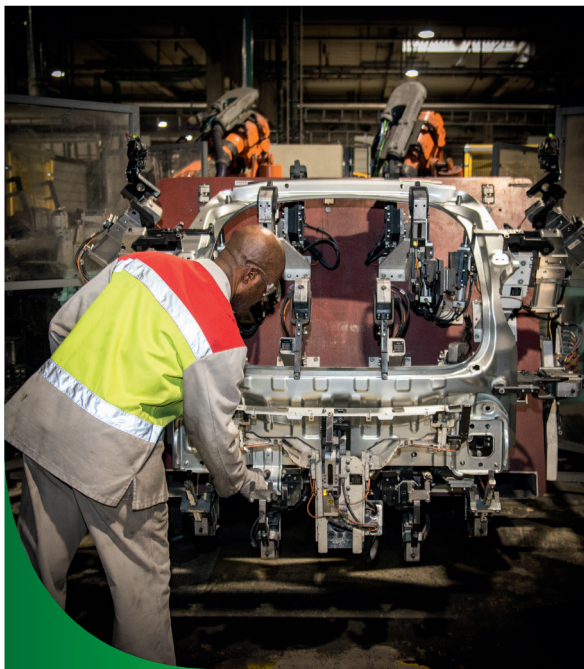


TOWER AUTOMOTIVE Belgium and Mensura awarded for unique reintegration programme

Tower Automotive Belgium is one of the largest players in the automotive industry. The company's plant in Ghent manufactures parts for Volvo, among other brands. Tower Automotive's top priority is the health and safety of its workers. With Mensura's help, the company aims to reduce ergonomic stress, maximise safety at work, and successfully reintegrate workers on long-term sick leave.



"Mensura is a flexible partner: they take a personal approach and handle every case with the care and attention it deserves. A perfect example is the progressive reintegration of MS sufferer Martine."

Veerle Van Kerckhove,
HR Professional at Tower Automotive

Challenges

- > prevent ergonomic stress caused by repetitive manual labour;
- > maximise occupational safety, from welding operations to assembly lines;
- > successfully reintegrate long-term absentees.

Solutions

- > well-thought-out ergonomic changes and safety measures specifically designed for the automotive industry;
- > progressive reintegration options in line with the abilities of the employee.

Advantages

- > effective prevention of musculoskeletal injuries caused by manual tasks;
- > solutions that increase occupational safety and create more awareness;
- > case study: the successful reintegration of MS sufferer Martine, who was so pleased with her employer's efforts that she nominated Tower Automotive for the MS@WORK AWARDS 2017.



Veerle Van Kerckhove, HR Professional at Tower Automotive

As a manufacturer and supplier of automotive parts, Tower Automotive focuses heavily on the safety and well-being of its workers. “There are many risk factors associated with what we do”, says Veerle Van Kerckhove, HR Professional at Tower Automotive Belgium. “Day-to-day tasks include welding, lifting heavy loads, continuous repetitive motions, etc. With Mensura’s help, we aim to eliminate, or at least minimise, all hazards.”

Minimising risks

Tower Automotive aims to prevent ergonomic injuries by making changes where needed. “These changes are often small, but they can make a big difference to those employees who need it the most”, says Hanne Kenis, expert in ergonomics and employee reintegration at Mensura. “Workstations and equipment can often be set up differently and better. Job rotation is equally important, as it prevents exposure to continuous, repetitive motions that may lead to injuries.”

Tower Automotive also adheres to the highest occupational safety standards. Veerle: “All workers at our welding facility wear safety footwear, safety gloves and safety goggles. We also implement a series of mitigating measures to reduce error and injury potential. One example is the installation of safety locks to prevent access to certain areas while machines are in full operation.”

Maximising attendance

When employees do end up on long-term sick leave, Tower Automotive examines all options for a progressive reintegration. “This is when Mensura helps us assess all aspects of workplace adjustments”, Veerle continues. “We will look at reducing work hours and introduce changes to the specific tasks for that person. We also discuss these reintegration options with the employee in question, the occupational health physician and the shift leader.”

Reintegration case study: Martine’s story

Some reintegration programmes bring extra challenges. “This was definitely the case for Martine, who was diagnosed with MS in 2013”, Hanne explains. “But even for those with a chronic illness, a successful reintegration in the workplace is possible. The first step was listing the exact job duties Martine held prior to going on sick leave, and deciding which of those tasks she would still be able to perform upon her return. We then developed a reintegration plan together with the occupational health physician. This plan included changes to Martine’s workstation, a gradual increase in working hours and physical workload, and internal coaching.”

“Other measures included a taller workstation chair for Martine, a relocation to a less physically demanding department, and more flexible working hours”, Veerle adds. “When she returned to work, we started monitoring how she was coping. First, we did this on a weekly basis, and then less and less frequently as time went by. Martine is now working the equivalent of 3 days a week.”

Efforts awarded

Martine showed her gratitude by nominating her employer for the MS@WORK AWARDS 2017. And Tower Automotive won! “This just reconfirms our commitment to the reintegration of employees who are not yet fully recovered upon their return”, Veerle says. “Since Martine’s case, we also successfully reintegrated an employee who was recovering from breast cancer. It is important to keep expectations realistic. The focus should be on healing, not on performance. This approach is working for us.”

Feeling inspired?

Mensura can assist you with developing and rolling out prevention measures and reintegration programmes for your organisation. Visit www.mensura.be or contact us on +32 2 549 71 00.