



Timpack Industries – in tune with engaging workers in health and safety

Timpack Industries has introduced a range of effective and innovative measures to engage its 180-strong staff team in health and safety – including senior management dressing up as the Bee Gees in a ‘Stayin Alive’ themed roadshow.

“It was when the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) came in,” said General Manager Jason Togia.

“We wanted to get across what the legislation really meant in everyday terms, including things like Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) and how to do a very simple risk assessment.”

“So, we put together a roadshow involving our Chief Executive Alan Walters, Quality Manager Andy Goodridge, and myself dressing up and performing as the Bee Gee brothers. We took the roadshow to all the shifts at each of our seven sites.”

“We based the messages on what the risks were to Alan dancing. The response was phenomenal.”

The roadshow is just one of the steps in a journey to lift health, safety and wellbeing, which Timpack began back in 2012. The changes put in place have seen the company’s overall

lost time injury figures improve and provides a point of difference with major customers.

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“We have quarterly reviews with some of our biggest customers,” said Jason. “Health and safety is always top of their agenda. We have to present our health and safety statistics and projects we are working on and they are very impressed.”

Established in 1984, Timpack is a leader in timber-based packaging in New Zealand, manufacturing and recycling pallets, bulk bins, boxes, crates and cable drums.

It has a head office and facility in Hamilton, and sites in Auckland, Mt Maunganui, New Plymouth, Nelson, Dunedin and Timaru. Most of its employees work in the factories and



62 per cent are Māori or from Pacific Island backgrounds. They work a two-shift roster, with the day shift from 7 am – 4 pm and night shift from 4 pm – 2 am.

The business's major risks come from working with machinery and manual handling. In 2012, they began exploring options to improve guarding on machinery and developed that process to meet the joint Australian/NZ 4024 standards. They have also worked to 'engineer out' many of their manual handling risks.

"We used to have a lot of manual handling injuries such as strains to backs, arms and hands, noted in our lost time injury figures and medical reports", said Jason. "We looked at the high-risk areas and have engineered out many of those risks, especially in our recycling areas, by introducing machines that do a lot of the lifting and stacking instead."

Alongside the engineering and guarding solutions, Timpack has also developed innovative approaches to engage its people in health and safety initiatives.

"We wanted to give our people a good understanding of what's in the Act, not only from a compliance or business point of view, but also how the Act applies to the work they do," said Andy Goodridge, whose role includes health, safety and wellbeing. "We worked with a Taranaki-based company called Creative Leap to develop an e-learning package."

"We also created a character called Tim Timpack. He's based on one of our supervisors who is a very good leader and tutor. Tim 'leads' all our training."

"The e-learning modules are like short TV programmes. At first the modules just had words and a lot of pictures and now we have included videos. We needed to know that people are competent so at the end we've added a quiz - we don't call it a test, and we try to make it fun."

"Reading and working with numbers are a challenge for quite a few of our staff. Early on, we came to the quiz part and one of our people said to me 'I can't do the questions, I can't read them'. So I read them to him and he knew all the answers."

"So then we introduced an audio narrative too, so people can either read or listen, and that has worked really well. We're currently working on a manual handling module."

"We introduced the concept of 'giving a gift' to a friend to save their life."

The roadshow also resulted in workers sharing a lot of ideas.

"Out of that we developed some key messages," said Jason. "Previously, if you saw someone doing something unsafe, it might have been seen as 'narking' on them but we introduced the concept of 'giving a gift' to a friend to save their life."

"We set up 'give a gift' boxes - they look like yellow post boxes - and created a very simple form. People can record unsafe behaviour, a hazard, risk, near miss or opportunity to improve and pop the form in the box."

"The forms go to the site managers, who work on the issue, and a copy goes to Quality Manager Andy. The managers work with the staff member who suggested the improvement, so they are aware and involved in implementation of the action. Every couple of months, our CEO Alan does a draw and we give a prize to someone who has submitted a form. The response has been amazing. We were getting 70 or 80 forms a month to start with. That's settled down to 30 or 40 a month."

There is also a strong wellbeing approach. This includes providing hearing and lung function testing and health providers coming in to talk to workers about issues like diabetes, diet and lifestyle choices. WorkSafe Inspector Vance Walker was invited to talk with staff, including covering issues such as national statistics showing a higher injury rate among Māori and Pasifika workers in the New Zealand workplace.

A plan is underway to introduce annual health checks for all staff as well as offering literacy and numeracy programmes.

Timpack works with the private Workplace Support organisation, with a provider coming in weekly to provide counselling and support for any staff who need it.

"They are proactive," said Andy. "They get out among the staff, lend a listening ear and provide support where possible."

Jason says the most important outcomes have been workers' enthusiastic response to the initiatives and an overall reduction in lost time injuries, but there is also the potential to provide a business point of difference.

WORKER ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

The best outcomes are achieved when a business and its workers work together on health and safety. Worker Engagement and Participation is about having planned ways for:

- workers to give input on issues which will (or are likely to) affect their health or safety. This includes asking for and taking into account their views
- workers to improve work health and safety on an ongoing basis (eg by raising concerns or suggesting improvements).

This will help you and your business make better decisions - and keep your people and productivity thriving.

KEY POINTS

Worker participation in health and safety leads to:

- improvement in lost time injury figures
- empowering staff to speak up about their health, safety and wellbeing
- productivity benefits.

For more examples and information visit worksafe.govt.nz