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By Zain Idris
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In recent years, digitization has become a powerful tool to enhance and transform a firm's EHS capabilities. Safety management, for example, is a key component of EHS, with the digitization of safety processes allowing for the use of less paper, leveraging occupational risk identification and serving to improve working conditions. This report focuses on how Danone, a global food and beverage firm, adopted software provider VelocityEHS's control of work solution to improve its safety management and permitting processes. The digital platform, with its permit to work processes, and contractor and visitor management capabilities, helped Danone to screen, train and approve third parties working on Danone sites. EHS executives should use this report to understand how technology can streamline safety management, thus reducing the risk of workplace accidents.

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Organizations mentioned

Danone, Google, GSK, Nestlé, VelocityEHS.

Danone Leveraged VelocityEHS's Control Of Work Solution To Digitize Its Essential Permit To Work Process

Within corporate EHS programmes, the control of work process is pivotal to maintaining safety among workers operating in high-risk environments. This practice of safety management ensures that workers do not undertake hazardous tasks until the relevant personnel have both reviewed and authorized them. This is key when workers carry out dangerous tasks, or when a contractor is hired to work on site.

Today, many firms are looking to leverage comprehensive EHS software solutions to digitize their previously manual control of work processes. Control of work software solutions amalgamate permits to work, hazard and risk assessment, and isolation management. Permits to work are documents verifying that an employee has the necessary qualifications to complete a specific task. Control of work software digitizes permits to work, allowing firms to benefit both from managing real-time risk and from accelerating the process of signing off jobs.

This report analyses how Danone, a French food and beverage firm with more than 100,000 employees, and with products sold in 120 markets, implemented VelocityEHS's control of work solution to digitize its permit to work process.

Time-Consuming Compliance Management Drove Danone To Find A Digital Solution For Its Permit To Work Process

In 2020, Danone's site in Macroom, Ireland was selected to participate in the DaMaWay (Danone Management Way) programme. This involved the standardization of key principles relating to zoning, SIM (daily performance reviews), problem-solving and continuous improvement. A key goal of the digitization process was for the site to become 100% paperless, with the digitizing of permits to work an important part of this. Danone was driven to digitize its processes as:

- **Printed permits are environmentally unfriendly, using large amounts of paper.**
  Before Danone implemented VelocityEHS's control of work solution, workers needed to print permits and store these in filing cabinets. Since Q2 2020, Danone has issued approximately 9,200 permits. Under the previous system, this would have used a large amount of paper, which is environmentally unfriendly and fails to comply with the firm's goals for sustainable development. The digitization process thus aligns with the role of the EHS function in promoting sustainability, as observed in the latest Verdantix survey of 301 global EHS decision-makers (see Verdantix Global Corporate Survey 2022: EHS Budgets, Priorities And Tech Preferences).

- **Excessive numbers of printed permits extend administration time for auditors.**
  After printing these permits, Danone previously needed to allocate time to file them. Not only was this task monotonous, it was also inefficient for auditors, who were required to spend a large proportion of their administration time trawling through filing cabinets to find the correct permits. Implementing a digital system streamlined this process, allowing auditors to access the correct permit at the touch of a button. This reduces their administration time and lessens required resources, creating a more efficient workflow and freeing up more time for implementing safety improvements.

- **Inadequate permit processes can lead to increased workplace risk.**
  Inadequate permit to work systems contribute to workplace accidents, as systems that are not comprehensive make it difficult to track the safety credentials of those on site. If workers have not acquired the relevant training, they may fail to complete the necessary safety procedures and may not be aware of any mechanical or operational changes made to the process. This exposes workers to risk which, if not mitigated, could result in fatal accidents. By deploying a new system, Danone will be able to smoothly manage on-site activity, ensuring that everyone present has completed the required training and has an awareness of any changes to processes, ultimately reducing the risk of injury.

