

Background material to the report:

*Increasing the value of age:  
guidance in employers' age management strategies*  
Cedefop research paper No 44

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5544>

## **Case studies**

*Disclaimer*

*This text is presented in its original form.*

*It has neither been revised nor edited by Cedefop.*

## Table of contents

1. Enemærke & Petersen .....	3
2. Eesti Energia .....	10
3. Frosta Sparbank .....	18
4. Kiruna .....	25
5. Kronoberg County Council .....	33
6. Schumann Haustechnik .....	43
7. Wicke .....	53
8. Achmea .....	63
9. Rabobank .....	68
10. UCLH .....	76
11. Czech Society for Quality .....	84
12. Vysocina .....	94
13. MAKRO .....	105
14. ZEMAT .....	113
15. Paloma .....	121
16. Crédit Industriel et Commercial .....	130
17. Groupama .....	138
18. Rossimoda .....	146
19. Glual .....	155
20. Firefighting Service of Zaragoza .....	166

## CHAPTER 1.

# Enemærke & Petersen

### 1.1. Description of the approach

Enemærke & Petersen is a Danish company founded in 1975. It started as a carpentry firm but since then it has developed into an all-round construction company. The company has 500 employees with headquarters in Ringsted and a department in Glostrup as well. Enemærke & Petersen is generally characterised as a company with a low level of hierarchy, thus there is a direct line of communication between the employees and the management.

The company specifically works with construction, renovation and maintenance of buildings. At present renovation of buildings makes up 80% of the company's turnover. Traditionally the construction sector has been criticised for their working conditions on the grounds that they have been considered below reasonable standards.

The overall objective is to adopt an age management approach that improves and encourages senior employees (older than 55 years) to remain in active employment. By ensuring an active age management approach it becomes generally acceptable in the working place that senior employees work under different circumstances and have more flexibility in their job. To create a common understanding of this issue it is important that there is an open procedure about it that is subject and applicable to all. From the company's perspective the age management approach is mainly designed to make it possible to maintain and use older employees' skills and experience.

The actors and target group involved are primarily the employees. They are primarily men at the vocational educational level corresponding to ISCED-5. The work performed by the employees is characterised by a high degree of physical intensity.

In the construction sector, as well as in Enemærke & Petersen, construction workers have physically hard labour, and it is widespread that the employees are given piecework. A research project conducted by the Danish Construction Association has shown that piecework can cause distrust at the work place (Dansk Byggeri, 2011).

The idea behind the approach was developed in a preliminary project with the participation of the Danish Construction Association and 3F (United Federation of Danish Workers). The purpose of the project was to point out the needs and demands of the employees. The preliminary project had an employee-

driven approach – by including employees it opened up the possibility to have their perspective on initiatives that could be taken to prevent attrition and to promote the motivation of senior employees to stay at the working place.

The preliminary project resulted in the following:

- (a) the employees wanted a higher degree of flexibility regarding working hours and working tasks, making it possible for senior employees to work on reduced hours;
- (b) there was a need for introducing yearly senior conversations in which the future possibilities could be discussed with the senior employee;
- (c) there was a need for arranging a yearly senior conference, where all employees are gathered to discuss their future in the company.

These points have formed the basis for the activities that were developed for the project.

The practice addresses several problems/barriers, such as dispositional (the attitude of the employees towards working with physical tasks), situational (more knowledge on the contextual factors surrounding you, such as the living conditions as a retired employee), and institutional (the negative consequence of piecework is a challenge that the practice is intended to reduce) factors.

The following activities make up the approach:

- (a) yearly held senior conferences;
- (b) senior conversations;
- (c) health check every year for senior employees (55+) and every five years for employees more than 45 years old.

The first two points focus on guidance of employees by involving them in the process. In the preparation of the senior policy the employees have accentuated that increased influence on their work, the planning and working environment, caused them stay in their work for longer.

The third point is a physical approach that prevents employees from physical decline by informing them on what their current physical state is. Also part of the health activity is that senior employees have a 25% discount on access to fitness facilities.

## 1.2. Guidance activities:

### 1.2.1. Identification of activities

The approach of Enemærke & Petersen consists of the following activities:

- (a) more flexibility in working hours and tasks: this is regarded as an activity as well as an output/result of the approach. By offering the employees more

- flexibility they are more inclined to work for more years, for example an employee can be offered a job with a minimum level of physical activity;
- (b) yearly held senior conferences: in these collective information sessions the employees are informed about the available career opportunities. The employees are also advised on how to interpret information and choose the best possible solution. According to the human resources manager, Birgit Wagner, about 50% of senior employees participate in the senior conferences;
  - (c) senior conversations: on an informal basis the employees have a conversation with their manager about their thoughts and plans for the future. The senior conversations are held to create a mutual understanding between the employee and the manager;
  - (d) health check: the employees can receive a health check that gives them information about their current physical state.

The yearly senior conferences and the senior conversations are considered forms of guidance. These activities are as a group of activities and guidance is considered to be a core element of the approach.

The senior conference is seen as the most important guidance activity as it constitutes a forum for all of the employees aged more than 55 and is a method that reaches the entire target group. At the senior conference the employees discuss their views and perspectives at workshops structured around specific themes such as inheritance, testament, pension schemes, etc. Also presentations are held at the conference by external consultants on some of the main topics.

On an informal basis the senior conversations are held between the employee and the responsible manager. These are individual meetings that could be regarded as follow-up meetings to the senior conferences. Typically these are arranged after the senior conference.

The methods used in the activities focus on the employees' individual demands. The workshops on the senior conferences give them the opportunity to tell their own work related stories. The senior conversations give the employees the opportunity to address issues face-to-face with their responsible manager. From the interviews it can be concluded that these methods contribute to the employees developing ownership and understanding of the overall age management approach. The most important aspect of the chosen method has been to involve the employees. In this way the age management approach is dynamic and adjustable to the specific needs and demands of the employees.

### 1.2.2. Description of methods

The two guidance activities have different levels of formalisation. The senior conference is a formal activity that is being held every year. With this conference the employees have a chance of providing their specific inputs and perspectives. The senior conversation on the other hand is a more informal type of activity which is based on the employees' specific needs. The employee and the responsible manager have a yearly conversation, but it is not an established procedure that the employee and the manager have a discussion on seniority. If there is a need to discuss individual matters the typical procedure is to arrange the senior conversations after the senior conference. There is no structured method regarding senior conversations, as these are held on an informal basis according to individual needs.

An important element of the senior conference is the inputs provided by the employees based on the group discussions that they have had in the workshops. The senior conversation is individual based guidance based on a face-to-face meeting with the employee and the responsible manager.

The involvement of employees in guidance activities are considered to be strong. In the workshops at the senior conferences the employees contribute to the themes and topics that are to be discussed.

There are also other people involved in the guidance process. At the senior conference external representatives for Pension Denmark present the conditions that the employees have regarding pension schemes. An external actor presents the regulations on inheritance and testament. An external actor presents the options that the employees have regarding their own health situation.

The age management approach is a part of the human resources policy of Enemærke & Petersen. An important focus in the policy is to have a mix of younger employees' drive and requirements for innovation with the experience and overview of the senior employees.

## 1.3. Outcomes and results

The flexibility offered to the employees has motivated several of the company's senior employees to stay longer in their jobs. Not only have the employees benefited from the company's age management approach, but retired employees benefit as well. The company has created a senior club that gives seniors the opportunity to join the company's summer and Christmas party every year. This is a chance to greet old colleagues and keep a sense of belonging to the company.

No tool has been developed to assess the outcomes and results. Results described are estimations from the interviewees. The direct and short-term result of the active age management is that 102 senior employees are significantly more motivated than before. It is estimated that 10-20% more senior employees choose to stay longer in their jobs after the introduction of the new age management approach.

On an organisational level the project has resulted in a higher level of social capital. With the new age management approach the senior employees have been met with a new attitude and policy which encourages them to stay longer in their work. According to the human resources manager, Birgit Wagner, in 2012 about 13% of all employees in the company have a senior job.

The age management approach counterbalances the widespread concern that senior employees might not be able to perform physical exhausting work. By giving the senior employees the option of more flexible work with less physical strain they can continue to work in the same company with conditions that are more suitable to them. By implementing this age management strategy senior employees consider themselves more accepted in the company. This also means that they are not exposed to a widespread attitude that they are not capable of performing their tasks.

The approach has a positive effect on the ability of the company to retain its present employees. The project has also gained attention on a national level, and in 2009 the company received an award by the Danish Ministry of Employment for this developed practice.

#### 1.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

The senior conference is a practice that could be introduced to other organisations. It is easily implemented and easy to adapt to other organisations. The most important factor to have in mind is that the management must be aware of their responsibility for carrying out the senior conversations and to follow up on the results of the senior conference.

The involvement of employees in the process of developing a new approach is transferable to other situations. The interviews show that a crucial element of the approach is that the employees have a say in adjusting it to their specific needs.

The interviewees emphasise that the senior conferences have been successful because there have been external inputs from experts and consultants in the different fields (legal experts, consultants in pension and consultants from the relevant trade union). Also it has been successful because

group-based guidance has been combined with individual guidance. Also, a follow up system has been put in place.

Policy-makers, programme managers and others willing to transfer this initiative to other organisations have to consider carefully how an approach is being implemented. One possible reason this approach has been so easily implemented in this organisation is that employees have been included from the beginning in developing the areas they consider the most important.

## 1.5. Conclusions

The overall objective of the approach is to adopt an age management strategy that improves and encourages senior employees (older than 55 years) to remain in active employment. The active age management approach ensures that it is well accepted that senior employees work under other circumstances with less demanding physical labour and have more flexibility in their job.

Guidance activities have been the main element of the approach. Also the approach has shown positive results due to the senior conference and the individual senior conversations. During the senior conference the inputs received from external actors in the different areas on the one hand, and the involvement of employees in workshops on the other, have ensured that the employees have gained more knowledge about their situation as well as more influence on the agenda and relevant topics. The senior conversation has been successful, because it is a method that follows up on the group-based guidance activities of the senior conferences.

The approach is considered to be easily transferable to other contexts and organisations. The main potential obstacle of a successful project is that the management does not put all the necessary effort and resources into carrying out the project. Another important element is to include the employees in the process and create a common understanding that it is an important area to focus on.

For the target group in Enemærke & Petersen the activities are put in place to ensure that the employees gain a better understanding of the link between their working life and life as a senior citizen. In this way the activities for the specific target group have prevented the senior employees becoming physically worn out and contribute to ensure that their competencies can be used for other functions.



## 1.6. List of interviewees

Birgit Wagner, human resources manager, Enemærke & Petersen

Niels Hørschen, Senior employee, Enemærke & Petersen

## 1.7. Literature list

Dansk Byggeri (2011). *Social kapital i Dansk Byggeri*.

Enemærke & Petersen (2012). *Seniorpolitik [Senior policy]*.

Industrien Branchearbejdsmiljøråd (2011). *Medarbejderdrevet innovation & arbejdsmiljø [Employee-driven innovation and working conditions]*.

## CHAPTER 2.

# Eesti Energia

### 2.1. Description of the approach

Eesti Energia Group is the biggest employer in Estonia with 7 680 employees. Eesti Energia's main economic activity is electric power generation, transmission and distribution which can be demarcated by NACE code 351 under NACE code D (Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply). Overall, 8 200 persons were employed in the NACE code D in 2011 <sup>(1)</sup>. Recent developments that have had a significant impact on the company are related to the electricity market opening in Estonia as of January 2013. This has had a major influence on the company's focus regarding the learning culture and its development. The company has its own development and competence centre where training programmes and grounding principles of training are elaborated. Still, since the affiliated companies have different objectives and work assignments, all affiliates can adjust how they implement the principles according to their individual needs and opportunities. All employees working in Eesti Energia are divided into three segments: executors, specialists and managers. The main focus of the company is currently on the succession of management, especially regarding engineers including succession management programmes for those who already work as managers in the company, as well as basic management training for those engineers who are expected to become managers in the future. The company strives for relation-oriented and engaging leadership and it has been successfully introduced in some regions, where the company operates (Harjumaa and Tartumaa). However, most employees of the company work in Ida-Virumaa. The region has a different cultural environment and employees working there are still used to task-oriented and hierarchical leadership. Although the company is trying to change this, it is quite complicated and needs further conscious action.

Since in the next coming years almost one third (ca 2 500 employees) of company's personnel will become older than 50 years, it became clear that the ageing workforce will become an obstacle for the company in the longer perspective and to maintain company's sustainability, immediate action needed to be taken. The biggest concern regarding the labour shortage is the lack of

---

<sup>(1)</sup> The data is not differentiated by subsectors, thus the number of employed reflects the number of employed in the whole sector demarcated under NACE code D and not only in the subsector 351.

engineers and managers. The shortage of necessary personnel is especially apparent in Ida-Virumaa, where most employees are older than 50 years and where it is difficult to find new employees, since the region is not attractive for young people who have graduated from university. Therefore, Eesti Energia has put together their age management strategy to keep and preserve the necessary and valuable knowledge older workers have. The company's age management strategy is part of the company's overall strategy.

The company and the sector face a lack of qualified workforce in the near future. As such, the organisation had to do something to cope with that situation. Measures were chosen after careful consideration and research of best practices in companies with similar profile, in different countries. In addition, the company organised a study visit to one company in Sweden which had tackled similar obstacles. The time factor was the main criteria for choosing these particular measures, since the company needed measures that would display relevant results in a short time period and that could be implemented immediately, without significant preliminary work. Time consuming activities were to be avoided, such as the training of new/young employees (mentorship and on-site training) to match the skills of their older colleagues which generally takes up to five years.

The target group was chosen by the personnel service together with department managers who developed the strategy. The target group of these measures was chosen based on age (had to be 50 or older) and the difficulty of the work performed, since it is harder to find qualified and experienced employees for complex and difficult placements.

Overall, the strategy and measures are developed during the time when the awareness of population ageing and its problems are just starting to rise in society. Also, the issue of workforce ageing does not only influence the electricity industry, but the whole country. At the same time, the company operates in an industry where the problem is self-evident. The obvious practical need was one factor that pushed the implementation of the strategy. In addition, since the company is very large, it deals with issues related to an ageing workforce also in a much larger scale, when compared to small companies.

## 2.2. Guidance activities

The company's age management strategy includes four different measures:

- (a) shared jobs-as older workers' capacity to work decrease with age, they were offered shorter flexible (part-time) and trainees were recruited. Working together enabled older workers to utilise their work experience and help trainees to settle in better – three individual cases;

- (b) mentorship programme-older and experienced workers are mentors for their younger colleagues who have moved up in their career ladder (this helps to keep and share knowledge in the enterprise) – 30 cases.
- (c) training- some of the workplaces in Eesti Energia demand very specific skills/knowledge, which are not taught in universities, therefore young and inexperienced workers will have on-site work training under older and much experienced workers – 85 individual cases.
- (d) personal stories of different older vibrant employees, with a long tenure, still working in Eesti Energia are shared through intranet, via an interview with the older worker, within the company to show that Eesti Energia values all its employees irrespective of their age and to set a positive example to other employees – 5 individual cases.

The mentorship programme and training on-site are the two activities which display more guidance methodologies. The aims of mentoring and training are to ensure the existence of necessary and qualified workforce in the long term and to offer older workers the opportunity to validate their skills and knowledge, gain more confidence and feel valued by the company.

Employees who are mentors or on-site trainers are chosen by their direct managers together with HR specialists based on their previous work performance, attitudes towards work and work culture. The management communicates the person who will become a mentor or on site trainer, but does not systematically notify employees that this is one measure of their age management strategy. There is a separate budget for the programme which ensures successful replacement of personnel. It includes financial resources for expertise development, diffusion activities, different training programmes including those regarding age management measures, remunerations, etc. The usual remuneration for mentoring and on-site training is 10% of a person's salary and it is usually paid for the period of mentoring, or in case of training it is usually a part of the performance pay paid in the end of the year (this can be seen as a motivational stimuli).

All of the measures were worked out by HR specialists together with the company's competence centre, training specialists and department managers. These measures were not prescribed by any external institution, such as a public employment service or by company's collective agreement. The trade union was also not directly involved in the elaboration or implementation processes. However, the company aims to involve them by including some stipulations regarding the replacement of workers in the collective agreements in the

future <sup>(2)</sup>. No external consultants or experts were included in the elaboration process of these measures. According to the plan, the measures were targeted at employees older than 50 with complicated work assignments, as the training of employees takes a long time. Older employees who will be mentors or on-site trainers usually have training before they start mentoring or on-site training. The training includes basic management skills and other important issues such as how to train (different skills regarding communication, performing – for this, external experts are sometimes used). However, the company has not made any campaigns to inform employees about their age management strategy due to potential misconceptions or fears. Some employees are afraid that this strategy aims at dismissing older employees (older employees are afraid to lose the jobs to younger). Frequently, employees who already work as mentors or trainers are unaware of the measure they belong to. This is a conscious tactic of the company to constantly but smoothly introduce these measures and making them part of the natural work process. In addition, the company is also using internal communication channels to share good examples and tackle the misconceptions and prejudices.

During the implementation period, the mentor or on-site trainer can get support from their personnel manager or direct manager. Together they solve problems that have occurred (for example, how to support the new or young employee or how to give feedback). In the future, the company aims to organise meetings for older employees who are mentors or on-site trainers so they can exchange experiences, issues and learn from one another. This is currently practiced informally, but the company sees potential in systematically organising these meetings.

Every mentor or trainer can adjust the mentoring and training methods according to what is more adequate for them. There are no guidelines to mentors or trainers on how they should mentor or train. They have to rely on the basic principles of the company and have a good work ethic and culture that meets company's expectations. The methods are not prescribed and can across departments. The timeframe of the measure also depends on the work complexity, but usually takes around four and 12 months during which constant

---

<sup>(2)</sup> Currently, only one collective agreement in the company includes the stipulation regarding succession of management. Employees, who have worked in the company for 15 years will get a bonus in amount of one month average salary in case they have trained their successor. This stipulation only applies to those specialists who have an agreement with the management to grow a successor. Previously, all employees with a tenure of 15 years had the right for a bonus.

feedback is given by both, the mentor as well as the new employee and this input is used to make necessary adjustments to the training.

The main barrier regards the implementation of the 'shared jobs' measure, as older employees are afraid that younger employee will take their job. Other measures are more easily implemented and the advantages of these measures are acknowledged both by older workers working as trainers and by the learning younger workers. However, in case of mentoring and on-site training, one obstacle can also be brought out- namely that it takes time and therefore it may demand the reorganisation of current work process, which also may be time consuming.

The company has not set very firm indicators for measuring the quality of these measures. Since the results of the measures are not immediately noticeable, it is difficult to define indicators. Still, for Eesti Energia it is important that the work quality is high, that their employees are satisfied and that the older workers transmit to the new employees the enterprise work culture and ethics. For this, constant feedback through regular work process is given to adjust and make the work processes more effective. Thus, the main aim is to develop new qualified employees who are just as good as the older staff members and at the same time show older workers how necessary and valuable they are for the company.

### 2.3. Outcomes and results

The main expected effect (both short-term and long-term) for the company is that the company has maintained its competence and knowledge after the current strategy period has ended (in six years). Therefore, the company aims to avoid the situation where older employees have retired and there are not enough younger workers with necessary knowledge and experience to replace workers. These measures have direct impact on the productivity, capacity and human capital of the company. The company surveys employees' satisfaction, mentoring and career development every two years. In addition to those outcomes and results, Eesti Energia makes significant efforts to be a desirable employer for young and talented students and people. The company follows the studies that monitor which companies are the highest rated employers among students and tries its best to be included in that group. Eesti Energia is usually on the top of the list and in 2012 was the most desired employer among job seekers (Stadnik, 2012). The company also follows trainees who after the traineeship, express their wish to work in the company. The company cooperates with Tallinn University of Technology (TUT) and according to their knowledge, the number of students

studying in the professions employed by the company is also increasing (mostly engineers). The company interprets, that one of the reasons behind this is their efforts in popularising these jobs.

On the individual level, employees who participate in these measures, have more confidence in themselves as through teaching and mentoring they also validate their own knowledge and skills (via an informal self-assessment) and at the same time also learn something new from their younger colleagues. Younger colleagues gain more experience, their self-confidence increases as well as their motivation to perform better as they learn from their more experienced colleagues. For younger workers learning new skills helps them realise what they would like to do in the future and what they are good at, which supports their career paths and encourages further education and training.

Since Eesti Energia is the largest company in the country its actions have an effect on the society. By implementing age management measures to retain its own sustainability, the company indirectly also relieves the pressure to increase social costs and by cooperating with TUT the company is also making an effort to avoid the mismatch between the skills that are taught in universities and that are actually needed in the labour market. There is no formal skills assessment scheme in place for this.

The company is also placing more focus on career management skills and career guidance activities; however this is mainly focused on younger employees. Since one generation of engineers is missing <sup>(3)</sup>, the main goal of the company is to ensure the succession of necessary employees. Thus, the company is consciously and strategically planning, monitoring and operating to ensure the existence of employees with necessary skills and knowledge. Therefore, the company has had different career guidance activities put in place for all employees. In case of older workers, these guidance activities regard smooth transition to part-time work and thereafter to retirement.

---

<sup>(3)</sup> This problem is caused by different factors. During Soviet Union, Ida-Virumaa was a prospering region as most key industries were located there. After regaining its independence, the situation in the region, mainly due to socio-cultural reasons, has deteriorated significantly and now it is a county with one of the highest unemployment rates. Therefore, it is not attractive for young persons graduating universities. Thus, and due to some other factors, the speciality of engineers and other technical professions also lost its attractiveness. As a result, one generation of engineers is missing, although the popularity of these specialities has started to increase again.

## 2.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

According to a study made by the Centre for Applied Social Sciences (RAKE, 2012) most Estonian employers have not thought about problems that they will face in the future due to population ageing and increasing number of older workers. According to the study, 82% of employers have not assessed the potential risks for their company arising from workforce ageing and 77% of employers did not find that in the next five years the share of older workers working in their company would increase (RAKE, 2012).

Since Eesti Energia is, according to available information, the only company in Estonia that has consciously and systematically turned attention to problems arising from labour force ageing, they represent a good example for others to learn from. The strategy includes different measures that all together make a system that creates synergy. Thus, it shows that to get results, the measures should be well-reasoned and placed in the overall strategy of the company to avoid fragmentation. In addition, the measures are not project based, but implemented for a long-period of time as it has been acknowledged that it takes time to accomplish expected results. There have not been formal impact assessments or evaluations as this is done constantly and interactively; collecting feedback is part of the work process. Still, from all four measures that have been implemented, 'shared jobs' has been the most troublesome, as older employees think that it is used to dismiss them. Thus, before the implementation process begins, personnel specialists have to provide careful explanations and do constant work with changing the attitudes of older workers.

There are two obstacles for transferability – the size of the company and financial resources. Smaller companies do not experience the problem of labour shortage as sharply as large companies, since their need for labour is much smaller. At the same time, small companies may also not have enough financial resources to invest in measures that would give expected results only after years of practice.

Decision-makers should focus on raising the awareness about issues related to an ageing population and possible responses by society and employers. It is important to remind the issue constantly and emphasise that the problems arising from population ageing will not disappear when they are not publicly discussed. On the other hand, it is also vital to encourage older people themselves to change their perceptions and attitudes and inspire them to feel more confident.



