

Sastamala



Age
Management
Masterclass

Have a look at 28 good practice examples that have been collected from various EU countries and take an inspiration for your work.

Examples are suitable for human resource managers implementing age management measures in their companies.

Examples may also serve as a training tool for teachers, trainers and lecturers at various educational facilities.

All case studies are available at: <https://www.amm-project.eu/>



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Company

Sastamala Municipality
An interview with Riitta Hietala, the City of Sastamala Human Resources Manager

Sector

Tertiary: municipal government

Specification

The municipality represents the local level of administration in Finland and act as the fundamental, self-governing administrative unit of the country.

Web-site

<http://www.sastamala.fi>

Age management dimension

Learning, training and lifelong learning

- organising work so that it is conducive to learning and development – for instance, within the framework of mixed-age teams and groups;
- using older employees and their particular qualifications both as facilitators of further education for older and younger employees, and as an organizational ‘knowledge pool’.

Employment exit and the transition to retirement

- flexible forms of transition

Health protection and promotion, and workplace design

- ergonomic workplace (re)design

Comprehensive approaches

- an emphasis on preventing age management problems

Expected result

- Longer working careers for the staff
- effective transfer of tacit knowledge upon retirement.

Main motives for the decision to implement the age management measures

As a municipal employer, the city of Sastamala has a large number of employees, who most often will have long working careers. Thus, a great deal of tacit knowledge is collected within the work communities, retaining of which can be a challenge upon worker retirement. Furthermore, because of the lengthy working careers, it is a challenge to uphold the employee’s training level.

Our way towards the age management

A discussion is scheduled with staff members who are approaching retirement age to set up a way to transfer all the necessary tacit knowledge that the work unit is in danger of losing upon retirement. It has been found though, that it is beneficial to only attempt to retain the useful parts of the tacit knowledge. There are, for example, some ingrained work models that can be updated instead of keeping things going the same way as before. This must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

It has been noted that flexible working hours meet the needs of workers from all age groups, since there are many kinds of job descriptions. Shift work and office work both can benefit from flexible hours. Especially

for those doing shift work, certain flexibility in planning the hours worked is welcome. Every worker will have some family events, personal reasons or other matters that need some flexibility from time to time.

Some also have opportunity for distance work, which has become more important last year especially. Certainly, for some professions, for example in teaching and nursing there are certain challenges, but many workable solutions were found during the pandemic. Distance work can be tiring if it goes on for very long, but sometimes it can have a beneficial effect when it comes to fatigue from commuting. For some individual work assignments, it has been found to be a preferable alternative to commuting somewhere for only a short job assignment.

Additionally, there is a possibility for part-time work, and partial care leave is also legally required for the younger staff members. Possibility for care leave is tried to provide for everyone who needs it. Also per the worker's request, part-time solutions are popularly arranged in all the departments at Sastamala city. Through these solutions the employee's working careers have been made longer, healthier and more enjoyable.

Strengths and weaknesses of the chosen approach

Strengths:

- The staff retains its ability to work and sense of work fulfillment until retirement.
- Tacit knowledge is retained in the work community.
- Staff keeps its skills up to date.

Weaknesses:

- Only full-time employees consistently receive supplementary training.

"Aha" moment

Everyone should challenge themselves to look at things from different perspectives at the workplace. Other worker's tasks look much different looking outside-in than what things appear from the other direction. For office workers the daily rhythm is much different compared to workers at the factory line. However, all groups get much more than their salary from coming to work every morning, or evening for the shift workers at the factory. For some, going to work is for paying the bills. For others, your coworkers are the reason. People tend to spend long stretches of time at work, year after year. Some spend a good part of their lives working for the same employer. It should be regarded as the employer's responsibility to take care of its employees, as some sort of a de facto social contract.

Offering all workers the ability to have some flexibility when it comes to one's working hours turned out to be highly valued. However, flexible working hours meet the needs of workers from all age groups slightly differently, since there are many kinds of job descriptions and different age groups tend to have different needs.

Both shift work and office work can benefit from flexible hours. It turns out that for those doing shift work, having your voice heard when your working hours are planned is very valuable. After all, everyone will have from time to time some family events, personal reasons or other matters that need some flexibility from the employer. Hearing these needs does not hurt the company's bottom line at all. What it does do, is create a sense of community at the workplace, which has numerous small benefits that are hard to pinpoint in numbers.

Activities to sustain this initiative

As legally required, the entire staff is offered supplementary training every three years. Additionally, each department prepares tailored training plans for their staff annually.

Monitoring system of the effects

The law requires supplementary training to be offered for all permanently employed workers every three years. These trainings are for all staff members regardless of age. Their function is to ensure a certain level of uniformity across the country when it comes to certain groups of employees, for example nurses or teachers.

Additionally, each department prepares tailored training plans for their staff annually. These tailored trainings are specially directed for the sectors that have had their work processes altered or have had some other changes in the job fundamentals.

The need for training among the staff gets mapped throughout the year and it leads to a common training period for all personnel. This is the same for mandatory and additional training at the departments. The time and place are set so that the majority are able to attend. The best place for training is usually the workplace, since everyone naturally has arranged easy transportation there.

For workers who happen to be on parental leave during supplementary training, individual arrangements are always attempted. Naturally, nobody is called in for training from their leave.

Part time and temporary staff members unfortunately don't enjoy all the benefits of training. Some of them have been working for the city for long periods of time, but their legal status as temporary employees excludes them from mandatory training. This is an ongoing problem without an easy solution. Some individual solutions can be found, but they must be taken care of on an individual basis. Legally speaking mandatory training is only open for permanent full-time employees. Sometimes the only solution is for the employee to obtain necessary qualifications to be offered a permanent role.

Beneficial effects of the initiative

An important part of good age management is foreseeing your employee's retirement. The retirement schedules for all members of staff can be planned ahead, which facilitates the transfer of useful tacit knowledge within their respective work communities. As valuable as experienced workers are, they are not forever. Their qualities can be transferred, though. However, it must be noted that not every bit of tacit knowledge needs to be transferred as is. Some old habits can be forgotten, and new ones take their stead.

The greatest benefit of proper age management and continuous training for your staff members is the fact that it extends the worker's careers at the same employer. Workers with a great deal of experience and training are more productive and tend to enjoy doing their work, no matter their job description. For a municipal employer, this effect is an important stone on the path to creating a well-run municipality.

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