

## LABEL FRIENDLY WORK SPACE<sup>®</sup>

### 1. Organisations involved

ifa Institut für Arbeitsmedizin,

Health Promotion Switzerland (Gesundheitsförderung Schweiz)

### 2. Description of the case

#### 2.1. Introduction

Work-related stress and resulting absence from work cost the Swiss economy a fortune each year. The average absence from work due to health issues is about 9 days per year per employee. This means for a company with 300 employees the loss of approximately 1 million Swiss francs per year.

In the year 2000, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (Seco) established the cost of stress at work to amount to 4.2 billion Swiss francs. This represents 1.2% of GDP. Based on this data, the attitude to Corporate Health has changed in recent years.

In recent years, Swiss economy has recognized that the benefits of the implementation of occupational health management programmes are significant. The association of employers supports the premise that preventive measures against illness or stress as well as health promotion will help reduce costs and increase productivity and motivation as well as encourage the well-being of employees. Since that time, it has become important to have measurable and verifiable standards for occupational health management programmes. The evaluation criteria are now based on the quality criteria for workplace health promotion of the ENWHP (European Network for Workplace Health Promotion) and are approved by the ENWHP.

Health Promotion Switzerland is the institution that initiates, promotes and implements activities for the health of all people in Switzerland. It brings together federal and cantonal representatives, insurers, Suva, professional medical organisations and research institutions whose activities are connected with the disease prevention. These institutions work together for a better health and quality of life. Health Promotion Switzerland (Die Stiftung Gesundheitsförderung Schweiz) provides the assessment and the awarding process for the programme label Friendly Work Space<sup>®</sup>. Health Promotion Switzerland is the owner of the individual mark Friendly Work Space<sup>®</sup>, which is a trademark for goods and services (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



The label Friendly Work Space<sup>®</sup> is awarded to organisations and organisational units that focus not only on individual behaviour, but also on measures to optimize the operational framework to successfully implement health promotion and a healthy culture as a part of corporate management.

Health Promotion Switzerland supports companies of all sizes who want to care more effectively for the health of their employees at work. Experts advise the companies and help them improve their

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health management. They provide businesses-proven packages of measures with checklists and possibilities of further training. Health Promotion Switzerland awards the label and performs the implementation of the assessment process and re-assessment process.

The label "Friendly Work Space" is awarded to companies that meet the six criteria of occupational health management. These six criteria are divided into 26 sub-criteria and are based on quality criteria relating to occupational health promotion of the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP, [www.enwhp.org](http://www.enwhp.org)). They were developed by the following institutions and companies: ABB Schweiz, ALSTOM, Die Schweizerische Post, Gesundheitsförderung Schweiz, ifa Institut für Arbeitsmedizin, Institut für Arbeitsforschung und Organisationsberatung IAFOB, MIGROS, SBB CFF FFS, Suva, SVV Schweizerischer Versicherungsverband and Swica.

ifa Institut für Arbeitsmedizin was one of the first entities that decided to incorporate occupational health promotion into corporate management and that strived for the Friendly Work Space® label. ifa Institut für Arbeitsmedizin provides health care service with curative, preventive and health-promoting aspects. It offers services to businesses regarding all questions about health issues. Today it encompasses 4 divisions: Primary care practice, Health Centres, Occupational Medicine and Workplace health. It employs more than seventy employees.

## **2.2. Aims**

The goal of the Friendly Work Space® project in ifa was to create a corporate healthy culture that helps to promote wellbeing and to prevent stress. This was aimed to be done by reducing stress factors that are responsible for illnesses in the workplace and by enhancing activities and improving circumstances that could help employees to improve their psychosocial wellbeing.

The main aim was to create working environments where employees would feel comfortable. To establish this goal in figures the following numbers were agreed on. ifa wants to achieve an absence rate of <1.5% and a fluctuation rate being smaller than 10%.

## **2.3. What was done, and how?**

The label Friendly Work Space® is based on six criteria of workplace health management (WHM).

