

Collaborative working in action – an employee perspective

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SUMMARY

This paper supports the presentation on “collaborative working in action from an employee perspective” within Network Rail in the United Kingdom. The paper will provide the background to the Network Rail initiative to work collaboratively with the Trade Unions and employees as one of the methods in use to improve and develop the safety culture within Network Rail.

INTRODUCTION

During 2010 Network Rail recognised that improvements in its safety leadership and culture needed to be made and sought to introduce a number of initiatives in order to address this. The collaborative working initiative is covered in this paper.

Network Rail recognised the positive contribution that Trade Unions make towards everyday health & safety management and in order to achieve the necessary improvements Network Rail and the Trade Unions jointly developed and implemented an initiative in April 2011 to promote collaborative working through employee engagement in order to:

- Provide improved safety leadership at all levels of the business and with contractors
- Improve the safety culture within the business
- Make a step change in the behaviours necessary to sustain continuous improvements in safety performance
- Implement a joint health, safety and welfare procedural agreement in a consistent manner across the business to enable managers and trade union health & safety representatives to work together on health and safety improvements through consultation.

IMPLEMENTATION OF INITIATIVE

Based on a ratio of 1 to 2,500 employees the Trade Unions were requested to recruit 9 Lead Trade Union Health & Safety Representatives through their democratic processes.

The Lead Trade Union Health & Safety Representatives report jointly to the Head of Safety & Sustainable Development Integration and their Trade Unions and work full time to achieve this important initiative.

Initial objectives were established to focus on employee engagement and the recruitment of employees as Trade Union appointed Health & Safety Representatives and to work with managers to establish and improve joint health and safety meetings between managers and health & safety representatives.

The Lead Trade Union Health & Safety Representatives also have responsibility for developing and mentoring health & safety representatives at local and area levels to promote productive engagement on health & safety performance and improvement initiatives.

HOW IT WORKS IN PRACTICE

Lead Trade Union Health & Safety Representatives work with the central Safety & Sustainable Development Directorate (S&SD), across the Network Rail business, with rail industry stakeholders and the employees they represent on a daily basis. This has improved communication and understanding of all on the improvements necessary to improve the safety culture of the business and indeed the wider railway industry in the UK.

Lead Trade Union Health & Safety Representatives were key stakeholders in the development of the Vision for Safety & Wellbeing and the Safety Strategy which provide a structured approach to safety leadership and culture change.

Trade Unions are represented on the Safety, Health & Environment (SHE) Committee which is the top level meeting in the company chaired by the Network Rail Non Executive Board members.

Lead Trade Union Health & Safety Representatives are key members of internal Network Rail Safety management meetings such as the S&SD Integration Group which is responsible for, amongst other things, promoting and delivering collaborative working.

Lead Trade Union Health & Safety Representatives are also key members the Trackworker Safety Group, a group which focuses on the improvements to track safety.

In order to work collaboratively with the wider rail industry the Lead Trade Union Health & Safety Representatives are also members of industry health & safety management working groups such as the Workforce Health & Wellbeing Working Group facilitated by the Rail Safety & Standards Board (RSSB)

The Lead Trade Union Health & Safety Representative team also work with the Office of Rail Regulator (ORR) and the Infrastructure Safety Liaison Group (ISLG) which is a group of major railway/construction contractors.

SUCCESS TO DATE

The Lead Trade Union Health & Safety Representatives have successfully recruited local health & safety representatives to develop the framework for collaborative working, consultation and improvements in the safety culture.

The Lead Trade Union Health & Safety Representative are working with managers at all levels to contribute towards safety improvement initiatives by providing an employee perspective at the start, middle and implementation stages. This has provided benefit for all parties and improved relationships.

Lead Trade Union Health & Safety Representative continue to promote the Vision for Safety & Wellbeing by encouraging open & honest communication by listening to employee concerns and acting upon them in an appropriate manner

The Safety & Sustainable Development Directorate and the Lead Trade Union Health & Safety Representative continue to work with managers and employees to develop trust and respect with all stakeholders. There is good progress in this area which is satisfying for all parties.

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

Good collaborative working is vital to influence behavioural change through workforce leadership and engagement and we must continue to develop a culture of trust and open & honest consultation with stakeholders. We must also continue to promote and assist in the implementation of safety improvement initiatives driven by the introduction of the Vision for Safety & Wellbeing and the Safety Strategy.

In order to achieve this Network Rail and the Trade Unions have agreed a 3 year extension to this collaborative working initiative which commenced on the 1 April 2012 until 31 March 2015.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion this initiative has been vitally important as one of the key aspects of developing the required improvements in safety leadership and cultural change through the will of all to work collaboratively.

Success will continue to be driven jointly as the relationship is embedded at all levels of the business.

We have jointly established a new and better way of working which engages with those exposed to the risk and with the influence to create a better and safer working environment.

We have a simple but powerful Vision - we want everyone to return home safely everyday.

APPENDIX 1:

APPROVAL TO PUBLISH PAPER



I ..Chris Hext, Head of Safety & Sustainable Development Integration at Network Rail

hereby give permission to the International Railway Safety Conference 2012 (IRSC 2012) to publish the paper titled:

Collaborative working in action – an employee perspective

To be presented at the IRSC 2012 conference to be held at the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel, London, England on 8 - 12 October 2012.

In the following media (tick as appropriate):

- Copied to memory stick for distribution to conference delegates
- Publish on the IRSC 2012 website

Signed: Chris Hext

Date: 31 August 2012

Please return this form when submitting the final version of the paper.