

Implementation of company initiatives to reduce stress and psychosocial risks

COMMENDED

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The issue

Like many organisations trying to survive the global financial crisis, construction company Cofely Italia was being forced to keep production levels high and costs down, intensifying workloads as a result. In the midst of a corporate merger, its number of employees was gradually falling and the remaining staff felt uncertain about the future of their jobs. As all these factors could lead to potential increases in absenteeism and accidents, action was taken to establish a good psychosocial work environment.

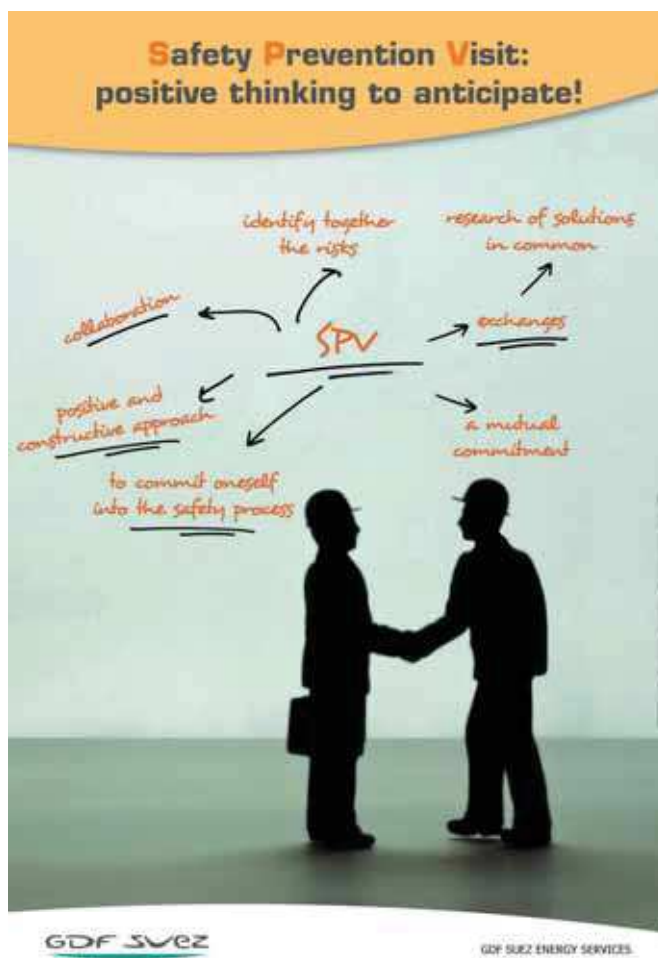
Action taken

Two separate studies were carried out in 2010 to identify the causes of psychosocial risks: a work-related stress risk assessment and a working environment survey. Together they confirmed the need to increase management involvement in matters relating to health and safety and to improve communication with staff and increase their awareness and involvement. They also highlighted the importance of putting initiatives in place for improving the corporate structure, primarily involving the company's managers and supervisors.

Work improvement initiatives that focused on the central role played by staff as a means of improving individual wellbeing and increasing productivity and growth were key to the success of this project. Preventive safety visits, for example, were introduced as a tool for highlighting any potential problems or difficulties but also for finding common solutions, putting forward improvement initiatives and strengthening good practice. The aspects that were looked at during the visits included work organisation, the working environment and the activities performed. One of the main challenges addressed was overcoming the perceived barriers between employees and managers, which required establishing an environment of mutual trust.

Cofely Italia recognised the fundamental and crucial role of communication. Communication to staff became more effective as managers got more involved and were present on the shop floor during operational activities, leaving behind their corporate role. This commitment from managers, combined with the involvement and participation of all employees, helped the company move towards a proactive approach and a shared prevention culture.

In addition, two preventive health initiatives were launched in 2014: screening of older workers for cardiovascular disease and a telephone service providing counselling and psychological support. Both initiatives are available free of charge to all employees.





Results achieved

- The number of accidents fell by 85% between 2010 and 2013.
- The number of preventive safety visits conducted increased from 208 in 2011 to 438 in 2013. There has also been a considerable fall (by around 80%) in the number of cases of 'unsafe' behaviour observed.
- In a survey carried out in 2013, nearly 5% of workers answered 'To a small extent' or 'Not at all' to the statement 'I enjoy working in this environment'. This compares with over 30% in 2010. The survey also showed that workers were more motivated, felt more committed to the company and were more aware of the role they played.

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