## 2.5. Conclusions

Eesti Energia implemented their age management strategy due labour force ageing and practical need for qualified labour force. The implemented measures have been successful as they help to keep the necessary knowledge in the company. Although these measures are new in Estonia and the national context does not support the implementation of these measures as the awareness of population ageing is low, the company is committed to reaching their objectives and this is the reason why these measures have been successful for the company. While guidance activities have not been in the centre of these measures, they are a part of it, but still mainly regard younger employees who are just/still moving up in their career. The strategy implemented by Eesti Energia represents a good example in Estonia from which other companies can learn, mainly from their systematic approach to solve the problems arising from labour force ageing.

## 2.6. List of interviewees

Kristi Mikiver, personnel specialist at Eesti Energia Technology Industries

Vladimir Krapivin, Eesti Energia Technology Industries

Aleksander Nalitkin, Eesti Energia Technology Industries

## 2.7. Literature list

RAKE (2012). *Vanemaealised tööturul [Senior in the labour market]*. Tartu: Rake, Centre for Applied Social Sciences, University of Tartu.

[http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid/Toovaldkond/uuringud/Vanemaealised\\_t%C3%B6%C3%B6turul\\_l%C3%B5ppraport.pdf](http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid/Toovaldkond/uuringud/Vanemaealised_t%C3%B6%C3%B6turul_l%C3%B5ppraport.pdf)

Eesti Energia <https://www.energia.ee/en/avaleht>

Stadnik A. (2012). Vaata kes on Eesti hinnatuim tööandja [Look who is Estonia's most renowned employers]. *Äripäev*, 8 March 2012.

<http://www.ap3.ee/article/2012/3/8/eesti-hinnatuimad-tooandjad>

## CHAPTER 3.

# Frosta Sparbank

### 3.1. Description of the approach

Färs & Frosta Sparbank is a medium sized company with 260 employees that works in the private banking sector in Sweden. According to bank representatives, the employees and their skills have a crucial function in attracting and retaining costumers in the private banking sector. Hence, the competence and personal development of employees are vital to the bank and is also incorporated as a natural part within the culture of the bank.

In light of the economic downturn in the beginning of the 1990s, the former bank manager acknowledged a large number of layoffs within the private banking sector along with a slight change in the workforce demography. The bank manager felt that it was necessary to retain qualified personnel and their knowledge fund within the company, to bridge the skill gap in new recruits as well as a way of safeguarding knowledge within the bank. Hence, the bank manager identified an organisation development aspect related to recruitment of retired workers.

Initially the aim of the approach was to facilitate transfer of valuable knowledge from older experienced employees to new recruits. The aim of the approach however became twofold when the approach on the one hand safeguarded knowledge and on the other strengthened the participant employees both professionally and personally, irrespective of age. The recruitment of retired workers and the approaches being made to safeguard competence was hence the model of what later came to be an internal mentorship programme within the bank.

The mentorship programme presented good results and thereby continued and also evolved over the years, and is today part of ordinary operations at the bank. As the programme evolved the target group also changed from new recruits to also include employees over the age of 55 approaching retirement since the mentoring activated them and evolved them professionally through sharing and receiving experiences. The current mentorship programme extends over nine, up to 12 months, and all employees are able to register interest of participation. A majority of the participating mentors are over the age of 55 while the new recruits are far younger. The number of participants in the programme varies from year to year and is based on the demand from employees. The numbers of participants estimated by one of the interviewees conclude of four to

10 participants each year. The mentors get an introductory training during a pre-meeting, more about this in the following section.

### 3.2. Guidance activities

#### 3.2.1. Identification of activities

The mentorship programme applied at the bank offers a form of informal mentoring of new recruits, in a structured manner. Through the programme a new recruit, or trainee, is mentored by an older and more experienced employee in the same workplace. The mentoring concerns professional development related to development of specific skills and knowledge as well as personal development. It is the human resources department that draws the general guidelines and general frameworks of the programme. However, a large share of the development of activities and methods related to the enterprise goals is delegated to the mentor and the trainee. In addition, the mentor and the trainee may establish additional professional or personal goals. The mentoring process consists of a mutual interaction between the mentor and the trainee which takes place face-to-face on a day-to-day basis.

#### 3.2.2. Description of guidance activities

The mentorship programme is a guidance activity that is financed by the bank as a part of regular operations. Since its initiation, the mentorship programme has gradually evolved and improved over the years, resting upon evaluations that are made after each trainee-period. All opinions and improvement suggestions presented in each evaluation are taken into consideration when facing a new programme period.

When a new human resources manager was recruited in year 2007, a follow-up with all the former/previous trainees was conducted followed by a revision of the mentorship programme. The present mentorship programme is similar to the previous one – with minor changes – and constitutes one part of the introduction programme for new trainees in the company. The trainee programme is divided into three periods:

- (a) beginning of employment;
- (b) sponsorship period;
- (c) mentoring period.

The programme as a whole – that includes the aim of knowledge transfer and professional as well as personal development of the participants – extends

chronologically over about nine to 12 months, with the mentoring period being the longest period, consisting of six to seven months.

During the first phase of the trainee programme, the human resources manager arranges a pre-meeting with sponsors related to basic professional skill development and mentors interested in taking responsibility for training and mentoring new trainees. The mentors and sponsors are informed about the framework of the programme as well as their responsibilities during the programme period. The interviewees describe this pre-meeting as an information meeting rather than mentor training. The mentors and sponsors are also called to a meeting with the trainees during this period where the match of trainees and mentors are made. In addition, a notice about the programme is published internally so that all employees of the bank can read information about the programme and affected offices.

Knowledge transfer between sponsors and trainees are the focus during the second phase, in which trainees are trained by the sponsors in specific skills development regarding banking. The mentorship programme represents the third phase of the trainee programme and is the longest phase, giving trainees the opportunity to develop at their own pace.

At the beginning of this period, trainees are assigned a mentor and the formal relationship between the mentors and trainees is established. Methods and activities practiced within the relationship between the mentor and trainee vary and depend on expressed individual needs. The differences in activities and methods used are encouraged by the human resources department on the basis that the conditions at the various offices are different and therefore enable a variety of approaches. According to the respondent human resources manager, the dynamic between the mentor and the trainee as well as an on-going successful process is far more important than strict formal guidelines. Hence, it is up to the mentor and the trainee to form a process with related methods, activities and schemes that suits them rather than meeting formal guidelines. The mentors work on the same workplace as the trainees and the mentoring is an on-going process in which they meet on a day-to-day basis.

Previously the mentors met on an ad-hoc basis and exchanged experiences. However, in recent years the former banking manager meets the mentors and trainees at least once every other week and supports them in their work. The former bank manager thereby has a unifying role in the mentorship programme through continuous monitoring as well as giving support to the relationships between mentors and trainees. In addition, the mentors periodically meet and exchange experiences and give each other guidance based on previous experience.

A continuous monitoring of the trainee and mentor are also held by the human resources manager to ensure that the formed aims and goals are – or are about to – be achieved. In addition, regular meetings with the human resources manager, business manager, mentors and trainees are held to discuss and monitor the development.

### **3.2.3. Description of methods**

The target group consist of new recruitments and employees over the age of 55 in retirement or approaching retirement, as earlier mentioned. The mentors involved in the mentor programme are committed and also experienced business advisors with few other responsibilities. The mentors did not receive any specific training in relation to mentoring and there are no requirements on formal qualifications except for experience, interest and a desire to teach. The new recruits have little or no previous experience within the private banking sector although are well educated and eager to learn. Though a mentor might be an employee's peer, most often a mentor is a person with greater skills and experience that is retired, about to retire, or at least not within the trainee's direct supervisory line of management.

The mentorship programme is an on-going process that offers a form of internal and informal mentoring of new recruits, in a structured manner over a period of nine to 12 months. The overall framework drawn up by the human resources department focuses on overall guidelines for mentors and trainees while the specific guidance and developed methods and activities are arranged by the mentor and the trainee paired together. Involvement of the participant employees are, for the above named reasons, crucial to the programme. Both trainees and mentors are offered group guidance, partly through the human resources department and partly through the support of the former bank manager. This guidance is formally required, but also informally available throughout the programme when needed.

### **3.2.4. Experiences with implementation**

Once the trainees have gone through the three phases of the trainee programme and employed, a monitoring is made within two to three months. Thereafter, follow-up calls are made for a more extended period of time. Follow-ups are also made regularly by the human resources department and the former banking manager as earlier mentioned in the text. Collectively, these evaluations and follow ups are made to further enhance and develop the programme. According to the human resources manager, the continuity and the relationship between the mentor and the trainee are at centre of the project and guidelines are formed on the basis of individual demand. Therefore, adjustments are made often in line

with the limited guidelines given by the human resources department which allow on-going adjustments. The mentorship programme is an internal programme and there were no external participants or stakeholders involved in the implementation of the approach.

### 3.3. Outcomes and results

The expected short-term effect of the mentorship programme, on an organisational level, is to facilitate entry of new recruits by facilitating knowledge transfer. Viewed in the longer term, the expected outcome is to safeguard competence and also that the employees remain at the bank for a longer period, especially older employees.

According to one of the previous mentors, the participation in the programme led to revitalisation of older employees and also brought questioning and revaluation of existing approaches and methods. Furthermore, the previous mentor described a feeling of suddenly being needed and that the mentoring also included the idea of reciprocity, since young employees also transfer valuable knowledge of economics, techniques and computers to older employees. The older employees are thereby challenged in developing their day-to-day work. Hence, the older employees also benefit from the programme, both personally and professionally.

The human resources manager confirms previous statements on revitalisation of employees and an increased personal worth by being sought after and needed. In addition, the mentorship programme has developed the employees in taking greater responsibility at the bank as well as low employee turnover at approximately 2.6% in total. The follow-up of the programme from 2007 also shows that several of the participant trainees are currently in management positions within the bank and that the mentorship had improved leadership within the organisation as well as the relation between workers.

In summary, the mentorship programme has entailed a win-win situation for all persons involved. The mentors contribute by sharing their knowledge and experience and in turn receive knowledge and new perspectives on existing methods and approaches being used at the bank.

### 3.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

The usages of a broad framework and general guidelines combined with increased responsibility on the participating employees have created a simple

and dynamic process, suited to the bank to a larger extent than strict guidelines and high level of control from management. The risk with too strict guidelines is, according to the human resources manager, to decompose the positive attitudes and other strengths already at hand. The selected dynamic process also includes the on-going follow-ups and other evaluations from which adjustments are made on a regular basis. In sum, the selected approach allowed an on-going process requiring commitment and adaptability from all levels within the organisation and has worked well for the bank in reaching its goals.

According to the human resources manager, one success factor throughout the mentorship programme has been the company culture which played a large role in the implementation. The win-win situation between the participants was another success factor that was highlighted.

One insight that the bank will bring into the next period of the programme is that physical working areas have a large impact on the programme and hence also on the programme results. Employees that had to move between working desks did not experience the same development curve as those who remained at the same desk during the programme period.

### 3.5. Conclusions

The mentorship programme implemented in Färs & Frosta Sparbank is not exclusively focused on older employees and age management. However, the dynamic process of the programme with the non-specific guidelines as well as on-going follow-ups and evaluations showed that the implemented strategy in safeguarding competence also resulted in revitalisation of older employees when feeling needed. The older employees were also challenged to develop their day-to-day work. All of these effects combined resulted in both personal and professional gain by the older employees functioning as mentors. The chosen approach thereby resulted in a win-win situation between the participants and created stronger foundations for active participation and learning throughout the organisation as a whole.

On the base of the interviews conducted with one of the previous participating mentors and one human resources manager, the success of the approach is imbedded in the company culture and also in active participation by participants, as well as within the informal yet structural monitoring process and support system based on the individual needs of mentors and trainees. The approach is, according to the human resources manager, an easy way of working and relates to basic views on learning, development and management as well as organisation.

### 3.6. List of interviewees

Elisabeth Johansson Heyl, human resources manager; Färs & Frosta Sparbank.  
Anders, Employee, previous participating mentor, Union representative; Färs & Frosta Sparbank.

### 3.7. Literature list

*Fadder och mentorinformation [Information to mentors]* . (Internal document).  
Färs & Frosta Sparbank.  
Introduction programme for trainees (Internal document). Färs & Frosta Sparbank.



## CHAPTER 4.

# Kiruna

### 4.1. Description of the approach

The municipality of Kiruna is a lower-level local government entity with, in total, around 2 000 employees. Swedish municipalities have a considerable degree of autonomy and are responsible for a large share of local services, such as education, social services and healthcare (SALAR, 2012). The largest areas that occupy most people within the organisation are health care, care and education (interviewee: Juntti).

The project 'Age Management' was launched at the end of 2002 with a duration of almost one year. It was financed partly by the Swedish government (SEK 1.1 million; approximately EUR 126 000) and partly by Kiruna municipality (SEK 2.2 million, approximately EUR 287 000). The primary purpose of this project was to influence management strategies and working practices to reduce absenteeism and the cost of sick leave, especially among older employees within the municipality. The long-term aim was to ensure a skilled workforce where older, more experienced, employees continue working within the organisation in the future. The instrument used was the approach called age management, inspired by an action programme called FinnAge developed by professor Juhani Ilmarinen in Helsinki, Finland, at the beginning of the 1990s (Utvärdering 2003). Age management is about developing and strengthening a more individualised leadership in which managers and leaders can pay attention to each employee's strengths and weaknesses regardless of his or her age (Kiruna kommun, 2004). This approach is thus about anchoring and implementing new attitudes and ways of working within the organisation (Utvärdering, 2003). The four corner stones are: attitude – recognising that ageing makes us both weaker and stronger; collaboration – by working together the respect for elders increase; planning – adapt work after current conditions; and communication – be explicit and consistent (Klepke, n.d.).

Managers from different departments within the municipality were a part of the project, and the target group eventually benefitting from this management strategy were employees older than 50 years of age, regardless of where in the organisation they were employed. The project management consisted of the municipality's personnel committee, the project leader and a project group.

The approach consisted of six core areas, including health/ill-health to create awareness of each employee's work capacity and reflect on how to take

advantage of their strengths; rehabilitation to adapt work tasks after age and experience, both to prevent sickness and to help the employee continue working according to his or her conditions; recruiting to make managers aware of age when recruiting new employees and not only recruit younger people; competence development that should not only be provided to younger employees since elders also are in need of skills development and should not fall behind; performance reviews to focus on how older employees' work capacity has developed and discuss how tasks can be adapted to each person's capabilities; and leadership to focus on attitudes and changes towards older employees. Through a management approach with awareness for these issues relating to age, these aspects were to be implemented within the organisation by the managers (Klepke, n.d.).

## 4.2. Guidance activities

### 4.2.1. Identification of activities

To create good leadership and a favourable work environment for all employees, age management was implemented at management levels through a leadership programme. In this programme, mainly consisting of seminars, topics regarding the six focus areas described in the previous section were discussed.

The activities in the leadership programme included:

- (a) leadership anchoring – seminars with groups within the municipality to guarantee that the project's objectives, purpose and implementation were known and supported by key groups at management levels. During these one-day seminars, participants discussed the connections between organisation and health; the attitudes towards older employees and how elders can be seen as either an asset or an obstacle in organisational changes;
- (b) knowledge sharing and leadership development – two-day seminars for operative managers where research was presented and questions on leadership were discussed;
- (c) inspiration seminars – lectures for all employees within the municipality. The topic was 'experienced colleagues – an obstacle or an asset', and the consultants hired for the project lectured on the elderly workforce's development and work capability;
- (d) application and mentoring – a programme where managers and leaders applied age management as a part of their leadership during eight months,

guided by current internal experience exchanges and external mentor support.

Other guidance activities developed were, performance reviews – individual talks between managers and employees over 50 years of age, focusing mainly on their needs, such as health/ill-health, rehabilitation and competence development. These were developed once managers started using the instrument included in the leadership programme. As mentioned in Section 4.1, performance reviews were included in the six focus areas but also functioned as a measure to implement parts of the strategy and change the mind-set and attitudes among managers and employees.

#### **4.2.2. Description of guidance activities and methods**

In the introductory phase of the age strategy the consultancy firm implementing the strategy had individual talks with 10 managers and 10 employees over 50 years old. These talks treated the six focus areas and were used as a way to give input and to understand how the seminars within the leadership programme could be formed, and what questions would be of most importance. The project plan consisted of two parts; the first was to hold general seminars, and then to have activities for operative managers to discuss certain issues raised at the seminar more in-depth.

The leadership programme described above was both an education and a development programme for managers and leaders to learn how to support their employees. In the leadership anchoring seminars, groups such as civil servants at administrative levels, union and safety representatives, and eventually trustees with personnel and development responsibilities participated. During these seminars, participants were given time for joint reflections and discussions on attitudes towards elders within the organisation and to raise questions from different perspectives. Questions such as the values of leadership and the role of leadership were discussed. Participants also talked about the development of working capacities and individualising leadership according to each person's situation. Consultants guided all seminars and discussions, and managers were guided in their roles as leaders. In the knowledge sharing and leadership development seminars, operating managers were informed on knowledge and research concerning these aspects.

Managers were provided support, organised as a group activity with approximately 10 managers in each group, where the consultants held discussions and managers were guided especially in how to organise the performance reviews with older employees. The consultants were from the consultancy firm Age Management in Sweden AB. During the application and

mentoring activities, each manager/leader was assigned three days each during a period of six months, where they in the mornings received information collectively from the consultants and could exchange experiences with other managers. In the afternoon, each manager had individual mentor support during one hour on how to deal with the six focus areas and implement them in their leadership.

Since many managers were unfamiliar with how to deal with the performance reviews especially, the consultants focused on how the managers could bring up topics in dialogue with the employee in a very concrete “how do I do this?” approach. Managers received both support and help on which questions to raise and how to do so in a sensitive manner.

The performance reviews with all employees are held once a year between the employee and the closest manager and it is always done face to face. During these talks with older employees, questions regarding the focus areas are discussed. The purpose of this dialogue is to understand the conditions for each older employee. For example, if the person will still be working within five or 10 year, what that person needs to do so, which tasks need to be adapted and what preventive measures need to be put in place to avoid sickness (more about this in the following sections). It is important that the leadership is individualised according to each employee’s needs and for the manager to first become aware, and then to think about what can be done to take advantage of elders’ new conditions. Anita Junttii, personnel manager at Kiruna municipality, provided the example of a teacher who lost part of her hearing and how work tasks were reorganised to help that person to continue working. Instead of spending the same amount of hours in a loud classroom, that person can do more administrative and preparatory work.

Anita Juntti says that it is only in recent years that the performance reviews with elders have become a natural process within the organisation. These talks have, after the project finished in 2003, been implemented permanently as a part of Kiruna Municipality’s personnel strategy. To keep the age management strategy within the organisation they have implemented a two-days education programme that all new managers must attend to become aware of their responsibilities and familiar with the tools at hand, such as the performance reviews. For managers to be able to implement the attitudes that create a good environment for older employees, they must know the municipality’s personnel politics and guidelines – and learn how to hold a proper performance review with elders in accordance with the principle of age management. Some managers do not feel that these talks are easy to get through, which is one of the reasons behind the initiative to implement a permanent education and support from the

municipality. A consultancy firm procured by Kiruna municipality implements the education programme in place today.

#### **4.2.3. Experiences with implementation**

When Kiruna municipality first started thinking about implementing a strategy to keep older employees working longer and highlight their potential, they were not familiar with the age management strategy that they eventually put in place. The consultancy firm, Age Management in Sweden AB, provided this approach. Although many aspects were new to the municipality, several parts were already in place but needed to be developed further, such as the performance reviews.

When the approach was to be implemented initially, people within the organisation 'raised their eyebrows' (interviewee: Juntti) since older employees first thought of the strategy as a way to facilitate their retirement. But expectations on the project soon changed and the mind-set also shifted as the new attitudes slowly grew into the organisation. Anita Juntti thinks that the implementation could have been even better if the approach was discussed more among employees as well, since 'a strategy has a better chance of succeeding if it is spread and well known' (interviewee: Juntti).

Ann-Catrin Fredriksson, county attorney at Kiruna municipality who was municipal manager during the project, thinks that especially elders appreciated the project as they became the focus of something and received a confirmation that they were important and esteemed as employees. She has a positive view of the reception of age management and the ideas it taught and created among managers and employees.

At the end of the project, discussions stemming from seminars and group meetings resulted in a concrete plan for Kiruna municipality that is now a part of the permanent strategy within the organisation. The project with age management was therefore not only something temporary, but a tool that was implemented and still of use today.

### **4.3. Outcomes and results**

The result on an individual level is that employees over 50 years of age feel more appreciated in the organisation compared to before. On an organisational level, the municipality has been able to retain more employees and thus preserve experience and competence among their employees. From a societal perspective it is valuable that a greater part of its population continues working, even after they have become older (interviewee: Juntti).

An evaluation of the project, conducted in 2003 (i.e. shortly after the termination of the project) showed that managers and leaders have increased their knowledge, insights and awareness of the focus areas and that they experience beneficial effects from this. Implementing this knowledge is however associated with a few problems, for example is it difficult to find substitutes when an employee needs to reduce working hours, which creates a high workload for other employees, and the performance reviews are not held as intended (Utvärdering, 2003).

A positive outcome is that the number of sick days has been reduced 5% within the municipality between 2005 and 2010. This can partly be attributed to the age management approach, alongside other projects within the organisation working specifically with reducing sick leaves (interviewee: Juntti). Another outcome is that employees chose to work longer: before, the project the average retirement age was 62, and now people in average work to the age of 64 according to Anita Juntti.

#### 4.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

Anita Juntti thinks that one important factor concerning the success of the implementation was the political management during the period. The political management was very committed to the project and talked about it a lot, which encouraged people involved in the strategy at the municipality.

Ann-Catrin Fredriksson states that all projects have vulnerability in the sense that they are very intensive at the beginning, but often only scratch the surface and do not reach too deeply into the organisation with a long lasting effect. She says that most people today do not think about the project per se, however, the attitudes that the project brought is still present. It is now natural to adapt working hours when an older employee wants to continue working despite having reached retirement age. What she finds most valuable from the project is not the guidance or the activities in themselves, but rather the philosophical approach towards elder and the knowledge on how elders learn, what they need, how they work and what challenges they experience.

A limiting aspect that can reduce the effects of the project, according to Anita Juntti, is the high turnover of managers within the organisation. To maintain the age management awareness and competence, the municipality must provide a lot of information to new managers and make sure they attend the education programme described above.

#### 4.5. Conclusions

Age management became a management strategy at Kiruna municipality as a means to reduce absenteeism and create a work environment in which older employees want to stay longer. The approach was to develop and strengthen a more individualised leadership in which managers and leaders could pay attention to each employee's strengths and weaknesses regardless of his or her age. The project focused on six areas that can lead to such objectives; health/ill-health and rehabilitation to adapt working hours and tasks to each individual, recruiting older employees, competence development for elders, performance reviews in which elders could share their needs and thoughts with managers, and leadership to create an individualised leadership open to the needs of older employees.

Managers have received the tools and attitudes to approach older employees; see their needs and meet them to ensure that their competence and experience is not lost.

