

## Spanopoulos group: A powerful culture for the best possible services

### What does this case study demonstrate?

A culture that is well aligned with a company's strategy and the employee behaviours can generate feelings of pride in the workplace and a genuine desire to achieve peak performance. Spanopoulos Group has created a powerful organisation culture, with a clear mission and an orientation to collaboration, emphasising the importance of producing consistently high quality services and managing to unlock the emotional commitment of their employees by accelerating the changes needed to achieve and sustain the best possible results.

*Workplace Innovation elements: Innovation/innovative capability, openness and communication, sharing knowledge and experience, concrete mission goal*

### Context

[Spanopoulos Group](#), a family owned and operated company, has over thirty years of experience in the marine and offshore field. It has undergone a gradual progress in order to be in line with the best and latest marine industry practices, offering a full spectrum of marine services based on a wide range of innovative, upgraded and highly productive vessels. The company is proud of the fact that all systems are being continuously updated, and their employees are dedicated, fully qualified and experienced professionals, sharing the Group's vision of impeccable collaboration in a fast developing technological environment. Having safety as a prior driving force, certain procedures are followed in order to deliver thorough and integrated customer services. The services are supplied and supported utilizing in-house technical, crewing and project management teams of 120 people as well as a number of subcontractors that cooperate with the company in various projects reaching a total number of 300 employees, on average.

With the current recession stressing not only national but global financial markets on a large scale and with difficulties which have increasingly affected the real economy, the company decided to increase its productivity mainly by operating, since February 2014 in Perama area, a new shipyard, providing many opportunities for new jobs in an area with high levels of unemployment. The 16,500 m<sup>2</sup> site is dedicated exclusively to luxurious mega yachts providing in house all kind of services, under the high standards classifications of ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS18001, ISPS and high liability insurance.

In this way, the company's vision to remain highly competitive offering quality services to the customers as well as employees has to a large extent, turned out to be achievable.

'We are in a process of company's development investing in new infrastructures as well as in our people... and we will go further...'. Operations and Financial Manager

The approach they used in the last three years is that they make a transition plan in relation to: culture, structures, responsibilities, skills, and required knowledge. Certain policies are included defining the exact procedures and processes to be followed. Issues such as, specific requirements in resources, are considered. They also include a transition schedule comprised of major milestones, management meetings, risk reviews etc. Finally, they define a communication plan for the employees and stakeholders.

## **A powerful organizational culture**

Spanopoulos Group is a successful shipyard in the market able to create something unique, which replaces company strategy, its experience on the market and technological advantages. They believe that although the strategy, experience and technology are all unquestionably important, the company has made an asset of their exceptionally powerful organizational culture.

It is of key importance for the capability of influencing employees' attitudes and actions to be aware of the impact the organizational culture has on the practical aspects of shipyard management as it will result in an efficient execution of company strategic tasks. As the competition and other pressures of various kinds grow, it becomes more emphasized providing the company with sustainability and flexibility, clear principles and governing strategies which are applied by the shipyard in its attempts to face new challenges. Clear key competencies and strategic objectives – both of which are strongly related to the uniqueness of the shipyard- are established. It is the basic concepts of vision and mission as well as certain external factors such as the global environment where the company operates that determine the model of culture to be followed by its employees.

In practice, using the company's mission and vision statements, top management sets long-term goals for the next 1–5 years defining ways to achieve them. These are then passed down to middle managers who determine what contributions their departments or other teams can make with their resources-e.g. human resources and potential incentives, such as bonuses that could be provided- during the next 6–24 months. Finally, first-line managers, i.e. shipyard managers, determine how to accomplish specific tasks with available resources within the next 1–52 weeks.

## **Sharing knowledge for the best possible services**

Every team (e.g. the marine and offshore, the towage and salvage, the shipyard, chartering team), works nationally and internationally with subcontractors, suppliers and classification societies. Every vessel and maritime solution must comply with the regulations and accounting standards determined by classification societies. Sharing knowledge, by working closely together with these organizations, is much more efficient because the classification societies have an enormous knowledge base to share.

In addition, customer feedback is one of the most important sources of information for their services. They not only work together to improve the services, but also work together to adjust them to fit new demands. Their customers inform them about new and changing requirements so they are able to adapt solutions or even develop new solutions.

Furthermore, regular meetings are held before, during and after the completion of a project in which employees are briefed and asked to share ideas and best practices as well as brainstorming sessions at which staff are given the freedom and encouragement to suggest job improvements. Finally, the company strongly believes in the importance of training in spreading key knowledge, skills and best practice, therefore several sessions are organized with employees participation from all departments.

### **Innovation/ Innovative capability:**

Managers and employees agree that the company's vision is to remain highly competitive offering quality services to the customers as well as its employees. The clear communication of the company's principles and strategies as well as the fundamental knowledge-sharing enhance their innovative capability.

### **Openness and communication:**

Decisions are mainly intrinsic, taken after listening to employees' views through regular meetings, brainstorming sessions and driven by concern for the employees and the organization.

*'With the employees cooperation the managing team takes decisions that will benefit both the company's goals as well as employees working life'.* Shipyard Manager

*'Employees opinions are heard and then the board decides'.* Employees' focus group

## **Enhancing shared knowledge and experience:**

High efficiency is achieved by offering to the employees, to an important degree, a work environment with learning opportunities in training sessions organized on a regular basis, by working closely with national and international organizations and by making the most out of their customers' feedback.

*'...And we benefit from the detailed knowledge we gather. And to develop and implement the best solutions we work together'*. Employee focus group.

*'Sharing knowledge is one of the most important conditions to stimulate the development of the best possible services.....It makes us work more efficiently, improving flexibility and performance as well as the company's position in the labour market, making it a safe place to work by offering employees the opportunity to gain skills and balance private work situation....'*, Employee representative

### **Concrete mission goal**

Quality of the organization and quality of work is very important for the organization aiming at better working conditions, higher performance and profitability as well as sustainability with satisfied clients.

*'We want to be a partner they can count on...'* Operations and Financial Manager

## **Prognosis**

Spanopoulos Group is committed to delivering services of the highest quality within a supportive working environment for the employees and a unique character, defined by an established organizational culture which is evolved, cultivated and maintained continuously. And an actively maintained culture can be nothing but an asset for the company's long term success.