

# Titan AG

*Titan AG is an automobile service business based in central Zurich. It is one of the main contract partners to BMW Switzerland AG and recently became the general importer of the new BMW scooter. The company is divided into departments, each with its own head who reports to the director at weekly meetings.*

## **WHP – finding answers**

Following a workplace health promotion presentation given by Suva (the Swiss accident insurance institute), the director of Titan AG contacted the organisation's experts. He felt that there was potential to improve both the relationship between employees and management's behaviour towards staff. Before setting a plan in motion Suva discussed the way the company operated, its products and philosophy, so that a sustainable structure could be created. Although Suva provides support, ultimately the company has to function independently.

## **Suva's contribution:**

- n Preparing and supporting all meetings relating to the workplace health promotion project
- n Establishing structures and procedures for the integration of workplace health promotion
- n Preparing and running workshops in co-operation with management and working groups
- n Providing support for the working groups and helping to plan activities
- n Identifying problems, setting targets and evaluating results
- n Assessing the situation via questionnaires and interviews and

evaluating the results before recommending appropriate measures

- n Supporting the measures and monitoring them with regular assessments and evaluation discussions with management and selected employees.

The activities were carried out on-site with a consultant and a trainer. An industrial psychologist and a quality consultant were available for consultation when needed. The training module "team building and inter-departmental co-operation" was applied.

## **Planning the project**

Suva's programme ran as follows:

- n Informing management about the project
- n Informing the entire staff about the project
- n Appointing an internal working group and training an appropriate staff member as a mediator
- n Drawing up a report using a SALSA questionnaire (salutogenic subjective working analysis) and circulating it to all employees
- n Holding a series of interviews (fourteen in total), based on the questionnaire
- n Analysing the results compiled by the working groups



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- Compiling a list of improvement measures with the working group, prioritising these and suggesting them to the directors.

### ***Translating ideas into action***

Following analysis of the questionnaires and the interviews and having looked at the priorities set out by the internal working group, the following issues were identified as needing urgent attention:

- Inter-departmental co-operation
- Management behaviour towards staff
- Personal relationships among staff
- Information policy
- Design and cleanliness of the rest rooms
- A two day workshop attended by management aimed to fulfill a number of further objectives too
- Integration of WHP measures into company policy
- Improvement of supervisor and management leadership style
- Improvement of inter-departmental co-operation
- Promotion of team spirit and co-operation.

Efforts were also made to find ways of integrating workplace health promotion into company management processes, redesigning work systems in the garages, introducing the new product (BMW scooter) into the sales, service and maintenance departments and establishing a publicity campaign to update all staff on the project's progress

(monthly newsletters and an information board in the cafeteria).

### ***Achieving the desired result***

The management at Titan AG immediately pledged their support for Suva, having already recognised the need for improved staff relationships. Suva's list of proposed improvements was approved by management and the project was set in motion without delay. Before starting on each activity, the situation at the outset was recorded and individual objectives identified. An evaluation took place every six months so that progress could be assessed. Preliminary results and the response from staff at all levels show that positive strides have been made. The most significant being a tangible improvement in the working atmosphere. The reaction to the implemented WHP measures was positive too. Employees reported improved well-being. However, it is too soon to tell if the project will be successful in the long-term. These results show that this is an effective method of integrating workplace health promotion into an SME. However, the success of the venture is dependent on a number of crucial factors: the mediator can only function effectively if the right person is chosen for the job; the whole project can only be successful if it becomes part of the daily functioning of a company and is wholeheartedly supported by the director.

### ***WHP – a wider context***

Workplace health promotion is not yet widely embraced. Its chances of success are improved, as mentioned earlier, if the owner or manager is co-operative and supports the project. WHP is also more likely to be well received in a company where positive personal relationships and good verbal communication already exist. At present, Suva cannot advertise its services for legal reasons. If workplace health promotion is to reach a wider circle of SMEs, a comprehensive advertising campaign is needed. An effective network is also essential for the implementation and integration of workplace health promotion.

Suva identified the following key points as prerequisites for success:

- For the mediator to successfully lead an internal working group he or she must feel a genuine commitment to the task and not feel pressurised by management.
- Management should have a positive attitude to workplace health promotion, set an example and give active support.
- Workplace health promotion should not be regarded as a one-off project. It needs to be integrated into the structure of the company if it is to be sustainable.
- An expert organisation has to be available for consultation and regular contact must be maintained between the SME and the experts.