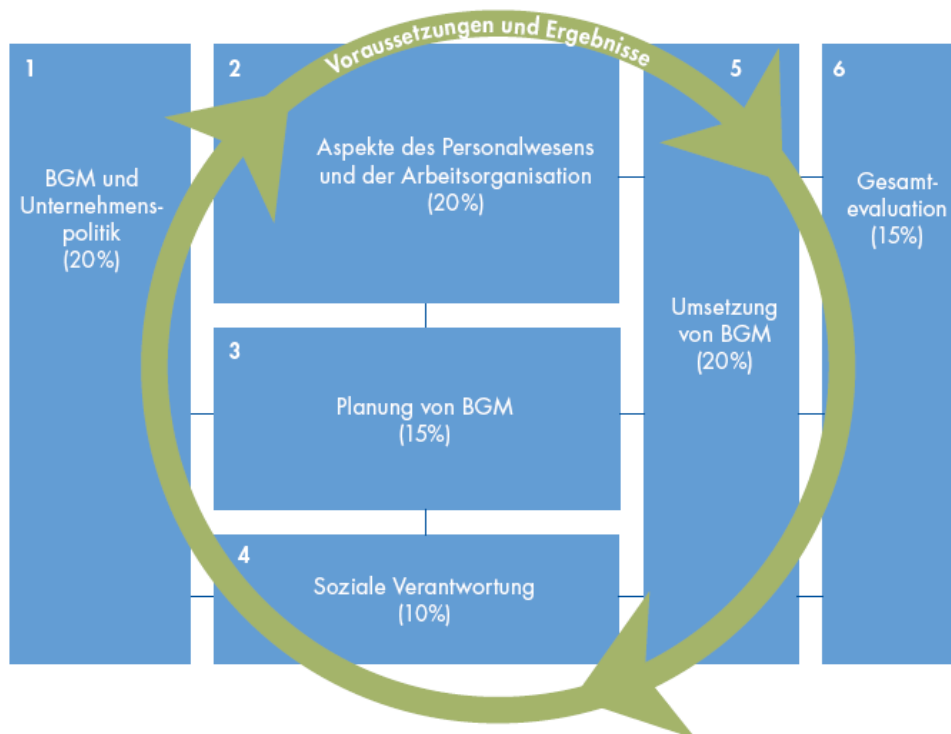
The WHM criteria point the way to a health-supportive organisation and provide direction in the design of a modern operating health management (see Figure 2).

WHM is aimed at leadership, company culture, climate, establishment, qualification and design of work processes and systems as well as at health behaviour of employees. It includes:

- Corporate Health and Corporate Policy,
- Aspects of human resource management and work organization,
- Planning of operational health,
- Corporate Social Responsibility,
- Implementation of operational health,
- Overall evaluation of operational health.

Figure 2

## Die 6 Kriterien für Betriebliches Gesundheitsmanagement



The assessment for granting the label took place in ifa in March 2009. They fulfilled all six main criteria of the occupational health management. The average result was above three so the company was awarded the label "Friendly Work Space".

To fulfil the criteria for the label the following actions and measures had been taken place at ifa:

### 1. **WHM-criterion: Workplace Health Management and Corporate Policy**

Purpose: The integration of WHM into the structures and processes of the organisation and the perception of WHM as an important management task.

The fulfilment of the first criterion is amongst other things secured by the philosophy of ifa, being based on the idea to create workplaces and a work environment where employees feel comfortable and respected. The main principle lying behind this philosophy is that employees should be treated with respect and that they are offered a meaningful work, following the general principals of holistic work demands, participation and freedom of latitude and decision making. It's generally understood that all employees have the right to privacy as well as the need of sufficient time to recover from work. Especially these aspects are reflected by offering the possibility to take days of when having worked overtime and by taking unpaid vacations. All employees are given the possibilities to education and training. A focus is here also put on trainings regarding mental health promotion, like for example the offer to take part in a training on how to deal with difficult clients. These general principles are regarded as mission statement and are included in all important decisions. The mission and its implementation are regularly reviewed by the management.

The company integrated organisational structures and processes for WHM, and the management regularly reviews those processes and structures in order to improve them. Resources to meet the

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requirements are available and the management of the company considers WHM to be useful and not necessarily profitable.

All managers are trained in leadership according to WHM. They are also encouraged to participate actively in annual health campaigns. In addition, specific training at external institutions is possible.