One of the most valuable aspects of age management is, as one interviewee pointed out, the philosophical approach towards elders and their circumstances. After the project, sick days have decreased with 5% and retirement age has increased from 62 to 64. The municipality has however encountered a few problems, such as finding substitutes when employees need to reduce working hours and sticking to the performance reviews.

The attitude adopted during this project is still present within the organisation today, and the tolerance level and awareness towards elders and have become better according to both interviewees and the evaluation report.

#### 4.6. List of interviewees

Anita Juntti; Personnel manager, Kiruna municipality.

Ann-Catrin Frediksson; Country attorney, Kiruna municipality.

#### 4.7. Literature list

Kiruna kommun (2004). *Age management i Kiruna kommun [Age management in Kiruna municipality]*. Municipality Office, Personnel Department

Klepke, B. (n.d.). *Positiv syn på äldre ska minska ohälsan i Kiruna kommun [Positive view of the elderly will reduce poor health in Kiruna]*. Vinnova: Stockholm. Minska ohälsan i offentlig sektor [Reduce poor health in the public sector]. <http://www.minskaohalsan.se/projekten/pdf/18.pdf>

SALAR (2012). *Municipalities, county councils and regions*. SALAR, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.

Utvärdering (2003). *Utvärdering av projektet Age management i Kiruna kommun* [Evaluation of the project Age management in Kiruna].

<http://www.kommun.kiruna.se>



## CHAPTER 5.

# Kronoberg County Council

### 5.1. Description of the approach

Kronoberg County Council is the regional administrative authority with main responsibilities in the public health care system. County councils are to a small extent also responsible for issues related to public transport, culture, tourism and regional development, but this case study covers only the health care sector. The county council has in total around 5 400 employees and is the biggest employer in the region. The three largest occupational groups are nurses, assistant nurses and physicians. The average age in the organisation is close to 46 years for both women and men; 48% of the employees are over 50 (Kronoberg County Council, 2011, p. 52).

The age management project in Kronoberg, targeting managers on the one hand and employees over the age of 55 on the other hand, was developed in 2003, and was a pilot project in this regard. Some of the elements of the project are still being implemented today, while other elements have been terminated (more about this later in the case study). Before the Kronoberg project, only one age management project had been implemented in the Swedish public sector.

The project stems from the insights of increased sick leave in the organisation, especially among employees aged over 55. In 2003, the sickness absence per employee had increased by 10.8 days since 1997 and the absenteeism among staff between 55 and 65 years was higher than average. This group had an average of 38.8 sick days per year, compared to the average in the organisation of 24.2 sick days. Furthermore, Kronoberg is a small county with only one large city, and the region experienced a sinking population. In combination with a relatively high outward youth migration, the county council was expecting shortage of labour. The issue of rapidly increasing sick leave in the entire labour market was also a matter of great concern for the government at the time, and the project received funding from a national action plan to counteract this. The project had a budget of SEK 3 million (EUR 350 000), whereof 1.1 million was granted by the government, as part of an initiative to strengthen health and working environment in the public sector.

The overall objective of the project was to adopt an age-management approach by improving the ability of employees aged over 55 to stay at work and to create a positive attitude among management in relation to its own and other employees' ageing. More concretely, the objective has been to try the instrument

‘age management’, as developed by the Finnish researcher Juhani Ilmarinen, in practice. The implemented age management strategies include career guidance meetings for employees over age 55, a mentor programme to facilitate knowledge transfer between younger and older employees, learning centres where employees can take part of education near their workplaces.

## 5.2. Guidance activities

### 5.2.1. Identification of activities

Initially, the organisation tried to adopt an age management approach by improving the ability of employees aged over 55 to stay at work. The organisation wanted to create a positive attitude among management in relation to ageing, which led to a focus on increasing management’s ability to create individual solutions that took into account older employees’ strengths and weaknesses, and to develop a more person-focused leadership approach that would benefit all employees, irrespective of age. The initial initiative resulted in a set of age management-strategies designed to retain older employees, to improve their conditions and the opportunities to share their skills. The second part of the initiative was to implement those age management strategies.

The strategies included:

- (a) skills training for managers – a plan for manager training regarding issues such as age awareness and working environment, was prepared to ensure that the first part of the initiative was implemented in everyday activities;
- (b) using pensioners as substitutes – employees at two of the council’s facilities could continue to work as substitutes after retirement when they reached 64 years of age;
- (c) career guidance meetings at 55 years of age – to help employees plan the next 10 to 12 years of their working lives with regard to health, absenteeism, etc. During the meetings the employees got the opportunity to discuss possible changes or renewals of working tasks/responsibilities;
- (d) mentorship programme – skills-transfer programme implemented at one of the council’s facilities. By letting older employees serve as mentors for younger employees, the purpose with the mentorship programme was to facilitate transfer of valuable knowledge. Enhancing workers’ employability by keeping all employees skills up-to-date;
- (e) learning centre – the council set up local learning centres that used modern techniques and where workers could pursue formal education or other training, flexibly and at their own pace;

- (f) validation – the council planned to validate experience-based knowledge so that workers more easily could move between job categories or employers;
- (g) the set up of a career and counselling centre to facilitate career planning;
- (h) revisions of policy documents – policy documents were revised to reflect the initiative's age management strategies. The human resources policy was revised to reflect age awareness and person focused management.

While some measures were implemented in the whole organisation, others were implemented in specific units of the organisation. In the beginning of the project, the Ljungby hospital, the psychiatry unit and the service unit for food and cleaning participated in the project.

#### **5.2.2. Description of guidance activities**

The adopted age management strategies had a quite clear focus on guidance. In the following paragraphs the specific guidance activities are described in more detail.

Firstly, a career guidance meeting was arranged individually with all the 55-year olds. During the guidance meetings employees were given the opportunity to discuss and plan the coming 10-12 years of their work-life and express wishes about change of work tasks, positions, etc. For example, one meeting led to a job swap between a kitchen assistant and a cleaner.

The learning centre had the aim to empower employees and raise skills. On the learning centres the employees could participate in formal distance education delivered via modern technology, often on an individual basis. The employees also had the opportunity to receive counselling and support in pedagogical and administrative matters, and meet other students in similar situations. The learning centres were physical spaces located near the workplaces to increase the willingness among employees to take part in training. The intended plan was to set up three learning centres in the area.

At the career and counselling centre employees were informed about occupational paths at higher ages. As the learning centre, the career and counselling centre was a physical space. At the centre the employees received counselling and advice from educational advisors, the Public Employment Services, the Social Insurance Agency and from the County Council. Guidance and counselling enabled the employees to become better informed about different career paths, including change of working tasks.

The mentorship programme had the aim to distribute knowledge and skills from older to younger employees and thereby address the challenges caused by persons with key qualifications going into retirement. The initial aim was to establish a formal mentorship programme during a longer period, but due to

financial difficulties this could not be implemented. Mentorship, as a knowledge transferring function, is now always used when introducing new employees to the organisation.

Educational courses and seminars for the managers were first held by the consultancy company. These courses focused primarily on age management in the broader meaning, and specific guidance activities could then be elaborated by the heads of divisions, which also happened. The actual providers of guidance (in the activities mentioned above) were thus internal actors, primarily managers. During the initial phase all managers were given education and training in the guidance activities, and guidelines were available. The managers took part in, for example, seminars focused on leadership and age awareness (such as prejudices and workability among older workers). The seminars were led by consultants specialised in age management.

### **5.2.3. Description of methods**

Older employees had guidance activities targeted towards them as individuals, via the career guidance meetings at 55 years of age. According to the guidelines of the career guidance meetings at 55 years of age, all employees above that age should be given an opportunity to plan their future working life together with their manager. This guidance talk should be given once a year. During the guidance meetings, the employee discusses his/hers future working life together with the manager. The manager thus provides guidance on future career paths after listening to the employee's needs and wishes. The career meetings were voluntary.

The degree of involvement differs between different activities, but in all activities the demands on management involvement are at least as high as the demands on employee involvement. Participation is voluntary. For example, learning centres demanded more involvement of employee, while the skills training for managers (focusing on work environment and age awareness) required managers' involvement. Most of the guidance activities were an initiative of the employee, this includes attending the learning centre where the employee attended lifelong learning activities and taking part in the career meetings where employees discussed their future working life. The kinds of skills developed depend on the employees' needs. Most activities in the learning centres were electronically supported learning and teaching (e-learning). The learning centres were particularly aimed towards assistant nurses in psychiatry, who often lacked formal education and therefore had low employability. On the learning centres the assistant nurses could take part in formal distance education, such as different vocational education and training courses (Interviewee: Svensson).

Both face to face channels of information and channels based on guidance centres have been used in this project. On the learning centres, the employees could take part in online education (e-learning). Otherwise, guidance was mostly provided face to face, such as during the career guidance meetings at 55 years of age.

Different methods were used in the education phase when managers were trained in leadership and age awareness. The methods include group discussions on issues raised (for example prejudices and workability among older workers), seminars and lecturing.

#### **5.2.4. Experiences with implementation**

The implementation of the instruments has been done through a project, with a project leader and project staff, consisting of human resources managers on different levels in the organisation. The decision makers governing the organisations have also been involved. More importantly, the human resources department and more or less all managers have been involved in the project. Dialogue with the trade unions has been cooperative throughout the project. Older employees were the target group of the initiative. They received information through different channels and had the opportunity to attend different types of guidance activities, such as career guidance meetings where employees planned their future working years with their manager, a mentorship programme where older employees transferred skills to younger, and education and training via a local learning centre focusing on e-learning, located near the workplace. Trained managers are the channels of guidance activities, through individual career planning meetings.

An external consultancy firm called Age management in Sweden AB was involved, especially in the initial phases of the project, arranging seminars and workshops with the project leaders and managers at different levels of the organisations. The initiative had no clear framework (of monitoring/control mechanisms) to start with, instead lectures were given to key persons, such as heads of divisions, the trade unions, the human resources department and the consultants, and then the initiative was elaborated. It was then also adapted to the different divisions, as each head of division made plans for how the specific division would adopt the age management practices.

One of the planned initiatives was stopped due to barriers in the implementation. The idea was to enable older employees in the health care units to switch job to less physically demanding jobs in the elderly care. Young employees in the elderly care often wish to switch to the medical services, but may lack the formal skills. The initiative was planned to establish an arena where

employees could receive guidance in the form of education and thereby develop the needed competence and then switch from medical services to elderly care. However, the two functions are handled by two different employers, the municipality and the county. The difficulties this raised were too difficult to solve (interviewee: Svensson).

Another barrier was the lack of time. Managers already had difficulties to handle all their tasks, and the project was by viewed by some as a source of additional work tasks. (interviewee: Johansson).

A third barrier was a fire, which generated unusual public scrutiny, due to high media coverage, for instance in national television. The organisation was accused of lacking fire-protection knowledge, and thus focus from the management was moved from age management to fire-protection issues (interviewee: Svensson; Johansson).

The consultants state in a report (Svensson, 2004b) that the lack of a study of the attitudes and existing policies before the initiative hindered a well-functioning implementation of the initiative and contributed to observed scepticism from some of the division managers.

### 5.3. Outcomes and results

Considerable effort was put in entrenching and anchoring the project in all levels of the organisation, such as the political administration, the human resources department and the central working environment committee. The unions have also been involved. Most instruments were at the time embedded in the human resources management, such as individual employee meetings. During the individual employee meetings, employees got the opportunity to discuss work performance, working conditions, career development and training with their manager. The interviewed manager, Doris Johansson, states that the entrenchment was one core success factor of this initiative. Still, the project leader, Ann-Sofie Svensson, wished that the programme was even better entrenched, to increase the impact in all divisions of the organisation.

On an individual level, the activities resulting in the most obvious short-term effects according to the interviewees are the career guidance meetings at 55 years of age – to help employees plan the next 10 to 12 years of their working lives with regard to health, absenteeism, etc. This has in the long term led to the possibility to switch work tasks if the present ones are experienced as tough or non-developing for the individual. They have also led to increased knowledge about career paths and educational trajectories, especially during the final years of working life before retirement.

On an individual level, the workplace located learning centre, where it was possible to undergo validation of prior learning and working experiences, was also of great importance.

On an organisational level, the long-term effect that all interviewees state is the increased focus on older workers as a resource, and not a burden. This has had the direct effect of the use of pensioners working in different parts of the organisation on an hourly basis when there is increased labour demand. Sick absence has also decreased and average actual pension rate is claimed to have been increased.

Although this was a small-scale project with limited resources, it has had a positive effect on the ability of the county council to keep its present employees and also to recruit new ones. The project has also attracted the attention from other organisations, which have increased their focus on issues related to an ageing workforce.

The project is characterised by the broad range of instruments and wide use of guidance. However, the evaluation showed that it has not functioned perfectly, and the employees and managers have not always trusted the intentions of the project, but it has given valuable experiences.

No quantitative indicators have been used in this initiative. The aim was to increase the pension age and decrease sick absence, but this has not been followed up.

It is difficult to assess the quality of the guidance provided. The interviewed trade union representative had no opinion about this. There is a high probability that it varies to a great extent depending on the individual manager. During the initial phase all managers were given education and training in the guidance activities by a consultancy company. The consultants' work resulted in general recommendations on how the county council should continue working with age management, which later worked as guidelines.

#### 5.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

The career guidance meetings at 55 years of age and above are according to the respondents a practice well worth spreading to other organisations. It is easily implemented and easy to understand, but must be preceded by a phase where the managers are educated in the specific needs, strengths and weaknesses of the older workforce. The organisation must also become able to provide new work tasks for employees who are worn out because of the present work tasks. On all accounts, this instrument has been the most widely used in the package and is believed to achieve good results also in other organisations. The



interviewed respondents believe that everything in the instrument – career guidance meetings for older employees – would be transferable to other situations and organisations. The project leader emphasised that it is important that the organisation and the manager closest to the employee, who leads the meeting, are ready to take necessary steps to actually improve the working situation for the employee.

Two evaluations of the programme have been made, and one final report from the project leader including some evaluation aspects. One was external, made by a researcher named Annica Svensson (2004b) at the regional university of Växjö. This evaluation presented some critical aspects of the programme, mostly concerning the entrenchment phase. The result showed that lack of communication led to vital information about the programme not being circulated enough at all levels of the organisation. The information about the programmes aim and activities were also perceived as unclear and vague. The other evaluation was made by the consultant and focused more on the first phases of the programme, concluding that the programme should have been anchored better in the organisation and that prior studies about attitudes towards older employees would have been useful, as a basis for the implementation phase.

A limiting factor was the somewhat hierarchical and decentralised organisation culture and structure of the organisation, giving rise to scepticism from the often very decentralised divisions of the organisation (interviewee: Svensson). Experience shows that the top management was very well informed about the practice, but the information did not reach lower managers and employees to the same extent due to the decentralised structure.

## 5.5. Conclusions

Active ageing, age management and guidance have all been vital parts of this project, the Age Management project in the Kronoberg County Council. It aims to create a social, psychological and physical working environment where older employees are seen as an essential resource for the organisation and where the individual employee are able and willing to stay in work at least till the age of 65. Guidance is used to increase awareness about possible career paths, both among managers and employees, and also to increase job satisfaction.

The career guidance meetings at 55 years of age is the most successful instrument in the package, much because it fits in well with the existing human resources structure, it is reasonably easy to understand for both managers and employees, but the difficulties lie in being able to meet the needs of the employee. Another instruments in the package were well developed, but did not



get the same kind of spread in the organisation, and must therefore be described as less effective. That was to a large extent due to the project structure, the project ended without having entrenched the instruments in the organisation. The change of human resources Director is also said to have a negative effect on the survival of some of the age management and guidance instruments.

It is difficult to assess the relevance of the context, or different aspects of the context. It is also difficult to assess the importance of the context in the transferability of the best practice. Of course some aspects are important; it is for instance easier to find new working tasks for older employees in a very large organisation as the case was here.

How effective were the instruments? As mentioned, the career guidance meetings which were introduced in the beginning of the programme in 2003, were much used, many years after the project. The purpose of the guidance meeting was to allow employees to discuss and plan the following 10-12 years of their careers with guidance support. This frequently resulted in employees over the age of 55 switching job tasks. There are no statistics on the extent to which this has happened, as the organisation is very decentralised and it is up to the managers to decide when such requests are responded to.

It is however clear that lifelong guidance was the most essential aspect in this age management project, and that the project in that respect has been a forerunner in Swedish age management projects. Few of the instruments were focused exclusively on older employees. Instead, the project focused on a continuous process that enabled employees at any age and at any point in their working lives to have access to guidance activities such as training, education and validation of prior learning and thereby increasing their capacities, raising their skills and supporting them in their learning and career paths.

## 5.6. List of interviewees

Ann-Sofie Svensson, Project leader Age Management project, Kronoberg County Council.

Doris Johansson, Head of Administration in the Service Division, Kronoberg County Council.

Sven Bondesson, Trade union representative, the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union, Kronoberg County Council.

## 5.7. Literature list

- Kronoberg County Council (2012). *Årsredovisning 2011 [Annual report 2011]*.  
[http://www.ltkronoberg.se/upload/Dokument/Om\\_landstinget/Styrdokument/ARSREDOVISNING%202011%20SLUTLIG%2020120330%20till%20LF.pdf](http://www.ltkronoberg.se/upload/Dokument/Om_landstinget/Styrdokument/ARSREDOVISNING%202011%20SLUTLIG%2020120330%20till%20LF.pdf)
- Skoglund, B.; Skoglund, C. (2004). *Dokumentation av Age Management-projekt för Landstinget Kronoberg [Documentation of the Age Management project in Kronoberg County Council]*. Skoglund & Skoglund Age Management i Sverige
- Svensson, A.S. (2004a). *En fullt frisk 25-åring skall inte bli en fullt sjuk 55-åring [A perfectly healthy 25-year old should not be a fully sick 55-year old]*. Kronoberg County Council.
- Svensson, A. (2004b). *Förändrat ledarskap genom Age managementprojekt? En utvärdering av en förändringsprocess inom Landstinget Kronoberg [Changed leadership through Age management project? an evaluation of a change process within the Kronoberg county council]*. Växjö: Centre for Applied Social Science.

## CHAPTER 6.

# Schumann Haustechnik

### 6.1. Description of the approach

Located in Gardelegen (Sachsen-Anhalt), Schumann Haustechnik GmbH is a private company founded in 1995. The main fields of activity of this crafts enterprise are heating and sanitary installations as well as alternative power harvesting systems such as solar and heat pumps or wood and pellet-burning installations.

In total, there are eight employees<sup>(4)</sup> working for the company: four technicians, two service technicians who are trained in the professions heating-, sanitary-, ventilation- and electro-installations; one commercial office clerk and one accountant. The age of the employees ranges from 23 to 55 years.

The company started out very small and the staff structure has gradually developed over time. Nowadays, the staff structure also allows for the development of larger projects in a wider geographical area. This has had positive effects on the flexibility of the company and the autonomy of the technicians. The leadership style can be described as task-oriented.

The fundamental objective of the age management approach is to safeguard and further develop the continuation and the success of the company. With regard to personnel, this means safeguarding the employability of older employees, improving the practical know-how of younger employees (especially as older installations still need to be maintained) as well as raising motivation and commitment of both younger and older employees to the company. The approach thus involves all employees. As it is a company philosophy that, in principle, 'everyone knows how to handle everything', on-going information exchange among professions and posts is an important pillar.

In the year 2000 it became clear that new apprentices/young people willing to work in a craft company were increasingly difficult to find and retain. Therefore, the company owner, Detlef Schumann, together with his employees, started to think about ways to deal with an ageing workforce.

Schumann Haustechnik GmbH participated in the demographic initiative (*Demografie-Initiative*) initiated by the Federal Ministry of Education and

---

<sup>(4)</sup> In this case study, the term 'employees' refers to both blue-collar and white-collar workers.

Research (BMBF) from 2001 to 2003. This laid the foundations for intensively dealing with demographic change, the necessity of an age-appropriate working environment and the development of an appropriate company culture. Since then, the company has actively dealt with the issues of age management and management culture.

The approach addresses the following problems: ageing workforce (80% of the technicians will soon be older than 35 years); high employee turnover (due to high physical and psychological burdens and low personal perspectives); unsuitable apprentices who soon quit the company.

As Schumann Haustechnik GmbH is a small crafts company, there is no overall age management strategy of the organisation and the approach is rather practical and informal. To resolve the above stated problems, several targeted activities (that are described below) have been set by the company to tackle the causes to the extent possible.

Important contextual factors that have influenced/still influence the approach are:

- (a) structural conditions:
  - (i) political/industry level: a collective bargaining agreement for this craft ceased to exist more than a decade ago, but it does still exist for industrial <sup>(5)</sup> companies. Thus, industrial companies are able to offer young persons in this profession better working conditions (not outside at the construction site) and better payment;
  - (ii) economic/regional level: other small crafts companies in the industry also have problems to recruit young persons;
  - (iii) social: tendency towards higher education – young people are less interested in doing an apprenticeship;
- (b) factors which improve the success of the approach:
  - (i) input by the demographic initiative (also via regional training cooperation); and in this context
  - (ii) networking with other companies;
- (c) factors which limit the success of the approach:
  - (i) a larger industrial company in the same industry and region attracts young persons.

---

<sup>(5)</sup> Industrial enterprises usually are larger enterprises which rely more on production in plants and with machines. Many industrial enterprises originally developed from small crafts enterprises, so there is no exact definition in terms of size.

## 6.2. Guidance activities

Within the approach 'strategies to safeguard employee performance – competence for the company's benefit', the following activities have been set:

- (a) training of the owner-manager;
- (b) creation of mixed-age teams and mentorship;
- (c) further training (with focus on older employees);
- (d) counselling and re-training of an older employee;
- (e) utilisation of new technologies/materials/working methods;

All these activities contain elements of guidance that are described in the following paragraphs.

