

Sonae Sierra

SAFETY CULTURE DEVELOPMENT IS A SOCIAL COMMITMENT

Shopping centre specialist Sonae Sierra uses DuPont to protect stakeholders including millions of shoppers worldwide.



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**— Pedro Soveral Rodrigues,
Head of Safety and Health at Sonae Sierra**

Challenge

With 48 shopping centres in Europe and Brazil, 17 sites currently in development and 13 new projects in different phases of completion*, Sonae Sierra is one of the fastest growing international shopping centre specialists. No serious accident has occurred in the company but considering the strong integration of shopping centres within local communities, Sonae Sierra's central belief is that it is their responsibility to protect their wide cross-section of stakeholders which include staff, shop tenants, service suppliers, contractors and visitors.

In 2004, when the company started working with DuPont, Sonae Sierra was fully committed to a sustainable development business model, but there was no safety culture or safety management system in place. The constant opening of new shopping centres, with hundreds of new people joining the Sonae Sierra community every year, made it even more crucial to have a proper safety organisation.

“We feel it is our duty to be a responsible member of the society in which we operate,” Pedro Soveral Rodrigues, Head of Safety and Health at Sonae Sierra, says. “Our top management was very impressed with the DuPont approach and we were convinced we needed to implement a culture of anticipation to prevent accidents, both at construction and at operational levels, as well as integrate the culture into each individual's attitude. This would contribute to improving our social responsibility and business performance,” he adds.

Solution

Based on an assessment of the situation, DuPont recommended an integrated safety and health management system and the development and implementation of innovative safety management tools across all levels of the company. DuPont designed and developed a fully customised safety and health programme, named *Personæ* after ‘per Sonae’ (for Sonae) and ‘Personæ’ (Latin for people), which within four years touched more than 70,000 people, including staff, shop tenants, service suppliers, contractors and millions of visitors, across the various Sonae Sierra sites in Europe and Brazil.

Results

Using an achievement indicator to measure the extent to which the company has succeeded in accomplishing its internal safety and health targets, Sonae Sierra calculated that, between June 2005 and April 2007, the number of hours of SPO performed across all sites rose from 56 to 1016, a 1,700 per cent increase. By the end of 2007, and with the help of these observations, the *Personæ* core team had registered a 51 per cent reduction of non-conformances per hour since the beginning of the project across a sample of nine reference sites. The company also discovered that the number of Lost Workdays per worker, which is the number of days of absence per worker following an incident, had dropped by 62 per cent since 2005.



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A Customised Global Safety System

According to the DuPont team, at the start of the project, safety at Sonae Sierra was limited to a few emergency procedures and was the sole responsibility of one safety professional within the entire organisation. DuPont consultants suggested setting up a global safety and health management system supported by a safety and health network which reports directly to the Sonae Sierra CEO. This network is led by a central committee – which decides on the safety and health strategy and targets for the organisation – and a safety and health office. It also relies on the work of five permanent sub-committees, each dedicated to a specific area of safety and health management that propose action plans to achieve these targets and standardise good practices across the company.

In cooperation with Sonae Sierra's management, DuPont also designed and implemented a wide variety of safety tools ranging from safety meetings to training, such as Safety Preventive Observations (SPO), a form of behavioural audit that records the number of non-conformances – unsafe behaviours – made per hour in relation to safety and health. DuPont consultants coached Sonae Sierra's management at all levels – site, regional and global – on how to implement safety procedures and develop a culture of safety awareness that would spread through the whole organisation.

Collaborating with Shopping Centre Teams and Tenants

Antonio Manuel Bettencourt, manager of the Centro Colombo, a shopping centre in Lisbon, explains, "Emergency practice drills, incident reporting and investigation and safety alerts are now part of our everyday routine. The biggest difficulty was to make shop tenants and their staff aware of the importance of safety in an environment which is not seen as fundamentally risky. All shop tenants and service suppliers were trained to identify lapses in their proceedings and behavioural attitudes and they are now starting to integrate a culture of anticipation in order to prevent accidents. In 2007 Sonae Sierra started its own Safety and Health award programme which falls into two categories: 'Best shopping centre team' award and 'Best tenant' award. These awards have been a huge success and really contribute to boosting tenants' commitment to safety."

Jair Marreta, manager of the Pernambucanas department store at Parque D. Pedro shopping centre in Campinas, Brazil, spends over 30 minutes each day on safety inspections, training and meetings. He is extremely proud to manage a store that offers such a safe environment for employees and shoppers alike. Although he does not know of

DuPont firsthand, he sees the results. He says, "The Pernambucanas group owns over 250 department stores in Brazil. I regularly visit other stores in the region and I must say that Sonae Sierra sites are by far the safest shopping centres I have ever come across."



Public Recognition Confirms Good Safety Results

Sonae Sierra has been recognised internationally with a number of awards for the high safety and health standards and practices it has achieved. In 2006 the Personæ programme won the first prize in the Corporate Social Responsibility category of the prestigious ECO Awards, presented annually in Brazil by the American Chamber of Commerce.

Personæ also won the 2007 DuPont Safety Award in the category of Visible Management Commitment. According to DuPont, an independent jury congratulated Sonae Sierra on its efforts towards the dissemination of a safety culture among all its stakeholders, and recognised the very positive impact of this project on society's sustainable development.

Pedro Soveral Rodrigues, Sonae Sierra's Head of Safety and Health, is also very positive about the results. "Personæ is creating a genuine cultural change that is propagating across all the company's operations. Our objective now is not only to achieve zero incidents on all our sites, but also to make the entire shopping centre community aware of the importance of safety, in particular the millions of people that visit our shopping centres worldwide," he concludes.

Sonae Sierra is the international shopping centre specialist that is passionate about bringing innovation and excitement to the shopping and leisure industry. Incorporated in Portugal in 1989, it is owned by Sonae, SGPS (Portugal) with 50% and Grosvenor (United Kingdom) with 50%. The company owns 48 shopping centres in Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany, Greece, Romania and Brazil, with a Gross Lettable Area (GLA) of more than 1.9 million sq metres*. Sonae Sierra's business model is based on the integration of the three main components of its business: ownership, development and property management.

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