In addition it is assured that legal requirements concerning safety and health at work are sufficiently being targeted by allocating these tasks to an external occupational safety and health services provider as well as appointing an internal safety and health responsible.

Concerning physical health and wellbeing there are different offers as well. Exercise is supported by the company management wherever possible. Employees are not only offered excellent possibilities for sport activities and relaxation. Wherever possible, organisational measures allow for participation and active involvement.

A relaxation room has been established for employees and is regularly used. A healthy menu could be obtained once a month within the company building. According to the high demand, frequency has been enhanced and the menu is offered once a week, including the possibility to take food home.

## 2. **WHM-criterion: Aspects of Human Resources and Work Organisation**

**Purpose:** To create personality- and health-promoting work structures that contribute to personal health as well as to healthy behaviour and to design work tasks correspondingly to these goals. In addition the organisation takes measures to deal with absences and reintegrate staff after longer periods of absence.

ifa has developed a special form for personnel interviews where health is explicitly addressed. All new employees are systematically incorporated. Job profiles with descriptions of requirements for all positions are formulated. Skills are promoted actively and as individually as possible.

ifa introduced regular meetings to collect information about workers' possible under- and overload. They developed a system for special tasks and for the creation of new functions (case management, care team, new hierarchical levels). Job rotation has been implemented in two teams. Workers have the possibility and the internal support for continuing education. The Human Resource Department keeps track of the skills of each employee and supports advanced training wherever required or desired.

The employees' development opportunities are also discussed in the annual appraisal meeting with the manager. ifa generally tries to provide best development possibilities within the company. Since the inception of the ifa, all executives have been recruited internally. When an employee has the desire for a professional career, sometimes even new professional positions are created. Free vacancies are posted on the website and are also communicated on team meetings and via internal mail.

ifa also cares for sick employees. Several measures are in place to reintegrate employees into the work process. In the meantime the absence rate is consistently recorded and reported. Specific approaches have been designed to short and long-term absences. All supervisors are trained about dealing with absences by internal specialists. A list of these internal specialists is available on the intranet for all employees.

ifa supports the reconciliation of family and work. Normal maternity leave of 14 weeks can be extended by unpaid maternity leave, women can choose to work shorter shifts when being pregnant, unpaid paternity leave is also available, and women have the possibility for a flexible return from maternity leave. At any time they can choose part-time work (up from 40%) and daily working time can be arranged flexible as well. The company also allows telework, including the provision of technical assistance like notebook and internet connection at home.

Especially for improving mental health and wellbeing of the employees ifa has nominated a supervisor, who the employees can consult when they have problems. When signs of burnout are detected, the supervisor provides supportive conversation and works together with the employee on possible solutions.

Ergonomic aspects at work are comprehensively dealt with within the normal risk prevention in the company. However it should be mentioned that all workplaces in the office area are arranged according to ergonomic aspects and an internal specialist can always be consulted on ergonomic questions and solutions.

### **3. WHM-criterion: Planning of Workplace Health Management**

Purpose: The formation of a specialized WHM office and a steering group. The key elements are setting of targets and target groups and informing all employees about the planned interventions and projects.

ifa has appointed a person responsible for WHM. This WHM officer designed a catalogue of measures to be implemented and is regularly checking on the status of implementation. Further on the WHM officer is integrated in other meetings and is in regular contact with the company management.

All WHM measures are planned and implemented for specific targeted groups (for example: stress management seminar for all employees, health panels for teams being in reorganisational processes, leadership trainings for managers, health campaigns for all employees). The intranet is regularly updated with all relevant information on the ongoing interventions.

