

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL EMPLOYEES AT MAGYAR TELEKOM

1. Organisations involved

Magyar Telecommunications Company Ltd.

2. Description of the case

2.1. Introduction

Magyar Telekom Plc. was established in 1991 as a spin-off telecommunications company of its legal predecessor Magyar Posta. Being a national carrier it has several hundreds of sites in various parts of the country. The headcount consisted of 6125 people in 2008. Magyar Telekom Plc. pays special attention to the mental health of its employees. This has mainly been achieved through accepting an Equal Opportunity Plan, which focuses on the balance of family and job. The Equal Opportunity Plan is a concept adopted by the Hungarian Parliament in 2003. The Plan implies that companies should respect the principles of equal treatment, promote equal opportunities and monitor the situation of employees in underprivileged positions to improve their employment conditions. Magyar Telekom Plc. prepared its Equal Opportunity Plan in 2008, to serve as a framework for 2 years for activities of this kind. Several activities have been organised and are available for all Magyar Telekom Plc. employees.

2.2. Aims

Magyar Telekom Plc. has implemented activities related to mental and physical health as they are convinced that healthy employees will perform better. The company wants to create a workplace where employees like to work, and enjoy coming to work. Magyar Telekom Plc. believes that balanced employees are capable of performing better than those who work under stressful conditions. For this reason the company wants to promote good mental and physical health and to prevent illness. Of course, the business opportunity inherent in reducing the number of days of absence is also a major consideration.

2.3. What was done and how?

The overall goal of the Equal Opportunity Plan is focused on improving efficiency at work through creating a better balance between job and private life. The plan contains several measures and programs (see references). In the following, measures aimed at improving mental health and work and life balance will be introduced in more detail.

1) The „Family and workplace” series is aimed at providing answers by a professional psychologist on questions on questions concerning conflicts on work-life balance, like questions who to deal with work and childcare, or what to do in case of a family emergency (divorce, death of a relative). Questions can be raised during a free-of-charge event within the working time. Employees can attend the event, but there is simultaneously also a possibility to raise questions online. Making use of the online consultation gives the opportunity to stay anonymous. Since 2005 more than 20 events have taken place. The events were always held in work time during the mornings (9 a.m.-12 a.m.) or in the afternoons (2 p.m. – 5 p.m.). Everybody has the chance to participate. Employees that can't attend the event due to their time schedule can always raise questions online. On average about 30 persons attended the events, and about 10-20 participants regularly joined the programme online. Employees

CASE STUDIES

gave positive feedback on the regular feedback forms that were used for training purposes (quality of the presentation, quantity of the information, usefulness etc.).

2) An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) enables employees to seek advice about private and workplace problems. While sessions on family and workplace concentrate on how to keep private life and work in balance the EAP has a much broader target area. For example questions can be raised on different financial aspects. The EAP is based on email contact and has its own intranet site. Employees can post their questions and problems anonymously if they wish. They receive answers from an internal network of advisors. The advice is provided within an average of 3-4 days.

3) In order to fit work circumstances to a maximum to employees needs, there are different forms of employment offered. Employees are offered to work on partial telework, all employees are enabled to do flexible working time, and part-time contracts are another opportunity that can be taken into account. A modification of a contract has to be agreed with the direct leader of the employee, however all management staff is encouraged to be flexible and to allow for different contracts and employment forms wherever possible. After agreement the HR department modifies the contract. Many employees work in part time. A majority of this part-time workers work 6 hours a day, but there are other part-time models as well. Working on flexible working time means that employees are obliged to be at their workplace during coretime from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. From 6-9 a.m. and from 2-5 p.m. employees can organise their work time freely. The exact hours employees work are administrated in a time sheet. Each 3 months (quarter) the time sheet is evaluated. Employees are encouraged to try to end with a balance of 0 at this time, however when overtime hours were done, they are paid for and a lack of working hours goes along with a cutback of the salary.

4) Magyar Telekom set up a film club with the aim to inform employees about different health related topics in an entertaining and informative way. Documentaries and films are shown, targeting different topics like stressful life situations, healthy lifestyles, dealing with disabilities, violence in families, the effects of politics on family matters, etc. After watching the documentary or film there is always an interactive dialogue with invited experts, in order to share experience, to eliminate fears and stereotypes, to show options how to deal with difficult situations, and to encourage a healthier way of living.

5) A 'young mother's programme' gives support to young mothers during maternity leave. The programme aims to hold and improve contact with the young mothers during their leave. This is done via e-mail and an especially created intranet site for colleagues on maternity leave. The mothers in this way remain informed about current news, and available jobs within the company. A young mothers' meeting is regularly organised to inform them about changes in the company and giving answers to their questions provided by HR colleagues. In a young mother's briefing, information and practical advice was given about financial and working conditions-related benefits and questions concerning maternity and maternity leave.

6) Since 2008 Magyar Telekom Plc. has offered a family support programme in cooperation with the DIMENZIÓ Insurance Society. The aim of the programme is to reduce the stress of telecom families with children. The programme consists of two elements:

- Placement in a nursery or kindergarten (for children aged 2-6):_Currently 45-50 places are available at a facility run by DIMENZIÓ, and additional 50-70 places are rendered available for telecom parents to place their children at 16 private facilities or children's institutions run by foundations (mainly in Budapest and vicinity). Apart from assuring places and additional help for parents, Magyar Telekom Plc. finances 2/3 of the monthly fee of childcare, employees have to pay only one third of the costs.
- Support provided towards summer camps (for children aged 6-14): To alleviate care of school-aged children—Magyar Telekom Plc. is providing placement at summer holiday camps at discounted rates all over the country, in cooperation with DIMENZIÓ. The discount amounts to 50-80% of the participation fee and the number of available summer camps grew to 11 in 2009. In 2008 over 230, in 2009 over 400 „telecom” children used this opportunity. According to the satisfaction survey of 2008 the satisfaction index with camps was 96%.

