

## WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION IN A TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

### 1. Organisations involved

Randstad Belgium

### 2. Description of the case

#### 2.1. Introduction

Randstad Temporary employment agency originates from 1960 in the Netherlands. Since 1965, they also operate in Belgium as Interlabor Interim. In 1970 the brand Randstad was launched in Belgium. From 1999, Interlabor and Randstad become one company: Randstad Belgium. Over the years, Randstad grows into an appreciated service provider in human resources. They attend recruitment and selection, career accompanying, training, in house services, specific human resources projects and lots of other services.

As a labour market expert, Randstad wants to be leader and driving force in bringing together people and organisations, and this from a refreshing view on work. In their everyday activities to realize this mission statement, Randstad pays attention to ethics and social responsibility. Their responsible attitude is confirmed by the SA 8000 certificate they achieved. Randstad was the first organization in Belgium that achieved this international corporate responsibility certificate. Every year, an external expert checks whether they still follow up the principles of the SA 8000 in the everyday activities. The nine basic principles of this standard are: legal age, voluntary labour, health and safety, social dialogue, anti-discrimination, physical and moral integrity, working hours, rights and wages, transparent monitoring.

Within the framework of workplace health promotion, especially 'health and safety' will be important.

*"Randstad aims at working conditions that guarantee the safety and health of all its employees and assure and promote their well-being."*

At Randstad several initiatives are taken over the years to fulfill this principle of the SA 8000 standard.

As Randstad is aware of the importance of healthy, happy and motivated employees, they decided to go further than the traditional initiatives in occupational health and safety. From January 2007 they started up several workplace health promotion projects under the name 'Vitality'. This initiative was taken within the framework of the yearly (occupational safety and health) OSH action plan, which is a part of the dynamic risk management system, an obligatory OSH system enforced by law.

#### 2.2. Aims

Randstad has three important missions related to occupational safety and health. They want to be the safest, the most durable and environmental friendly and the healthiest company. In order to be the healthiest company, they plan health promotion activities every year. Through these activities, Randstad wants to stimulate the employees to take initiatives on their own towards a healthy lifestyle. Their prior aim is not a higher productivity or less sickness absence, but a better work-life balance for their employees. As the employees of Randstad are mostly young people, their initiatives will have especially an effect on this generation.

## 2.3. What was done, and how?

Within the framework of the OSH action plan in 2007, Randstad started up the health promotion programme 'Vitality'. A work group was set up with members from the human resources and internal communications departments, Randstad Sport<sup>1</sup> and the OSH department, who also leads the project.

The communications department is responsible for the promotion of 'Vitality' on the intranet and other communications means.

Randstad Sport is a department specialised in the employment in the sports world. They have contacts that might be helpful when organising sports activities. A member of the OSH department has specialised in vitality by taking workshops and lectures and by receiving books and DVD's on the matter. In the meetings of this work group, tasks and responsibilities are well defined. The budget for the Vitality programme has to be followed up by the OSH department itself as the budget will be a part of the general OSH budget determined each year.

Since the start of the programme, a lot of activities were organised, some were temporary, others return every year. An intranet page is specifically dedicated to the vitality programme and contains information on the activities and general information on the four categories.

Figure 1 Intranet page on the 'Vitality' programme



Within the programme there are different types of initiatives belonging to the four categories:

- wellness;

<sup>1</sup> This is a department that is specialised in the employment in the sports worlds. They have contacts that might be helpful when organising sports activities.

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- healthy nutrition;
- sports and;
- moving.

Randstad deliberately draw a distinction between sports and moving. After all, some people haven't done sports in ages so for them it would be discouraging if all physical activities are of very high level. For sporty employees on the other hand, there has to be a challenge or they won't participate.

Examples of the different initiatives taken from 2007 until now are presented according to the different categories:

## ▪ **Wellness**

A composer has composed relaxing music for the Randstad employees. This CD was one of the 'Vitality' gifts, which the employees receive every quarter.

In the different regions tai chi workshops are organised with a professional tai chi trainer.

**Figure 2 Tai chi session**



As a high work pressure is typical in the sector of Randstad and suggested by the internal inquiries, the training and development department organised stress manipulation sessions for the employees. In these sessions, they learn how to convert negative stress into positive stress. The office managers of the different local offices can request such a session for their personnel.

The Randstad employees can enjoy reductions in Spa.

A smoke free day was organised to encourage smokers to quit smoking. When you can quit for one day, you can quit completely.

## ▪ **Healthy nutrition**

Free fruit was distributed during three months to promote healthy nutrition. As Randstad has a lot of employees, it's impossible for the budget to keep doing this. However, by offering the fruit a few months, employees might be triggered to bring their own fruit to work.

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Workshops in healthy nutrition are organised regularly in the main office. The participants learn in group how to cook fast but healthy, about the do's and don'ts when dieting. The recipes are published on the intranet.

Randstad employees have the opportunity to participate to WeightWatchers@work during lunch break at lower price.

Randstad offers support for employees who want to stop smoking. They subsidise medication and nicotine plasters.

## ▪ **Sports**

For the employees who want a real challenge, participation to triathlon and beachvolley was organised.

Randstad provides sports outfits from Nike for employees who want to participate in sport contests such as the 20km of Brussels. When the yearly budget allows it, Randstad also participates to this running competition in group.

