

# SAFETY TALK



## 'INTENSIVE BUT WORTHWHILE!'



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- 01 ALAIN VANDERCRAEN**  
"We wanted to integrate NINA in day-to-day reality so that we could bring together middle management and the workforce."
- 02 PUNTA PACIFICA**  
The project involves the creation of a man-made island in Panama. Area West started work on the island about two years ago.
- 03 ONE OF THE NINA SESSIONS**  
"Our approach got people really involved, and the group made lots of intelligent comments and valuable contributions," recalls Alain Vanderkraen.

Punta Pacifica is the name of a man-made island in Panama. Area West started work on its creation about two years ago. The end is now in sight. The sand and rock work is virtually done. A sub-contractor is working on the compaction of the sand. 'This was a difficult project for the proper introduction of NINA,' says Mark. 'And I'm not just talking about getting the NINA philosophy across to local, Spanish-speaking staff; linking NINA to the specifics of a project so that people see the point is also a challenge. The situation is very different from, say, the offshore market, where we've

been working for years with extra safety requirements imposed by the client. On top of all that, this project started before the global introduction of NINA.'

### CIRCLE

'We found it challenging to turn NINA into an everyday reality,' recalls Alain. 'When it came to the values and rules, everybody was in favor. But how does it work in practice? How do you apply the NINA philosophy on a day-to-day basis in a situation where the equipment doesn't always comply with the strictest requirements

and where standards are different when it comes to safety? The project was already well under way when we started to think about introducing NINA.' Mark: 'Late last year, the middle management on the project completed the NINA "Do-it" course. That led to tensions between middle management and the workforce. Because of the language barrier and the cultural differences, the workforce had difficulty with the open approach to communications about safety. That was a vicious circle that needed to be eliminated.'

**Cultural differences, language barriers: in some countries, launching NINA involves specific challenges. It was relatively late in the day by the time NINA was in place on the Punta Pacifica project in Panama. SHE-Q officers Alain Vanderkraen and Mark Sturru look back on an intensive but successful process.**

### SUPPORT ROLE

Alain and Michael Evertz, the SHE-Q coordinator for Area West, took the first steps. They developed an approach based on two principles. First of all: commitment from head office. 'We were convinced that we had to move through this process together with Area West and all the parties involved,' explains Alain. 'Secondly, we wanted to integrate NINA in the day-to-day reality so that we could bring together middle management and the workforce. We also wanted to introduce the Business Unit's SHE-Q targets in our local situation: things like working with SHOCs (Safety Hazard Observation Cards) and Job Hazard Analyses (JHAs).'

In consultation with the project manager Jan van Merkerk and Gerjen Heij, the works manager, it was decided to organize NINA workshops with the SHE-Q officers in a support role. 'It's very important for the project management to take the lead. NINA is more than just a SHE-Q thing,' says Alain. The next step involved talking to middle management: superintendents, supervisors and the technical department people. 'We explained our plans to this group of fourteen people and asked for input. Because they came up with a concrete plan, this group found it easier to sympathize with the practical implementation of NINA and they were better prepared to communicate the philosophy.'

### TIME-CONSUMING

Together with Michael, Mark and members of the middle management, workshops were designed and implemented for the local staff. The language problem was tackled by bringing in bilingual office employees to act as interpreters. The course material was translated into Spanish. Alain: 'If you work with a large group, you see that more than half of them hardly feel involved at all. So we opted for a small-scale approach with small groups of six people.' Two trainers and an interpreter were alloca-



ted to each group. The NINA philosophy was explained in detail, with the emphasis being placed on the importance of giving feedback. 'We did our best to convince the participants that it is vital for them to report unsafe situations, that they can rest assured that their jobs won't be at risk, and that feedback will actually be valued,' says Alain. 'Then we took a detailed look with every group at the topics of SHOCs and JHAs, practicing how to use them step-by-step. In that way, we got the message across clearly. It's time-consuming but I'm happy we did it like this. Ultimately, quality has to come first. Our approach got people really involved, and the group made lots of intelligent comments and valuable contributions. The vast majority got to grips really well with the subject, which is, after all, quite complex.'

### INSPIRATION

'The training has almost finished now, and we see the results every day. We receive meaningful SHOCs, and it's a lot easier for me now to talk to the local people about safety. There is less distance. We are going to organize a brief summary of the program

with the entire group,' says Alain. 'Of course, the obvious question is: why are we investing so much energy in this process, even though the project has virtually finished? The answer is simple. In a project organization, it's important to use NINA on every project but, of course, we hope the people from this project will also be working on a follow-up project. There may be a second Punta Pacifica island in the pipeline, and Panama is "booming", with lots of other projects moving to market. Our project management has now gained so much experience in this area that introducing NINA will be much more straightforward next time round. I have drafted a detailed report on our approach. I hope that colleagues on future projects can draw on it for information and inspiration,' explains Alain.

SHE-Q manager Wilfred Haaijer: 'Putting NINA into practice in a setting where the safety standards are lower can involve lots of challenges. I visited Punta Pacifica myself in February this year. There were a lot of discussions taking place about these challenges and the associated dilemmas. For me, these were highly constructive discussions. They made it clear that there was a lot of commitment, but that putting NINA into practice isn't always straightforward. By talking to each other, and by providing support through training and workshops, we can find solutions and turn NINA into a reality.'