

# Healthy employees, less absenteeism: the goal shared by **WILMS** and Mensura

**W**ilms has been designing and manufacturing shutters, sunblinds and ventilation systems since 1975. Located in Kempen, Wilms is based on a vertical integration model. It takes care of the entire production process, from design to manufacturing and transport. "This ensures we can deliver comfort to our customers. But the comfort of our 160 employees is just as important," says HR manager Tina Ermgodts.



*"Our prevention policy created a knock-on effect: more and more employees come up with their own proposals."*

Tina Ermgodts, HR Manager at Wilms

## Challenges

- Ensuring mental and physical health in the workplace;
- Reduce absenteeism structurally.

## Solutions

- Workshops and training that promote the mental and physical well-being of employees;
- Introductory session to launch an absenteeism policy.

## Advantages

- Experiences and insights about mental and physical well-being are shared;
- A boost in the engagement of employees;
- Managers and supervisors receive the necessary tools to tackle absenteeism.



*Tina Ermgodts, HR Manager at Wilms*

Wilms embarked on an ambitious prevention policy four years ago. Tina: “Our occupational physician gave the impetus and advised us to reduce health surveillance from annually to every three years. Although such a medical examination exposes the problems, we mainly want to act proactively. Since then, we have invested the allocated budget in a comprehensive prevention policy that we have dubbed ‘Wilms Gezond’ (Wilms Healthy).”

## Keeping specific tasks into account

Wilms consulted Mensura to make sure it could develop its prevention policy at once. Tina: “They provided insight into the different ways in which we can promote the health of our 160 employees.”

Some initiatives, such as the training given by two burn-out specialists, are useful for all employees, but the company also sets up targeted campaigns. Tina: “There are very diverse profiles here: from production workers to administrative employees. These very varied roles come with their own health risks. When upskilling employees with a first aid certificate to become a back coach, Mensura took this into account. The back coaches now give their colleagues ergonomic tips. This way everyone reaps the benefits of the training.”

## A positive impact in the workplace

‘Wilms Gezond’ clearly had the anticipated impact. Tina: “We are seeing a real knock-on effect: people respond with their own proposals. For example, the installation of a new coffee machine was prompted by a spontaneous demand for substituting sugared beverages with healthy variants.”

That is why we continue to take into account the possible health consequences for every decision. When purchasing new safety shoes, for example, we looked for customised footwear instead of giving everyone a standard model. Incorporating the health impact into our policy has really become a reflex. We can always count on the expertise of Mensura to do that.”

## Understanding the cause of absenteeism

At the start of 2018, Wilms also decided to include actions against absenteeism in the prevention policy. “In truth, prevention without a proper policy on presence remains inadequate if the goal is to reduce absenteeism,” says Heidi Mermans, prevention expert in psychosocial aspects at Mensura.

However, reducing absenteeism figures is not an end in itself for Wilms. Tina: “Our philosophy is not about focusing on percentages. Quite the opposite: we look at the employees behind those numbers. Why do they take sick leaves? And how can we prevent that? To keep them mentally and physically fit, such is the underlying intent of our policy.”

## Lay down rules for absenteeism

Wilms, together with Mensura, is defining the absenteeism policy step by step. Heidi: “The first stage consists in identifying the type of absenteeism and its possible causes, such as a high workload or the corporate culture. These elements were discussed during an introductory session, and we provided tools for conducting absenteeism interviews.”

The session provided Wilms with the elements to start drawing up absenteeism procedures in 2019. Tina: “These clear rules constitute a guide on absenteeism for managers and employees alike. An information campaign will follow at the end of 2019 and we will roll out the procedures in 2020.”

## Comprehensive approach to absenteeism

In every stage, Wilms does more than just focus on preventing absenteeism. The do’s and don’ts during an employee’s absence are also covered, as well as the procedure for his or her work resumption when no longer incapacitated. Tina: “We can rely on Mensura for all these aspects. We can count on an experienced partner who, together with us, does its utmost to ensure our employees are physically and mentally fit.”