

> Dow Benelux

SPSS enables Dow Benelux to reduce absenteeism due to illness and decrease disability claims

Situation

Dow is a worldwide, leading manufacturer of innovative chemical, plastic, and agricultural products and services. The company highly values the principles of sustainable development, and strives for a healthy balance between economic, ecological, and social responsibilities. Dow's largest plant outside the United States is located in Terneuzen in the Netherlands. It has 26 production units and well over 2,100 employees.

All production units are customers of Dow's internal, certified Health Service. The purpose of this Health Service is to continuously improve working conditions and reduce absenteeism by providing safety, health, and welfare advice. The Health Service, led by Ronald Slootweg, has a staff of 14 (mandatory experts with a permanent, full-time appointment). Henny Martens holds the function of occupational and organization expert in Dow's Health Service.

Challenge

There are many instruments available to support the factors of safety and health. However, assessing and supporting the welfare of employees at work is much more difficult. Simply adding welfare-related considerations to working conditions legislation and regulations is not sufficient. Organizations themselves must take the initiative in order for them to be able to provide advice on welfare that is in line with the health and safety standards.

Employees' feelings of being successful in their work appear to have an important impact on the success of the organization or enterprise. It is becoming increasingly clear today that productivity is directly related to motivation. The challenge is to get welfare on the agenda, so that employees feel that they have some degree of control over their levels of satisfaction. It goes without saying that employers will benefit greatly from motivated employees.

Henny Martens was charged with developing a welfare and stress prevention program within the framework of the Working Conditions Policy. In this process, management, the works council, and the Health Service were all focused on continuous improvement. This enables Dow to respond and adapt to constant changes within the organization and society.

Company

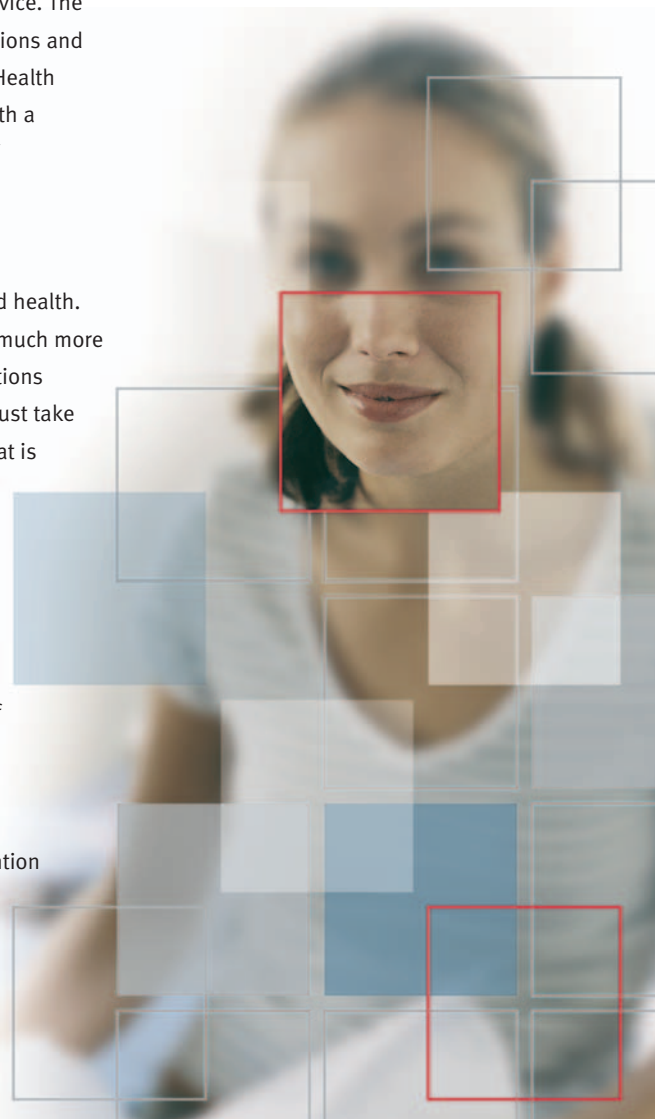
Dow Benelux
Country: The Netherlands
Industry: Chemical industry
Founded: 1964

Application

Employee, welfare and satisfaction monitoring system

Product

Survey Research application



To support the welfare process within Dow Benelux, SPSS developed a survey research application based on its standard data collection, analysis, and reporting software.

Results

- With the help of SPSS, the concept of welfare has become a permanent agenda item at Dow Benelux, and is discussed periodically at staff and management meetings.
- It has become possible to quantify welfare risks. By applying the welfare program, Dow Benelux is better informed of potential welfare risks.
- Employees at Dow Benelux have become actively involved in finding solutions for welfare risks. This broader support for tackling these problems significantly increases the chances of success.
- Better measures can be taken. For example, an employee's poor performance can be caused by divorce or illness at home, or by a problem in the workplace. Using SPSS helps to determine whether the right improvement measures are applied to the risks.
- The works council also participates in the process, with annual meetings to evaluate the outcomes of the action plan and the actions taken by the employer. The responsibility lies with the employer, but it is the works council's task to check it.

SPSS' software application is used for the periodic investigation conducted by the Health Service of Dow Benelux amongst its own employees. Questionnaires are sent to the employees' homes, filled in, and returned to the company. SPSS then processes the completed questionnaires and presents the reports to Dow Benelux.