### 6.2.1. Description of guidance activities

Aim of the guidance activity:

- (a) training of the owner-manager: to gain insight into the possibilities in age management and management culture in order to be able to actively develop age management (and guidance) strategies for the company. To be able to empower older employees and inform them about training possibilities and occupational paths. To manage/guide his team accordingly;
- (b) creation of mixed-age teams and mentorship: to explore working alternatives and their possible implementation. Via the creation of mixed-age teams knowledge transfer and support of work tasks which engage old and young employees. Thereby, team members (one older and one younger person) mentor and assist each other in the areas of their competency;
- (c) further training (with focus on older employees): to specifically inform older employees on training possibilities and to ensure that training is provided in a way that all employees are able to regularly participate;
- (d) counselling and re-training of an older employee: counselling to identify the abilities of an individual employee after health problems and to explore alternatives to work as well as its implementation. Targeted retraining to assume new tasks and delegate those which are no longer possible to be fulfilled by the employee;
- (e) innovation/system change – use of new technologies/materials/working methods: to elaborate and implement options that allow for reduction of physical work for all;

Methods applied:

- (a) training of the owner-manager: Detlef Schumann has attended seminars and working groups organised by the demographic initiative in age management on topics such as personnel recruitment, employee dialogue, or optimisation

- of the operational organisation. In the seminars, experts provided information while in the working groups, the attendants were working in small teams on an age management topic;
- (b) creation of mixed-age teams and mentoring: the creation of mixed-age teams has been effected in group discussions (among all staff) and then in direct dialogue of the owner-manager with the employees in question. Between the two members of a mixed-age team there has to be certain sympathy for each other as they have to work together very closely and shall exchange knowledge and assistance. It is thus crucial to choose the right combination of people. Mentorship and knowledge transfer (learning from each other) functions in the way that older employees tend to be more experienced and can teach younger people; younger employees may be more flexible or faster and can relieve elders (physically). Mentoring and knowledge transfer are intended by the company, but there are no specific instructions on how to handle this issue. Nevertheless, both the younger and the older team member are informed that the older employee should instruct the younger employee on the job, whenever possible and appropriate;
  - (c) further training (with focus on older employees): in the framework of individual career planning, the company owner together with each employee elaborates development possibilities under consideration of knowledge, skills, needs and aims and established a qualification plan. In regular talks with each employee, the owner-manager compares an updated list of the actual competences of the employee with the requirements of the job/new developments in the job. Needs for further training and offers available are then discussed and a plan for training measures is made. The professional knowledge is then broadened by attending external seminars/lectures. These are organised by various stakeholders of the sector, who inform on new products and working techniques. The seminars/lectures are mostly held for a group of people (from different companies), not for an individual. They are offered in a mode that facilitates learning for older persons (topics: for example client service, new technologies, installations for senior citizens and persons with disabilities);
  - (d) counselling and re-training of an older employee: the changed situation of the employee and his/her needs are been assessed in a dialogue between the owner-manager and the employee because the owner identifies that the employee is no longer able to do his job due to health problems and that there is a risk of losing this employee without alternatives. In a follow-up meeting, the owner-manager informs the employee about other fields of activity and together they assess the re-training need by comparing already

- existing competences of the employee with requirements of the aspired position. The employee is then trained by attending a seminar together with others and receiving one-on-one on-the-job training from a colleague;
- (e) use of new technologies/materials/working methods: many changes happen in the work flow 'automatically' (ideas are discussed directly). But there are also regular round-table meetings at the end of the working day, where all employees gather and discuss new technologies, alternative material, work methods, etc. Possible ways to facilitate work are discussed together.

The choice for a specific method is effected due to the available offer (e.g. the method "seminar" for the training of the owner-manager); to allow for a good cooperation among all parties involved (methods 'group discussion/dialogue' for the creation of mixed-age teams); due to the expected effectiveness (method 'individual career planning' for further training); methods 'dialogue/information about other fields of activity/assessment of the re-training needs' for re-training of an older employee; method 'round-table meeting' for the use of new technologies/materials/working methods).

For most guidance activities, no extensive financing is needed. Further training, with focus on older employees, is responsible for most financial needs. The training of the owner-manager took place in the framework of the demographic initiative, which also required self-financing.

#### **6.2.2. Description of methods**

The activities and methods are not formalised within the company, but some of them are described in the online toolkit <sup>(6)</sup> of the demographic initiative (and on the website of the INQA initiative respectively). Thus, some methods applied are in line with used and prescribed methods by other organisations.

Concerning the level of guidance – for the activities 'training of the owner-manager' and 're-training of an older employee', the guidance is aimed at individuals; for the activity 'creation of mixed-age teams' it is aimed at groups; for the activity 'further training (with focus on older employees)' it can be aimed at

---

<sup>(6)</sup> See <http://www.demowerkzeuge.de/index.php>. This toolkit has been developed in the course of the networking project 'demographic initiative' and has been financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Within the demographic initiative, university researchers, unions, representatives of employers and small crafts entrepreneurs in various provinces of Germany worked together to analyse demographic change in small enterprises and develop personnel management tools such as: demography-oriented personnel analysis and planning; personnel recruiting; further training and personnel development; personnel placement; health secure and promotion; handling of retirement; enterprise culture.

individuals or groups, and for the activity 'use of new technologies/materials/working methods' it is aimed at the whole team.

All employees are, in principle, the target group of guidance concerning their education/skills level, position, workload or age. Besides the target group, the owner-manager and external experts <sup>(7)</sup> of the demographic initiative are involved in the guidance process. The owner-manager benefited from information and training in seminars organised by the demographic initiative that in turn uses experts with university background <sup>(8)</sup> (cooperation between university and craft companies).

All employees are involved in guidance activities and may actively participate. There is no formal personnel management strategy. The channel that is mostly used is face-to-face communication (with one employee or in the group); everything is handled rather informal.

At the beginning, the owner-manager received training. The training has been finalised in 2003, but the owner-manager actively seeks information on current developments via the demographic initiative. The creation of mixed-age teams is in principle finalised, but when it is necessary, the composition of the teams can be changed.

Further training (with focus on older employees) is a continuing activity; during a year, each employee attends approximately 4-6 trainings that are rather short to ensure that participants can concentrate (3-4 hours). The seminars are paid by the owner-manager and are organised by various stakeholders of the sector, who inform on new products and working techniques. The seminars/lectures mostly were for a group of persons. Employees shall remain in a learning flow, i.e. they are regularly sent to training.

The re-training of an older employee has been finalised within a short period. The re-trained older employee attended a seminar to be a service technician (former technician). The employee received this training by attending a seminar together with others and one-on-one from his colleague on the job. Debate about the usage of new technologies/materials/working methods is held frequently. The owner-manager pays for the training. The seminars are organised by various

---

<sup>(7)</sup> Management consultants, trainers as well as experts in demographic change who have completed training recognised by INQA.

<sup>(8)</sup> E.g. from the Gesellschaft für Arbeitsschutz- und Humanisierungsforschung mbH (GfAH; <http://www.gfah.de/>), the Institut für Sozialforschung und Sozialwirtschaft (iso; <http://www.iso-institut.de/>) or the Institut für Arbeitssystemgestaltung und Personalmanagement GmbH (IAP; <http://www.iap-institut.de/>).



stakeholders of the sector, who inform on new products and working techniques. The seminars/lectures mostly were for a group of persons

### **6.2.3. Experiences with implementation**

The issues linked to recruiting young persons/apprentices have not been fully solved yet. Due to the small size of the enterprise, formalised procedures for guidance do not seem necessary. It is more important for the owner-manager to be informed, open and available for the employees to discuss issues when they appear.

When creating mixed-age teams, special care has to be taken to ensure that the individual employees can work well together. Thus, the idea of creating mixed-age teams has to be presented and thoroughly discussed, in bilateral talks with the manager and all persons involved have to be given the opportunity to express whom they wish to work with. This becomes less relevant when people of similar age work together, since the experience and the background do not differ too much. In most cases, the mixed-age teams worked out well. When Schumann started with mixed-age teams there was one team where the colleagues cooperate as well. This situation was solved by exchanging team members with another team.

The demographic initiative was important to start the process, to obtain background information on demographic change and work and how this can be dealt with. This initiative serves as information pool to exchange actual study results, reports on the situation in companies and their approaches for different industries and target groups. The initiative also runs a website with descriptions of instruments/methods for a demographic personnel policy (20 selected ways to proceed that have been tested in praxis).

The quality of the implementation of the approach at Schumann Haustechnik GmbH is measured continuously by the owner-manager. He monitors employees interaction, attitudes towards work and the feedback of employees and clients.

## **6.3. Outcomes and results**

The major effects of the approach on individual level are: knowledge about educational processes, changes in job profiles/activities, job-life satisfaction, motivation as well as increasing skills and competences.

Day-to-day business is working better and clients see that the technicians are dealing well with all situations. Clients recommend the company.

At organisational level, both quantity and quality have risen. The social balance achieved via mixed-aged teams helped to ameliorate work processes and client contact.

Mixed-age teams are especially successful in dealing with complex tasks, as competencies such as the ability to solve problems, dealing with conflicts or stress and creativity may vary among the different age groups and young and old may complement each other.

Knowledge transfer from old to young has been improved by the creation of mixed-age teams and is thus kept within the company.

Concerning the effects on society, the costs of unemployment of elder persons have certainly been prevented, especially by the activity 're-training of an older employee'. Schumann Haustechnik GmbH has been presented as good practice and rewarded for their approach.

The company has increased their range of products in terms of senior and disability accessible installations: now, they are also selling sanitary solutions that are better meeting older clients' needs.

#### 6.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

As a starting point, this approach emphasised reducing stress at work and quality over quantity. By establishing a good basis for dialogue with the employees, the entrepreneur learned to identify potential problems quickly. It was important to feedback to employees on good results due to improved work flows and reduced stress. The company succeeded in bringing old and young together, which laid at the core of their approach.

The guidance elements in all the activities set were important to deal with the individual situation in an appropriate way and to let the employees know that they are valued. The owner-manager benefits from a good feed-back culture, as in most cases he is not at the construction site himself and therefore has to rely on the information given by the employees. Adaptations can only be made when events and problems are openly and commonly discussed (round table meetings at the end of the day take place once a week). There are no formal impact assessments or evaluation results, but working climate, motivation and commitment have improved.

As concerns transferability, Detlef Schumann stresses that the appreciation of both young and old is crucial. A good and open discussion climate within the company and an active interest of the management in the wellbeing of the employees are conducive to the motivation of the staff. The approach, the activities and the methods appear to be easily transferable, especially for smaller

craft companies. Certainly, re-training possibilities are limited as technicians at construction sites are necessary and not everybody can switch to office work when ageing. Such possibilities are more limited in smaller companies. For a transfer to larger companies, the approach, the activities and the methods would need to be more formalised and documented. While physical strength is an issue in this craft company, in a services company, psychological burdens would rather be in the focus, but activities and methods might need to be adapted accordingly.

In this specific case, the wish for the contribution of policy-makers would be to improve the framework conditions (e.g. same minimum wage in small crafts and in industrial enterprises), to closely look at the situation in the construction sector and of smaller craft companies there. A company like Schumann Haustechnik GmbH can successfully implement age management and guidance strategies, but without the possibility to recruit young apprentices as well, the whole strategy will fail in the long run.

## 6.5. Conclusions

The overall approach 'strategies to safeguard employee performance – competence for the company's benefit' is concise and effective. Via different activities that complement each other it has helped to raise motivation and skills, safeguard workplaces and bring the company forward.

While the different activities and the guidance methods applied have made age management a success at Schumann Haustechnik GmbH, there are contextual factors that have to be accepted as they cannot be changed by a small company. Networking and the exchange of information and experiences via the demographic initiative proved to be very helpful. The fact that larger industrial companies in the sector are located nearby and can offer better working conditions and better payment is a barrier.

But as most enterprises are rather small, a case study that informs about age management and guidance activities implemented by a small craft enterprise in the construction sector can thus help to give rather small enterprises an idea of what can effectively be done in an informal and practical way.

## 6.6. List of interviewees

Detlef Schumann, Owner and manager  
Schumann Haustechnik GmbH & Co.; Am Lindenberg 4; 39638 Gardelegen;  
Germany  
e-mail: [info@haustechnik-schumann.de](mailto:info@haustechnik-schumann.de)  
Tel.: +49 3907 739408

## 6.7. Literature and Links

Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes (2012). *Erfolg kennt kein Alter: Gute Beispiele für die erfolgreiche Gestaltung von Altersvielfalt* [Success knows no age: Good examples for the successful design of age diversity. Berlin: Federal Anti-Discrimination Office  
[http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Broschuere-Good-Practice-Altersvielfalt-20121126.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Broschuere-Good-Practice-Altersvielfalt-20121126.pdf?__blob=publicationFile)  
INQA– Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit/Good Practice  
[http://www.inqa.de/EN/Learn-more\\_Good-Practice/content.html](http://www.inqa.de/EN/Learn-more_Good-Practice/content.html)

## CHAPTER 7.

# Wicke

### 7.1. Description of the approach

The family business Wicke GmbH + Co. KG was established in 1866 and is located in Sprockhövel/North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany. This metal industry enterprise is a leading specialist in the development and production of wheels for heavy loads and transport rollers as well as the relevant system components.

Wicke has production facilities in Germany, the Czech Republic and People's Republic of China and employs, in total around 850 persons including the world-wide sales organisation. At the headquarters in Sprockhövel there are around 230 employees; 80% of these are workers or employees with relevant professional qualifications. While in the 1990s, most staff was aged between 20 and 29, in the 2010s, the majority is aged between 40 and 49. Around 30% of the 175 workers (blue collar) and 35% of the 55 employees (white collar) are now already more than 50 years old.

Wicke regularly conducts demographic analysis of their workforce and as early as 2005, they chose to react proactively. To motivate an ageing workforce to stay within the company by offering adequate workplaces as well as ensuring that important knowledge is not lost in cases of retirement, Wicke has begun to develop a systematic concept to cope with demographic change and takes the chances such a situation offers. The personnel and age management strategy covers all employees.

As part of the enterprise philosophy, the managers are in close contact with all workers and employees. This is also illustrated by the corporate standards, which, for example, includes the support of constructive cooperation of all staff. Another corporate standard is the transfer of knowledge (that shall be effected and developed further by means of Nova.PE, see below).

The Wicke PE-Haus (*Wicke Personal Entwicklungs-Haus*; Wicke Personnel Development House) is a systematic and integrated strategy that looks at personnel management by considering demographic change. The strategy is visualised in form of a house; with a foundation, a ground floor, first and second floor as well as a roof. The second floor is dedicated to demography and the rooms display the demography master plan that has been developed in 2005 (implementation is foreseen until the end of 2013). Within this demography master plan, the following topics are addressed:

- (a) operational career planning: systematic qualification needs evaluation (referring to both a position and the qualification wishes of a person) and training planning is effected for all workers/employees;
- (b) personnel development: in the years before 2005, the focus laid on the acquisition of new skilled workers, not only for the need of the company but also to counteract the lack of skilled workers in the region. The company trains apprentices in the in crafts-technical as well as in the commercial field. The subject knowledge transfer, i.e. the drain of specific knowledge by the pensioning-off of workers/employees, was an important problem to be worked on. This led to the elaboration of a structured, systematic proceeding and thus the application of Nova.PE (the approach that is described in detail in this case study);
- (c) work organisation and workplace: from 2005 to 2007, age-mixed teams were introduced and with the knowledge transfer approach maintained further until now. This is also connected with continuous workplace redesign (e.g. assembly workplaces were ergonomically reorganised – under consideration of staff recommendations). The existing job rotation is being developed further;
- (d) working time arrangements: to allow staff to glide into retirement, Wicke applies the instrument of (supported) part-time work for older workers/employees;
- (e) health management: at the end of 2008, a project for workplace health promotion together with the AOK (compulsory health insurance) has been introduced. In the framework of this project, a catalogue of measures has been developed and implemented. Although initially intended for older employees, it made sense to open up health management activities for all employees.

The main objective of the EQUAL development partnership Nova.PE in North Rhine-Westphalia is to support small and medium enterprises in preserving and expanding their innovative capacity in times of demographic change. Unlike in large enterprises, essential enterprise-specific knowledge in SMEs is often tied to individual people; for example staff who have built up the company.

With Nova.PE, the project partners have developed a procedure for the sustainable and effective transfer of knowledge among staff which has already been applied successfully at Wicke and in several other enterprises. Such a knowledge transfer becomes necessary when older, experienced workers or employees are approaching retirement age and successors need to be prepared for taking over the position. In many cases, these successors are themselves aged 45+, as it is the higher hierarchical positions that are to be filled.

From the actual situation of an individual worker's or employee's exit from the company, the necessity of a standard solution for such a problem can be derived. Thus, to make an enterprise sustainably demography-resistant, a periodically returning personnel process to check retirement risks of indispensable informal knowledge and to eventually initiate transfer processes is implemented.

## 7.2. Guidance activities

### 7.2.1. Identification of guidance activities

As outlined above, within the framework of the Wicke PE-Haus, a range of approaches and guidance activities for workers and employees of all age groups are implemented within the company. The knowledge transfer process Nova.PE, which is a core approach at Wicke, is now described in more detail in this case study. Nova.PE consists of two processes:

- (a) the personnel process;
- (b) the transfer process.

Nova.PE has been developed in a partnership of enterprises (Wicke being one) and universities/management consultancies. The whole project and all methods applied are formalised and well described.

### 7.2.2. Description of guidance activities

The aim of the personnel process is to acquire and retain the competencies that are indispensable for the enterprise and to identify important knowledge carriers within the group of staff who will retire in the near future. Thereby, older workers or employees gain insight into their own, often unconscious, specific skills and thus their importance for the enterprise.

In the framework of a mandatory annual personal interview with the executive (direct supervisor), indispensable knowledge (of staff aged 55+) is assessed and documented. Detailed enterprise and/or area-specific checklists are used to elaborate personal profiles of the staff and to document his or her specific expert competencies. Besides personal profiles, knowledge profiles for an area or for the whole enterprise can be elaborated as well.

The personnel process is supported by the IT-tool 'competency pilot' (*Kompetenzpilot*). The IT-tool was developed in the framework of Nova.PE by the EQUAL development partnership. It was not only developed for Wicke, but for any enterprise that implements Nova.PE. It serves the following functions: visualisation of indispensable competencies according to areas and age groups;

elaboration of differentiated personal profiles for individuals; organisation of knowledge transfer processes as well as elaboration of transfer plans.

If the result of the personnel process determines the need for a transfer process, it is decided when, among whom, and with which contents the transfer process shall be implemented. Although a transfer process is not mandatory, participation is recommended and in most cases knowledge provider and receiver are both interested (after the benefits for each party have been discussed).

The aim of the transfer process is to process the indispensable knowledge from knowledge giver to knowledge taker in a well-structured and documented manner and thereby empower the latter to adequately fill his/her new position.

The transfer of knowledge is conducted in a methodical, didactically flanked and moderated teaching and learning process. A neutral transfer coach assists the knowledge giver and they together elaborate a 'knowledge tree' (where the roots represent sources of knowledge, the trunk stands for core competencies and the fruits represent activities of the knowledge giver). Thereby, the knowledge provider becomes aware of his/her own specific competencies and understands the importance of his/her work.

The personal profile and the knowledge tree then serve as input for the elaboration of the transfer plan, which in turn is the basis for the actual transfer process. The transfer plan documents: transfer areas, contents, progress and successes, methods, timing.

In the transfer process, that is accompanied and moderated by the transfer coach, the knowledge provider and the knowledge receiver (one to maximum three persons) meet face-to-face for approximately one hour upon scheduled appointments which are integrated into every-day work, and discuss the different topics. The transfer coach helps upon the decision of methods for knowledge transfer to ensure that the process is not only 'teaching of' but also 'asking for', for example, specific handling procedures.

In the implementation phase, both the personnel process and the transfer process are assisted by external experts of the four partners in the Nova.PE project (see below). Nevertheless, the intention is also to train an internal knowledge carer that will be responsible for future knowledge transfer projects.

For Wicke, no participation cost in the Nova.PE project arose, besides investment of time for the counselling and qualification/training activities. Approximately 10 consulting and approximately 20 qualification days are offered free of charge and knowledge management software is provided (in the framework of EQUAL, the project is funded by the European Social Fund and the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs).



According to Wicke, longer Nova.PE processes also pay off as important knowledge stays in the company. Although familiarisation phases in new positions may take quite some time and additional cost occur when two people work in the same position for a while, the knowledge receiver familiarises much faster and is for the next years much better able to fulfil the tasks of his/her new position.

### 7.2.3. Description of methods

With the IT tool Nova.PE-competence-pilot companies get detailed information about the allocation of knowledge (skills and abilities) of their older employees. Based on this data the intergenerational transfer of competencies can be transformed in a systematic and sustainable way.

Guidance is primarily aimed for individuals; nevertheless there can in principle be up to three knowledge receivers. Target groups are people aged 55+ (knowledge givers) and their successors, who in many cases can also be counted in the group of elderly staff as, for example at Wicke, such knowledge transfers mainly became necessary for leading positions.

The Nova.PE implementation process within an SME is accompanied by four external subprojects (designed in the framework of the overall project and carried out by the partners of the development partnership):

- (a) the Chair for work organisation and work structuring of the Ruhr University Bochum (*Lehrstuhl für Arbeitsorganisation und -gestaltung*) develops processes, methods and instruments for the analysis of enterprise-specific knowledge which are, in cooperation with the other three subprojects, continuously adapted to the needs of the respective enterprise;
- (b) the management consultancy Bkp GbR Unternehmensberatung collects and analyses the competencies of the staff of the age group 55+ and provides process instructions, competency check lists, decision guidance, etc.;
- (c) ZWAR e.v. initiates and plans the knowledge transfer between knowledge giver and knowledge taker; documentation and success monitoring is now effected by means of a target agreement in the transfer plan;
- (d) the Centre for Continuing Education of the University Dortmund (*Zentrum für Weiterbildung*) supports the implementation of an IT-supported knowledge management tool.

Both the knowledge provider and the knowledge receiver(s) are strongly and actively involved in the process. While the knowledge provider summarises the information to be transferred, through his/her questions and further information needs, the knowledge receiver defines what of the available and prepared information is actually needed and what should additionally also be discussed.

The personnel manager (head of the human resources department) approaches potential knowledge receivers directly and discusses face-to-face. The human resources manager then defines the actual need for knowledge transfer with the knowledge giver and his/her superior. A successor is sought internally or externally (hiring) in due time to allow for a smooth knowledge transfer. For leading positions, successors are often aged 45+ and thus, older workers/employees especially benefit from the possibility to take their time to fill the new position and to be able to ask for informal knowledge.

While the knowledge provider is asked which contents are important to be transferred, the knowledge receiver is, separately, asked about his/her expectations on what to learn by the transfer coach (or later on an internal 'personnel carer' who has accompanied prior transfers within the company). Interestingly, there is always a gap of between 30% to 50% in the contents that either would have not been considered by the knowledge provider or not expected/asked for by the knowledge receiver. This is knowledge that would have been lost without such a structured transfer procedure.

Thus, it is important that, from the knowledge tree and the expectations of the knowledge taker, the personnel department pre-structures issues and questions to be discussed in the transfer process. In the first meeting of knowledge provider and knowledge receiver together with the transfer coach, the transfer plan is elaborated and documented. The transfer methods used in process range from discussion of the knowledge tree, interviews, open discussion, work shadowing, etc.; they are chosen in relation to the topic and the needs of the involved persons. A transfer plan is detailed enough, when it is clear for the knowledge receiver how the desired learning target can be achieved by the predetermined date.

Knowledge transfer can thus be carried out, for example, in moderated meetings of one hour every two weeks for a certain period of time (depending on how much knowledge needs to be transferred; lasting for some weeks or months). At Wicke, on average, it takes 10 to 12 such meetings to elaborate the transfer plan. The transfer process, which takes place in regular meetings close to every-day work, where the knowledge taker can also practically try out what he/she has learned and where he/she also has the obligation to document the transferred knowledge, on average lasts for one year (for internal successors, shorter for external successors).

Besides the annual personal interviews, all staff at Wicke is informed about the Nova.PE procedure, there is a staff newspaper that regularly reports on personnel management issues as well as information from the works committee and diverse activities, social events, etc. The approach is well accepted.

