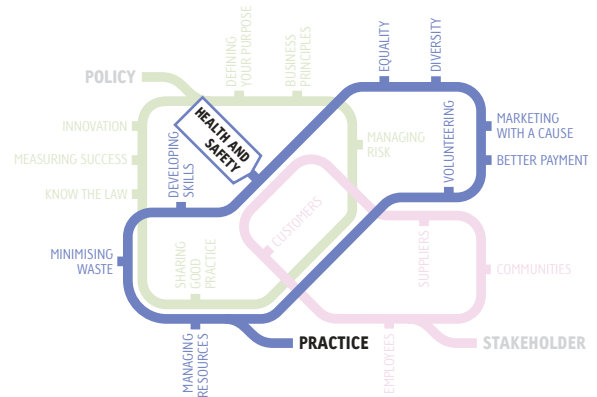


KEEP YOUR STAFF SAFE AND HEALTHY



This is one of a series of +points on The Journey – a route map designed to help you build a business that people value. Check out other +points on www.smallbusinessjourney.com.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

You CAN reduce risks and protect your bottom line by ensuring staff are safe, healthy and not unduly stressed.

WHY?

- There will be fewer accidents in your business and less sickness/absenteeism.
- The risk of your business being sued or prosecuted will decrease.
- Healthy, safe employees will be more productive.
- Many companies require their suppliers to have good performance in health and safety.
- Insurance may be cheaper.

EXTRA BENEFIT TO YOUR COMPANY

- Your staff will feel more valued, be more motivated and more productive.
- Where staff are unwell, they should take less time to recover and return to work sooner.
- High calibre potential staff will want to work for you.
- Customers will be attracted to you because if you care about your staff, they will believe that you also care about the quality of the goods and services you provide.

The Small Business Consortium is a group of organisations who share a common goal. They include AccountAbility, Arts & Business, British Chambers of Commerce, Business in the Community, CSR Europe, Federation of Small Businesses, The Forum of Private Business, Institute of Directors, Lloyds TSB and Scottish Business in the Community. Their work is supported by the DTI, www.societyandbusiness.gov.uk. These materials are created by Corporate Culture, www.cc-plc.com.

LIVING PROOF

MTM PRODUCTS

MTM Products is a 38-employee light engineering company based in Derbyshire which believes that being proactive about work-related stress is good for business. MTM's rehabilitation and return-to-work policies have developed from a director's keen interest in the positive aspects of work such as increasing motivation, facilitating flexible working and achieving a satisfactory work-life balance. At MTM, the management believed it was better to take the initiative in this area rather than to wait for something to happen and then have to deal with it in an unplanned way.

THE RESULTS

MTM's mental health policy is one of a number of business improvements which attempt to balance the needs and aspirations of employees with the needs of the business. Progressive thinking on this issue has helped MTM to increase the effectiveness of its organisation; improve the quality of working life for staff; support and encourage individuals to achieve their potential; and reduce the personal and corporate costs of mental ill-health.

WHO ELSE IS MAKING A POINT?

Many companies throughout the UK understand the real business benefits that can be gained from actively looking after the health and safety of employees. Here are just two:

- **Freshbake Foods** is a frozen food manufacturer which employs 150 people in Glasgow, a city that is bottom of the league for nutrition, smoking, exercise and heart disease.

Working through Scotland's Health at Work Scheme, the company has introduced a series of health-related programmes including a slimming club and healthy choices in the canteen which have proved very popular. There are also swimming clubs, ladies' and men's football teams; and an agreed policy on tobacco and alcohol consumption has also been introduced.

The results: Absenteeism is down from 6% to 2% and safety rates have been greatly improved. Activities like sponsored football, a cyclethon and a family day have all contributed to staff morale and raised money for charity. The company has received an award from Scotland's Health at Work scheme.

- **Central High Rise Limited** is a small steeplejack company which won the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) Occupational Health & Safety Award (for small businesses) in 2003. The company lost a business partner in a fatal fall soon after it was established and the remaining partner Keith Turney promised to push for improved safety standards in the industry.

The results: Nineteen years later the company has won seven prestigious ROSPA awards for safety. Improvements began with a change in attitude from top management. Safety back up systems, training and an improving culture have also improved levels of health and safety for all employees. Keith Turney describes the benefits in two significant ways; "Firstly I can point to our prestigious client base, but even more importantly I am relaxed about my son, who now works with me, being at height".

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- In 1999/2000, about 1.03 million workers suffered a work-related injury and there were 218 fatal injuries at work. Source: Health and Safety Executive
- Avoidable work-related injuries and ill health account for some 33 million days off work every year in the UK. Source: Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
- Work-related stress costs society between £3.7 billion and £3.8 billion every year [1995/96 prices]. Up to five million people in the UK feel “very” or “extremely” stressed by their work. Source: Health and Safety Executive
- 57% of SMEs have been asked by a large company customer for details of health and safety working practices. Source: Small Business Consortium / DTI Research, May 2002

HOW TO GET STARTED IN A SMALL WAY

- Get commitment from the highest levels on health and safety and support others who want to take this further in the business.
- Identify potential hazards in the workplace, and where these risks exist identify how serious they might be and how likely they are to occur.
- Involve employees – they have a working perspective on problems and solutions.
- Be prepared to make changes in the way you work if you need to reduce risks.
- Check regularly that your company is complying with health and safety legislation.
- Make a regular place on the management agenda for issues concerning the health of your staff.
- Make sure everyone in the work place knows the arrangements on health and safety.

WHO CAN HELP YOU TO GO FURTHER?

Strengthening the performance of your business in the ways outlined is in part a legal obligation. But going beyond legal requirements makes even more sense. If you are committed to health and safety, then you'll find there's lots of help.

National Help

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) produces a number of publications on health and safety including a guide for SMEs. The HSE's website includes an A-Z of issues and downloadable factsheets. Contact your regional HSE office for further help. www.hse.gov.uk and www.hse.gov.uk/startup.

The Healthy Workplace Initiative is jointly sponsored by the Department of Health and the HSE and offers a new approach to the problems of health at work. www.signupweb.net.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) is a registered charity that provides advice, resources and training on safety in all areas of life.

www.rospace.com.

The British Safety Council is one of the world's leading occupational health, safety and environmental organisations. Members include SMEs.

www.britishsafetycouncil.co.uk.

The Forum of Private Business Health and Safety Guide is designed specifically for SMEs. Email mis@fpb.com.

Online Help

Scotland's Health at Work has a health and safety toolkit for small businesses.

www.shaw.uk.com.

Safestartup offers basic information on how to comply with health, safety and environmental regulations for start-up companies and small businesses. Endorsed by the HSE. www.safestartup.org.

Business Link provides practical and easy to use information and support for SMEs on a wide range of issues including health and safety. www.businesslink.gov.uk.

IT'S COMMON SENSE

This briefing paper is one of a series of +points that make up The Journey – a route map designed to help you build a business that people value. You need only do one if you like. It's your journey. It doesn't have to be time consuming or complicated. It's basically common sense.

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