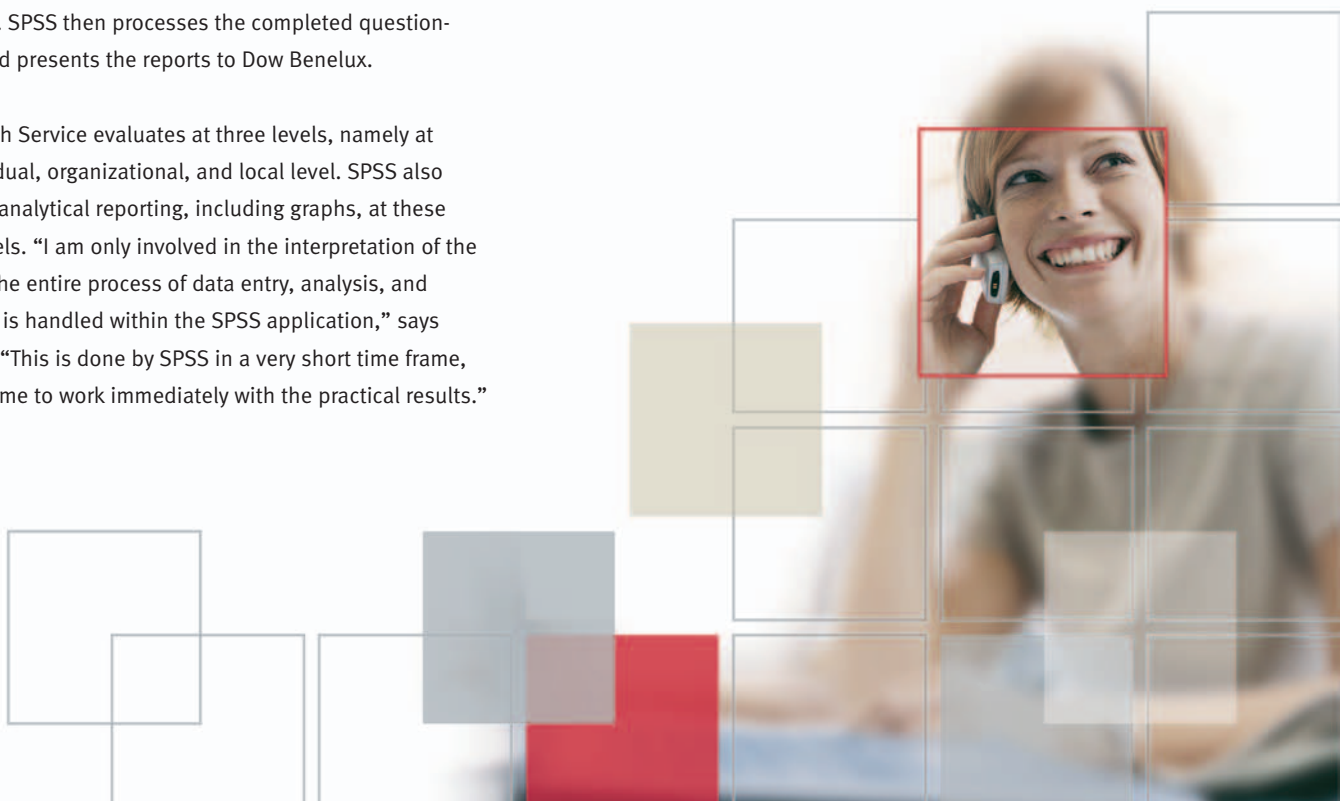
The Health Service evaluates at three levels, namely at an individual, organizational, and local level. SPSS also provides analytical reporting, including graphs, at these three levels. "I am only involved in the interpretation of the results. The entire process of data entry, analysis, and reporting is handled within the SPSS application," says Martens. "This is done by SPSS in a very short time frame, enabling me to work immediately with the practical results."

The pivot of the organization

The basis of a faultless process here is to have a database with reliable data. Hilde Bun, one of the staff employees of the Health Service of Dow Benelux, handles the collection, organization, and provision of all data to SPSS. "Hilde ensures we make a good start- if data entered into the application is unreliable, the results are, of course, also unreliable," adds Martens. Claudia Doeland from SPSS Benelux monitors the privacy of the completed questionnaires, sees to it that deadlines are met, and takes care of the administrative processing. "Without both of these people, this process would not go as smoothly as it does," says Martens.

Amazing results

The figures below demonstrate the positive contribution of the survey research application to welfare and stress prevention. In addition, Martens is also very pleased with the fact that the periodic investigation has resulted in a response of up to 70 percent since 1997. "The good employee communication by the Public Affairs Department also contributed to these excellent results," continues Martens.



Average absenteeism percentage:	between 3.2 and 3.7 % (National: Industry 5.8 - 6.5%)
Frequency of absenteeism notifications:	between 1.18 and 1.26 % (National: Industry 1.38 - 1.40%)
Disability influx:	between 0.3 and 0.5% (National: Chemical industry 0.9%)


Clear reduction in absenteeism costs

The percentages mentioned almost seem unreal. “We may conclude that SPSS has made an important contribution to these numbers,” points out Martens. “In addition, the SPSS software has also incited us to solve other problems, such as follow-up analyses of workload, physical pressure, evaluation of measures taken, and other specific problem areas. This development caters well to changes in society.”

Multiple prizes won

In 2002, Dow Benelux participated in the National Good Practice competition of the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. Dow’s Health Service won this

competition and subsequently participated in the European competition, where they, again, became winners. In 2001 and 2003, the Health Service was also recognized by the company’s own works council. As the company’s occupational and organization expert, Martens received an acknowledgement to this effect in 2003 because he had made particularly significant contributions to the company, according to the works council. “It is obviously very satisfying when your own customer recognizes what you achieved and is pleased with the results,” concludes Martens.

 **Henny Martens, occupational and organization expert of Dow Benelux:** “There is no need to worry about any difficult statistical operations, this is all taken care of in the application. It is a matter of using your common sense, but the interpretation of the results is supported by the application.”