

Vivechrom S.A: Effective communication to face any future challenges

What does this case study demonstrate?

Venturing in a participation style of management relates to improvements in the job, the product, the work atmosphere and the company as a whole. [Vivechrom S.A.'s](#) health and safety attitude at work along with the company's performance improvement program through dialogue and a people focus in managing change, resulted in improved employee efficiency and engagement and an increase in the company's innovation capacity.

Workplace Innovation elements: innovation/innovative capability, employee voice, people's support through change, sustainability, engagement

Context

Vivechrom S.A. was established in 1932, and has always been the leader in the Greek paint industry. In 1992 Vivechrom became a member of AkzoNobel, the largest paint company in the world. Today, the company continues its path having a modern organization, a dynamic management team and a considerable workforce of 238 employees.

Vivechrom S.A.'s strategic target is to remain the leader in the Greek paint industry, not only for the quality of its products but also for the care for its personnel, the environment and the society. The company applies modern systems of management, evaluation, compensation and development of its employees. It also ensures the hygiene and safety in the workplace, and takes measures for the continuous improvement of the working conditions and the good working climate.

Within the context of the financial and economic crisis that had considerable consequences in the markets and a major effect in the consumers' behaviour, the company decided to strengthen its competitive advantage by increasing its investment in its people. In Vivechrom S.A. they strongly believe that the more trained and developed their employees are, the more committed and motivated they will be to participate in their several tasks and successfully implement and run various projects, working in teams and in collaboration with other company departments.

'We want to create an engaging work environment applying practices that make people more involved and responsible for their job. To this end, we apply a holistic approach for the improvement of the employees' performance in conjunction with the company's development'. Ms Marilena Marinou, HR Business Partner

They started with the Preparation of the process. They exchanged ideas about their needs with employee's representatives, middle and upper management teams. Then, during Assessment, a Risks analysis was made, which was the most important activity. In the phase of Development they defined their goals and focal points, which procedures should be followed, the scheduling, the potential costs and the human resources required. Finally, they determined a time line for Implementation, defined roles and responsibilities of service providers, developed policies and procedures and confirmed performance indicators based on their model.

Health and Safety with employees' participation

The company is committed to applying a health and safety attitude at work and increase the employee engagement in safety (Behavioural Based Safety-BBS). They have a strong, consistent and timely reaction to the discovery of unsafe acts, whether they result in injury or not. Safety incidents are viewed as an opportunity to learn and improve with the leadership, managers and supervisors to make the staff aware and consider how they do what they do and why. There is an open, feedback-rich culture among employees, which enables employees to consistently learn and grow.

The management team designed the company's BBS in cooperation with frontline employees and all employees are involved in the implementation. A wealth of information is provided around areas in need of improvement from collected data about reported injuries. The team determines what would have prevented the reported injuries. If it is not immediately obvious the team uses methods like discussing how increased situation awareness might have affected the occurred event. From this analysis, the team identifies critical safe behaviours for an observation checklist according to the importance of safety, frequency of occurrence etc. A summary of significant positive safety behaviours that were observed and one or two areas that require change is made and they deliver their feedback as soon as possible. At safety meetings, which are held once a month, but depending on the circumstances and how critical the situation might be, these could take place more often, the results of the observations are being discussed and objective problem solving is encouraged. Company's management team as well as all members of the staff, including employees' representatives, participate.

Improvement goals are set ensuring that each employee knows what behaviour or process they need to work on to reach the goal. The total compliance is required with the behaviours agreed to as the most effective to reduce errors.

Performance improvement through Dialogue

A holistic approach, My Career Performance and Development Dialogue-PDD, for the improvement of the employee performance in conjunction with their personal and the company's development, is implemented.

The purpose is for every staff member to agree on performance assessment, individual business goals and his/her personal development plan, set objectives and goals for the remaining year, eliminate any misalignments and give and receive feedback on performance. For this reason, training in specific areas for each employee is foreseen every year linked to certain goals. All employees agree on at least 5 yearly targets and the next steps for achieving them are agreed. Through an electronic platform and a distributed printed version all members of the staff participate. It is implemented within the following stages.

From January to February they set the goals for the year, Business goals, as they define what themselves or the team is expected to deliver and when, as well as Development goals as they try to define how they and the team expect to develop to deliver and achieve business goals.

