

EvoBus Iberica: Commitment to Employees

What does this case study demonstrate?

The case study of EvoBus Ibérica SA shows a company fully committed to develop Workplace Innovation (WPI) practices for the benefit of workers that, at the same time, favour the competitiveness and future sustainability of the company.

Workplace innovation elements: work organisation, fairness and equality, support to employee initiative, learning and reflection, workplace partnerships.

Context

EvoBus Ibérica SA belongs to Daimler Buses, a major world coach manufacturer and part of the German Daimler Group. EvoBus Ibérica has got a major establishment located in Sámano (Cantabria), with approximately 260 employees. This establishment is currently specialising in the manufacturing of coach chassis, which means that EvoBus Ibérica is since 2003, together with a Brazilian Plant, the only two producers of chassis for long-distance and special airport coaches within the Daimler group in the world. In fact, the production is exported all over the world, especially in Europe, Latin America, Near East, Far East and North Africa, among others. In 2013, EvoBus Ibérica manufactured a total of 1,271 chassis.

Being part of the Daimler Group, the company follows the main principles stemming from Daimler, although EvoBus Ibérica has got a large degree of autonomy to develop their own human resources policy (provided that they are in line with the main Daimler's guidelines). In this regard, the company is very active in developing and applying innovations in the human resources side, where it is considered as a reference practice within the whole Daimler Group. Indeed, several interviewees underline the high commitment of the top management to these practices, especially from the Director of Human resources, who has got a very open and pro-active attitude to all these issues.

EvoBus Ibérica: Working all together

EvoBus Ibérica has developed, over the years, a number of Workplace Innovation practices, where the most important ones can be summarised as follows:

Active continuous qualification policy for all employees of the company. The company develops some specific training activities intended to improve the capabilities of key individuals within the organisation (the so-called "Lead" Initiative). In this respect, recently in time, the company has introduced the so-called "Mentoring project" practice, where selected employees with key and well recognised skills and competences mentor other selected employees in concrete domains where qualification needs have been identified. Major attention is also paid to recruitment practices of external new personnel.

The company is active in listening to their employees. For this purpose, the company has developed several tools (regular satisfaction surveys, suggestion boxes, workshops to identify areas of improvement). Also, the company has developed the so-called "Development Management System" ("Sistema de Gestión del Desarrollo"), by which every employee in the company has got one annual meeting with their immediate superior and with the management, in order to evaluate his/her situation, areas of improvement and the design of an individual training action plan for next year(s). As well, the employees can speak with his/her respective managers about all possible questions of interest, where both managers and workers can contribute with their ideas and proposals (bidirectional meeting). Employees remark that the organisation is relatively flat, in the sense that dialogue with top management is easy for

them. Finally, the company develops an active communication policy with employees, to inform them on relevant developments within the company (notice boards, publication of an internal magazine distributed amongst employees, ICT servers to share information, etc...).

The company fosters the autonomy of their employees. The company organises its production around self-managing working groups, that is to say, working groups that have the ability to self-organise work and its distribution amongst participants, provided that they fulfil some previously defined production goals.

Healthy and fluent labour relations with the legal employee representation. The company views the legal employee representation as a key partner, which is better reflected in regular meetings (formal and informal ones) to inform employee representatives on different elements of interest (evolution of the company, identification of problems, discussion of solutions, etc.), always based on a spirit of fulfilment of all agreements and mutual respect between both parties. Also, the company has got its own collective agreement with better working conditions than those that currently exist in the provincial sector agreement.

Active equality and diversity fostering business culture, based on the respect of individuals.

Examples of activities developed in this domain include an active policy to favour the conciliation of personal and professional life, the availability of flexible working hours by the worker according to his/her needs, the possibility to telework for recent mothers/pregnant women, the presence of just one working shift for production people from 7h to 15h or the lack of weekend work (unless special demand peaks). Some of these activities have been proposed by the company Equality and Diversity Committee, composed of people of all departments. Recently, this Committee implemented the so-called “Weekend for families”, where employees’ families were invited to see and visit the production facilities. A project to bring disabled people into the company is currently in process.

Strong emphasis on the health and well-being of employees. The company has got a strong risk prevention policy, better reflected in weekly meetings to expose and discuss cleaning, security and risk-related elements within departments/teams. Also, employees have access to reduced prices negotiated by the company for private health insurance that covers work-related and non-work-related health problems and diseases. In this regard, the company supports those employees that need medical support but can continue working. Finally, the company fosters the participation of employees in social or sport activities.

So who benefits?

The management representatives suggest that happy and well-motivated employees work better and more efficiently, and are more involved and engaged in the company. In turn, this good work atmosphere facilitates both economic (profitability, efficiency, high performance, higher flow of good ideas from employees and higher flexibility levels when required) and social outcomes (positive employment relations, low accident rates, lower employment turnover rates, positive image of the company in the area, etc.).

Meanwhile, employees and their representatives are “proud” of working in EvoBus Ibérica. Thus, they perceive that the company is truly interested in being an excellent “place to work” in comparison with the largest share of enterprises in the area, which is reflected in excellent working conditions, higher learning opportunities, higher participation in the company, positive employment relations or higher job security (especially in these years of economic crisis). A good example of this is the employment restructuring process (expediente de regulación de empleo, ERE in Spanish) experienced by the company due to the falling demand for buses and resulting in temporary lay-offs of employees. Both employees and their representatives suggest that this restructuring process has been managed in a very socially responsible way, an element that it is highly appreciated by them.

Prognosis

EvoBus Ibérica is a company very active in developing and introducing WPI practices. Thus, attention to employee voice, talent development and innovative work organisation practices are part of the company's DNA. This situation is likely not to be changed in the future, where new ideas are being currently explored to be brought into practice (fine-tuning of the mentoring practice, projects for the inclusion of disabled people, etc.).