



# Bus Driving – A Job For A Lifetime

Healthiness as a leadership  
objective in a bus company



# Who Is sabtours?

- Upper Austria's largest private bus company (100 busses – 4 locations), est. 1961
- Public line operator in the city of Wels (6.2 mn passengers, 33 busses fueled by biodiesel generated from used cooking oil)
- 6 regional lines, also as subcontractor
- Modern fleet of 23 tour busses
- 20 travel agencies
- Tour operators Kneissl Touristik and sabtours Touristik



# Demographic Development:

- **As an opportunity:** 50+ is the most important target demographic both in leisure bus travel and public bus transportation
- **As a threat:** There will be a shortfall in supply of bus drivers in the labour market



# Why A Supply Shortfall?

- Since 2009 legally required multi-module follow-up training for professional (bus) drivers
- In which driver has to invest money & free time
- Failure to complete training results in loss of bus driver's license
- (Retired) stand-in drivers will not go to such lengths → **shortfall especially during peak season**



# Special Demands on Drivers:

- Rising customer pressures and demands
- Increasing traffic
- Time table fulfilment
- Responsibility for the passengers
- Responsibility for the bus
- Technical demands rising
- Stress factors (e.g. blocked bus stops, noise, aggressive passengers, etc.)
- Little family time
- ...



## Further Factors:

- Gradual raising of the retirement age to 65 years in Austria
- Before: Retirement at 58
- Statistics show on average longer sick leaves for this age group
- Decreasing birth rates

# Urgent Need for Action!

2007 age structure analysis:

- 42% are 50+
- 11 % are < 30 years



# What We Know:

Healthy and motivated employees are indispensable for our ability to compete and succeed!





## It all started in 2007:

All our efforts that followed were combined into a project called



("Bus driving – a job for a lifetime")



# What do we want to achieve?

## We want ...

- ... the best employees!
- ... our employees to stay healthy for longer in their lives
- ... to enable our employees to remain in the workforce for longer – *and enjoy it!*
- ... to make sabtours an even more attractive place of work
- ... to constantly improve working conditions at sabtours
- ... our employees to be as healthy as possible at the time of retirement



# How are we going to achieve this?

- Managers play the key role
- Provide healthcare
- Provide opportunities for training and development
- Enable change of job/job rotation
- Adapt work conditions if needed
- Account for changes in physical ability and productivity
- Promote mutual understanding



# What are our “tools“?

- „**Gesunde Dialoge**“ (“Healthy Dialogues“)
- **Cautious conversation** with employees whose health is perceived to be at risk, discussing with them ways and means that enable them to better cope with their work
- **Seminars** related to real-life examples for employees in leadership positions
- **Coaching** for employees in leadership positions



**At the core:  
„Gesunde Dialoge“ (“Healthy Dialogues”)**

2007: 120 employees – 83 %

2009: 145 employees – 90 %

2011: 183 employees – 92 %



# “Communicate healthily“:

- Between employee and immediate superior
- Duration: 30-60 minutes
- Standardized questionnaire
- Strengths: What is going well?
- Weaknesses: What stresses you?
- Criticism is allowed!



# Milestones:

- Founding of a steering committee 2007
- Anonymous employee survey (OÖGKK\*) 2007+2009
- Seminars for employees in leadership positions 2007+2009
- Bi-annual “Healthy Dialogues“
- Conversations about how to cope with work with employees whose health is perceived to be at risk
- Coaching for leaders
- “Drawing conclusions“ workshop
- Deduction of appropriate measures
- Evaluation meeting
- Ongoing PR work

\*OÖGKK = Upper Austrian Regional Health Insurer



# Cost and effort:

- Approx. 45 minutes per employee-superior conversation
- Approx. 10 workshops of the steering committee
- The resulting measures cost time and money
- External cost (e.g. consulting, therapy projects, etc.)
- Organisational effort
- Creativity



# Result:

- **List of strengths and weaknesses**
- **Action plan workshop**  
(Development of an action plan → strengthen strengths, reduce weaknesses)
- **Implemented measures** (new duty roster systems for line buses and coaches , one team leader per line, complaint management)
- **Individual support for the employee to enable them to better cope with their work**



# Involved parties:

- Industrial psychologist Mag. Brigitta Gruber ([www.arbeitsleben.at](http://www.arbeitsleben.at))
- OÖGKK (Upper Austrian Regional Health Insurer)
- Fund “Healthy Austria“ (Sponsor)
- Prof. Wolf R. Böhnisch (JKU Linz)
- Internal project leader
- Management and employees

# Sponsorship:

- Fonds Gesundes Österreich (Fund “Healthy Austria“)
- OÖGKK (Upper Austrian Regional Health Insurer)
- Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (NestorGold pilot project)



# Measures (examples):

- Age sensitive duty roster design
- Introduced protection device for bus driver's seat
- Developed new training standards
- New complaint management
- Special work clothes for evening shift
- Communicators (team spokesperson)
- Driver's handbook
- Training & development offerings for professional bus drivers
- Special seats and gearshift lever for drivers with impaired health
- Physiotherapy as a preventive measure



# Positive effects:

- Overall satisfaction: 46%►52%
- Satisfaction with working hours: 78%►83%
- Compatibility of family and career: 67%►72%
- **Plus: Since the introduction of the “Healthy dialogues“ communication in the company has improved overall!**



# Praise and recognition:

- „Model of good practice“
- „Best of Wirtschaft“
- Seal of quality BGF
- Upper Austrian Health Award (nominee)
- Lower Austrian Health Award (nominee)
- NestorGold-seal of quality
- Network „Growing older – having a future“
- Member qualification alliance (Region Wels)
- Member network „Knowledge management“



# Looking ahead:

- Bi-annual „Healthy dialogue“
- Max. 35 talks per executive
- Building on our experiences in creating our „Visions 2015“
- Definition of corporate goals and communicating them more strongly to our employees
- Promote personal responsibility



**Thank you for your attention!**

