

Aperam

Award: Safety
Category: Workplace Improvement

Leave the phone in your locker!

Challenge

More and more people use personal cell phones and are constantly connected with the outside world, with their network through social media accounts like Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp. This connection usually does not end when the workday begins.

A few minutes here and there won't typically hurt a business, but can be a big distraction - and become a very dangerous situation in certain workplaces! For example, employees who operate heavy machinery, drive forklifts, or work in crane areas should never use cell phones while working, since it could create a safety hazard.

The cell phone diverts and makes people less concentrated. This can be FATAL in our plants. At the beginning of 2018 we had within 20 days 2 serious accidents at Aperam due to mobile phones.

The feed-back from our services centers showed us that it is really difficult to get the situation under control with a simple prohibition to use the phone during work hours. This is normal human behavior. As soon as the phone vibrates, you want to look at it. We needed a geographical separation between the private phone and his owner during the work hours. The ban on using personal devices in production

areas is not new by Aperam, but we wanted to go further and implement the ban on having a personal cell phones on oneself during working hours in those dangerous areas.

Action

We divided our actions in 4 stages: Discovering, Concept, Roll out and Monitoring. During the **Discovering stage** we collected information and gave first information about this project: Through an internal survey we checked the actual situation on our sites and asked the site managers their opinion about the prohibition project of wearing private mobile phones for the blue collars. We collected their comments and questions, took them into consideration and answered questions that arose. The local legal aspects were checked by each site.

We sensibilized the workers on the risk of "mobile phones" through information, discussions and workshops. We started an internal communication campaign on this project with articles in the company wide newsletter.

After the Discovering stage followed the **Concept**

stage: We established the rules on the use of cell phones and gave guidance to the sites for the deployment of this project.

Local project managers and local technical support managers were designated, the local unions and/or works councils involved.

With their support the needs of technical and organisational solution, like lockers and company phones, alerting system in case of emergency in the family, dedicated safe cell phone usage areas... should be evaluated and organised. Especially providing the lockers made a real difference. They were equipped with chargers and highly visible in the plants, thus giving an additional incentive to put the phones there.

Company tablets and mobile phones have been compared and tested. They are now associated with certain workplaces and not anymore with people, effectively cutting personal use.

With the support of the communication department posters have been created and translated in all Aperam languages.

The **Roll out stage** began.

17 sites, all service centers from Aperam, started in the summer with the concrete implementation

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of this project. Lockers have been installed, safe areas dedicated, tools put at disposal and people instructed.

After 4 months for the implementation we started the **Monitoring stage**.

Outcome

This is what our sites managers say today:

- "It surprised us. Fast deployment, no complaints"
- "It is implemented without any problem and it works"
- "Very good indeed, this action really makes the difference"
- "People increase attention on their tasks. No distraction due to Whatsapp anymore. More productivity, more quality, less human mistakes"
- "Less distracting behaviors on the production. Decreasing conflict situation between workers of old-generation and new-generation."

The outcome of this initiative convinced the Leadership team of Aperam so much that they decided to roll this out company wide, including in the steel plants.