

*2,556 companies with 3,426 employees belong to VSSM (Swiss Association of Carpenters and Furniture Manufacturers) and it is one of the largest trade associations in Switzerland. Most member companies are small businesses.*

The association is headed by a central committee, which employs 50 staff. The association is also responsible for training its members and runs a number of training centres. The training system, both for basic and further training, is very up-to-date and a very open and adaptable modular type of operation. The trade association works in co-operation with many companies. It consults Suva (the Swiss accident insurance institute) for expert guidance.

#### **Network**

Suva is based in Lucerne and represents Switzerland and Liechtenstein in the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion. After Suva gave a workplace health promotion presentation to VSSM, it was agreed that efforts should be made to bring WHP to the company. Suva supported this project on many levels, but activities were always planned with the intention that VSSM should be able to operate independently eventually.

How Suva supported the company:

- n Preparing and supporting all meetings relating to the workplace health promotion project

- n Establishing structures and procedures to facilitate the integration of workplace health promotion into the initial and further training programme
- n Planning individual modules
- n Setting up the training programme for the mediators
- n Bringing in an industrial psychologist
- n Planning and running basic workshops
- n Supporting the working groups and helping with planning activities
- n Offering support in identifying problem areas, setting targets and subsequent evaluation
- n Planning a time schedule for implementing proposed measures
- n Selecting appropriate outside support.

Activities are carried out on site with an advisor and a trainer. An industrial psychologist and a marketing specialist can be consulted when needed.

#### **Putting WHP into practice**

Although everyone is optimistic that WHP can become part of company ethos, finding an effective way of introducing it is considered

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to be a bigger problem than practical implementation. Translating proposals into action needs to be as smooth running and simple a transition as possible. In order to introduce the concept of WHP to the company, a game depicting a game of golf was designed. The 18 holes were replaced with 18 questions about workplace health promotion. If the questions are answered correctly, the game can continue, if not a "detour" must be made. If a staff member cannot answer any of the questions, he is encouraged to talk to the manager. He then receives full written information about every question.

**Measures already taken:**

- n Verbal information for the VSSM area heads of careers training
- n Verbal information for the VSSM central committee
- n Establishment of a working group in which employer and employees are represented
- n Workshops and meetings organised
- n Developing the workplace health promotion "game"
- n Planning a time scale for implementation
- n Organising training for the mediators.

**Make the healthy way the more humorous way**

Two levels of action have taken place:

1. WHP has been integrated into the association teaching syllabus and examination regulations. Teachers are undergoing training as mediators by Suva.
2. WHP has also been integrated into all the association companies. WHP is to be introduced in addition to the measures already stipulated by law. Emphasis should be placed on a humorous approach with the help of a game of golf named "Hole in One". Once interest is awakened, it should be spontaneous and fun to play. The following aids are available:
  - n "Playing field" poster of a golf course with 18 questions. It should be displayed somewhere easily accessible, e.g. in the cloakrooms, canteen, WC door.
  - n 18 answer cards explaining the questions should be hung in a folder. If a player has further questions, or would like further explanation he should contact the supervisor. This encourages the communication process.
  - n The person responsible, normally the company owner, is provided with comprehensive background material to the 18 questions.
  - n Every employee in each of the companies belonging to the association, receives a special game to keep as a reminder of workplace health promotion.

**Conclusions**

An association such as VSSM is involved with many companies so it is an ideal point of contact. The association and its training centres are already well known and recognised by the companies. It is well placed to involve a large number of SMEs and for regional VSSM staff to provide support and assistance. Without this kind of backing, companies tend to be reluctant to undertake reform, particularly when there is no legal obligation. Ideally, employee representatives should not only support the project but take an active role. Everyone involved in the project believes that the chosen method is a positive way of bringing workplace health promotion to SMEs. However, the success can only be assessed after the implementation. Involvement of both employer and employee is essential. Involvement of experts such as industrial psychologists and marketing specialists is to be recommended. Because the association structures and decision making processes need to be taken into consideration, all the activities take much longer than they would in individual companies where often only one person makes the decisions.