

MC PREVENCIÓN: A company engaged with its workforce

What does this case study demonstrate?

The case study of MC Prevención shows an interesting example of a non-industrial company that, despite existing economic difficulties in recent years, is active in developing a number of Workplace Innovation (WPI) practices that are particularly valued by the company employees.

Workplace innovation elements: employee friendly forms of flexible working, learning and reflection, fairness and equality, internal communication, supporting employee initiative and participation.

Context

MC-Prevención is one of the most important Spanish Occupational Risk Prevention companies. The company was set up in October 2006 due to a legal obligation (Royal Decree 688/2005) to segregate the external prevention services from the activities of a former Mutual Insurance Society (MC-Mutual). MC Prevención has currently got more than 75 establishments distributed in the whole of Spain, although the headquarters of the company are located in Barcelona (with another important office in Madrid).

MC Prevención has a workforce of 752 employees, including experts in occupational medicine, hygiene and safety at work, ergonomics or psycho-sociology, as well as a clerical staff. The company offers a wide portfolio of services in the field of occupational risk prevention (training activities, health services, etc.) to more than 30,000 clients (enterprises) distributed throughout Spain. MC Prevención has also got a special team dedicated to R&D activities, basically intended to design new products and solutions customised to the needs of enterprises.

Last year, and due to the economic difficulties of the company, MC Prevención experienced an Employment Regulation Plan that resulted in a number of dismissals (around 50 people).

Engagement with the workforce

MC Prevención is fully independent in autonomously deciding its own human resources-related practices. In this sense, the company is fully conscious that the success of its activities is primarily dependant on the availability of a well-trained and fully engaged workforce. In this regard, the company has developed a number of activities that can be categorised as WPI practices and that are summarised as follows:

Flexitime practices. The company has developed in recent years a number of flexitime practices. To start with, employees have a working time framework from 8h00 to 15h00, as well as one afternoon per week (from 16h00 to 19h00). Notwithstanding this, employees also have a certain degree of freedom to vary their entry/exit times according to their ad-hoc needs, always in consultation with the intermediate managers. This element is particularly valued by employees, especially those who have family obligations as it facilitates a good balance between work and private life. In any case, company employees who are in direct contact with clients are requested to adapt their working times to the needs of the clients (for instance, training sessions can be held very early in the morning or late in the afternoon due to a requirement of the client), where these non-standard hours are subsequently compensated.

Attention to continuing training activities for employees. MC Prevención is active in the development of formal continuous training activities for its employees, aimed both at improving sector specific skills/abilities as well as general/transversal abilities (time management, communication, etc.). On average, a company employee devotes around 5% of his/her working time to training activities, although

this time is unevenly distributed according to different occupations and groups (more attention is paid to doctors and technical staff). Also, the company financially supports some education initiatives initiated by individual employees (for instance, university studies).

Attention to the well-being of employees. Despite the financial difficulties, the company maintains a package of social benefits for employees, including aid for the education of children of employees, as well as health and life insurances. Meanwhile, MC Prevención has got a strong risk prevention and equality policy. Thus, the company is vigilant that no discrimination against people according to gender, sexual orientation, race or age considerations may exist within the company in a number of domains (i.e. wages, promotion possibilities, access to social benefits, etc.). In fact, women represent approximately a 70% of the company workforce, and they are particularly present in administrative and intermediate managing positions.

Emphasis on internal communication activities. Last year MC Prevención has been particularly active in communicating with its employees via different channels. For instance, the results of every Director's Board held in the headquarters of the company have to be disseminated by participant directors to their managing subordinates and so on in a kind of "cascade" approach, so that relevant information is shared by all members of the organisation. Also, the company explains on a regular basis written communiqués with relevant information on market and company developments that are spread to all employees, either via email or posted on the so-called "Employee portal" within the Intranet of the company. Finally, Facebook/Twitter facilities have been developed in the last year, where employees can participate in this for all kind of comments/suggestions. In this regard, the new company management is trying his best to increase the existing levels of communication and transparency within the company.

Support for the initiative of employees. The company develops a competition of ideas amongst employees to identify good ideas suggested by employees that may result in positive outcomes/improvements for the organisation. The winners of this competition receive a financial prize.

So who benefits?

From the perspective of the company, an active involvement in WPI practices results in a number of positive outcomes for the company itself, including the full use and development of employees' potential and possibilities for the sake of the enterprise (via the involvement in continuing training practices or the competition of ideas) and the establishment of a good work environment within the company (via the flexitime practices, the internal communication policy or the social benefits for employees), where all these elements favour the satisfaction and engagement of the workforce and, incidentally, the profitability and long term sustainability of the company.

Meanwhile, and from the perspective of employees, MC Prevención offers a number of interesting elements, including good terms of employment (in respect to salary levels, working hours, social benefits and flexitime practices), as well as an emphasis on training activities and the development of the human resources of the company. Not surprisingly, the existing personnel turnover in the company is very low, so employees usually develop long careers in the company.

Prognosis

Looking at the future, MC Prevención is committed to continue being a reference company in Spain within its sector. For this purpose, the company is fully aware of the importance of continuing its involvement in WPI practices as a way to increase its attractiveness as employer as well as its competitiveness and future sustainability. It is expected that overcoming the company's economic difficulties will redound in a future reinforcement of the WPI practices.