Finnish Institute of
Occupational Health

Work Ability Management at a Strategic Level

Objective: Strategic work ability management is connected to organizational management

Strategic work ability management is part of organizational management, where factors related to the employees´ work ability are considered in all decision-making. Strategic work ability management is a systematic and proactive approach to supporting work ability to which the entire organization is committed.

Work ability refers to the employee's work performance, i.e. the relationship between individual characteristics and work. Work ability relates to the employee's health, functional capacity, competence, motivation, work, and communal factors, such as leadership, the work community, and its culture, as well as physical and psychosocial working conditions.

Why?

Work ability management is often too problem-centered, focused on individual people and actions, and detached from the rest of the organization's management, which results in poor effectiveness.

The benefits of strategic work ability management include, among other things, reduced disability costs, improved service quality, and stronger employee attraction and retention.

Ways to enhance the strategic nature of work ability management

Assess the current work ability management practices

Gather information on:

- the current work ability support practices and their functionality
- factors related to employee well-being at work, work ability, and occupational safety, such as various key figures, investments, and costs.

Set concrete and measurable goals for work ability management

Set the goals related to employee well-being at work, work ability, and occupational safety further into the future, and anticipate the effects that possible changes may have on the employees.

The goals must be concrete, realistic, and measurable. Communicate the goals actively and clearly to ensure that everyone is familiar with them.

Set both predictive and reactive indicators for the goals

Predictive indicators include, for example, employee turnover, competence needs, and customer satisfaction.

Examples of reactive indicators include employee well-being at work, sickness absences, and accidents.

Utilise information from different sources in work ability management

Gather information from different sources:

- the organization
- occupational health care
- the occupational pension insurance company
- the accident insurance company.

Combine and interpret information from different sources and use it to support decision-making.

Ensure sufficient resources for work ability management

The organization's management decides on the resources that are allocated to work ability management. Resources include the necessary personnel, time, and competence. The resources and goals for work ability management must be in balance.

Monitor and evaluate the realization of the set goals

Plan, schedule and delegate the necessary actions to achieve the goals.

Allow enough time for the realization of the goals so that the agreed actions can be implemented, and their effects monitored. Monitor and evaluate the realization of the set goals in collaboration with different actors.

Managing occupational health collaboration is the responsibility of the workplace

Occupational health collaboration requires active collaboration between the workplace and occupational health care. This includes setting common goals, coordinating different operating methods, as well as ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

It is the responsibility of the organization's top management to decide on the occupational health agreement, its content, and scope, as well as any changes to the agreement. In addition, top management, and HR work together to define collaboration objectives that meet the strategic and business needs of the workplace.

Tools

- The Workplace Resilience Toolkit strengthens the work community's ability to prepare for and adapt to change. The toolkit includes the Workplace Resilience Test and three alternative workshops.
  Workplace Resilience Toolkit (ttl.fi)