

Training Academy: High Qualified Employees for High Quality Products

What does this case study demonstrate?

The company aims to give the employees more job autonomy and give them the feeling that their opinion is taken seriously. Therefore the general structure was changed and a new management line was added to give small teams more workplace responsibility. The new team structure changed the whole management structure, being the guarantee for more autonomy and self-responsibility of the employees.

Well qualified people are the backbone of the organisation and the competitiveness of the company; it is necessary to have up-to-date skilled employees because they sell “knowledge” and training. Having a general overarching concept and budget for employee trainings makes it easier for the employees to get and conduct training, and enable continuous improvement.

Workplace innovation elements: work organisation practice (flexibility, self-managed teams), learning and reflection partnership (continuous improvement), and workplace partnership (integrating tacit and strategic knowledge).

Context

Since 2002 the company is a part of a German holding group specialised in personnel and organisational development and training, including virtual training, E-Learning and other IT solutions for learning as well as coaching, and talent management.

Overall Training Concept

Continuous training of the employees is very important for the company; they continuously train the employees (with certain priorities, like 2009 explicit manager trainings, with a mentoring programme and coaching). In 2013 the company implemented an overall training programme and budget for every department to make it easier for the employees to get the training they need to keep them up-to-date. There are now no costs for the departments, but the employees still have to reconcile with their manager. Within a yearly appraisal interview, individual personnel development measures are identified and agreed upon. There is also a hotline giving advice on which training course fits best or is possible. A multi-channel learning concept was developed: e.g. it is possible to learn English during the working times and at home via smartphone or while traveling (e-Learning). An interactive tool was developed consisting of video- and audio-sequences, reading and writing exercises and on-site courses.

Team Leader and Small Teams (12-15 Employees)

The three level hierarchies were enhanced by an additional level of team leaders. This was done to give the employees more autonomy, to better involve the employees, to make workplace directed decisions together with both employees and managers. 2013 there was a comprehensive structural change: launching new departments, closing and combining different departments. The fourth line of managers (team leader) are replacing some former heads of departments, aiming to have small teams with more self-responsibility at the workplace.

Employee Survey and Participation System

Every 2 years an employee survey takes place. Since the beginning (2000/2002) more than 10 focus teams (depending on the agreed personnel and organisational developments) were setup to transfer the results of the surveys into active measures giving the employees the opportunity to develop solutions bottom up. Controlled by the managers, most of the measures developed by the employees were implemented (if they were not too expensive): like Health Management (medical examinations, massages, etc.) and care points for critical situations like work overload, not manageable time schedules (at the workplace or within a department). A fair improvement system was established, money for the best solutions is given to the employees.

So who benefits?

By keeping the employees up to date on professional and technical issues, the company stays competitive and has a better customer focus. The employees' voice is based on a suggestions system, small teams, and individual training. WPI measures allow an optimal usage of the employees' competences and capabilities at the workplace by the team structure.

The employees benefit from the top-down WPI structures. Being accepted and adopted by the employees, a win-win situation for the employees and the management is created, especially by bottom-up structures (care points, self-responsible teams, etc.). The employees' competences are continuously updated and their competences are relevant for the company development and products. They could decide much more autonomously at their workplace.

Prognosis

The named workplace innovations are now and in the future a consistent element of the organisational structure of the company. Their impact is far reaching: new team structures changed the whole management structure, being the guarantee for more autonomy and self-responsibility of the employees in the future. Workplace Innovation is fostered through the new company structure, and personnel development is continuously done with the integration of the employees' needs and perspective (e.g. through survey and the implementation of new issues deriving from them). This is the ground or framework for enabling and guaranteeing that workplace innovation initiatives of the employees could be delivered and taken up by the company in the future.