CASE STUDIES

Independently from the Equal Opportunity Plan Magyar Telekom Plc. employees may spend their holiday or some weekends at the company's holiday homes at discounted rates, and here they have the opportunity to strengthen family relations and have fun with their families.

Members of the health fund have the possibility to have a Vicardio test. Vicardio is a bio-physical measuring and assessing method whereby coronary status and endurance to various types of stress (chemical, physical, nutritional, psychological and environmental) can be assessed and which prepares a three-dimensional colour image of the heart in two minutes' time using ECG-like data. Vicardio measures and calculates the amount of stress and provides a graphic image of how the heart operates plus the functional parameters of the heart. Apart from evaluating the information received, the instrument issues the necessary warning also if the value obtained differs considerably from the average value. Vicardio is also able to show the organism's vegetative stress value (which is not the same as the psychological stress one feels in everyday life). Vegetative stress demonstrates the kind of damages prolonged stress situations have caused in the heart and the vascular system. If data obtained indicate the need of further medical check-ups, the expert having carried out the measurement provides an easy access to them.

The whole WHP programme has been developed by HR staff and the HR area is also responsible for the operation of all interventions offered. Employees' needs and suggestions were taken into account while designing the programme. Employee inquiries were done to assess their needs and they have an ongoing opportunity to post observations and suggestions on an intranet forum. The outcome of employee satisfaction surveys are also taken into consideration when a program was designed.. Employees have also impact by representation in the Central Work Council.

The Human Resources area informs employees on the various parts of the programme. This is primarily done via the intranet, but also by sending direct email messages. Generally the arrangements that give certain financial benefits (e.g. holiday-making, family support program) are the most popular ones among employees. Most of the employees are aware of them and use them. Other measures are not that well known and used by employees.

The most essential problem Magyar Telekom Plc. had to confront in the past 1 to 2 years, has been the criticism with which both employees and managers have approached the programmes and their reluctance to accept something they are unfamiliar with. After initiating a programme, it takes time to convince employees of the usefulness of the measures and to encourage them in participating. Magyar Telekom Plc. tries to improve the situation primarily through increasing the promotion and communication at the time of implementation and whenever possible, by launching pilots. The latter is primarily aimed at enabling a narrower pool of the people concerned to acquire information if the implemented measure operates well in real life situations. On the other hand, the pilots also provide the HR area some useful feedback that can be used to improve the interventions.

Apart from measures focused on creating a balance of family and job and on retaining mental health, a safe work environment and the prevention of illness are equally important for Magyar Telekom Plc.

2.4. What has been achieved?

The Equal Opportunity Plan and the interventions implemented have not been evaluated systematically yet. Magyar Telekom Plc. is currently analysing the possibility of designing and implementing a complex measurement system.

Magyar Telekom Plc. won several prizes with their health promoting programme. They won the Family Friendly Workplace Prize 2008, issued by the Ministry of Welfare and Labour. Magyar Telekom Plc. came out first among a large number of company candidates. They also achieved the third place in the "Heart-Friendly Workplace" competition announced by the National Institute for Health Development in 2009.

2.5. Success factors

The most important success factors of the interventions implemented at Magyar Telekom Plc. to improve employees' general health and mental well-being are the following:

- All of the management staff was briefed on the measures and was encouraged to do their best to enable and motivate employees to take part in the different actions offered. For example the implementation of flexible working time and the possibility of working part time always had to be agreed with the direct supervisor. Supervisors did not only take care about this, they were also actively involved in informing the employees about the mental and general health measures within unit meetings.
- One factor ensuring a maximum of success of the programme is also seen in the fact, that interventions offered are delivering real solutions for employees. Since employee's needs were taken into consideration to a maximum extent when designing the programme most of the employees appreciated the offered measures. For example the young mothers programme was implemented after realising that several young mothers had problems adapting to their jobs after having been on maternity leave.
- Magyar Telekom Plc. tried to make all interventions available for the broadest possible pool of employees. For example the EAP programme, giving anonymous advices via the intranet, is accessible for all employees at any time. But also other parts of the programme like the flexible working time and the possibility of telework were made accessible for as many employees as possible.

2.6. Further information

Magyar Telekom Plc.

Telephone: +36 1 458 0000; +36 1 458 7000

Email: fenntarthatosag@telekom.hu

www.telekom.hu

2.7. Transferability

Companies of other sectors can apply similar programs supporting physical and mental health as Magyar Telekom Plc. The practices and programs applied by Magyar Telekom Plc. are not sector specific; they can be used in any other type of company or sector. At the same time the implementation of the program and the selection of its individual elements need to be adapted to the nature of work, the needs of employees and perhaps the culture of the company. Managers play a key role in having it accepted and by their personal example they can be important success factor of the initiatives. There should be well articulated targets attached to the programs to ensure that success can be measured and evaluated.

3. References and sources:

- More information about the Equal Opportunity Plan and the individual activities and programs is available at: http://www.telekom.hu/society_and_environment/society/equal_opportunities
- More information of the Healthy Environment of Work and the individual health programs is available by contacting the company.