A fitness session was organised under the direction of Gella Vandecaveye – former world champion judo. During this session, she pays a lot of attention to the prevention of RSI in shoulders and wrists.

**Figure 3 Fitness session**



'Vitality' has a corporate deal with Passage Fitness and healthCity Belgium, two fitness centres. When the employees go to these centres they will receive a reduction. Free acquaintance evenings are organised.

Negotiation is ongoing for an every year organisation of a national table tennis tournament . Table tennis clubs open there sports hall for the employees of Randstad in return of the profits from the drinks.

## ▪ **Moving**

In order to promote cycling, cycle maps were distributed among the employees. Related to this action, a photo competition was organised with a bicycle GPS as winners prizes.



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Two Wii consoles<sup>2</sup> are placed in the cafeteria to stimulate the employees to move during lunch break.

Every year the 'Take the stairs-day' is organised. As a reward, the participants receive a healthy drink.

Because of the structure, typical for a temporary employment agency, Randstad is not an easy organisation to set up workplace health promotion activities. A lot of the employees work in local offices sometimes at a large distance of the main office. In order to reach all the employees, a lot of the communication happens through the intranet. Every employee can address a page called 'my health& safety' where they can find, among the other things, all information on the 'Vitality' programme. This can be information on the activities that are being organised but also general information like tips on issues covered by the four categories. The OSH department delivers the content and the communications department is responsible for the maintenance of the page.

Examples of **information on the intranet** are presented according to the different categories.

## ▪ **Wellness**

On the intranet, 'Vitality' tips are published. These are for example tips on prevention of colds, prevention of fatigue, correct body position during computer work and how to relax.

## ▪ **Healthy nutrition**

The information focuses on:

- The importance of nutrition for a good nights sleep and, vice versa, the importance of sleep to nutrition;
- Healthy eating (e.g. eat with moderation, emotions influence on eating behaviour);
- Healthy recipes from the workshops;
- 'Vitality' tips: the advantages of a healthy breakfast, how to prevent being tired round noon.
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## ▪ **Sports**

The intranet provides:

- 10 good reasons to choose fitness: 'Vitality' as a corporate deal with Passage Fitness and healthCity Belgium, two fitness centres;
- 'Vitality' tips: power training;
- Links to and promotion of different initiatives in Belgium such as 'Start to sport', 'Start to run', 20 km of Brussels.

## ▪ **Moving**

Information on:

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<sup>2</sup> Wii is a Nintendo gaming console on which people can play games that invite them to move. Sports like tennis, golf, etc are simulated on a screen while the gamer does the sports movements.

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- Integrated fitness (e.g. train while you work, some abdominal exercises in the car or the metro, exercises while making a call, making a healthy detour);
- 'Vitality' tips: promotion of walking and a link towards more information, how to prevent diabetes, how much physical exercise do I need every day?, how to be more physically active?;
- 'Take the stairs day'.

## ▪ **Future plans**

Together with 'Brand New Day' additional information will be defined to put on the extranet and new tools will be created. An extension of the intranet tool will be done together with brand new day. Subjects such as better sleep and less alcohol will be added together with a possibility to ask further individual information to a group of therapists. Employees can also enrol by subject and receive a daily tip.

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

As the prior goal was not to achieve a higher productivity or less absenteeism, Randstad consciously chose not to measure the progress among the employees. The project is 100% health promotional and therefore a measuring is not really necessary.

Off course, like every project, this project has also some results, which are given below:

- Based on the results of the employees' satisfaction inquiry, the 'Vitality' can be seen as a real success. Based on this inquiry, they were able to identify a need for more attention to stress handling;
- As a proof of the success, Randstad was awarded for their 'Vitality' programme as Best Employer of the year in 2009 in Belgium.

## **2.5. Success factors**

The success of this workplace health promotion programme is probably because the activities are not obligatory and 100% aimed at improving the well-being of the employee.

The offer is very diverse so that everyone will find an activity that appeals him or her. The programme focuses on four topics, which are all four important factors in the creation of a healthy lifestyle.

Randstad also made the distinction between movement and sports. This is important to motivate both the not active employees and the already very active employees. By providing activities at different physical activity levels, both parties will be addressed and motivated.

In order to overcome the possible communication problems related to the internal structure of the company, Randstad developed a nice communications platform on the intranet where all information of the programme can be distributed among all employees.

For some activities, Randstad even appeals to its own personnel to help in the organisation of the activities.

New initiatives are taken every year so that the attention of the employees doesn't fade.

## **2.6. Further information**

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## **2.7. Transferability**

A lot of the initiatives of this project can be transferred to other companies too. For example, the creation of an intranet dedicated to the health promotion programme is something that even small companies can do. If necessary, a specialised IT company can help to set up such a page. It is also not so difficult to put on interesting information and links on the different lifestyle related topics. It will however be necessary that a responsible person or work group is chosen so that there will be continuity in the project.

For a small company it will be perhaps too difficult to organise workshops and fitness sessions and arrange reductions in fitness centre as they don't have a large budget to spare. But of course, there are a lot of cheaper activities possible. It is for example possible to involve employees in the organisations of the activities.

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

- Interview with Dirk De Clercq from Randstad Belgium, June 22th 2009
- <http://www.randstad.be>