In early summertime participants review whether something didn't turn out to be as it was expected to, whether their targets need a sort of adaptation or change or if any further assistance in the accomplishment of the targets is required.

In November they carry out self-appraisals of their performance according to their personal development plan, the effectiveness of the targets that they set, what other objectives they met beyond their stated goals, which achievements they are most proud of, what kinds of risks did they take during the time span for this evaluation and the areas that they would like to receive further training. Options are offered such as: on the job training, job rotation, very short term job assignments, e.g. to work for a week or six months in another company of the same group of companies, in a different function and they are assisted in having a new career outlook.

A people focus into managing change

The way they work has reached such a matured stage that change management focuses more on the development of employees' potentials and fully exploiting their job experience. They put a people focus into managing change implementing a structured change methodology that focuses on people-related issues. They emphasize more on training their staff on how they can cooperate and communicate more successfully, how they can minimize job frustration and people can become real change agents and champions.

By acquiring additional skills, project managers have become business change champions. This has benefited them, as it has put them at the centre of the company's change agenda and dramatically increased their personal value. The company benefits by increasing the capabilities of its workforce; thus, creating a higher level of employee commitment to change and implementing more successful change initiatives.

All project managers have acquired skills in project management, change management techniques as well as interpersonal skills and are able to:

- Help senior executives and managers play an active leadership role that ensures people support the change.
- Help people in the company to see a real personal need for change and to understand the project vision.
- Identify project stages and activities where high levels of involvement are required – and facilitate this involvement so that commitment is built.
- Build plans that ensure that people have the necessary skills and motivation to meet the new demands the change brings.
- Develop follow-up plans to accelerate the acceptance of change.
- Share the company's vision for change knowing where they're heading so they are fully engaged in the change.
- Plan and deliver a range of communication and action-learning events.
- Assess change data and they collect and interpret data from individuals and groups regarding their understanding, perceptions and feelings about the change.

So who benefits?

Innovation/ Innovative capability:

Ms Marilena Marinou argues that the applied Practices cultivate innovation, as employees now have a stake in the company's growth and sustainability offering more ideas and problem-solving solutions when obstacles arise. They meet particular challenges and find improvements in policies, procedures or products, fostering growth and more critical and imaginative thinking. Through the PPD approach, the new approach in managing change as well as BBS, different perspectives can be identified, able to offer a creative solution and thinking out of the box.

Employees' voice:

The group of employees believe that by empowering them to speak up and be heard, the company uses its greatest asset to its highest potential becoming more competitive in the market. The company can hear what might be good, considering any suggestions from those who are often closest to the customers, or the everyday problems.

'The company allows us to express our views even at the central offices abroad and I have once made some remarks... and they were taken into serious consideration', Employee representative.

A very simple procedure is followed. They are informed, from the HR department of their company, to whom to turn to from the central offices and they can get in contact with him either via phone or email.

'...We have established an open door policy with our staff and the employees' council, letting go hierarchy and the impulse to control and remaining open up to what is emerging'..., Ms Marilena Marinou, HR Business partner.

People support through change:

'People have become business change champions benefiting themselves as well as the company. On the one side, project managers have increased their personal value. On the other side, the company benefits by creating a higher level of employee commitment to change and implementing more successful change initiatives', Employee focus group.

Sustainable organization with engaged employees:

They have built trust in their initiatives with a positive and optimistic outlook towards the future of the company. This has increased employee longevity with the company making them mentors to new employees and indispensable to managerial staff.

'They have made the company more competitive, the employees work more efficiently...' Employees' focus group

'The aim is to remain pioneering offering sustainable products and services with engaged and committed employees', Ms Marilena Marinou, HR Business partner.

Prognosis

Vivechrom S.A. has created a workplace environment where employees and managerial staff join hands to work towards a common goal enjoying, at the same time, their work and delivering their best level with a cordial relation for smooth flow of information and better understanding.

The company's successful implementation of open door policies has ensured effective communication and transparency at all levels in the hierarchy, steadily establishing a healthy and positive workplace culture in which conflicts and unnecessary disagreements are avoided and it is ready to face any future challenges based on its employees active participation.