#### **7.2.4. Experiences with implementation**

When Nova.PE has been developed in the frame of the EQUAL partnership, Wicke has been one of the first enterprises to implement the procedure in practice. Nova.PE has meanwhile become a standard in personnel management of the company and is still used. The first such personnel and knowledge transfer processes have been implemented together with and accompanied by the above mentioned external partners of the sub projects. As foreseen by Nova.PE, the personnel manager in these first projects got acquainted with the process and now assumes the tasks of a 'personnel carer'; i.e. external partners are no longer necessary.

Initially, Nova.PE did not foresee controlling activities. Wicke elaborated and implemented a quality control process for this knowledge transfer in their enterprise. Therefore, for each topic that is listed in the transfer plan, the knowledge taker has to mark the stage of transfer separately every two weeks (i.e. red = not yet worked on; yellow = currently worked on; green = transfer completed).

This has become necessary to stress the importance of continuous work on the transfer process (as in some cases, after the elaboration of comprehensive transfer plans, people saw written results, became exhausted and commitment declined).

The EQUAL partnership has ended and the project Nova.PE is now no longer managed by the University of Bochum but has been out sourced and taken over by management consultancies who now – with costs – also counsel and guide transfer processes for larger enterprises.

### **7.3. Outcomes and results**

All approaches of the Wicke PE-Haus have been initiated to retain and acquire skilled workers/employees. There is low personnel fluctuation, an open communication culture and high trust.

Until the end of 2012, there have been 13 Nova.PE processes since the implementation of the approach at Wicke. Nova.PE has in most cases been applied to fill leading positions; but there were also two cases of foremen and one quality expert with specific knowledge that would have been difficult to transfer otherwise.

The age of the knowledge receivers varies from 35 to 50 years; as people aged 45+ will have to work for 20 more years, at Wicke they are of course welcomed and encouraged to step forward in their career and take over higher hierarchical positions.

In all cases of knowledge-transfer in the framework of Nova.PE, both knowledge provider and knowledge receiver were interested and willing to cooperate and exchange.

Many knowledge providers report that they first felt sceptical but then respected and valued it when the personnel manager approached them and asked them to become knowledge providers. In the process they learned that there are few persons in the enterprise who have their specific knowledge and that such knowledge is valuable and thus worth to be preserved and transferred.

Knowledge receivers state that familiarisation with their new tasks was facilitated and much easier than expected due to competent advice (mainly from the knowledge provider but also from those accompanying the process) being available. They felt encouraged to assume new responsibilities and appreciated the smooth and well-structured familiarisation period.

The knowledge that is essential for the future of the enterprise stays within the enterprise. The approach for example ensures that external contacts, that have often been acquired and cared for by a specific person over years, can be kept and that the knowledge taker is acquainted with and introduced to them.

The face-to-face interviews with the knowledge provider and the knowledge receiver(s) on the intended information transfer and expected information receiving clearly show that due to the structured procedure knowledge receivers integrate much more information than they would in a normal on-the-job familiarisation procedure. Thereby, knowledge is also preserved within the company and is well documented for the future. This is especially useful in an SME (as there are around 230 workers and employees in Germany, Wicke considers itself as SME), where internal knowledge documentation, for example in the form of corporate Wikipedias, is not a standard.

The guidance that is offered within the approaches of the Wicke PE-House in general and in the Nova.PE process is essential and an important contribution to enable life-long learning in SME and active age management.

The short and effective familiarisation periods of successors show that Nova.PE has been implemented successfully and thus, also future knowledge transfer processes will be arranged in such a way.

#### 7.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

Such a knowledge transfer can only be successful when both parties, knowledge provider and knowledge receiver(s), feel that they may benefit from the procedure. Thus, the manner in which these two parties, and especially the knowledge provider, are approached and asked to cooperate is crucial.

At Wicke, experts have clearly been commissioned by the management (i.e. the personnel manager who assumes the tasks of the Nova.PE personnel carer). The procedure and the tasks were firmly anchored, for example in the quality management system and in the target agreement system. Such a structured proceeding is necessary to ensure that as much informal knowledge as possible and necessary is transferred and documented.

The annual recurring knowledge screening in the personnel process assures that there is reliable information on the actual existing competencies and knowledge and that well-prepared transfer processes can be initiated at any time.

To ensure good cooperation of all involved parties and high acceptance of the process and the transfer coach within the enterprise (in the first Nova.PE projects there was an external coach, now the personnel manager assumes the tasks of a personnel carer as foreseen by Nova.PE), high social and methodological competency of the persons responsible is crucial for the process.

Although Nova.PE is very well documented, others who want to implement this particular approach should in the first cases, as foreseen, work together with experienced experts. Thereby, the responsible personnel manager of an enterprise can learn directly from these people and can then assume the tasks of a personnel carer to initiate and implement further knowledge transfer processes.

If policy-makers want to contribute to the facilitation of knowledge transfer processes and to the growth of knowledge in SME, they should actively promote and support a project such as Nova.PE.

## 7.5. Conclusions

Demographic change and the forthcoming retirement of key staff affect SMEs, as essential knowledge as well as experience might be lost. Knowledge needs to be preserved, transferred and documented within the enterprise and most of the smaller enterprises lack strategies and structures to do so. Moreover, there is also the issue of an ageing workforce which needs to be considered.

By establishing the Wicke PE-Haus, the company succeeded in elaborating a systematic and integrated strategy that looks at personnel management by considering various aspects of demographic change. The approach Nova.PE has proven to be very helpful for a guided, well-defined, structured and documented assessment and transfer of essential informal knowledge.

The approach Nova.PE is well documented and as has been developed specifically for SMEs and with scientific background, it can in principle be applied by any company that needs knowledge transfer.

In this process, guidance is offered on several levels: The implementation at the enterprise level is accompanied by Nova.PE experts who while working train an enterprise internal person (from the personnel department) to become future personnel carer and thus initiator and moderator of further knowledge assessment and transfer processes. The personnel process is assisted and the transfer process is coached. All this ensures that the whole procedure and all involved parties are optimally cared for.

## 7.6. List of interviewees

Peter Steinmann; Personnel manager, Wicke GmbH & Co. KG;  
Elberfelder Strasse 109; 45549 Sprockhövel; Germany  
e-mail: [steinmann@wicke.com](mailto:steinmann@wicke.com)  
Tel.: +49 202 2528-118

Roland von Gersum; Wicke GmbH & Co. KG; Elberfelder Strasse 109; 45549  
Sprockhövel; Germany  
e-mail: [gersum@wicke.com](mailto:gersum@wicke.com)  
Tel.: +49 202 2528-118

## 7.7. Literature and Links

Dortmunder Personalmanagement Prädikat (2010). *Die ausgezeichneten Unternehmen und ihre Konzepte. [The winning companies and their concepts]*. Dortmund: Verlag der Soziale Innovation.

[http://www.wicke.com/downloads/wicke\\_personalmanagement.pdf](http://www.wicke.com/downloads/wicke_personalmanagement.pdf)

*Equal Newsletter: LLL in KMU/Altersmanagement*, No 18, November 2006.

<http://www.equal.esf.de/Equal/Navigation/Publikationen/newsletter,did=170142,render=renderPrint.html>

INQA – Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit/Good Practice:

<http://www.inqa.de/DE/Lernen-Gute-Praxis/Handlungshilfen/Chancengleichheit-und-Diversity/novape-Damit-das-Know-how-im-Unternehmen-bleibt.html>

Nova.PE

<http://www.aog.rub.de/novape2/aktuelles.html>

*Personalführung* No 7/2006, Special, pp. 82-89.

[http://www.aog.rub.de/imperia/md/content/pdf/artikel\\_pf\\_07\\_2006.pdf](http://www.aog.rub.de/imperia/md/content/pdf/artikel_pf_07_2006.pdf)

Wicke

<http://www.wicke.com>

## CHAPTER 8.

# Achmea

### 8.1. Description of the approach

#### 8.1.1. General information about the organisation

Achmea Holding NV is one of the largest suppliers of financial services (mainly insurance) in the Netherlands employing 17 000 people.

During a company downsize in 2009-10 Achmea raised the question of how to deal with older employees. On the one hand there was the idea to lay off employees – in particular older workers – who had become redundant. On the other hand in the light of future shortages in the labour market, Achmea felt the need to extend the working life of older employees and to fully use their knowledge. Responding to the latter need, the Silver Pool was born.

Employees with the age of 57.5 plus who had become redundant had the choice between a lay off including a financial compensation or to join the Silver Pool. With the Pool Achmea chooses to derive maximum benefit from the knowledge and expertise of older employees.

#### 8.1.2. Development of the approach

Achmea applies the principles of social innovation and distinguishes the following career stages based on these principles:

- (a) initial stage: try and find (where do I want to go?);
- (b) ambition stage: development and career (I want to go!);
- (c) combination stage: care for children, dilemmas about tuning work/life (searching for balance);
- (d) expertise stage: knowledge transfer, many lives and work experience, reflection and sometimes reorientation, pillars of the organisation (meaning);
- (e) landing stage: tapering career, more attention to private situation (gradual reduction).

These stages are based on the life stages that Achmea sees and uses in their human resources policy.

In addition, Achmea operates an (internally organised) Transfer Centre since 2002 for internal horizontal or vertical job transfers of employees which have become redundant. The Silver Pool has arisen in an organisational environment in which lifetime employability, career development and social innovation are basic values, further stimulated by the downsizing in 2009-10.

### 8.1.3. Objectives of Silver Pool

The aim of the Silver Pool programme of Achmea is to promote employability and vitality in the silver stage of the career. It offers an innovative way of dealing with employees which have become redundant. The Silver Pool is an internal department within Achmea and as such part of Achmea Staff BV. The employee who uses the 57.5 plus scheme can become an employee of the Silver Pool department with retention of their salary. As a Silver Pool employee they are willing but also obliged to accept suitable temporary work. As a consequence, employees in the Silver Pool tackle all kinds of jobs, in the short or long term. As such the Silver Pool consists of skilled professionals that are committed to temporary work until retirement. Employees at this independent internal agency have priority over contractors and third parties.

The Silver Pool leads to a triple win-situation. For employees, the advantages are as follows:

- (a) flexibility in working hours as far as demand vacancy holder is followed (in case of a fulltime vacancy the flexibility is perhaps less than a part-time vacancy);
- (b) put in their work experience and qualities, further development of skills;
- (c) receive 100% salary (75% if there is no work).

The hiring manager has the following benefits:

- (a) short reaction time, employee has relevant knowledge of systems and practices;
- (b) pays only the hours worked at job;
- (c) rates are competitive versus external suppliers (the internal rates are lower and not subject to VAT).

Finally for Achmea the Silver Pool leads to cost savings (no external agency needed and/or consultants) and good employment.

## 8.2. Guidance activities

During the redeployment period of 39 weeks the Transfer Centre supports the reassignment candidate of 57.5 years and older actively in the search for a suitable job inside or outside Achmea. If the reassignment candidate does not succeed in finding a new job within this period he can choose from the following two options:

- (a) the employment contract is terminated by the employer under an award severance pay;



- (b) the contract will be continued under the conditions as stipulated in the Silver Pool scheme.

As stated before, the employee can choose which path suites him best. The employee can talk with his own manager about the possibilities.

The reassignment candidate can in principle only use the Silver Pool scheme when it has not been possible to come to a final relocation within the redeployment period. However, by way of derogation Achmea and the reassignment candidate can under certain conditions agree that the reassignment candidate join the Silver Pool before the end of the redeployment period. This is only possible when the reassignment candidate has completed his or her personal employability profile (PEP) and the Achmea Transfer Center has given permission for an early transition to the Silver Pool. The PEP is a personal plan regarding the competences and ambitions of the employee. This plan is the result of the reflection process of the transfer candidates who wish to use the Silver Pool follow.

People who choose to switch to the Silver Pool during or after their Transfer Centre period, first have a conversation with the career counsellor and with the manager of the Silver Pool. During this conversation the personal employability profile (PEP) and CV are discussed. Applicants must be proficient when they enter the Silver Pool.

All vacancies in Achmea are notified to the Transfer Centre of Achmea, including temporary vacancies. Interesting vacancies for the Silver Pool are selected. In addition, network contacts are used to find temporary work.

The Silver Pool/Achmea is committed to find a fitting job for its employees. It may include a final internal redeployment like work projects, replacement vacancies (for example in the case of maternity leave). All job and temporary work vacancies are first (internally) offered to the Transfer Centre and the Silver Pool. Suitable candidates in the Transfer Centre or the Silver Pool have priority in the application process for these jobs/temporary work. Only if it appears that no suitable candidates exist in the Transfer Centre or the Silver Pool, will the vacancy be placed on the internal vacancy website of Achmea.

Besides the efforts of Achmea, the reassignment candidate for the Silver Pool is expected to actively prepare himself or herself and accept suitable work, and have a positive attitude towards new job opportunities. The work must cover a minimum period of four consecutive weeks, unless otherwise agreed by mutual consent. The first selection (proposition) of possible suited candidates is done by the Silver Pool, but employees also have the opportunity to make their interest known to the Silver Pool organisation. If the reassignment candidate considers the proposed activities unsuitable he/she starts a dialogue with his supervisor of

the Silver Pool. In case of differing opinions, the question about the appropriateness is submitted to the manager of the Silver Pool and ultimately to the supervisory committee.

### 8.3. Outcomes and results

As stated before, the Silver Pool leads to a triple win-situation. Employees in the Silver Pool remain involved in the organisation. They feel motivated, are still learning every day and salary and pension payments continue. Achmea does not have to pay severance and hire expensive consultants is thus saving costs. For managers, it is attractive to deploy an employee of the Silver Pool. The employee is already familiar with the organisation, which saves time and they only pay the hours actually worked which saves money. Furthermore, the employees bring in seniority and experience. In addition, Achmea maintains a reputation as a good employer.

In January 2011 30 people were in the Silver Pool, which appear to be highly motivated employees. In December 2012 this number has grown to 73 people. The average employment rate was 64% in 2012. Matches are made on competences, the hiring managers are satisfied and in many cases the duration of the work is extended.

### 8.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

The major success factor is the fact that the Silver Pool results in a triple win situation which is also visible in the first results. For a good match it is important that employees are well motivated to accept a job opportunity and the managers are eager to hire an employee of the Silver Pool and see the benefits of hiring him or her.

However, there are additional steps to take. The Silver Pool should extend its visibility and network for further growth. Since Achmea is a nationally operating company, employees of the Silver Pool may live in various parts of the country. The travel distance may be a disadvantage for their employability. In one case, the Silver Pool has found a solution to cope with the problem of travel distance. After a centrally organised training and instruction period and some investments in teleworking at their homes, the Silver Pool employees could successfully be employed.

Another success factor is the fact that the manager of the Silver Pool has the same age of most Silver Pool employees. As a consequence, she easily understands the situation and feelings of the employees of the Silver Pool.

Quality of the guidance provided is not an explicit factor in the overall organisation. The Silver Pool is manned by Achmea employees, who are skilled or trained in the duties that fall under the Silver Pool (intake, redeployment activities, human resources knowledge)

## 8.5. Conclusions

The Silver Pool seems to be an effective instrument for the redeployment of senior employees who have become redundant. Employer, employee and manager all benefit from the Silver Pool. This triple win-situation is also the major success factor.

The guidance that is provided helps the employees in gaining insight about their own skills and ambitions, and are laid down in personal employability profile (PEP). This stimulates them to think about their own development and stimulates them in thinking in job opportunities, after their previous tasks in Achmea.

## 8.6. List of interviewees

Josje Frietman; Manager Silver Pool.

## CHAPTER 9.

# Rabobank

### 9.1. Description of the approach

#### 9.1.1. General information about the organisation

Rabobank is comprised of 139 independent local banks plus Rabobank Netherlands, their umbrella organisation, and several specialist subsidiaries. Overall, Rabobank Group has a total workforce of 61 000 employees (in FTE). In organisational terms, Rabobank is an inverted pyramid: at the top of it are the local banks, and at the bottom the Rabobank Netherlands. Rabobank Netherlands advises and supports the local banks in local services.

Every Rabobank employee is assessed on the basis of performance objectives, which may differ between the various units. One objective may be 'continued employability', but it's the responsibility of the employee to formulate specific goals on this issue in the planning and assessment talks between manager and employee. To be more precise, the employees suggests and the manager reflects on and approves goals and ambitions with respect to employability, education and training, senior leadership and coaching ambitions, interest in vacancies within the Rabobank organisation. Requests for training and coaching requirements are nearly always translated into a personal development plan (PDP). This PDP includes an annual assessment regarding the potential and performance the employee resulting in the PPM-score, which managers are obliged to give their employees. Normally, this score and the development of the score in time are discussed in the PDP-talks between manager and employee. Managers and employees are required to prepare these talks. Important elements from the managers perspective are:

- (a) How will the unit develop in the coming period?
- (b) Which competences does the employee own right now and which competences are required in the near future?
- (c) Are there other job opportunities for the employee when he/she further develops himself or herself?

Important elements to be prepared by the employees are:

- (a) Where am I good in?
- (b) Which job elements do I like to do?
- (c) Do I do these things in my current job?
- (d) What can I do to fulfil better my job?

- (e) What do I want to do in the future?
- (f) What do I need for further training and development to attain that future goal?

Rabobank has its own collective labour agreement, where the primary and secondary benefits are very good; the favourable conditions for staff for mortgages or insurances are widely known. The bank takes good care of its staff. The basis for the human resources policy is summarised in the former motto: 'people make the bank' and in the new motto 'people unite the bank'.

Self-management and increased self-responsibility among employees are the trending topics at the Rabobank. At the same time broad development opportunities exist for Rabobank employees based on a general human resources policy. Rabobank management does not apply a specific ageing strategy, nor does the bank apply a policy for specific groups within the organisation. The general strategy is to offer broad development opportunities in a way that tailor made solutions are possible for each employee.

As a consequence, there is no specific age management strategy in Rabobank. In recent years specific arrangements for elderly employees have been terminated, such as extra holidays for elderly employees. The agreements were terminated because of the fact that they did not attain their objectives.

About one third of the employees with an age of at least 55 have reached their potential according to their PPM-score. In the PDP-talks the manager discusses with them what they think would be necessary to keep them happily employed. To find satisfying solutions and as a part of the further individualisation policy, (senior) employees do have several demotion options:

- (a) retirement starting at the age of 55;
- (b) part time employment;
- (c) telecommuting;
- (d) flexible working hours;
- (e) classification in a lower function group with a special salary arrangement.

#### **9.1.2. Development of the approach**

In 2010 several senior Rabobank employees met and posed themselves the question: How do you ensure that senior staff enjoy and will continue to enjoy their work?

The employees felt the need to exploit better their experience and secure their knowledge for the organisation before retirement. This feeling was further stimulated by the fact that the workforce within the Rabobank is aging because of a lower supply of young workers and because of the rise of the retirement age to 67 years.

These developments created the context for the bottom-up initiated Wij(s) Rabo <sup>(9)</sup> community. Wij(s) Rabo is an informal and free network of and for older employees within the Rabobank organisation who want to contribute in a positive and constructive way to their own employability and of their colleagues. Wij(s) Rabo intends to point at all the ins and outs of the senior employee within Rabobank organisation. Important themes are vitality, internal mobility (switching function), self-esteem, image, and balance between work and home. These activities are performed among peers, and organised by the employees themselves. 'Working with pleasure' is the central issue in general and therefore subject to each PDP-talk. A focus on this issue is beneficial for both the Rabobank organisation and (senior) employees.

Despite the fact that Wij(s) Rabo has no specific age criteria for joining the community, many of the members of the open community are employees around 50 years old or more. All other employees are welcome to join. Wij(s) Rabo has members and so-called ambassadors in all levels of the organisation.

Rabobank management is enthusiastic about the initiative and convinced of the potential added value for the group elderly employees, but will not adopt and formally support it. The community is, nevertheless highly compatible with the general human resources policy of the organisation. The highly educated workforce is expected to make its own decisions about career development and individual choices and arrangements in a mature dialogue with its management. The tendency is towards a further individualisation of the collective labour covenant. The human resources policy should create enough space for individual arrangements.

#### **9.1.3. Objectives of Wij(s) Rabo**

About one third of all 55+ employees have reached their potential, the other two thirds still have potential for further horizontal and vertical development in the organisation. This means that they can be transferred horizontally to another business unit to a job at the more or less the same level or they can be classified in a lower function group (vertical development).

Especially employees with potential are interested in and are targeted by Wij(s) Rabo. Through the community Wij(s) Rabo actively contributes – in a positive and constructive manner – to the promotion of the employability of senior employees within the Rabobank organisation. The members like to bring in their broad and rich knowledge and experience through the Wij(s) Rabo community which can be reached via the Rabobank intranet community. Wij(s) Rabo is

---

<sup>(9)</sup> Wij(s) Rabo is the contraction of the Dutch words for 'we' (*wij*) and 'wise' (*wijs*).

aimed at actively contributing to the agenda of the company and to become a sounding board for the Rabobank at multiple levels in the organisation (including management level). Wij(s) Rabo intends to act as an eye-opener when it comes to internal labour market barriers. Wij(s) Rabo also tries to secure the right age balance in the departmental labour forces. According to Wij(s) Rabo, young teams should consider a preference for elderly people in case of a vacancy. There is no formal skill validation system for this. According to the Board, however, it is the responsibility of the managers to find the right balance in their labour force and to make a right judgement based on required competences.

The formal objectives of Wij(s) Rabo are:

- (a) promoting the employability and the effective redeployment of older employees within the Rabobank organisation;
- (b) enforcing and promoting knowledge and experience transfer including coaching and mentoring, especially to the junior staff within the Rabobank organisation;
- (c) being the voice of older employees to the various stakeholders and interest platforms;
- (d) contributing to the range of measures within the Rabobank organisation aimed at the older employee.

Wij(s) Rabo also hopes to become a formal counterpart of the Board of Directors. However, this latter goal does not really fit into the generic human resources policy of the Rabobank organisation and is therefore not formally supported by the Board. Also specific arrangements for senior employees do not fit into this policy.

According to the Board Wij(s) Rabo should concentrate on the interests of its members and facilitate knowledge and experience sharing between them and other personnel. A second role is to provide the Board with constructive ideas, for instance about the stimulation of horizontal career development within the Rabobank organisation and initiatives for knowledge retention and sharing. In this respect, the Board recommends Wij(s) Rabo to extend its influence in the organisation by actively joining several interest groups, such the employee council, the pension fund platform and the unions. The board also recommends Wij(s) Rabo to influence the agendas of the various departmental meetings.

## 9.2. Guidance activities

As stated before, it is the employees' own responsibility to come up with ideas and plans regarding continued employability. Wij (s) Rabo tries to remove

barriers, set agendas and, most importantly, tries to stimulate seniors to think about their employability within the organisation and prepare themselves well in this respect for the PDP-talks and annual assessment. This is mainly a form of self-reflection. In addition, managers are increasingly willing to point their employees to the existence of Wij(s) Rabo. Ideally, it's the role of the manager to inform the employees about the existence of Wij(s) Rabo, but it's the employee's own initiative to join Wij(s) Rabo, to start and continue to think about their own employability and future within the organisation and to become active in the Wij(s) Rabo community.

