.

## **2.6. Further information**

[www.oriflame.pl](http://www.oriflame.pl)

[www.oriflame.com](http://www.oriflame.com)

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## **2.7. Transferability**

All the actions are universal and can theoretically be implemented in most companies. However it might be difficult and even not very useful to conduct some of the interventions in very small enterprises. The satisfaction questionnaire and the ongoing participative approach were very well accepted and welcomed by the employees, but depending on the size of a company it could be easier to conduct discussion groups and health circles instead of doing a questionnaire. Other interventions like the flexible working time or the systematic approach on how to help new employees to adapt to the new workplace are even more general and can of course be copied by all kind of companies from all over Europe.

## **3. References, resources:**

- <http://www.greatplacetowork.com>
- <http://www.kompas.edu.pl>