

Case Study.
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Sustainable safety improvement through standardisation

"Sustainability" is no longer simply a buzzword in the business world; this concept has become intrinsic to continued growth and success. Fundamental to the realisation of sustainability is improved safety in the workplace.

And yet, achieving lasting improvements in safety has proven elusive to many companies. In light of this, the Danone Group's Waters division, through continued commitment and consistent implementation of its safety programme on a global scale, was able to reduce the frequency rate of accidents and injuries by an average of 25.4% per annum over the last six years. This has not only improved the company's bottom line, but also earned it a DuPont Safety Award in 2009.

"The Safety value existed in Danone, but was not on the forefront of our daily activities. In response to this, a new approach to safety management, the WISE programme, was developed with the help of dss⁺.

MARC GROSSER, LABOUR RELATIONS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY DIRECTOR



The Danone Waters division is one of the four business divisions that comprise the Danone Group. With over 80,000 employees at 162 production sites in 120 countries, the Danone Group is one of the global market leaders in healthy food production. The Waters division is the second largest producer of packaged water, including brands such as Evian, Volvic and Aqua. Having sold roughly 18 billion litres of water in 2008, Danone holds approximately 11% of the global market share.

Safety has long been a core value of the Danone Group, but in 2004 it was recognised that safety improvements were lagging behind the industry average. "The Safety value existed in Danone, but was not on the forefront of our daily activities," as stated by Marc Grosser, Labour Relations and Social Responsibility Director. In response to this, a new approach to safety management, the WISE programme, was developed with the help of dss⁺.

Danone recognised that in order to improve safety, it was vital to cultivate an integrated culture of safety. As such, the WISE programme was built upon the 12 behavioural elements of the dss⁺ safety management system, with the goal of developing a culture of anticipation through a focus on safe behaviour. "WISE blends a bottom-up participative approach, a rigorous methodology and a strong, visible, engagement from the top" explains Pierre Decrion, Director of Manufacturing Methods for the Waters division. A visible management commitment to WISE, and safety as a whole, was considered paramount: the programme was positioned as a fundamental element of the corporate Manufacturing Excellence Vision.

While the production of packaged water is not considered to be particularly dangerous, the operation of heavy machinery and the transport of large goods nonetheless require an acute awareness of safety and due diligence. WISE was first executed on manufacturing sites with high accident frequency rates. Meetings were opened with a review of safety results to emphasise its relevance. The programme helped employees to develop a sense of personal ownership of safety, while fostering an environment in which continued dialogue on safety matters was encouraged. Implementation varied by site, as considerable discretion was given to account for site specificities and cultural differences. Each site progressed, yet results were variable.



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PIERRE DECRION, DIRECTOR OF MANUFACTURING METHODS FOR THE WATERS DIVISION, DANONE

By 2006, despite improvements, the Waters division lagged behind other divisions. Recognising the value of the WISE system, the management decided to approach safety with renewed vigour – additional resources were dedicated to bolstering WISE. Teams were dispatched to each site and tasked with the collection of reporting data. Leading and lagging indicators were established, thus providing a reliable stream of data upon which management could steer action and focus on improving weak areas. Senior executives visited sites on a monthly basis, conducting safety audits and leading dialogues on safe behaviour. Moreover, the site visits allowed for an exchange of best practices, facilitating the process of developing a standard WISE methodology.

During a site visit at Aguas Danone de Argentina, the central team observed a particularly efficacious mode of deployment: each line manager assumed responsibility for one of the twelve WISE behavioural elements, creating a subcommittee with five or six workers. Each subcommittee developed a detailed mission, with clearly-defined, measurable goals, a communications plan, a specific timeline for implementation and an auditing schedule. Sixty employees were actively engaged in the WISE committees in the first year. The following year, each participant created a new subcommittee based on WISE principles, allowing safety knowledge to cascade throughout the organisation. After two years, Aguas Danone de Argentina was rated as World-Class by WISE practice leaders. Soon afterwards, sites throughout the division adopted the methodology, creating a standard for WISE implementation.

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To supplement the improved implementation of WISE, Danone Waters adopted a series of incentives to further communicate the importance of safety within the workplace. The division began to hold an annual Safety Network Convention, at which participants exchanged best practices, implementation plans and recognised effective safety initiatives. Employees at all levels within the division were represented, thus placing emphasis on both the individual and collective ownership of safety. The division also began to hold the WISE leadership awards, in which general managers were recognised for the best improvement in safety, as determined through audits.

In 2008, the Danone Group adopted a new programme for rewarding its senior executives: the "ethical bonus". One third of the variable portion of their remuneration became dependent upon meeting measureable social goals – one of which is safety. By incentivising safety amongst senior management, the Group further demonstrated its visible management commitment to safety.

By 2009, WISE had been expanded into all regions. Moreover, it was expanded to suppliers and subcontractors, offering audits, action plans, and deployment of models to logistics and transport partners, especially in Latin America and Asia, where traffic can be dangerous. For example, some Waters division sites in the Americas have adopted road safety program for their own personnel.

Overall, the Waters division has achieved an 86.3% reduction in the frequency rate of accidents and injuries over the last six years, making the Waters division the leader in safety within the Danone Group. The frequency rate reduction is expected to be another 30% for 2010. According to the Danone Group, "the WISE programme has also had a positive structuring effect, a clear relationship being established between operational performance improvement and safety."



The programme's success and sustainability has solidified the company's commitment to the WISE strategy. At present, the company is further developing the content of the programme, adding risk-based elements to the existing behavioural elements.



Assignment

Improve safety performance of waters division that was lagging behind the industry average.



Offering

Development of safety management system.



Impact

- 86.3% reduction in the frequency rate of accidents and injuries over 6 years.
- Danone awarded the DuPont Safety Award for performance improvement.



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