### **4. WHM-criterion: Corporate Social Responsibility**

Purpose: To define and improve the role of the organisation concerning a broader community, not only including the own staff but also addressing stakeholders in the environment of the organisation.

ifa has established a social account that supports employees who are facing financial emergencies (e.g. like health costs, dental expenses, etc.) with financial contributions. Staff members of ifa with financial emergencies can also be supported by a special loan. ifa also offers apprentices with problems in the apprenticeship a non-bureaucratic new start.

ifa offers some medical services, like flu vaccinations and travel advices, for the whole family of employees. Where possible, ifa also tries to fit their job offers to socially handicapped persons. This way there has recently been one person starting a fulltime job at ifa and another person being able to come back to the employment market through a first job at ifa.

ifa is further active in environmental protection through different measures. There is a bike-storage room for employees to support cycling. ifa purchases business vehicles with low fuel consumption and low CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Another action in the field of energy consumption is the general investment in ecological worthwhile products, like e.g. the installation of a long distance heating, the setting up of automatic lights for the stairways or the use of recycled paper.

### **5. WHM-criterion: Implementation of Workplace Health Management**

Purpose: The interventions in place in order to promote the health of employees are holistic, targeting at organisational and environmental changes and encouraging in the meantime the individual to live and behave healthy. Interventions are further linked to each other rather than just being single actions. All interventions are accompanied by a process including a regular survey at the starting point, interpretation of results, determination of results and of course the implementation of measures.

ifa regularly (every 2 years) conducts an employee survey on health related figures. Periodic stress management seminars (health panels) concretise the written survey. All employees take part in them. Supervisor assessment is also covered by using survey instruments. The results of the surveys are discussed in the management and in the individual teams, and the needs for appropriate actions are derived. The derived measures are prioritized in consultation with management. By regular repetition of surveys the needs are reviewed and re-evaluated and the interventions are planned. The internal WHM skills guarantee professional interpretation of the situation and a link to the figures with the indicators.

The specific interventions are determined and implemented in consultation with the teams and the management. In the following a project manager is defined for each measure in order to make sure a

smooth follow up. A catalogue of all measures in place is gathered together as well. The implementation of measures is assisted by internal staff (WHM officer, the steering committee, a psychotherapy team, occupational physicians etc.) and if needed from external specialists (ophthalmologists, dermatologists, etc.). Additionally all employees of ifa can always participate at annual health campaigns for clients of ifa Health Centre (topics of recent years: ergonomics, burnout, bullying, healthy nutrition, drug prevention).

#### **6. WHM-criterion: Overall evaluation of operational health**

Purpose: Evaluation of WHM concerning the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. Review of internal and external performance indicators over the short, medium and long term.

The effects of WHM measures are reviewed with regards to related health indicators (absenteeism, accidents, turnover, etc.), safety and health procedures, productivity, cost-benefit balance sheets, customer satisfaction etc. These areas are systematically evaluated in ifa.

The impact of WHM is examined every 2-3 years to identify the results. Absence figures are evaluated annually. The goal attainment (less than 1.5% absence rate) is regularly reviewed. The management of WHM developed a comprehensive overall evaluation process, which was agreed with the management of ifa and has been implemented from the year 2009 onward.

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

ifa integrated organisational structures and processes into WHM. The management regularly examines relevant health indicators, particularly absenteeism and turnover, and the results of employee survey, as well as derivation of measures.

### **2.5. Success factors**

Success factors of the project can be seen in various aspects. Mainly the 6 criteria and actions being conducted within all of them, guarantee the basic success of the workplace health promotion programme at ifa. It also has to be highlighted that many workplace health promotion interactions in ifa have been ongoing for several years and that the steady continuity of following a healthy approach and promoting a healthy culture, also contributes a lot to the success of the measures. The matter of fact that health is already being raised during job interviews at ifa also contributes to the general healthy culture.

### **2.6. Further information**

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### **2.7. *Transferability***

The measurable and verifiable standards for occupational health management programmes that were developed for the label "Friendly Work Space" are the tool that can be used in all enterprises that want to deal with workplace health programmes, no matter what size or sector. All publications and the whole procedure are published on the internet, available to the public.

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

- [http://www.gesundheitsfoerderung.ch/pages/Betriebliche\\_Gesundheitsfoerderung/Tipps\\_Tools/label/unser\\_anliegen.php?lang=e](http://www.gesundheitsfoerderung.ch/pages/Betriebliche_Gesundheitsfoerderung/Tipps_Tools/label/unser_anliegen.php?lang=e)
- Ergebnisse Self-Assessment, Institut für Arbeitsmedizin ifa, 25.02.2009