

Posters

Strategic Alliance for developing and maintaining service for small businesses on occupational safety and health (osh) and environmental needs

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Abstract

This paper is to introduce a concept how to achieve sustainability in a strategic perspective discussed in parts of financial institutions in Austria. It should be a contribution to the discussion supporting the decision finding process. The model introduced is going to be conceptualised in Austria by an insurance and a cooperative bank. The IUW (Institute for Environmental Economics and Management) at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration (R.Paulesich) is scientific consultant and coordinates cooperators.

In everyday business management OSH is not a concern mobilising people neither inside nor out-side of companies. At least since Mintzberg categorises it as an 'hygienic factor' with only few effects on performance and productivity possible approaches to a deeper description and analysis became obsolete respectively were shifted from management to technical agenda. But now there is a new situation raising in Europe. Initiated by an EC directive from 1989 (89/391 "Measurements for Improving Safety and Health Protection for Employees at their work") all EU member states are obliged to define a legal framework with a focus on prevention services. Further more all employees in each company should be able to use such a service - also micro businesses are included.

Most of EU member states had to (or will have) implement new organisational infrastructure to realise directive and national framework. In Austria for instance companies with less than 150 employees had to come into use of OSH service by four steps from 1997 up to 2000. Sizes from 51 to 150 persons had to cover their needs by services to market conditions. For companies with less than 50 employees OSH service is offered by the AUVA (Allgemeine Unfallversicherungsanstalt = Public and General Insurance for Accidents) - free of charge.

It is financed by raising insurance premiums for all by 0,1% (from 1,3% to 1,4% of brutto amount of wage per employee payed by employer). The EC directive achieves following:

1. All employees has to use the OSH service and preventive health care.
2. Management has to use appropriate instruments for information about where and how measurements has to be set to minimise endangering situations.
3. Companies has to document their OSH activities according to their size.
4. Member states has to control results according to their legal framework.

Organisational framework in Austria has a particular character in comparison to other EU states. OSH Services for small businesses are offered by only one single institution (AUVA). Therefore it seems to be easy to develop market in cooperation with strategic allies. In spite of different approaches of other EU states there are several options for optimising benefits to promote prevention activities and abilities of small companies.

- Each small company has to use the OSH service and is visited therefore personally by OSH consultants.
- Research and consultancy experience allows a prognosis: OSH consultants in interaction with small companies will generate a lot of information beyond the limits of OSH.
- These informations open a in-depth sight of thinking and acting in/of small companies.
- The especially demanded method of Information generating can be learned by training (communicative skills). Leading paradigm is the state of the art in qualitative methodologies of social research.
- Deeper view inside small companies enables a real time perception of needs.
- Needs can be covered by OSH consultants in two dimensions premising an extension of OSH competencies: (1) support to comply with all legal requirements (environment, operating license, etc.) (2) matching generated information with external available market and non-market items (communicative skills).
- Information matching means knowing about what, where and who is qualified for problem solving.
- Our experience in OSH consulting small businesses disclosed needs mainly for the above mentioned point (1), promoting health prevention and financing.

Expressed in more general terms small companies are searching for support to minimise technical risks and to improve perceiving opportunities.