



Knowledge-based Management to Support Decision-Making

Objective: Decision-making in work ability management is based on diverse information

All stages of work ability management involve knowledge-based management, starting with proactive measures. The objectives set for work ability management determine the information needs. Knowledge-based management includes:

- gathering information
- interpreting information in collaboration with workplace actors and occupational health care
- using information to support decision-making
- monitoring and evaluating implemented measures.

Why?

Information needs should be carefully considered to avoid the underutilization of information. The gathered information creates added value when information from several sources is combined and interpreted in collaboration with various workplace actors and occupational health care.

Knowledge-based management helps in:

- anticipating the future
- preparing for potential risks
- justifying decisions
- targeting actions.

Ways to develop knowledge-based management

Define:

- what information is needed in terms of workplace objectives
- the data format
- how information gathering will be coordinated
- how the results will be used.

Note that information needs are different at different management levels

Top management monitors the organization as a whole in terms of personnel, services, and finances. To support strategic decision-making, it not only needs organizational-level information but also information on the entire industrial sector.

Supervisors use information on the work ability of their unit's employees and the quality of services. Real-time alerts generated by electronic systems support management and enable quick response to changes.

Utilize both predictive and reactive indicators

Predictive indicators describe, for example, the functionality of processes, customer satisfaction, and employee turnover. They help in anticipating the future and preparing for possible risks. Reactive indicators, such as the number of long-term sickness absences and started disability pensions, describe past events and outcomes.

Combine information from different sources to obtain a clear overall picture

Combine information gathered from occupational health care and the workplace. Interpret the information together. Occupational health care produces information on:

- the personnel's work ability
- the health effects of the working conditions
- risks to work ability
- the threat of disability

For example, a better understanding of the underlying factors behind sickness absences can be obtained by examining the proportion of absences under different diagnostic categories, the results of the workplace well-being survey, or workplace surveys conducted by occupational health care.

Identify the costs of work disability to prioritize actions

Identifying the costs of sickness absences, workplace accidents, and disability pensions helps in targeting interventions effectively. Prolonged sickness absences are particularly expensive. Target interventions that reduce work disability at the risks and risk groups at the employee, work unit, and organizational level.

Plan the implementation of solutions

At the workplace, establish common practices for how conclusions are drawn from information, how new solutions are developed, and how they are implemented. Monitor and evaluate the success and impact of the solutions. Some measures require more time to produce results. Therefore, management needs to allow sufficient time to achieve them.

Regularly assess the effects of work ability management

The workplace and occupational health care work together to monitor and evaluate the effects of occupational health collaboration. The assessment is based on jointly agreed concrete goals and indicators.

Work ability management is effective if the measures lead to the realization of the goals. The effectiveness can be assessed in terms of outcome, processes, and cost benefits.

Examples of objectives and indicators	Assessed effect
The sickness absence rate decreases	Outcome
The number of early support discussions increases	Process
Occupational health care costs per person decrease	Cost benefits