

Preventing burnout and stress to achieve 'Lives in Balance'



Siemens, Belgium

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The issue

Siemens is a globally operating technology company but aims to address health management at global and local scales. Recent global surveys on health management and psychosocial risks have been conducted and, at the local scale in Belgium, it was found that about 16% of employees experience high levels of stress. Irregular or long working hours, worries about job security, the impact of mistakes and work intensity have been identified as particular risks.

Action taken

Global evaluations and feedback from Siemens organisations in more than 70 countries led to the development of 'Life in Balance' (LiB) — a company-wide methodology based on five areas identified as essential to successful psychosocial risk and resource management: awareness, leadership involvement, communication, training and the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). LiB, as an important part of the overall Health Management programme Fit@Work, was implemented in Belgium from 2013 and the most appropriate measures for their specific risk factors were selected and were adjusted to fit local cultural and company conditions.

Risk factors for burnout/stress and a high level of stigmatisation of these issues were identified. To raise awareness of and destigmatise these issues, a video was created from the perspective of an affected manager who volunteered to share his experience. An instructional video was also created to enable other branches globally to take a similar approach and develop 'educational' videos.

To improve involvement and awareness of leadership, stress management training for managers and two-day health seminars are run, targeted at managerial staff. Both initiatives promote health and highlight possibilities for support with regard to both prevention and rehabilitation. Interested workers without personnel responsibility are also invited to attend and these workers contribute a valuable perspective.

To improve communication, the Siemens Social Network was set up in 2013. In Belgium, the Fit@Work group was set up within this network and is now an active community of employees, health experts and voluntary members discussing stress and psychosocial issues, among other health topics.

Worries about job security in Siemens Belgium have been addressed through the Employability Index. This is a tool via which individual development plans are created and long-term learning areas are proposed. Suitable paths are revealed for every employee.

Finally, about 66% of Siemens employees worldwide have access to the EAP. Based on the recent local risk assessment and a global survey on EAPs, quality management documents have been created for EAPs to help improve the use of this valuable resource.

As a result of the LiB programme in Belgium, the existing EAP was reviewed and is now offering professional support for psychosocial risks and juridical problems to all employees and direct family members.



Results achieved

- Health Management seminars have been rated as 1.8 on a scale from 1 (very good) to 6 (not at all useful), with about 10 % of the workforce having attended seminars to date.
- Around 70 % of all managers have attended stress management training on a voluntary basis. 90 % of participants would recommend this training strongly to their colleagues.
- There has been a strong decrease in absenteeism since the implementation of Fit@Work.
- More than 250 employees (~20 %) have joined the social network community and about 400 health-related posts have been created in the last six months.
- Increased commitment among management and employees to a healthy lifestyle.
- Siemens was granted the Belgian Employer of the Year 2014 as recognition of LiB implementation, amongst other initiatives, and the Employability Index played a significant part in this.



We are convinced that only through a holistic health management, true physical and mental health can be achieved.