

Saarioinen

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Age
Management
Masterclass

Vuon. käyttöpaikasta toista

Yhtiön omistajien osuudet

ICB VINNOVA

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

Saarioinen

Gathered from interviews with: Minna Sarsama, Manager People & Culture | Transformation and Change | Strategy implementation | Leadership development

Anitta Mehtonen, Office Secretary from Saarioinen.

Sector

Secondary sector: Food production

Specification

Saarioinen is a privately owned Finnish food industry company and one of Finland's leading food manufacturers. Saarioinen produces a selection of convenience food products, meat products and preserved foods. Saarioinen is the Finnish market leader in many of its business areas. Saarioinen's annual net sales amount to approximately EUR 250 million and the group employs a total of 1,300 employees. Saarioinen has factories in Kangasala, Valkeakoski and Huittinen as well as a consumer ready food factory in Estonia which mainly manufactures products for the Baltic market.

<https://www.saarioinen.fi/>

Age management dimension

Employment exit and the transition to retirement:

- preparatory measures for retirement at the corporate level;
- flexible forms of retirement that allow for a phased reduction of working hours;
- ergonomics.

Expected result

Aging workers should be able to maintain their enjoyment of working and the ability to work longer, and additionally to decrease the number of days spent on sick leave.

Main motives for the decision to implement the age management measures

As expected from a family business that has been in business for a long time, Saarioinen has many aging employees. The type of work at Saarioinen includes both repetitive factory style positions as well as traditional office work, both with their own set of challenges.

It is obvious that without some support many workers will not stay in good health and lifted spirits until retirement age. The options are either to keep hiring younger workers or improve the well-being at work for everyone.

Constantly rotating into fresh staff might sound appealing at first glance, but it comes with many drawbacks. For production line workers it leads directly into lower productivity and job engagement. Days spent on sick leave increase and savings from lower wages disappear quickly as production slows down when workers quit or are replaced. Hiring new staff is almost always more expensive than keeping existing ones. For office workers the difference is even more stark. There is a great deal of tacit knowledge that each worker accumulates over the years at work. Transferring this knowledge to new hires is often very difficult and even when it goes well, some working knowledge is always lost.

For a company with a structure like at Saarioinen, with more administrative and production positions than R&D, where younger hires with fresh ideas might be thought as preferable, workers tend to stay for many years. This means naturally that the average age of workers trends towards seniors over time. Thus, there is much to be gained from implementing a strong worker well-being program, especially for aging workers and very little to lose.

Our way towards the age management

After the need for proper age management was identified, it was soon realized that a continuous program would be preferable to a one-off approach. Either way a certain amount of preparation would have to be done.

The program started with some benefits and services, such as physical therapy, sourced from local service providers. It was thought of prudent to have some sort of a method to track satisfaction with the services and a simple questionnaire form was found to be adequate.

Gradually more services were added, paying close attention to suggestions from staff and what could be surmised from the questionnaires. Notably Saarioinen transitioned into a full senior worker -program more than ten years ago, that is open for workers over 55 years of age. Some services and benefits are only available to this class of workers.

The sort of methods and services that work with workers of different age groups vary. For example, older workers value additional days off more, as younger workers can be motivated with monetary bonuses more easily. It was then decided to offer the ability to exchange holiday bonus money as days off for everyone in the senior worker -program. This proved to be highly popular, boosting worker morale and well-being at work, while costing very little for the company. The added years of productive work more than pay for the costs incurred.

Strengths and weaknesses of the chosen approach

Strengths:

- Employee's ability to work and work enjoyment stay high.
- Preventable sick leave due to work strain is decreased.
- Employees can choose the mode of support that best fits their needs.

Weaknesses:

- As a top-down model, its success relies on management's abilities.

"Aha" moment

It was found that lessening the workload for aging workers did not, in fact, lead to lower productivity. The actual time spent doing productive work stayed more or less the same, while almost eliminating all dramatic decreases in productivity, that most often come from days spent on sick leave. It was found that most sick leave is totally avoidable.

Activities to sustain this initiative

The program runs as par for the course at the company. Proper age management is seen as a normal and sensible part of doing business.

There are periodic changes and fine tuning done on the system from time to time. Changes to the service selection are made according to the results of worker satisfaction questionnaires and suggestions from the staff. As a whole, the system is under a constant state of being monitored, but not micromanaged.

Monitoring system of the effects

The program's impact is continuously monitored with satisfaction questionnaires. When the system works as intended, it shows a lack of days taken on sick leave, productivity that stays constant and a general lack of complaints. Thought of this way, carefully monitoring how the system works can be a bit of a challenge.

Beneficial effects of the initiative

Challenges that relate to well-being at work can be tackled before they turn into real issues. Employee's work satisfaction is increased and their ability to work retains longer. Work results also increase with no additional cost to the employer.

Upholding the ability to work all the way until retirement, which is beneficial both for the worker and the employer.

Personal recommendation

Anitta Mehtonen, an office worker at Saarioinen speaks at length about the benefits of the age management services at Saarioinen. As she is part of the senior workers program being over 55 years of age, she thinks highly of the program and how it helps keep the stressful effects of work at bay and keeps her feeling more energetic on and off work. She especially recommends taking advantage of the possibility of converting bonuses into days off, because at her age the extra free time to spend with family and doing things that you love is much more valuable than extra money on your bank account.

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