

DB Rent: Intelligent Mobility Concepts

What does this case study demonstrate?

The company is very much engaged in innovative and sustainable services and products. To stay innovative and to be competitive and innovative, creative a (high) skilled workforce is necessary. Therefore the focus on the triangle of economic success, ecological sustainability and training / social care for the workforce is the main driver for Workplace Innovation.

Workplace innovation elements: work organisation practice, learning and reflection partnership (continuous improvement, high involvement innovation, shared knowledge and experience), structure and system improvement, workplace partnership.

Context

The private company “DB Rent” is part of the Deutsche Bahn (German Railway Company), but relatively free in its decisions, especially on Human Resources. Founded 2001, DB Rent has about 450 employees now, offering comprehensive solutions for smart mobility concepts and interlinking different transportation systems, combining train travel with car rentals, call a bike, etc. Vehicle fleet management and short and long time rent systems, “Flinkster” (car sharing), Chauffeur service, Full-Service-Leasing and –Rent are completing the company products. Also maintenance, repair, insurances, etc. are enclosed services around the fleet management. The company is built on three pillars: Economy, Ecology, and Personnel Development. The company has to be very innovative and up-to-date because the service and products are sustainable and interlinked (personal) travel possibilities (mainly train-car-bike), because of a high competition (e.g. concerning car-sharing, city-bikes).

Integration of employees in innovation development and projects

Because of the market need to innovate continuously in new transport possibilities, not only the engineers but also the other employees are involved in innovation activities and projects, such as recently the development of a new electronic bike lock system. Because of the innovative character of the company service no market solutions are available. New projects could be initiated by every employee: to innovate new and develop existing services and products further, but also for organisational and personnel development, new market strategies, etc. Up to now about 100 projects were conducted with participation of different employees, coming from different staff hierarchies.

Talent management

Young talented personnel are looked for by other companies, their demands on the job and company offers are growing, so the company has to provide good working conditions. With this personnel development programme, the individual potentials are identified and further developed by training, specific projects and coaching. It could be seen as not only training as such but as “sustainable further development” for the key staff of the company. Employees could apply themselves for the programme. There are diagnostic instruments and tools managers are using to assess the employees concerning their competences, potentials and work performed. This validation is checked and discussed by a common management conference. The tools and instruments are partly adopted from external sources and further improved; also new tools were developed. The objective of this company programme is to develop and

train with more efficiency (only what is needed in a specific case, for a specific employee) and to keep the young employees, talents in the company.

Employees' surveys and appraisal interviews

On a yearly basis there is an employee survey, mainly focused on training necessities. The survey is seen as a personnel development strategy / instrument and combined with yearly appraisal interviews between all the employees and their managers. Within these interviews the work performance and target achievement of former interview agreements is proofed, new objectives of the manager and objectives of the employee are adjusted. It is seen as a targeted promotion of employees and the integration of their perspective (employees' voice). This is dedicated to the concrete workplace of the employee, not on the company targets at a "higher level" (that means that there is a strong focus on the individual and not the company level).

Health programme

There is a dedicated health concept in the company, including a lot of specific health and rejuvenation possibilities, e.g. offering health checks and "health information days" of external institutions. Every 2 years there are preventive medical check-ups, every year flu shots are offered. The office equipment is oriented on ergonomic and health criteria, employees can decide what they need and want. There is a room (called "lounge") for the employees where they can retire for a short period by doing what they want. Most of the health related offers could be used during the working time. There is also a computer programme "Moving", opening a pop-up window on the computers of the employees, stimulating short actions and exercises to move. A sports offer is completing the health programme, e.g. free use of bicycles and fitness studios. A common corporate company challenge is organised by the employees from time to time (common jogging).

Social counselling service

An external hotline can be phoned anonymously for psychological help by every employee in case of any social or psychological problem, asking for individual help and support. This is a hotline that can be used by different companies: <http://www.ias-gruppe.de/index.php?id=91>.

So who benefits?

Workplace innovations are oriented at the improvement of innovative products, services based on the innovative competence of (high) skilled employees. The motivation for WPI is rather evident: to be competitive and stay on the market the company needs innovative and talented people as well as a healthy staff. Therefore clear win-win-situations are developed by individual and company relevant training opportunities, by giving the employees a voice within the management structure (yearly appraisal interviews with the manager), and by taking care of their health and critical life events and personal problems. WPI activities are mainly market driven but the employees' satisfaction (reviewed by the interviews and surveys) and health is seen as a precondition to be innovative and competitive.

Prognosis

The mainly top-down developed workplace innovations (like the described) are setting up bottom-up *structures* to improve the innovative skills of the employees and to integrate their competences and voice in the company development continuously. This is structurally guaranteeing the integration of the workplace know-how of the employees for the improvement and innovation. Because this is the sustainable ground for the company's success, innovativeness and competitiveness Workplace Innovation will be a stable element of the company structure, organisational and personnel development.