

DIALOGUE AT EYE LEVEL

Adam McCombs and his team are fully committed to meeting all the needs of Interroll's North American customers. He heads the company's regional Center of Excellence in Wilmington, North Carolina. The center produces conveyor rollers, RollerDrive, drum motors, technopolymer injection molded parts and the new conveyor platform, which meets the highest hygiene requirements. We discussed employee collaboration at the Wilmington facility.



Adam McCombs, Managing Director Interroll Corporation Inc., USA

It seems that everyone is only talking about digitalization, automation and robots in manufacturing today. What about people?

Adam McCombs: They play a crucial role. Without them, all our investments, technology and customer relationships would be completely worthless. That's why it's essential to provide the right framework conditions so people can perform their work safely, realize their potential, develop further and increase their value to customers. At Interroll, we ensure that our employees always work under safe conditions and at the same time are able to expand their personal expertise. To put it simply: They should be able to leave the company evenings in the same or even better condition than when they entered.

Aren't the framework conditions you're talking about essentially basic precautionary measures?

Exactly. They include strict compliance with occupational safety and fire protection regulations and regular inspections, for example, by external authorities such as the local fire department. You also need to ensure that employees' first-aid skills are regularly refreshed and that you have a competent response team available at all times. Furthermore, you need effective risk management to deal, for example, with health risks such as the recent Corona pandemic or natural disasters like hurricanes or tornadoes. The challenge is not simply to define basic regulations and ensure their compliance, but to create a working environment in which every individual in the company is aware of these issues, can play an active role and is heard.

How can this be achieved?

Through a corporate culture based on communication, transparency and dialog at eye level. That's why, for example, we have an open-door policy, promote diversity, organize regular meetings in which we encourage an open exchange among ourselves and have a team of safety experts who conduct regular audits and act as direct contacts for all employees. Even minor changes in work processes can have a major impact. For this reason, we strive to analyze and evaluate changes at an early stage. In addition to personal contact, we rely on various digital communication channels.

Such as?

One example are screens that visualize the status and performance of our production and assembly stations. Employees can use the monitors to transmit information independently and improve processes, for instance. In addition, we can reach our staff at any time via digital channels if, for instance, we need to temporarily close a production site for safety reasons because of a storm. In this way, we avoid having employees make dangerous trips to work.

And what about the organization of work?

Our approach is flexible production, call it a "breathing factory." We give employees the opportunity to balance their work and private lives more easily by offering extended weekend hours and hybrid working, for example. We also financially support programs for employees to improve their fitness and provide medical benefits that go far beyond the level required by law such as offering coverage for mental health.

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