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THE BANKNOTE INDUSTRY
AND CHANGED THE WAY
ORELL FÜSSLI LTD. SECURITY
PRINTING APPROACHED
ITS ORIGINAL VISION
FOR FUTURE TRENDS.



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The stubborn inventiveness of counterfeiters has traditionally been the agent of change in the banknote industry. In the past year however, change was driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, compelling this industry to implement new processes. Orell Füssli Ltd. Security Printing (OFS) had to adapt quickly to meet increased demand whilst ensuring the safety of its employees. This is their COVID-19 story.

Industrial players in general have been facing new challenges since the outbreak of the pandemic. OFS has also been weathering the storm in the face of a sudden increase in demand for banknotes, in combination with lockdown measures impacting the availability of staff, materials, and other essentials. The Zurich-based firm managed to provide their clients with an uninterrupted flow of banknotes, on time. There was no recourse to Force Majeure.

Production planning, procurement, IT and HR, in a show of Swiss efficiency, implemented contingency plans to increase raw material supply, manage physical distancing at the workplace, and provide new tools and technologies to employees working from home.

COVID-19 TASK FORCE

A taskforce was implemented at the outbreak of the pandemic, and continues to monitor the situation on a daily basis. Led by the Group CEO Daniel Link, members come from top management, security and safety, HR, production and liaise regularly with cantonal authorities including security and medical consultants. The taskforce has a clear and simple dual mandate: employee safety and business continuity.

The COVID task force follows four key principles:

1. EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION TAKING

The epidemiological data in Switzerland and in neighbouring countries, from where many employees commute, is regularly analysed with ad-hoc experts.



New COVID regulations are reviewed and translated into pragmatic actions at the workplace. In certain instances, internal rules have superseded those required by law. The wearing of masks, for example, was mandatory on OFS premises before it became compulsory in Switzerland.

2. REINFORCED COMMUNICATION

A direct channel of communication was opened up between employees and the taskforce, superseding traditional direct hierarchical lines. All COVID related queries were channelled through the taskforce and were dealt with on a priority basis, however benign the query. Communication with suppliers, including transport companies and forwarding agents, was reinforced. An open exchange with suppliers has been essential to reserving slots in the highly disrupted global transportation system.



BCM know-how, and this bore fruit with the successful management of production and distribution during the height of the pandemic.

4. EMPLOYEE SUPPORT AND SAFETY

As strict confinement measures kicked in, everyone felt the impact in their daily lives, whether at home or at their workplaces. OFS did their best to alleviate some of the burdens by providing masks and hand sanitizers, at the very beginning of the epidemic when these items were hard to come by. Physical distancing was made possible in the tight confines of the historic building in Zurich thanks to the space freed up by colleagues ordered to work from home.

Are these measures temporary or will they outlive the pandemic? Meals have been served in the staff canteen, free of charge. The direct communication channel to the task force has offered an outlet to anxious staff who are able to seek prompt support and solutions. Working remotely was enforced whenever possible together with flexible work hours to help parents cope with closed schools. Teleconferencing tools were swiftly provided to staff working remotely.

"We took the right measures very early on and we were able to minimize risks for employees" says Michael Kasch, about how OFS handled the special situation. "Additionally, I must say that all our employees have been very consistent in implementing the measures in the offices and in our production."

Employees belonging to a risk group have either been reassigned to positions

3. BUSINESS CONTINUITY

After decades of painstakingly mapping risks and updating contingency plans to evolving technologies and know-how, the team at OFS felt vindicated when the firm continued running smoothly throughout the epidemic. "We had not anticipated the pandemic as such" says Michael Kasch, the Managing Director of the Orell Füssli security printing division "but we did have contingency plans for a sudden shortage of staff, or unplanned road blocks."

Business Continuity Management (BCM) is a core principle at OFS. Since almost half a decade, OFS has been refining its

enabling them to work remotely, or have been provided with specific protective equipment. Whenever a contact case has been reported, however remote the risk, preventive quarantine measures have been enforced. These stringent rules have so far contained cross-contamination at the workplace.

LOOKING FORWARD TO A DIFFERENT FUTURE

Remote work is still the norm at OFS however, and will continue to be so for several months until it is deemed safe for employees to return to the office. "Virtual meetings have become a normality but can never replace physical events and face-to-face contact especially with our clients" says Michael Kasch.

On a more positive note, times of crisis create new initiatives. "The pandemic has accelerated the rollout of digital transformation" according to Michael Kasch. "We will introduce tools using virtual reality and artificial intelligence earlier than initially planned. Virtual visits of OFS premises and production facilities, using VR goggles, could soon become a reality."

LESSONS LEARNED

As the pandemic wreaked havoc within supply chains, leaving many companies at a near standstill, OFS ramped up production and filled new orders on time. "Business contingency plans simply kicked-in" confirmed Michael Kasch. "We have spent considerable resources over the years assessing risks and mitigating them



through these plans. We ask our suppliers to comply with our strict rules. It means extra security stock of raw materials. It means secure storing of printing materials in vaults. It is all about reserved, spare production capacity. We pay a premium to transporters for priority shipments. It all comes at a cost. But we have a responsibility in times of crisis. We are after all the main supplier of banknotes to major Central Banks."

Put to the acid test and based on their performance so far, it does seem that OFS knows a thing or two about prioritising

Business Contingency Management and employee safety. This does not detract from OFS's core mandate: that the security of the printed product will always remain at the centre of everything.

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