Therefore, employees can join and actively participate in the networking meetings, theme meetings and workshops organised by Wij(s) Rabo. Or they can join and actively contribute to the digital community of Wij(s) Rabo on the Rabobank Intranet. Here, they can pose questions, submit ideas, apply for vacancies or promote themselves, which has a high degree of self-development and self-management, employees discuss among themselves the subjects they wish to talk about. Furthermore, they can become an active member in one of the working groups of Wij(s) Rabo:

- (a) workgroup ideagenerator, which is aimed at generating and developing ideas in the field of employability and the use of the older employee;
- (b) workgroup development, which is aimed at engaging in the further development of Wij(s) Rabo;
- (c) workgroup activities facilitates, which organises networking events (theme meetings and workshops);
- (d) workgroup communications, which provides communications (community, newsletters, website).

The Wij(s) Rabo community has only recently been established, so it's hard to say how the objectives will be put into practice and which guidance activities will be dominant to meet objectives. Moreover, since the Wij(s) community is not formally supported by the management it's even questionable which of the objectives will become predominant and most effective.

An important prerequisite for the effectiveness of Wij(s) Rabo and its objectives is a successful community with a high and (pro)active participation level of the employees. With a small community and small level of interaction, Wij(s) Rabo will for instance not become the voice of the employees towards various stakeholders and interest platforms.

The first two objectives are 'promoting the employability and the effective redeployment of older employees within the Rabobank organisation' and 'enforcing and promoting knowledge and experience transfer especially to the junior staff within the Rabobank organisation'. To meet the needs of the target



group, brainstorm sessions have been organised in September 2012 discussing the questions in an open brainstorm:

- (a) which are the drivers to participate in the community?
- (b) what do you want to do? what gives you the energy?
- (c) which role are you willing and able to play in the community?
- (d) what is necessary to execute this role in the community?

All participants believe in Wij(s) Rabo and want to become active, but they do point to the importance of a vital community instead of an inactive presence of Wij(s) Rabo. This is the reason why much effort is put in the further growth of the community. To do so Wij(s) Rabo can rely on its members in the communication department.

Meanwhile, Wij(s) Rabo already has ambassadors in the various platforms and interest groups to contribute to the two other objectives. However, these ambassadors are part of these platforms not because they are members of Wij(s) Rabo but primarily because of their function and role in the organisation. These vary from higher management levels to operational level. As members of Wij(s) Rabo they can bring in specific Wij(s) Rabo issues, but it is not their official role in these platforms. The level of education is not an obstacle for participating in the various platforms: a large fraction of all employees is highly educated.

Since the management does not formally nor financially support Wij(s), the community is built by the members in their spare time. As stated before, the initiative is a bottom-up one and not formally supported, which poses a high challenge on self-management and self-guidance for reaching the joint objectives of Wij(s).

### 9.3. Outcomes and results

At the moment more than 300 people – mostly older employees – are member of the community. Wij(s) Rabo is increasingly able to put relevant ideas and issues on other agendas and to contribute to the removal of internal labour market barriers. Perhaps the most important effect of Wij(s) Rabo is that it stimulates the senior employees to look in the mirror and force them to think about their future employability within the organisation. Wij(s) encourages them to prepare themselves well in this respect for the PDP-talks and annual assessment. This is in the interest of both employer and employee. In addition, managers are discovering the positive impact of Wij(s) and are increasingly willing to point their employees at the existence of Wij(s) Rabo in the PDP-talks. Furthermore, Wij(s) Rabo is trying to be the voice of older employees to the various stakeholders and

interest platforms. However, there are other stakeholders which represent employees. Wij(s) Rabo is trying to find their place in the overall framework of involved actors, such as the Works Council and unions.

#### 9.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

One major critical success factor is the fact that Wij(s) Rabo is a bottom-up own initiative starting from the target group itself and the feelings of the senior employees within this group. A positive attitude is a strong basis for the success of the initiative. Furthermore, activities are carried out by various working groups staffed by experts in for instance communication, human resources department, etc., and enthusiastic members of the community. Wij(s) Rabo is increasingly gaining influence by means of its ambassadors in the various interest groups, management levels and units. The communication – although not formal – with the various stakeholders including social partners is constructive aiming at win-wins for employees and organisation. And finally, the application of digital opportunities provided by the Rabobank Intranet facilitates realtime communication with the members, the interaction between them and for all members and other stakeholders an important open source for inspiration.

#### 9.5. Conclusions

Wij(s) Rabo is an informal and free network of, and for, older employees, within the Rabobank organisation, who want to contribute in a positive and constructive way to the employability of themselves and their colleagues. Wij(s) Rabo intends to point at all ins and outs of the senior employee within Rabobank organisation. Important themes in the community are vitality, internal mobility (switching function), esteem, image and balance between work and home. 'Working with pleasure' is the central issue, which is beneficial for both the Rabobank organisation and (senior) employees. These themes are, therefore, an integral part of the annual PDP-talks and subject of the personal assessments. Wij(s) Rabo tries to remove barriers, set agendas and, most importantly, tries to stimulate seniors to think about their employability within the organisation and prepare themselves well in this respect for the PDP-talks and annual assessment. The formal objectives of Wij(s) Rabo are:

- (a) promoting the employability and the effective redeployment of older employees within the Rabobank organisation;

- (b) enforcing and promoting knowledge and experience transfer especially to the junior staff within the Rabobank organisation;
- (c) on behalf of the older employees mouthpiece to the various stakeholders and interest platforms;
- (d) contributing to the range of measures within the Rabobank organisation aimed at the older employee.

At the moment more than 300 people – mostly older employees – are member of the community. Wij(s) Rabo is increasingly able to put relevant ideas and issues on other agendas and to contribute to the removal of internal labour market barriers. Perhaps the most important effect of Wij(s) Rabo is that it stimulates the senior employees to look in the mirror and force them to think about their future employability within the organisation. This is in the interest of both employer and employee.

An important prerequisite for the effectiveness of Wij(s) Rabo and its objectives is a successful community with a high and (pro)active participation level of the employees. With a small community and small level of interaction, Wij(s) Rabo will for instance not become the employees mouthpiece to various stakeholders and interest platforms.

Since the management does not formally nor financially support Wij(s), the community is built by the members in their spare time.

One major critical success factor is the fact that Wij(s) Rabo is a bottom-up own initiative starting from the target group itself and the feelings of the senior employees within this group. A positive attitude is a strong basis for the success of the initiative. At the same time since the initiative is a bottom-up one and not formally supported, it puts a high challenge on self-management and self-guidance for attaining the joint objectives of Wij(s).

## 9.6. List of interviewees:

Liesbeth Oosterhagen; initiator of Wij(s) Rabo.

Hans van der Heijden; manager at the human resources department.

Jeanne Driessen-Engels; initiator of Wij(s) Rabo and line manager.

Henk opers; employee at corporate purchasing department.

## CHAPTER 10.

# UCLH

### 10.1. Description of the approach

#### 10.1.1. General information about the organisation

UCL Hospitals (UCLH) is a NHS Foundation Trust which employs 6 300 staff. It comprises: the Eastman Dental Hospital; the Heart Hospital; the Hospital for Tropical Diseases; the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery; the Royal London Hospital for Integrated Medicine and the University College Hospital (incorporating the former the Middlesex and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospitals).

The Trust is committed to supporting work-life balance and improving working lives for all staff, while recognising commitment to equal opportunities.

NHS organisations are increasingly employing ageing workforce. This is due to the following developments <sup>(10)</sup>:

- (a) demographic factors: not enough workers under the age of 65 to carry out all the functions that are required within NHS;
- (b) legislation: the employment equality (age) regulations and equality Act;
- (c) the abolishment of the default retirement age;
- (d) lifestyle choices: employees decide to work longer, in a more flexible manner with a better work-life balance;
- (e) talent management: employees are stimulated and facilitated to exploit their talents.

Achieving age equality fits into the organisational values and culture of NHS, contributing to corporate social responsibility and increasingly diverse workplaces. In addition, since demand for health services increases, the business case for keeping people in employment longer has become stronger for NHS compared to organisations outside of the health care sector.

#### 10.1.2. Development of the approach

Aiming at age equality and anti-discrimination no specific target group based policy instruments are operational within UCLH. Learning and development

---

<sup>(10)</sup> NHS Staff Council. Partnership for occupational safety and health in healthcare.

opportunities are available to develop the workforce irrespective of the age of the worker.

The staff of UCLH consist of highly specialised and educated medical professionals, highly skilled and trained nurses and support staff. Working in a medical environment places high mental and physical demands on employees, which necessitates the provision of flexible work options for all employees irrespective of their age.

However, retirement remains one of the issues during lifetime employment which employees, managers and employers should reckon with and more importantly also prepare for. Due to the abolishment of the default retirement age, UCLH has developed new retirement guidelines for all Trust employees in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

#### **10.1.3. Objectives of the guidelines**

The aim of these guidelines is to provide guidance for staff approaching retirement age and to highlight services available within the organisation to support the transition towards retirement, and to encourage staff to prepare for their retirement at an early stage; to utilise the support and advice available; and to explore the various options open to them.

They do not form part of the employee's contract of employment. The guidelines do not cover pension information in detail, therefore these guidelines will not affect an employee's right under the NHS pension scheme, but they should be read in conjunction with the NHS pensions regulations. Depending on the employee's pension scheme the ability to retire may be age related.

The guidelines are made for employees, for line management as well as for the human resources department. They do not only focus on the actual retirement but predominantly on the employability and management of older employees during the years before actual retirement. By offering a widely accepted procedure, the guidelines start to make the older employees more conscious of the nearing retirement age and encourage them to (start to) think about the planning of and their employability until retirement.

The guidelines are in line with the aim of the NHS employers to create age diversity in the workforce, more specifically with the following elements <sup>(11)</sup>:

- (a) workforce shortages are addressed by new approaches to staff retention including improved career management of experienced staff;
- (b) an age diverse workforce is developed by tailoring employment to the differing needs of different age segments;

---

<sup>(11)</sup> NHS Employers. Age diversity in the workforce.

- (c) ageism is tackled in all its forms;
- (d) flexible employment arrangements are offered for staff of all ages.

Workforce shortages are worked out by completion of annual workforce plans for each division, including a demand and supply analysis to determine the quantitative and qualitative gaps. The human resources business partners complete this exercise joint with the management team of each division.

In addition, NHS tries to attract new talent via schemes for second or third careers. In this context, an interesting example is shown in Box 1.

**Box 1. Althia Turner is proof that it's never too late to pursue your dreams.**

After 26 years as a domestic supervisor, physiotherapy and health care assistant at UCLH, she decided the time was right to start a new chapter in her life.

Althia embarked on a full-time university course and has recently qualified as a nurse at the age of 55.

Althia said: 'When I was doing the other jobs I knew I wanted more [...] but I was caring for three grandchildren and it just wasn't possible. When my 50th birthday approached I decided I wanted a change in my life and to do something for myself. I feel so proud at what I have achieved. My husband and children are proud of me too!'

She was encouraged to move up the career ladder after chief nurse and talent spotter Louise Boden made a comment.

'One day I was sent to first aid training where I met a colleague called Louise Boden who was a chief nurse. Louise assumed that I was a nurse. When Louise saw my badge one day she was surprised and said 'why don't you go for it?' She inspired me.'

As a first step, she beat off stiff competition to win a healthcare assistant post at The Heart Hospital and subsequently gained her NVQ. Then, with support from senior colleague Ellie Knights, she signed up for three years at South Bank University. Her studies were funded by UCLH.

When the going got tough she knew she could rely on her friends and colleagues.

'I didn't have a secondary education so I found university difficult at first. When I was upset Louise and other colleagues were very kind and considerate and offered me support. Louise in particular has shown an interest throughout it all.'

Louise said Althia is a great example of how it is never too late to develop your career.

Louise added: 'It is helping colleagues like Althia that makes my job really worthwhile. I wish her continued success and I have no doubt that she will make a great nurse.'

Althia returns to the Heart Hospital as a fully qualified staff nurse this autumn.

'It's made me realise you can achieve anything if you put your mind to it. I feel on top of the world', she added.

Source <http://www.uclh.nhs.uk/EDUCATION/NMEDU/Pages/Dontstopbelieving.aspx>

## 10.2. Guidance activities

### 10.2.1. Agenda setting

For the purposes of workforce planning, the human resources business partners provide managers with a report on a quarterly basis detailing the names of staff who are 12 months away from age 60 and over who may qualify for the NHS pension. This will encourage managers and employees to discuss retirement options at an early stage and ensure employees are made aware of the support available within the Trust.

All employees are encouraged to make proper preparation for their retirement at least two years before they may wish to retire. The Trust recommends them to attend a pre-retirement course for instance, but they are not obliged to do so.

In preparing for retirement, employees will need to consider the various options available, including:

- (a) the support which is available;
- (b) what benefits/payments they will get regarding their pension;
- (c) whether they wish to consider flexible retirement options to prepare for their retirement;
- (d) whether they wish to work beyond their NRA but claim pension (retire and return programme).

As appropriate the line manager has a conversation with the employee and discusses with the employee, when they are two years from retirement, their retirement intentions and advises them of the pre-retirement courses, encourages them to attend, and highlights the flexible retirement options and support available.

### 10.2.2. Pre-retirement courses

Employees approaching retirement age are encouraged to attend the pre-retirement courses run by the Staff psychological and welfare services.

Employees will normally be granted special leave with pay to attend these courses. It is the responsibility of employees to book themselves onto this course or can be recommended by their line manager.

All employees are encouraged to discuss their retirement plans at the earliest opportunity to enable their line manager to support, and provide guidance to them on their journey to retirement – in particular with a view to requiring time off to attend meetings with their pension provider.

### **10.2.3. Services on career and professional development**

The pre-retirement courses may be supplemented by advice and counselling, which are also obtainable through the Staff psychological and welfare services. This service guidance on the development of career management skills (CMS) offers:

- (a) seminars for career development planning, application form/CV preparation and interview skills, and coping with change;
- (b) individual coaching for professional development and interpersonal effectiveness.

Staff have open access to the service and can self-refer to the service. They can make contact and arrange an appointment with an advice worker, a careers advisor or a counsellor, without seeking consent from their manager/employer. Alternatively, they can be referred through Occupational Health or by recommendation from their line manager.

### **10.2.4. Specific advice and counselling on flexible working arrangements**

The Trust positively encourages the use of flexible working arrangements and there are options available to staff to enable a healthier work-life balance with regards to forthcoming retirement.

These options offer staff an alternative to simply retiring and help support the transition from being employed to retiring. With the approval of their line manager, staff have the option of gradually reducing their working hours or moving into a less demanding role at a lower grade if they wish to do so.

Staff may have the option of working fewer days/hours in their current job, with a corresponding reduction in salary (wind down). Pensions for part-time staff are calculated on the whole time equivalent salary so if a member of staff winds down, rather than retires, this should not reduce their overall pension. In the meantime they will continue to build up pension entitlement. This option may be taken from six months prior to the date of retirement.

Employees will need to discuss this option with their line manager and put their request in writing. Staff can refer to the procedure set within the flexible working guideline. If agreed, the line manager will need to forward a change form to the human resources business partners.

Another option is to step down into a lower graded position with less responsibility than their current position. Staff will get to make use of their skills and experience in a less demanding position and continue to contribute towards their pension. Employees will need to discuss this option with their line manager in the first instance, to consider whether there is a suitable vacancy within the department to enable a voluntary downgrade. If a vacancy does not exist at a



lower grade within their department, the employee will need to apply for suitable internal vacancies through the recruitment service.

An employee should discuss these options of flexible retirement with their manager in the first instance and liaise with the pensions manager for the effects on pensions contributions and payments. The Trust strongly recommends that staff seek advice from an independent financial advisor and the Staff psychological and welfare services, prior to any amendment of working hours being implemented.

It is the responsibility of the human resources Business Partners to monitor all requests for flexible working, maintain records and produce reports as required.

#### **10.2.5. Lifelong learning and professional development**

UCLH is strongly committed to promoting a culture of lifelong learning and enabling access to continuing professional development opportunities within a structured career pathway. UCLH supports the personal and professional career development through a series of structured learning and development guidance activities, starting with the Trust induction programme.

Statutory and mandatory training are relevant for all employees in the health sector including older employees irrespective of age. Staff have a legal and professional obligation to update their clinical skills, techniques and occupational knowledge to reduce the risk of injury to themselves and their patients. The statutory and mandatory training courses of Trust cover both legal and Trust requirements.

Also, national vocational qualifications (NVQs) need to be met by staff irrespective of age. NVQ's are work-related qualifications, based on the skills and knowledge needed to do a job effectively. Staff are able to access a range of NVQ training options.

Furthermore, an extensive portfolio of courses ranging from personal development through to leadership and management is offered, open to all employees irrespective of age.

UCLH use performance appraisals. All staff needs to be appraised at least once a year with a review at least every six months. These are often used to discuss retirement plans if appropriate, so led by the line manager with the employee. In addition and as part of these appraisals, skill gaps are identified by the line manager with employee in a two-way process (talks between the employee and manager). The line manager is also responsible for ensuring a fair assessment process to be able to support and demonstrate skill gap issues.

### 10.3. Outcomes and results

On an individual level, employees are stimulated to think about their career, especially in relation with the latter stages of their career. By offering information and advice, employees are better prepared for the transition towards retirement. This means that the individual has a better grasp of this process, and does not get faced with unexpected issues.

On organisational level, the human resources business partners do not hold any central information on the use of flexible options or on the employability and/or recruitment of older employees. From the age profile trends, however, it appears that UCLH is in fact employing an ageing workforce. The share of older employees has risen from in the period 2008/12.

Another important outcome of the aim to create age diversity in the workplace is the fact that employees are not treated any differently/special because of their age. It is visible that all staff are treated of the same high value. This leads to a better functioning organisation where all employees are respected.

These effects on individual and organisational level contribute to the development of a national work force that does not (negatively) stereotype older employees, and where people are comfortably starting their retirement stage of life.

### 10.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

One major success factor in achieving age equality is the fact that it fits into the organisational values and culture of NHS, contributing to corporate social responsibility and increasingly diverse workplaces.

The success is further stimulated by economic arguments. Since demand for health services increases the business case for keeping people longer in employment has become stronger for NHS compared to organisations outside of the health care sector. As a consequence, UCLH simply need older employees to be able to keep on delivering high quality health services.

From this perspective, it's also logical that special guidelines are in place to ensure the effective employability of older employees until actual retirement.

### 10.5. Conclusions

All instruments for keeping a balanced, well trained and educated workforce have a general focus on skills and needs, irrespective of age. The age issue only

arrives in the discussion when retirement is nearing. Special guidelines are in place to provide guidance for staff approaching retirement age with the ultimate objective to ensure effective employability until retirement.

The line manager provides an important part of the guidance. The talks between the line manager and the employee are an important part of this. However, the employee has an important role in this process. An open attitude in these talks is important. Furthermore, employees must seek out the opportunities offered by the Staff psychological and welfare services. This staff is made up of high skilled professionals in the field of psychological and welfare services

## 10.6. [List of interviewees](#)

Ragini Patel, UCLH

## CHAPTER 11.

# Czech Society for Quality

### 11.1. Description of the approach

The Czech Society for Quality (CSQ) is a Prague-based non-governmental organisation <sup>(12)</sup> providing a wide spectrum of services and products in the area of management systems (education, publications, conferences, workshops) and quality management tools (EFQM Excellence Model, CAF Model). CSQ publishes a lot of expert publications on the topic of quality management (methodological guides in the field of quality certification, statistical overviews, etc.) and organises various educational events, conferences and seminars. They also have their own professional magazine, *Perspectives of quality*. CSQ is qualified to issue many different certifications in the field of management systems and provides educational (lecturing) services. The company has a unique position in its field based on more than 20 years of existence (founded in 1990). Taking into account the total number of 27 permanent employees at the beginning of 2013, it can be considered as a small company. On the other hand, CSQ associates a large member base consisting of around 1 350 individuals (natural persons) and 160 collective members (firms and organisations) working in different areas of management systems. The services provided by CSQ are available to both individual and collective members and external clients.

The style of leadership is rather relation oriented with a great emphasis on share of knowledge. To create a positive image of the company, the company's members and employees adhere to the Ethics Code. CSQ also has a quality management system certified according to the ISO 9001 Standard.

In the field of human resources management, the company uses organisational directives that substitute an overall human resources management strategy. In 2011, CSQ decided to validate the outcomes of an age management project, which was carried out by the Association of Adult Education Institutions (AIVD) <sup>(13)</sup>, and implement the concept of age management in its human

---

<sup>(12)</sup> CSQ is, according to Czech legal form, a citizens association (*občanské sdružení*). It means that CSQ can technically generate profits, but only for the purpose of achieving the objectives of the association.

<sup>(13)</sup> AIVD is a non-governmental organisation and a leader of the project called the strategy of age management in the Czech Republic. The project ran for past three years with an aim to transfer the Finnish innovative tools (i.e. work ability index) and

resources management. The overall objective of the approach was to achieve a positive change in company culture based on equal opportunities and the development potential of each employee.

The statistics of the company's permanent employees, who are the target group of the age management measures, show a predominant proportion of women. Petr Koteš, CSQ's executive director, accounts for it through the specifics of the educational company. 'The employment in this field calls for increased carefulness and, perhaps, suits women better than men', he said. The most populous is the group of employees in the age category from 40 to 49 years of age. The ratio between employees who are aged below 30 and employees aged over 50 is well-balanced as the consequence of hiring few younger employees during the last three years.

Table 1. **The socio-demographic structure of CSQ at the beginning of 2013**

Age group	Male	Female	Total	Share (%)
20-29	0	5	5	18.5
30-39	3	4	7	25.9
40-49	1	8	9	33.3
50-59	0	3	3	11.1
60-69	0	2	2	7.4
70+	1	0	1	3.7
Total	5	22	27	100.0

Source: CSQ Human Resource Management documents.

The employees are facing both physical and psychological pressure. The occupation is sedentary and needs ergonomic adjustments. From a psychological point of view, the work is also very demanding (e.g. need for continuous learning, meeting deadlines, lecturing, etc.). Because the work requires high qualification, there is a prevailing amount of employees with a university degree.

The approach was not introduced on the basis of some immediate cause, but following an offer from AIVD to participate in the project mentioned above. CSQ saw it as an opportunity to analyse the situation regarding its employment structure and to evaluate the organisational directives concerning human resources management. The approach can be considered as a combination of partly adopted outcomes from the AIVD's project and own continuously undertaken human resources practices.

---

to tackle the issues of older workers in the labour market and the application of principles of age management in the Czech Republic.

The approach is not trying to address some general dispositional, situational or institutional barriers. For example, CSQ has never experienced any notable fluctuation of older employees. Quite the contrary, most of workers rather stay active and serve extra years in older age (e.g. the oldest employee at CSQ is 75 years old). If there are any institutional problems such as disagreements or conflicts between employees, they are usually of occupational nature and age does not play a big role. In terms of motivation and equal opportunities, the results from a questionnaire survey (for details see below) show that in many cases the older workers are more satisfied with their job or at least do not grumble about it as much as their younger colleagues.

## 11.2. Guidance activities

### 11.2.1. Identification of activities

Ideally, the introduction of the age management concept should proceed from the top (a top-down approach), i.e. defining the vision and strategy of an organisation which would respect age management principles. However, not every company is able to entirely change its human resources management using a top-down approach and, as well as in the case of CSQ, the actual extent and scope of particular age management measures not always emerge from the senior management. The CSQ's approach is the one that works the other way round – from the bottom. Of course, the CSQ's management initiated the approach and was fully involved in its coordination. Only the scope and extent of newly adapted measures came up mostly from the employees themselves. The aim of this bottom-up approach is to affect and adjust particular human resources procedures and to slowly integrate them into the company culture, so they would naturally and gradually complete the vision and values of the company.

