

# Physiotherapy programme to prevent strain injuries at work and to deliver measurable change across partner companies

COMMENDED

Toyota Material Handling

Belgium

[www.toyota-forklifts.eu](http://www.toyota-forklifts.eu)



## The issue

Across Europe, Toyota Material Handling employs over 4,500 mobile technicians — approximately 50% of the workforce – to service its customers' material handling equipment. Engaging with the Healthy Workplaces for All Ages Campaign, and consulting stakeholders, the company identified an ageing workforce as a material issue on which stakeholders expect transparency. Following a recent survey, Toyota Material Handling recognised that 15 % of its workforce in Europe is over 50 years old. In the company' factories, automation has eliminated heavy lifting. However, for mobile technicians working on trucks at customers' sites, it is not possible to automate manual handling operations to the same extent. Toyota Material Handling recognised that overstrain is the main cause of injuries among service technicians.

## Action taken

With increasing retirement ages, the company understood that it needs to reinforce measures to help all employees adopt healthy working practices in order to retain its highly skilled and experienced workforce. Toyota Material Handling took action to prevent strain injuries at work: following an in-depth analysis of accident data, as well as consultations with service technicians, poor manual handling practices were identified as the primary cause of injuries; therefore, the company developed a physiotherapy programme.

The first stage focused only on service technicians who had suffered an injury through overstrain. The external physiotherapist delivered an introductory training session combining theory and practical exercises. This was recorded and shared on the internal e-learning tool, where it was accessible to everyone in the company. Following





its success with workers who had been injured, the programme was then rolled out to all employees, with a refresher course delivered to recipients 3 years after their initial training.

With the support of this business case, other Toyota entities, in the Czech Republic, France, Italy and Sweden, have since renewed or initiated similar physiotherapy programmes. This business case was also shared externally through EU-OSHA's good practice exchange events, organised by Toyota Material Handling and fellow official campaign partners Seat, Siemens and Lego across the EU.

## Results achieved

- In the last 2 years, accidents through overstrain have more than halved.
- The proportion of employees who took leave of absence as a result of an accident decreased from 20 % in 2006 to 5 % in 2014.
- Since undergoing treatment with the physiotherapist, none of the employees who experienced overstrain injuries has experienced a similar injury.
- The absenteeism costs avoided are equal to four times the investment cost of 337 physiotherapy sessions. This has also led to a reduction in the company's insurance premiums.
- Savings are reinvested in health and safety measures for employees in Spain. Being struck by an object was identified as the second most significant cause of accidents; the company is now analysing and improving the tools and equipment handled by its mobile service technicians.

*Conversations with service technicians helped to identify poor manual handling practices as the primary cause of injuries.*