HOLISTIC WORK-LIFE APPROACH AND RETAINING WORKERS OF ALL AGES

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Maintaining and promoting the performance of workers and retaining workers at work are the most topical issues in today’s work life and economics. However, it is not only about work and the working community related to it but about the interplay between work, the working community, and life outside the sphere of work. Work and life outside work are linked together interactively. This functional whole calls for a holistic interdisciplinary work-life approach.

An example of such broader approach is provided by the set of findings described in this presentation. The presentation includes a review and is based on several consecutive studies. The results depict the views of more than ten thousand Finnish workers, managers and executives engaged by private and public work organizations.

1) The results show that the older the company, the older the staff. According to the respondents, the age structure of the personnel (ageing of employees) affects everyday business operations. The willingness of the oldest employees to continue working until the (retirement) age of 65 depends on whether the workplace has implemented measures to promote the work ability of ageing workers or not. Despite the recognized adverse state of affairs, most companies had taken no measures to promote the work ability of workers. This was particularly true of small enterprises. The oldest workers in the very smallest workplaces were more often and on average four years earlier ready to quit working than seniors in larger companies.

2) The findings demonstrate that persons satisfied with their life are frequently willing to keep on working. Satisfaction with life keeps people going. Among those satisfied with their life as many as 77 % believe that they will continue working full-time at least till the age of 60 or beyond.

3) The prevailing working culture either repels people or promotes their commitment to the work. A good or highly functional work culture make people feel disposed and find continuation of work pleasant.

4) The continuation of work is even more certain if the employees find not only their work culture but also coping with their own life good. Willingness to continue working is twice as common (73 %) among men who find both their working culture and the quality of their own life good as among those men (36 %) who experience both their working culture and the quality of their own life poor. A functional working culture is very important for those young adults who are not coping with their life very well.

5) The results also demonstrate that worksite measures to improve the wellbeing of workers increase both the willingness and ability to keep on working in all age cohorts and in all task or working groups.

6) Young employees feel themselves as old as their chronological age. The share of people who feel younger than their chronological age grows with age among both men and women. People’s willingness to continue working also increases with age. Reported subjective ages refer to the individual’s functional capacity as a whole (general index) and are useful when realizing interventions and dynamic proactive measures against the loss of work ability and well-being.

7) Well-being and ability spell success. In this sense the crucial factor is the level of work life ability of each employee and the work organization.

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