Putting the theory into practice: Managing Psychosocial Risk in small enterprises

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Visit the Management Standards website at: www.hse.gov.uk/stress
Troubled Times for SME
Troubled Times
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What we know about the Current Situation and SME’s

• The Current business climate offers some challenges and unique opportunities for the management of psychosocial risk in SME’s

• Changes to the way people work due to the economic downturn are having implications on how we tackle traditional issues within SME’s
SME and Europe

• 20 million SME in the EU represent 99% of businesses. They are key drivers for economic growth, innovation, employment and social integration.

• The main factors determining whether a company is an SME are: Company category, Employees, Turnover or Balance sheet total.

Medium-sized = 250 people € 50 m turnover, balance sheet € 43m

Small = 50 people, € 10 m turnover, balance sheet €10m

Micro< 10 people, € 2 m turnover, balance sheet ≤ € 2 m
The current position of SME and stress

• Report after Report indicates that there is a problem with psychosocial work environments within SME and larger organisations.

• It’s possible that stats are an underestimate of psychosocial risk: is there a SME Iceberg?
State of Theory and SME’s

• Conceptual models exist around psychosocial risk but not always perceived always to be relevant to SME’s

• There is significant research on describing psychosocial issues less so on practical interventions

• Psychosocial SME research is poor and sparse
Conceptual framework for public health guidance: Mental wellbeing and work
Nice Guidance PH22

Type of work & organisational systems
- physical, psychological and social conditions
  pose risks (stressors) and/or opportunities for health

Healthy organisations more productive
- business case for investment in health

Cumulative experience of work & exposure to stressors
  influences vulnerability/resilience

Organisational vector

Purpose of work is wealth creation-employee
  key to productivity/competitiveness

Economic trends influence employment rates, job security, wages

Legislation safeguard rights protect health & safety

Population-wide vector

Life-course experience

Health & Wellbeing

Individual agency-

Socio-cultural society vector

Work determinant of income
- major process of social stratification

Ethnicity, gender, age sources of discrimination

Changing social attitudes and aspiration towards work

Environmental vector

Physical, biological, chemical agents pose
  Work hazards (e.g., dust, noise)

Exploitation of natural resources create jobs

Individual beliefs, attitudes & capacities
  influence response to work, including perception of
  risks (stressors) & opportunities

Experience of ‘stressors’ effects
  nervous system & ‘coping’/resilience
  including health-related behaviour & long term health & wellbeing
Practical Lesson learnt from employers on managing psychosocial risk
Best Practice: Getting the intervention accepted in the workplace

• Don’t be tempted to take a top-down approach in SME’s

• Make the outcomes of the interventions transparent to all employees

• Train-up competent users within the organisation; who can be a point of contact for questions

• Don’t over complicate the intervention
Best Practice: Getting the Intervention accepted in the workplace

- Make sure it passes the mother test
- Identify champions for the process
- Cover organisational issues and make sure you address individual concerns
- Keep on talking and tailoring the intervention
Best Practice: Sustaining the intervention at an organisational level

- Embed opportunities for staff to discuss issues of concern in the organisation – not just for stress – but to give staff a voice
- Giving departments the responsibility for their own action plans flowing out the action points of the intervention is vital
- Rolling programme of implementation – Not all at Once
Summary

• Make it real!!! Otherwise SME’s just want run with it

• Allow the workers to be at the centre of implementing the intervention

• Keep the language simply – don’t use jargon

• Work in partnership with management and workers – Pivotal