Danuše Svobodová, the coordinator implementing the principles of age management in CSQ, explains that the older workers are not the only potentially vulnerable and disadvantaged group at CSQ, and eventually in the whole labour market as well. Therefore, the CSQ's approach tries to comprehensively approach every age group, i.e. older workers (aged 50+), newly graduates (aged 25-29) as well as women on maternity leave or the sandwich generation <sup>(14)</sup> .

---

<sup>(14)</sup> The generation of people, usually aged 30 to 50, who care for their ageing parents while supporting their own children.

Before identifying the guidance activities that build up the CSQ's approach, a quick look should be taken at the initial phase of the age management implementation process:

- (a) it was necessary to familiarise with the CSQ's employment structure and organisational directives concerning human resources management in detail;
- (b) the first draft of implementation strategy was created and presented during AEDUCA conference <sup>(15)</sup>;
- (c) the coordinator responsible for the age management work team and activities was nominated;
- (d) two types of questionnaire surveys were carried out, the first one to calculate the work ability index and the second one to map employees' perception of human resources management in CSQ.

The results gathered from the surveys turned out to be very helpful in the process of designing further activities.

On the basis of the first questionnaire, the work ability index was calculated. The work ability index is an evaluation tool that serves the purpose of assessing the situation in the workplace. The results are supposed to show for which employees or groups of workers occupational medicine care (both physical and psychical) is necessary.

The records from the second survey were analysed by the age management work team and transformed into specific tasks and measures including setting-up the team roles and terms (deadlines) for monitoring the progress of implementation.

The main activities – both introduced on the basis of the questionnaires or already having been run before – in the approach are:

- (a) signposting – regular information on guidance activities to all workers via the company intranet;
- (b) mentoring – offering focused support for newly hired employees regardless of age;
- (c) assessing – quarterly evaluating the work ability of each employee by formal and informal means (questionnaires, dialogues) and considering their personal, educational, and vocational needs and development;
- (d) teaching/training – comprehensive e-learning and attendance education for permanent employees, enabling individuals to acquire new knowledge;

---

<sup>(15)</sup> AEDUCA is an annually held festival on adult education in the Czech Republic.

- (e) enabling – supporting all workers to participate in various learning courses organised by CSQ;
- (f) feeding back – gathering information on the needs of individuals and responding to them by adapting or developing particular measures;
- (g) networking – organising teambuilding sessions and enhancing intergenerational team cooperation;
- (h) system changes – supporting changes and developments in organisation to improve the quality of working life (e.g. extra sick-days, improved system of rewards and benefits, flexible working hours, home office, supplementary pension insurance and life insurance, spa and recreation contribution, etc.).

#### **11.2.2. Description of guidance activities**

The aim of all guidance activities can be summed up in the following objectives that make up the general vision:

- (a) the company must have a good knowledge of its age structure;
- (b) there has to be a fair (non-discriminative) attitude towards ageing;
- (c) each manager must understand individuality and diversity;
- (d) good and feasible age management strategy, but not necessarily in a formalised strategic document (it is more about the approach);
- (e) good working ability, motivation, and will to continue working;
- (f) high level of knowledge;
- (g) good organisation of work and a good working environment;
- (h) quality of life.

To achieve these objectives, CSQ approaches its employees with various methods that build up the activities mentioned in Section 11.2.1. Here is a list with brief description of applied methods:

- (a) competence and satisfaction screening takes place to understand better employees across generations and their factual needs. The screening (assessment) uses quantitative and qualitative tools of questionnaires and interviews;
- (b) there is an open dialogue between senior managers and subordinates. Senior managers mostly play the role of advisor and are also in charge of career planning and development. However, the career development in terms of promotion is limited due to the size of the company. If there is a working position arrangement to be done, it is usually carried out according to the given situation at the workplace;
- (c) every employee of the company has its own plan of personal development that is annually updated at the beginning of the year and evaluated at the end of the year;



- (d) there was a great demand for better intergenerational cooperation coming from the employees. The company responded by introducing a few measures that would enhance this cooperation. For instance, the project teams are built on intergenerational basis from now on, which is supposed to lead to better exchange of knowledge and know-how transfer. More informal teambuilding activities are being organised to support mutual understanding (e.g. company volunteering). Also the tradition of off-site meetings and reunions was reintroduced;
- (e) since CSQ is a professional educational company, various kinds of lecturing methods make up the essential part of the approach. Together with the knowledge-based lectures, the employees expressed their interest in mental (psychical) hygiene programmes and courses. In response to this request, at the beginning of 2013, CSQ submitted a project on this topic for funding from the European Social Fund <sup>(16)</sup>. If it succeeds, it will not be the first CSQ's project aimed at lecturing activities which was supported from the European Social Fund. Between 2010 and 2011, CSQ successfully carried out a project called 'the development of knowledge on the way to prosperity' which was aimed at improving language and IT skills and also managerial soft skills and competences (team management, business skills, communication and presentation, balanced scorecard, etc.).

The choice for a specific method is always made by the executive management. Since CSQ is not focused at generating big profits, the budget is an important aspect of decision-making, particularly when it comes to arranging additional lecturing activities. Therefore, there is an effort to use also some external funding sources such as the aforementioned grants from the European Social Fund. For activities that are implemented internally, no additional budget is needed.

#### **11.2.3. Description of methods**

The applied methods are not formally described; they naturally result from particular activities. Although the first impulse to verify and implement age management principles in CSQ came from outside, most methods had already been developed internally over the years on the basis of feedbacks and communication between the management and employees. The external influence represented by the age management project helped to name them and put them under the same roof.

---

<sup>(16)</sup> Within the Operational Programme Prague – Adaptability for the period 2007-13.

Most of all guidance activities are designed for individuals, although there are also some cases that require team work and mutual cooperation. It is also the size of the company that enables to focus on individuals. The target group of the guidance are all employees regardless of age, education, skill level, gender and so on. 'Of course, everybody uses what suits them the best, but this is what the equal approach should be about – to give people the same options and let them choose', Petr Koten explained.

There are no other people involved in the guidance process at the moment. However, there is a future possibility of extending the approach to the secondary target group of external lecturers and auditors. An even more long-term goal is the implementation of age management principles on a sample of selected entities of the CSQ's member base. But these are only thoughts for now and by no means real intentions.

The providers of guidance are from within the company. Although they are all experts in the field of lecturing and education, they received special training on age management provided by Finnish experts from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health under the strategy of age management in the Czech Republic project.

Given that most of activities are voluntary-based, employees show quite a strong involvement and the participation in offered activities is usually very high. On the top of that, a lot of older workers are still actively publishing research papers and trying to get involved in running the company.

'It is not relevant to have a career management skills (CMS) framework for the same small company as CSQ', Danuše Svobodová mentioned and added that the career development is planned face-to-face with the senior management.

The guidance is an on-going and continuous process that has been running for the past several years at least. The intensity differs from project to project and depends on current circumstances like the budget or time.

#### **11.2.4. Experiences with implementation**

There have not been any significant problems that would require adjusting the approach during the implementation phase nor changing the original approach.

It seems, the only problem occurred during the calculation of the work ability index, which was not received well among the respondents, because it seemed too personal and, perhaps, at some points, too delicate. As a result of this reaction, it was decided that the survey would be anonymous and published only under random code numbers.

The only external persons involved in the implementation were the representatives of the Association of Adult Education Institutions. Their role was

to monitor the process, give advises and arrange the meeting with Finnish experts who provided the age management training.

There are no quantitative indicators for measuring the quality. The quality is reflected in feedbacks provided in the questionnaire surveys.

### 11.3. Outcomes and results

Over the last three years, there has been a significant change in the age structure of employees in CSQ caused by hiring six new employees who were, at that time, under 30 years of age. This led to a fundamental rejuvenation of the collective. But, on the other hand, there is quite high proportion of workers who are over 50 years of age and some of them are already entitled to retirement. Although the company has never experienced significant fluctuation, the senior management realises that the current structure will not be the same all the time and that there will be an increasing need to focus on the transfer of know-how in the near future. The first step was done when the senior management had identified all crucial positions that might need substitution in the future and implemented the rules for replacing the employees who decide to leave or retire.

A token of good care can be seen in the average length of employment at CSQ. Because CSQ applies a policy of voluntary retirement, a lot of older workers are employed with CSQ for 10 or more years. Workers have the opportunity to decide for themselves when to stop working and even after they leave the job they can still cooperate with CSQ under the contract on working activity<sup>(17)</sup>. This enables older workers to receive old-age pension and some extra money from the part-time working activity at the same time.

Older workers have the same opportunities for education and development as younger workers. Everyone is also given the same chance to demonstrate their abilities. If an individual comes up with a good idea for a project or product, s/he has the right to participate in its implementation regardless of her/his lower or higher age.

The average value of the work ability index questionnaires reached 41.5 points (on the scale from 0 to 50 whereas higher score indicates better results), which shows a very good working ability of all participating workers. Also the working satisfaction rose up during the age management project's implementation. For example, in 2010 there were four employees considering a

---

<sup>(17)</sup> The contract on working activity (*dohoda o pracovní činnosti*) is a special form of employment relationship set up under the Czech Labour Act.

change of employment compared to one employee who was thinking about it in 2011.

An on-going professionalisation of staff has taken place over the past several years. The level of knowledge has been gradually rising and some workers started to hold positions of auditors, trainers, examiners or consultants that used to be accessible only to external workers.

#### 11.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

The main thing what others can learn from this approach is that a company can function quite effectively and successfully despite diversified age structure of employees. The above described approach also helps to enhance the employability of older employees. All it takes is to analyse the situation and most importantly to communicate. The key to this approach are feedback on feelings and satisfaction. 'It is essential to always ask what employees want and appropriately respond to their needs', Petr Koten said. The approach is completely feasible with the help of internal actors and there is no need for a big budget.

Also the respondent from the target group, Blažena Heroutová, confirms and praises the fair approach and mentions one example. 'I was made redundant at the age of 50 from my previous job but at CSQ I was able to win out the open competition against another younger candidates', she explained. She said that she is particularly satisfied with three additional sick-days, flexible working hours, opportunity of taking courses of her choice and managing her own working plan.

The transferability of the approach to other institutions is limited to the size and sector of activity or entrepreneurship. CSQ is an example of a small professionalised organisation with very high educational standards, which is perhaps the reason why all guidance activities have such a great impact and are so quickly absorbed by employees. Also the size of the organisation allows more flexible communication and personal development planning.

#### 11.5. Conclusions

The age management project did not result in a strategic document. Instead, the principles of age management have been identified and highlighted in existing processes related to the development of employees. Desk-research of organisational directives and implementation of regular questionnaire surveys helped to focus on specific needs. On the basis of that, individual measures have

been developed and implemented. 'Age management has become a natural part of the care for workers at CSQ', all three respondents concurred, and the objective of a positive change of company culture was achieved.

Because the project had a great deal of publicity, the employees took it very seriously and almost everyone wanted to participate. People were thinking more deeply about the topic and came up with a lot of ideas and proposals that would make their work life better. It was the mutual determination what proved to be the main success factor of the approach.

The case is highly transferable in non-governmental sector, but can be easily applied to any small enterprise too. The socio-demographic structure of employees must always be strongly considered. The work at CSQ or at any other educational organisation is more demanding from the psychical point of view, therefore the approach is not suitable for example for large production companies with less educated manually skilled employees.

#### 11.6. List of interviewees

Petr Koteň; Executive director of the Czech Society for Quality

Danuše Svobodová; manager of Centre of Excellence; coordinator implementing the principles of age management in CSQ.

Blažena Heroutová; Quality manager (respondent from the target group).

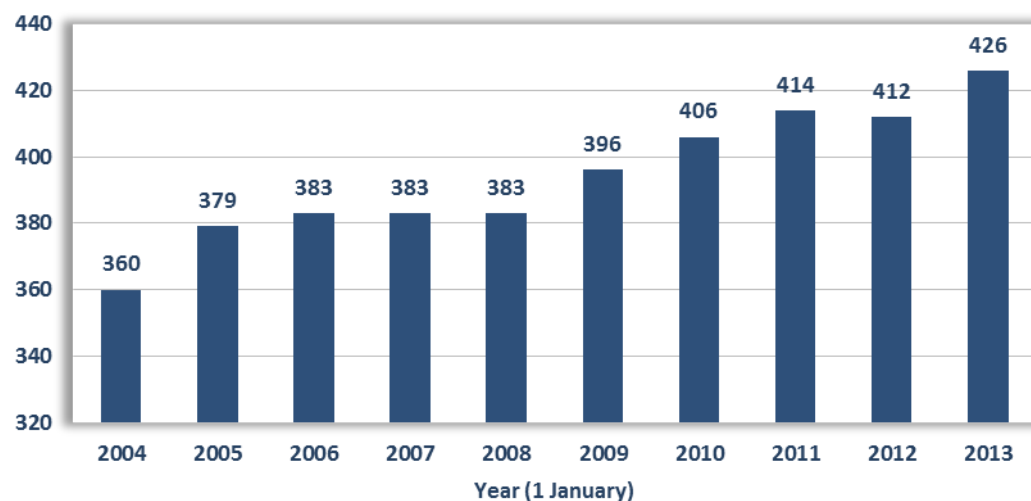
## CHAPTER 12.

# Vysocina

### 12.1. Description of the approach

The Regional Authority of Vysočina Region (*Krajský úřad Kraje Vysočina*, KÚKV) is a regional public administration body based in Jihlava, the capital of the region. The Vysočina Region is an administrative unit of the Czech Republic, located partly in the south-eastern part of the historical region of Bohemia and partly in the south-west of the historical region of Moravia. Considering the total number of 426 permanent employees at the beginning of 2013, KÚKV is a large organisation and an important employer in the region.

Figure 1. The course of the KÚKV's workforce between 2004 and 2013



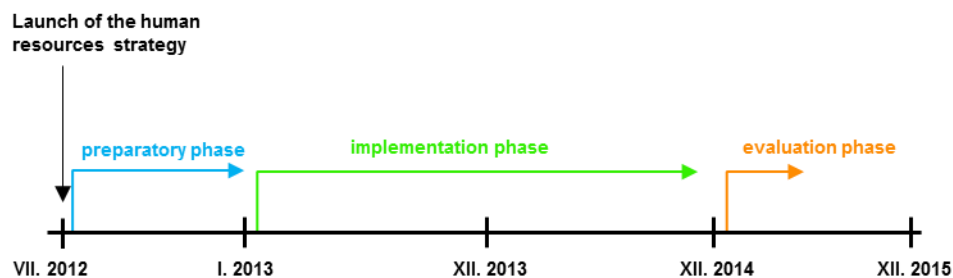
Source: The human resources strategy (2012) and internal material (2013).

KÚKV places great emphasis on its working culture and working relationships. An essential element of the working culture of the Regional Authority is the Employees' Code of Ethics. The organisation is a pioneer among other Czech regional authorities in the field of equal opportunities with a special focus on gender policy and lately also on age equality in the workplace. In appreciation of this effort, KÚKV has been awarded for its contribution to human resources management in many national contests.

Although KÚKV has been dealing with active human resources management for many years, an official human resources strategy was launched just in mid-2012 with the funding support of the European Social Fund <sup>(18)</sup>. The human resources strategy, which is divided into an analytical and an implementation part, has the following main objectives:

- (a) to assess the current state of human resources management in KÚKV;
- (b) to identify the nature and function of human resources processes in KÚKV;
- (c) to find the potential for development of human resources processes in the context of strategic management;
- (d) to evaluate whether the human resources management in KÚKV corresponds to modern trends in the field;
- (e) and to define particular measures that will be further developed in the implementation phase of the human resources strategy.

Figure 2. The schedule of the human resources strategy implementation



Source: The human resources strategy (2012).

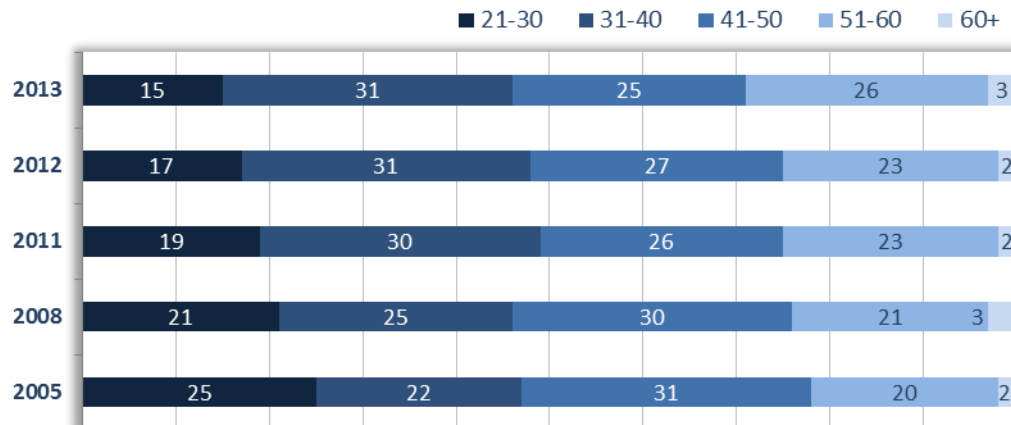
The target group of the strategy are not specifically the cohorts of older workers who are aged 50 and over, but it is based on a comprehensive approach that tries to include all age groups. ‘Supporting only one specific target group would be against our philosophy of equal approach which was presented during the national competition “Office half and half” (*Úřad půl na půl*) <sup>(19)</sup>’, explained Hanáková Kosourová, KÚKV’s head of the human resources department. ‘This, of course, does not mean that 50+ is not one of our primary target groups’, she

<sup>(18)</sup> From the operational programme Human resources and employment administered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic.

<sup>(19)</sup> The competition was founded in 2007 by the Czech Ministry of the Interior to support the implementation of policies on gender equality and the principle of gender mainstreaming in the work of public administration authorities. KÚKV is a national winner of the competition for 2012.

added and pointed out to the age structure of KÚKV (Figure 3). The number of older workers has been continuously growing since 2005. In 2013, nearly 30% of employees are over 50 years of age.

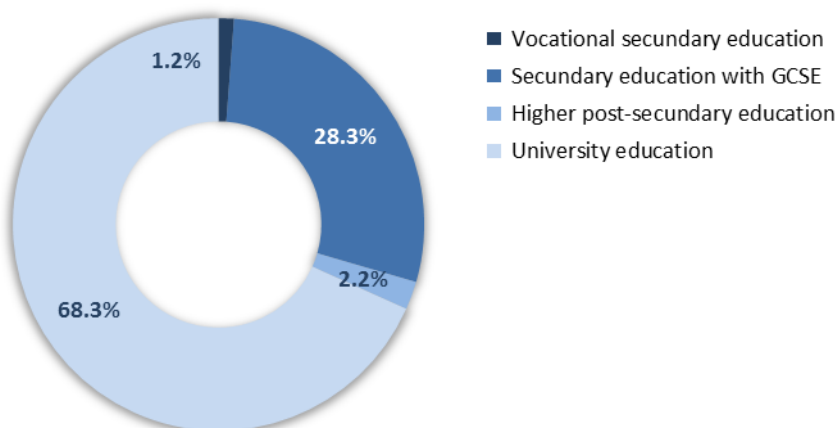
Figure 3. The course of age structure of KÚKV between 2005 and 2013



Source: The human resources strategy (2012) and internal material (2013)

Most employees hold a university degree (68.3%), followed by workers who have completed secondary schools education with GCSE (28.3%). There are also employees with higher post-secondary education (2.2%) and vocational secondary education (1.2%).

Figure 4 The educational structure of KÚKV in 2012



Source: The human resources strategy (2012).

The occupations are relatively physically demanding because of their sedentary nature, which need ergonomic adjustments. Even higher is the mental



intensity of the work (dealing with clients/citizens, knowledge of legislation, increasing requirements for IT and language skills, etc.).

The human resources strategy was not developed as a response to an immediate cause. It was seen as an opportunity to conduct a thorough analysis of the human resources management practices. All the activities which had been carried out before the strategy was launched also needed to be sorted out and better organised. The approach can be considered as original, based on years of experience.

If there are any dispositional, situational or institutional problems, the practise does not address them intentionally, because they have not come to the surface yet. For example, the human resources department did not have to solve problems with the fluctuation of older workers who would retire earlier from the job. Taking early or later retirement is a voluntary act and the statistics show that the latter is rather predominant, which demonstrates that the older employees are well taken care of. There has been a small remark regarding the lower motivation of some older workers to participate in voluntary educational courses, but it is rather individually based. The human resources measures are trying to resolve the problem by giving more chances to employees to express their needs. Also, the Social Fund (for details see below) was founded for all workers to finance additional activities of their choice. In terms of motivation and equal opportunities, the results from regular anonymous surveys on social climate and satisfaction with working environment show very solid outcomes.

## 12.2. Guidance activities

### 12.2.1. Identification of activities

The roots of the approach can be traced to the lawful foundation and start-up of Regional Authorities in 2001. In the very same year, the Social Fund, which is the KÚKV's financial tool in the area of social policy, found its origins. Each worker is annually entitled to use up to 10 000 CZK (i.e. EUR 200) for any kind of activity supported under the fund. Since its foundation in 2001, the list of activities has been regularly revised and upgraded according to employees' needs.

The whole approach in its current form is built up on the basis of following activities:

- (a) signposting – regular information on guidance activities to all workers via the company intranet, where every employee sees all successfully passed or upcoming courses, events and activities and has information about the balance of his/her Social Fund;

- (b) counselling – occupational physician and company psychologist working with individuals or in groups to help them discover, clarify, assess and understand their own experience (e.g. preventing burnout, mobbing, mental health at workplace);
- (c) mentoring – offering three-month focused support for all newly hired employees followed by three-phased adaptation assessment (self-assessment, mentor's assessment and department manager's assessment);
- (d) teaching/training – enabling individuals to acquire knowledge, skills and competences. Except for compulsory training, which consists of at least 18 training days and one accredited seminar during every three years on the topic of new legislation and work-related education, there is also a plenty of voluntary courses available;
- (e) networking – organising meetings of employees on parental leave. To harmonise private and working life, intergenerational bowling competitions and sport days are held annually;
- (f) feeding back – gathering information (regular questionnaire surveys) on the needs of employees and responding to them by adapting or developing particular measures;
- (g) managing – managing guidance activities in the human resources strategy with the necessary human and organisation resources and evaluation. At the beginning of 2013, the first preparatory (analytical) phase has been completed;
- (h) system changes – supporting changes and developments in organisation to improve the quality of working life (e.g. introduction of the Health Support Company Programme and the Social Fund, system of rewards and benefits, flexible working hours, home office, supplementary pension insurance and life insurance, spa, recreation and vitamins contribution, etc.).

