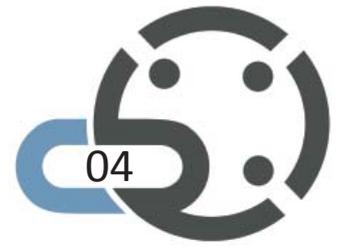




COLUMBUS
STAINLESS
— [Pty] Ltd —



Columbus Stainless (Pty) Ltd

Employee training and development is key to sustainability and growth

Employee training and health

Challenge

Columbus Stainless (Pty) Ltd is situated in Middelburg in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. We employ around 1,500 people on a full-time basis and are a member of the Acerinox Group.

Our main philosophy is that people are the most important asset in a business. A competent workforce is the foundation of achieving operational excellence and the route to sustainability.

Generally the South African labour market has very high levels of illiteracy which results in a very high unemployment rate and national skills shortage. The upsurge in mining activities and the re-commissioning and construction of new power stations in our area poses a very serious skills challenge. We are all competing for a very small pool of engineers and artisans.

In 1992 Columbus went through an expansion project which cost R3.5 billion (US\$1 billion). This project included installation of new technology that necessitated a better skilled workforce with computer literacy and advanced engineering and technical skills. As our plant is located in a rural agricultural and mining town we had to invest heavily in training our workforce.

This meant that we had to seek accreditation to train our own artisans and operators.

The Health and Safety Act of 1993 also requires an employee to be declared competent to perform a specific task. This requires an extensive training system to meet the legislative requirements and monitor the competence of a workforce with a diverse skills base.

Action

Columbus Stainless has developed a training system to ensure a competent workforce in line with legislative requirements and the complexity of the plant.

The Standards Based Training (SBT) model requires competencies to be confirmed through evidence collection. Progress towards the performance requirements are measured against criteria set out in a standard, or a learning outcome.

Outcomes and standards are developed based on an analysis of the role and equipment used during a process. Training material is developed and includes Component Modules to address knowledge outcomes and Standard Work Instructions describing practical tasks.

Monitoring and tracking of competence for each role is achieved by capturing requirements and achievements on a Competency Profile.

A gap analysis is conducted to determine the training needs. These are then captured in an Individual Development Plan so that structured training and coaching can be conducted in accordance to the role requirements. Employees are assessed against the competencies. If they are competent, their profile is updated accordingly. If an employee is not yet competent, they re-enter the training and coaching phase.

In an endeavour to address the artisan skills shortage, Columbus Stainless Pty (Ltd) is taking part in the Jipsa (Joint Initiative for Priority Skills) initiative to accelerate artisan training. This entails a condensed and focussed training programme for artisans.

Since 2000, Columbus Stainless has participated in the development of national qualifications for production employees. This culminated in Columbus Stainless pioneering the first formal qualifications in the country. These include the Certificate in Metals Production, and Metals Engineering Process Qualifications.

Additionally we have designed a detailed programme for training engineers and technicians to ensure that their practical experience is addressed. This programme covers engineering, metallurgy, financial and information technology.

Each year we also offer bursaries to young students to study engineering degrees at university. Technicians can also study mechanical, electrical, metallurgical and industrial engineering. Over the past 10 years, more than 100 young people have been sponsored in this way.

Outcome

The following programmes are now available to employees:

- Self-study: All employees can enrol in studies that benefit Columbus Stainless.
- Management Development: The aim is to empower our first line supervisors and managers.
- Engineers in Training: To develop engineers.
- Technicians in Training: To develop mechanical and electrical technicians.
- Apprenticeships: To train and develop fitters, boilermakers, millwrights and electricians.
- Learners Steelmakers: To develop plant operators.

Our SBT model has resulted in structured training and a uniform approach between all plant areas and meets all legislative requirements. It enables Columbus Stainless to have a multi-skilled, flexible workforce that can meet the demands of the technical and international stainless steel market. Every employee has a Portfolio of Evidence which details their assessed competencies.

Columbus Stainless is an accredited training provider and our SBT model has been audited to ISO 9000 and the standards of the Skills Education and Training Authorities (SETA).

Since 2008 Columbus Stainless has been recognised by SETA as one of the top training companies in South Africa and a supporter of the National Skills Development Strategy.

Columbus Stainless has maintained an Artisan Trade Test first-time pass rate above 90% for apprentices. This compares well to the national pass rate which is below 40%. Since 2004, a total of 317 apprentices have passed their trade tests with Columbus Stainless.

In 2002 we took part in a pilot project to implement production qualifications in a manufacturing environment. All new operators must complete a 12-month Metals Production Qualification before they are appointed. A total of 298 employees have received this qualification.

Columbus Stainless has also established a culture of continuous learning where employees are encouraged to take an interest in their own development. This is evident in the 1,282 self-study enrolments we have subsidised over the last six years.

We also conduct management development programmes to empower our managers. Since 2007, a total of 234 candidates has benefited from this leadership training.

With these initiatives, Columbus Stainless is creating a strong workforce geared to the future. Sustainability is assured by addressing our own skills needs and the needs of our country so that Columbus and South Africa remain competitive on the world stage.