



Company social services go online **Bosch expands its health services for associates**

June 9, 2017

PI 9680 RB MK/KB

- ▶ First large company to offer online social services for associates
- ▶ Simple and anonymous access to expert help
- ▶ Chief personnel officer Christoph Kübel: "The company social services support associates who are in challenging situations."

Stuttgart, Germany – Bosch is the first large company in Germany to offer its associates online access to company social services, starting this year. The services support associates in all their personal and professional issues. According to a study carried out in 2016 by BKK Dachverband e. V., absences due to stress-related conditions more than doubled between 2005 and 2015 in Germany. "Our company social services can contribute to maintaining our associates' health and wellbeing," says Christoph Kübel, member of the board of management and director of industrial relations at Robert Bosch GmbH. "Caring for family members, raising children, or expecting too much of yourself – challenging situations can arise at home or at work. Our online service now offers associates even more straightforward support." Bosch views the online social services platform as another contribution to improving work-life balance. Thanks to a dedicated web page, more than 100,000 associates in Germany are able to contact the qualified counselors at the company social services directly anytime and, at their request, anonymously. Bosch was one of the first companies in Germany to introduce in-house social services in 1917.

Online social services lowers inhibition levels

The counselors support and advise associates in private face-to-face consultations, by phone, and in group discussions. What makes the new online service special is the ease of access for associates who are looking for guidance. They can use the service anywhere at any time, including via smartphone and at home on their private computer. "The issues that our colleagues approach us with are often very personal and sensitive. They include matters like mental

health and stress management, but also coping with crises. With our online service, we can now also reach associates who have so far been unable to use our services before due to fear or shame,” says Michaela Noe-Bertram, head of social services at Bosch. As is the case with face-to-face consultations, all communication is subject to confidentiality. In addition, associates who use the service do not enter into any obligations. Communication between associates and counselors can happen either asynchronously by email or in real time in individual and/or expert chats. While the individual chats involve only counselors and associates, the expert chats involve several participants communicating with an internal or external expert on a predetermined topic.

Writing has healing effects

Along with easy access, another advantage of the online access is that it is available whenever associates need it. When it comes to advisory services provided by email, the associates can take time to formulate their concerns. They will receive a response within 48 hours. “Even just writing the text has a healing effect on the person,” Noe-Bertram says. That is because in order to convey their concerns, those contacting the service have to listen to themselves. “This allows the person who is seeking advice to find out more about themselves. The written text reflects the person’s inner state of mind.” This was true for Manuel M., who made use of the online social services platform. As he recalls, “I was surprised how freeing it was for me to grapple with my problem and to write it down.” His colleague Julia H. says that “If it weren’t for the online service, I probably wouldn’t have told anyone about my concerns to this day. I just found it uncomfortable to tell anyone about them in person. Today I can also use the face-to-face services.” The counselors are also connected to each other through the online platform. This allows them to exchange their thoughts about individual cases and contribute their own expertise.

Comprehensive preventative health care for associates

Bosch offers a comprehensive health services program for its associates. For example, the company supports associates who have been diagnosed with cancer as part of its “OncoCure” initiative. Associates with a tumor have access to the latest diagnostic tests at the Robert Bosch Krankenhaus, paid for by the company. In 2015, Bosch expanded its in-house health management services to include prevention, rehabilitation, and integration measures for mental health issues. The goal is to pick up on mental health problems at an early stage, raise awareness among associates and executives about them, and to offer integrated support services. As a result, the in-house social services are closely connected to other units like the occupational health service, the in-company health management program, and over 400 cultural, sports, and leisure groups at Bosch.

Press photos: #1-PE-21423, #1-PE-21435

Internet:

Bosch online social services: www.bosch-sozialberatung.info

Preventative health care at Bosch: <http://bit.ly/2sWET4v>

Study by BKK Dachverband e. V. (German only): <http://bit.ly/2hjn4YU>

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The Bosch Group is a leading global supplier of technology and services. It employs roughly 390,000 associates worldwide (as of December 31, 2016). The company generated sales of 73.1 billion euros in 2016. Its operations are divided into four business sectors: Mobility Solutions, Industrial Technology, Consumer Goods, and Energy and Building Technology. As a leading IoT company, Bosch offers innovative solutions for smart homes, smart cities, connected mobility, and connected manufacturing. It uses its expertise in sensor technology, software, and services, as well as its own IoT cloud, to offer its customers connected, cross-domain solutions from a single source. The Bosch Group's strategic objective is to deliver innovations for a connected life. Bosch improves quality of life worldwide with products and services that are innovative and spark enthusiasm. In short, Bosch creates technology that is "Invented for life." The Bosch Group comprises Robert Bosch GmbH and its roughly 440 subsidiaries and regional companies in some 60 countries. Including sales and service partners, Bosch's global manufacturing and sales network covers nearly every country in the world. The basis for the company's future growth is its innovative strength. At 120 locations across the globe, Bosch employs some 59,000 associates in research and development.

The company was set up in Stuttgart in 1886 by Robert Bosch (1861-1942) as "Workshop for Precision Mechanics and Electrical Engineering." The special ownership structure of Robert Bosch GmbH guarantees the entrepreneurial freedom of the Bosch Group, making it possible for the company to plan over the long term and to undertake significant upfront investments in the safeguarding of its future. Ninety-two percent of the share capital of Robert Bosch GmbH is held by Robert Bosch Stiftung GmbH, a charitable foundation. The majority of voting rights are held by Robert Bosch Industrietreuhand KG, an industrial trust. The entrepreneurial ownership functions are carried out by the trust. The remaining shares are held by the Bosch family and by Robert Bosch GmbH.

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