Comprehensive Pre-Planning And Implementation Preparation Ensured A Smooth Transition To A Digital Process

With such a major transformation, it is easy for mistakes to occur and for anxiety to creep in, as employees lack the required training and do not feel comfortable with a new system. To prevent this, Danone devised a comprehensive strategy to ensure a smooth transition to the control of work solution, ensuring that employees familiarized themselves with the new system and were able to operate it. The key components of this strategy were:

- **Assigning required training material and resources to all permit users.**
  To ensure success with the implementation of the control of work solution, Danone offered training to all permit users on site. These sessions equipped employees with the skills needed to operate the software comfortably. Danone thus minimized the chance of problems and backlogs arising when the software went live. Employees were also issued with tablets and mobile devices, enabling them to access all functions across the control of work system, including the permit to work functionality.

- **Delivering interactive workshops to establish best practices.**
  The VelocityEHS customer success team conducted interactive workshops with Danone's internal users. Not only were these more engaging than a training video, they provided Danone employees with the opportunity to collaborate with experts from VelocityEHS, asking them questions and clarifying queries that the training videos had failed to answer. This allowed Danone to leverage VelocityEHS's broad knowledge of rolling out control of work systems in firms as diverse and complex as Google, GSK and Nestlé. The process maintained engagement between both parties and served to establish best practices, which in turn led to better uptake and a successful deployment.

- **Engaging consistently with the VelocityEHS team throughout project implementation.**
  Consistent engagement throughout the project resulted in a solid working relationship between Danone and VelocityEHS. This ensured that both parties were aware of project progression, of what and when the upcoming deadlines were, and of any issues that Danone users faced. VelocityEHS had sufficient time to implement solutions to problems, preventing the launch date from being pushed back and avoiding excessive problems arising on release. Ultimately, this ensured that the project was completed efficiently and effectively.

Digital Permitting Has Led To Increased Visibility Into Danone's Overall Risk Profile

Control of work software is an aspect of broader EHS risk management, which analyses an environment critically, highlighting potential dangers and implementing corresponding controls to prevent incidents from occurring. In Danone's case, leveraging VelocityEHS's control of work software to update its permit to work approach enhanced its current risk profile. Danone is now in a healthier position in terms of avoiding workplace accidents. Positive impacts of the project are evident in the way in which Danone has:

- **Achieved the 4Cs of safety: communication, cooperation, control and competence.**
  The control of work solution has established communication between permit approvers and creators and the workforce through a control of work map. This feature, which can be accessed by all users, provides visibility on any planned work in a specific timeframe, reducing the chance of conflicts in planning. Cooperation has been evident from the increase in input from shareholders when creating permits. Site maps also provide control, giving advance notice to those attending a site and to the contractor. This transparency allows Danone to be sure that those present have acquired the correct safety qualifications. Inductions can be scheduled, tracked and refreshed when necessary through the contractor portal. The combination of these components minimizes the risk of accidents occurring.

- **Improved functionality and efficiency to generate a more streamlined system.**
  With a digital system in place, the permit to work process is now far more efficient. User adoption is at 100%, as permit approvers and raisers are added and are active on the system. This reduces the opportunity for miscommunication between parties, decreasing the likelihood of an underqualified contractor attending the site. Furthermore, the clear and user-friendly layout of the system has benefitted Danone employees, allowing them to achieve a higher success rate in closing permits within the desired timeframe.

- **Focused attention on safe work conditions, reflecting an enhanced safety culture.**
  Implementing this solution has improved Danone's attention to safe working conditions. The mandatory field of requirements when issuing a permit reiterates the focus on compliance. Whereas in the previous system, problems with permits may have been missed through human error, the control of work solution allows operatives to recognise concerns and act upon these effectively. Thus the streamlined system reduces workplace accidents and helps achieve a more sustainable working environment.

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Contact

Verdantix Ltd, 18 Hatfields, London
SE1 8DJ, United Kingdom

contact@verdantix.com
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