#### **12.2.2. Description of guidance activities**

The aims of the health care support activities under the Health Support Company Programme are to support employees in active care for their own health and help them to retain a good medical condition for the entire length of their employment. The physical health measures are aimed towards alterations to life style, improvements in eating habits and movement activity. Within the activities aimed at the promotion of mental health, employees participate in training events in the field of burnout and finding the boundaries between personal and working life. The objectives of the educational and counselling activities are to strengthen the performance and potential of all employees. The Social Fund is intended primarily to improve working conditions, to provide recovery and regeneration

and to enhance cultural, sporting, recreational and social activities. Last but not least, it is also meant to overcome potential difficult social or financial situation of workers.

Guidance activities are carried out by internal or external actors (the physician or the psychologist) with the help of various mainly qualitative methods such as interviews, workshops or lectures. The only quantitative exception is the competence and satisfaction screening using a questionnaire survey. The communication (dialogue) of human resources processes takes place in the vertical and horizontal level. The vertical one can be understood as a disintegration of strategic management goals into departments, units and individual employees, whereas the horizontal one works out as a regular communication between different departments and the staff of KÚKV. This communication cycle is on-going and continuous.

The general concept of the approach is prepared internally and every decision is subjected to the human resources department or eventually to the chief executive officer of the Regional Authority.

The Regional Authority of Vysočina Region is rated as the third more efficient public administration institution in the Czech Republic in terms of successfully using of EU grants. From 2007 to 2013, KÚKV has introduced eight successful projects with the amount of 160 million CZK. One of the projects with a total budget of CZK 7 million (15% was co-financed by KÚKV) also contains the above mentioned human resources strategy. All other activities are financed entirely by KÚKV or, more precisely, from the regional government budget.

#### **12.2.3. Description of methods**

The guidance activities, which are carried out with the help of different qualitative and quantitative methods, have been described and formalised in the human resources strategy.

The human resources processes are embedded in the collective agreement between the employer and the trade union. 'The trade union plays an active role and sometimes comes up with interesting ideas', Hanáková Kosourová stated. For example, the collective agreement consists of provisions on non-discriminative (age and gender) working environment, training and education of employees, safety and health at work, etc.

Considering the size of the organisation, it is no surprise that guidance is aimed and organised for groups. There are three hierarchically defined groups of participants (actors) who have their own expectations, objectives and capability to influence them (Table 2).

Table 2. **Levels of guidance in KÚKV and stakeholders involved in human resources processes**

Actors	Expectations	Objectives	Capability
Top and middle management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• modern and effective institution</li> <li>• friendly, respectful and professional work inside and outside of the Regional Authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promoting strategic management regarding the principles of human resources management</li> <li>• reach the vision of the Regional Authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure stable political leadership of the region</li> <li>• ensure stable and prosperous economic environment</li> </ul>
Linear (lower) management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• responsibly carrying out a qualified job</li> <li>• implementation of human resources strategic goals to individual goals of employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure respected and stable working conditions</li> <li>• setting individual goals of employees and their assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adhere to the Employees' Code of Ethics and support strong working culture</li> <li>• clearly and specifically defined strategic objectives</li> </ul>
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hold a positive, strong and prestigious work position</li> <li>• responsibly carrying out a qualified job</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maximise execution of individual goals</li> <li>• have a respected, stable and socially responsible job</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adhere to the Employees' Code of Ethics and support strong working culture</li> <li>• a positive approach to working performance with emphasis on self-improvement</li> </ul>

Source: Adjusted by the author on the basis of the human resources strategy (2012).

The target group of guidance activities are all employees regardless of age, education, skill level, gender, etc., with respect to equal opportunities. Other people who are involved in the guidance process are the occupational practitioner and the company psychologist. The human resources department cooperates on the preparation of a new project with a Prague-based NGO called Gender Studies. Also, the human resources strategy was put together with the help of an external consulting company through a public tender.

The quality of the providers is ensured by their professional qualification and practice in their fields (medical, psychological, educational). The representatives of higher and lower management, who are also the providers of guidance, received specific training on how to work with disadvantaged groups of workers (older employees, disabled workers, mothers with children, etc.).

Although most activities are voluntary-based, the participation rate is usually above expectations. Employees are also actively providing feedback on the activities they participated in.

The process of human resource planning is designed with regard to the current set of activities and agendas that are defined by the legislation. The planning process is based on the decisions of human resources managers as well as on the current state of employees and their positions. If there is a need to address specific work tasks that go beyond the scope of one department, a

special working group is established, whose activities are managed by internal regulations and directives. On a similar basis, the working group for human resource processes consisting of various internal and external actors was founded.

There are a lot of different channels used in guidance processes. Counselling with the psychologist or with the physician is face-to-face. Lectures, trainings and workshops are usually organised for groups. KÚKV has also some online services available such as e-learning courses and company intranet.

The guidance is an on-going and continuous process that has been more or less intensively running since 2001. The intensity differs from project to project and depends on current circumstances like the budget or time.

#### **12.2.4. Experiences with implementation**

The employees of the human resources department have the impression that the guidance process is set right and represents an important part of the human resources strategy. However, it would be premature to make a general conclusion, because the strategy has run only since mid-2012. Employees also speak highly of the top management of the Regional Authority, which is fully supportive of the approach. This can be considered as one of the main success factors.

Except for the actors, who are involved in the implementation of the approach as described above, there are no other institutions or individuals actively participating. On the basis of recommendations emerging from the analysis of the human resources process, the human resources department is preparing a set of key performance indicators for individual personnel processes. These indicators will be implemented into the management system using the method of Balanced ScoreCard and will be used in the evaluation part of the project in 2014.

### **12.3. Outcomes and results**

The results from regularly held questionnaire surveys provide a good insight into the effects of the approach on individual level. The aim of this internal evaluation tool is to determine the level of motivation of employees and to reflect their complaints and suggestions. The social climate (mutual cooperation, friendship, working atmosphere, balance between personal and working life, etc.) is seen as positive by 80-92% of the employees regardless of age, gender and education. The working environment (material facilities or motivation to better results) is reflected affirmatively by 78-91% of the workers.

KÚKV's attitude toward its older employees is positively reflected by the employees' loyalty to the institution. Keeping low staff fluctuation is important, because 'the clerical system does not effectively allow raising substitutes', said Ivana Šmídová. The know-how transfer works according to a set of procedures for the transfer of agendas and regardless of age for now.

In 2012, the organisation's positive image has been appreciated several times in the form of various awards such as the above mentioned acknowledgment for equal opportunities in the workplace (1st place two years in a row) or National Quality Award (1st place) and Excellent Organisation Award (1st place).

The main societal effect of the approach is that older workers stay active for more years and in quite respectable positions. This helps to sustain the employment situation, which is not very favourable in the region of Vysočina.

#### 12.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

The main element which other organisations can learn from this approach is that some public administration authorities, which are usually considered as old-fashioned with very rigid structure, can set a good example and competitively adopt modern human resources strategy, formerly a privilege typical for the private sector only.

The factors that influence the human resources processes most are displayed in a brief analysis using the PEST model <sup>(20)</sup> (Table 3). These factors also influence the extent of the transferability of the approach to other institutions in the public administration sector.

---

<sup>(20)</sup> The PEST model is a simplified PESTLE model. Only the legal aspects are joined together with the political factors and the environmental factors are left out completely, because they are not relevant for this case.

Table 3. The PEST model

Political factors	Economic factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the performance of the Regional Authority is affected by the programme of the ruling political party in the region</li> <li>changes in the political representation of the Regional Authority after the 2012 elections</li> <li>changes and amendments to existing legislation</li> <li>the expected impact of the upcoming Act on Officials (2014-15)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dependence on budgetary financing</li> <li>the impact of the public finances reforms</li> <li>possibility to use European grants (structural funding)</li> <li>wage competitiveness in the labour market</li> <li>expected inflation</li> <li>unemployment rate in the region</li> </ul>
Social factors	Technological factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>low population density in the region</li> <li>majority of inhabitants are living in rural areas</li> <li>lower educational structure of the population of the region</li> <li>increasing number of employees at the Regional Authority</li> <li>diversified age structure of employees at the Regional Authority</li> <li>high education level of all employees at the Regional Authority (two third with university education)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>digitisation of public administration (e-Governance)</li> <li>use of advanced information technologies</li> <li>increasing demands on the professional level of the employees</li> </ul>

Source: Adjusted by the author on the basis of the human resources strategy (2012).

## 12.5. Conclusions

KÚKV is one of many typical case examples of Czech employers, which can be reflected as socially responsible and considerate in the field of active ageing. But at the same time, KÚKV, as well as other institutions in the Czech Republic, does not name the approach as explicitly 'age management' as seems to be increasingly popular across the rest of EU member countries. Perhaps not enough experience with this phenomenon might explain the hesitation to be more specific in supporting some particular groups of employees. On the other hand, when we look at the set of guidance activities and measures that are offered and frequently used by older workers who represent nearly 30% of the workforce, we realise the presence and importance of the proactive approach towards the group of employees aged 50 and over.

The approach, consisting of healthcare, social responsibility, and educational training is highly transferable in the public administration sector. One of the main obstacles in the transferability might be the financial scheme, which is, in the case of public authorities, dependent on political decisions and the ability to draw financial resources from national or European funds. However, it is obvious that such investment is worthwhile and eventually even cost effective, as it has a positive impact on keeping employees active in older age. This way KÚKV sets a good example and shows that similar programmes can be implemented quite effectively.

## 12.6. List of interviewees

Ivana Hanáková Kosourová; Head of the human resources department.

Jitka Vráblová; Officer in the field of education and training (Deputy head of the human resources department).

Ivana Šmídová; Head of the economic administration department (a direct supervisor of employees who are the target group of the approach).

Ivana Hanauerová; Officer in the field of personnel and pay agenda (a respondent from the target group).



## CHAPTER 13.

# MAKRO

### 13.1. Description of the approach

MAKRO Cash and Carry Polska S.A. is part of the METRO Group, which is the leading international player in the self-service wholesale sector, offering a broad range of products and services for professional customers, such as hotel and restaurant operators, catering firms, independent small retailers, institutions and offices.

Employees are in the very centre of its development strategy and creating a working environment that fosters their development is a fundamental element of its corporate culture. MAKRO Cash and Carry Polska S.A. is commonly perceived as one of the best employers in Poland and has been acknowledged for its policies in the field of human resources, evident through its many rewards and recognitions.

The wholesale store in Łódź (MAKRO Łódź) was established in 1994 as one of the first MAKRO Cash and Carry stores in Poland. As of 2012, it employs 230 people, over 25% of them are aged over 46 and 43 employees have 18 years of experience within the company. Employee fluctuation is very low.

MAKRO Łódź does not have a formalised strategy in terms of age management, but the issues are an important part of its everyday human resource management and are regarded as being increasingly important for its future success. According to the company the concept of age management should apply equally to managing young as well as older employees. Consequently, MAKRO Łódź approaches age management with a focus on creating favourable conditions for professional and personal development of employees irrespective of their age. In this context, older workers are one of the target groups that is offered an opportunity to benefit from measures aimed at employee development.

The company implemented an approach which integrates professional and personal development of older workers with that of the younger staff. MAKRO Łódź uses intermentoring to enhance work attitude and competencies of the most experienced employees while preparing the newly recruited ones for successful performance at work, for instance in customer service, customer relations or as cashiers.

Intermentoring is understood as a model for enhancing the development of the organisation by the implementation of a two-way/up-and-down mentoring:

older, more experienced employees share their expertise and acumen with young workers, who in turn share their knowledge, skills (e.g. related to emerging technologies) and life-attitude with their mentors. The achievement of these goals is facilitated by the promotion of diversity, flexible work arrangements and corporate wellness within the organisation. The concept of intermentoring is much in line with the organisational culture of MAKRO Cash and Carry Polska S.A., which envisages that the wholesale stores with longer experience on the market support the new ones in the initial period of their operations (sharing knowledge, experiences, etc.).

The orientation towards employees' development and lasting relations supports maintaining a stable market position, increasing effectiveness, minimising the threat of employee fluctuation and maximising chances for successful recruitment of new staff in the periods of intensive growth. It also addresses future challenges of the local labour market related to aging population of Poland, as well as a dynamic process of outflow of labour forces from the region of Łódź.

## 13.2. Guidance activities

### 13.2.1. Identification of activities

An important area of professional and personal development of older employees within MAKRO Łódź is their involvement in the mentoring process of younger workers. These activities are accompanied by a unique combination of the company's culture of sharing knowledge and being open and supportive to employees' expectations regarding their professional development.

### 13.2.2. Description of guidance activities

The professional and personal development of older employees is aimed at improving their self-perception and understanding of their own competencies. It should increase their motivation and professional engagement and consequently contribute to a longer working life within the organisation.

Intermentoring provides the ageing employees with the possibility of gaining new skills and obtaining a broader perspective on different areas of work. Similarly, close cooperation with younger people stimulates their enthusiasm and vitality. The effectiveness of these processes is strengthened by using other methods for example trainings or periodic assessment of employees' performance – which cover wide groups of employees within the organisation.

Intermentoring combines the advantage of learning-by-teaching with the benefits of sharing knowledge within the organisation. The method contributes to developing competencies and improving performance of MAKRO Łódź, while offering its older employees – the mentors – a unique opportunity to strengthen their position within the company as well as to gain a more positive life attitude. It also makes their working time more diverse and more interesting. From a mentee's perspective, intermentoring speeds up their adaptation process, indicates possibilities of development within the organisation and helps to succeed with it. This method is deeply rooted in the company's culture and has been accompanying employees' development since the beginning of its operations.

### **13.2.3. Description of methods**

One of the characteristic features of the method applied by MAKRO Łódź is its non-formal character. As mentioned by one of the mentors, it is more about a positive attitude and engagement in helping less experienced employees during their on-boarding process, than a formal programme might be. Such an approach gives greater flexibility which is essential for the method to yield the expected results. In practice, older employees have more flexibility in the organisation of their work with the mentees.

Intermentoring is provided to individual employees, and therefore the scope and form of cooperation may be adjusted to the individual needs of particular workers. Consequently, there are no fixed time frames for intermentoring; although the most intensive support is usually provided within the first three months of employment, it should be considered as an on-going process. This corresponds with the MAKRO Łódź corporate culture of support, i.e. the company supports employees at all stages of their development.

Intermentoring is usually seen as part of the everyday duties of employees who perform as mentors. The intensity of the actions and the necessary involvement of mentors differ, not only depending on skills and competencies of the young employees, but also the kind of job they are being prepared for. It is also often determined by the economic situation at the time and the cycle of development of the organisations. In periods of intensive growth or significant organisational changes in MAKRO Łódź which result in employment increase, there may be higher demand for such activities.

The target group of the guidance activity are those people with the greatest amount of experience within MAKRO Łódź, especially those working in client service, client relations or cash desk divisions. In practice, mentors represent older employees who have reached managerial positions in their operational

units. The method is targeted at people who have both knowledge and skills and are personally predisposed for mentoring others. Their competencies in the field are usually strengthened by earlier training related, for example, to the development of interpersonal skills.

There is no standard training programme that would prepare employees for the particular role of mentor. The company initiates and provides various trainings supporting the development of qualifications needed at different positions and different levels. However, in practice, education of employees is much individualised as they have wide possibilities of indicating their specific needs in this field and proposing particular training programmes they would like to complete. Therefore, the range of trainings completed by mentors may differ depending on the character of support needed in each case.

There are no formalised criteria (e.g. defining minimum age) for a person to become a mentor. The selection is made individually by the human resources management during a process of periodic (usually monthly) assessments of selected employees. This provides an opportunity to examine both personal and professional predispositions for the role of mentor as well as individual preferences in this field.

Monthly assessments may also be used for evaluating effectiveness of on-going mentoring processes – both in terms of its influence on mentors and mentees. There is no standard technique used by mentors in the process. This can comprise of tutoring in the workplace, on the job training, assistance in participation in an e-learning course provided by the employer, or just a face to face conversation. It should be stressed that all of these forms stimulate an exchange of experiences and facilitate personal and professional development of the older employee by observing how younger people think, work, behave or perceive certain situations.

#### **13.2.4. Experiences with implementation**

The corporate culture of actively supporting employees' personal and professional development irrespective of their age has been a part of MAKRO Łódź operations since their beginnings. In this context, intermentoring has proved to be an effective method for supporting the older and the most experienced employees. As such, the method was effectively used without having to introduce major modifications to the approach. Some adjustments could have been observed on an operational level but these were related more to an increasing centralisation of management following the standardisation of processes within MAKRO Cash and Carry Polska S.A., rather than being the result of necessary improvements to the existing practices. Such modifications concerned, for

example, the system of periodic evaluation of employees – introducing the system of monthly assessments – which appeared to be an effective tool for gathering information to enable an evaluation of intermentoring processes (in terms of its effects on mentors as well as performance of mentees).

The main barriers to the implementation of the approach were related to the negative stereotypes concerning older people, for example that their work is less effective, their attitude to work rather obsolete, they will not get along with young staff, or that their ability to learn and effectively use modern technologies is relatively low. These could affect the mentees' willingness to engage in the intermentoring process at its initial stage. These stereotypes can also affect recruitment processes but this is mainly due to the candidates' low self-assessment and perceiving themselves as old people who are not able to face new challenges.

Intermentoring is about sharing knowledge within an organisation. Reluctance to sharing one's knowledge and experience with others might be a significant barrier to providing effective intermentoring. Therefore, the selection of mentors must be preceded by a careful examination of their attitude to supporting others. Moreover, the company actively promotes the culture of sharing knowledge by a positive attitude that is represented at work by their managerial staff.

The effectiveness of the method can be measured, for example, by performance and satisfaction of mentors and mentees, a mentor's length of service within a company, the number of older people within the organisation or the level of their migration.

### 13.3. Outcomes and results

The approach and method implemented by MAKRO Łódź with a view of professional and personal development of older employees proves to be very successful, both with regard to delivery of short and long-term effects.

According to the mentors, the role stimulates constant endeavour towards better performance and higher self-expectations. They pay more attention to how they dress and their attitude towards life and work so to be perceived as professionals, but also to feel comfortable within a group of younger people. Involvement in intermentoring results in the working day being more diverse. Although this means additional responsibilities, it also poses more challenges each day and makes work more interesting. To successfully combine different activities, mentors constantly develop their organisational and time management skills.

Observing how others develop and gain new skills is an effective method of learning for oneself and gaining new motivation for further development. This cooperation provides mentors with new insight into their own competencies as well as enabling them to gain new skills directly from mentees, for example, in the area of IT. Intermentoring gives mentors more energy to work, brings more vitality into their lives, and makes them feel younger.

In the long term, mentors feel more satisfied with their work and their role within an organisation. They gain more openness and can establish positive relations and avoid potential conflicts more effectively. Being supportive and offering guidance to other people who may have problems, make them more confident in life.

The experience gained during the intermentoring process increases mentors' interests in new areas of professional activity and makes them more open to new possibilities and paths of professional development. In fact, they gain new skills in managing their careers – in this context the guidance method supports a lifelong guidance policy priority on EU level.

Finally, mentors become more willing and capable of extending the duration of their professional activity.

The experience with the implementation of this approach indicates that intermentoring may enhance some of the key factors determining an organisation's competitiveness for example human resources, customer relations, cost structure, or risk management and reputation.

In the short term, it increases performance of new employees while shortening the time needed for their adaptation and to gain qualifications they require for the workplace. As well as boosted self-esteem and better performance of mentors, intermentoring contributes to a more friendly and productive working environment. Personal and professional development strengthens mentors' engagement in the organisation and promotion of corporate values. It enhances workers loyalty and enables MAKRO Łódź to keep their most experienced and valuable employees while also reducing overall migration. This helps the company to maintain long-term relations with its key customers, thus increasing their loyalty.

As an indirect effect, intermentoring contributes to enhancing the company's reputation and becoming an employer of choice, which could in turn facilitate recruitment processes and help the company to prepare better for the future challenges of the local labour market.

The guidance practices applied in MAKRO Łódź contribute to the promotion of employment of older people within the society. It overcomes stereotypes concerning older employees and proves that they can add value to the

organisation. Extending the period of their professional activity may also be considered in the context of contributing to a better overall physical and mental health state of older generations.

#### 13.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

MAKRO Łódź's approach to active aging confirms that developing qualifications of older workers may enable creation of shared value: for employees, business and the society.

One of the main success factors of the method is the existing culture of support within the organisation, which creates a favourable environment for its realisation. The company not only provides opportunity for a good job and professional development but also offers an ongoing support, which may refer to overcoming various problems encountered by employees not only in their professional but also personal life (e.g. difficult economic situation, health problems, etc.). The supportive working environment encourages employees to ask for help and in many cases MAKRO Łódź decides to use its resources to help them (e.g. financial support, flexible working hours, legal or tax counselling, etc.). Such approach determines the attitude of its employees and their willingness to truly engage in supporting others. This environment should also be recognised as a precondition for potential transfer of the practice.

Another contributing factor to the success of intermentoring is its informal approach, giving the mentor more flexibility in the organisation of the process, which helps in building mutual trust and engagement. Any potential necessity to standardise intermentoring might have negative implications on the transferability of the practice.

The method's success is also demonstrated through a very low worker outflow rate and a relatively high representation of older employees who have been with the company for several years.

#### 13.5. Conclusions

MAKRO Łódź's approach to age management focuses on supporting the development of its employees, irrespective of their age, education, etc. The implemented guidance, which integrates objectives concerning aging workers with those related to newly employed staff, proves to be a successful method of professional and personal development in older employees, while simultaneously enhancing the company's position on the market. The intermentoring method,

which envisages the involvement of most experienced employees in mentoring of younger workers, is successfully used for improving mentors' self-perception, increasing their motivation and professional engagement and consequently preparing them for a longer professional life.

The unique environment created by corporate culture of support and orientation towards employees' development appears to be a very important factor in its success and determinant for its potential transferability. The lack of standardised or formal frameworks regarding the implementation of the intermentoring provides a flexibility which maximises the potential of the method for the development of mentors.

### 13.6. List of interviewees

Magdalena Stępniewska; senior human resources partner.

Wiesława Kidzińska; sales representative.

Małgorzata Filipiak; head cashier.



## CHAPTER 14.

# ZEMAT

### 14.1. Description of the approach

ZEMAT Technology Group is a Polish-American corporation based in Łódź, with a history on the market dating back to 1957. The company is at the forefront of the newest technical developments in the field of high frequency technology and related innovative industrial solutions.

ZEMAT is a primary Central European manufacturer and supplier of technologically advanced machines using high frequency technology for plastics welding, medical equipment, packaging, cold plasma generators, industrial heating and drying, wood moulding, etc. It also offers complementary processing machines like hot air and ultrasonic welders, thermo-formers and roller die cutters, or hydraulic and pneumatic presses. Apart from manufacturing, it provides related service and technical support. The company has a wide network of distributors across the globe.

ZEMAT employs 60 people, including 27 production workers of which 13 are over 50 years. Its age management strategy is not formalised and its main goal for older workers is to assure high quality of production and services while enhancing their engagement and satisfaction. In practice, its approach to age management focuses on the development of sustainable relations with its employees and is oriented towards lasting cooperation with its ageing workers while enhancing possibilities for their development and more effective use of their potential.

One of the key determinants of the company's success in the market is its ability to assure a high quality of products and services delivered. ZEMAT's business requires that products are tailored to specific requirements of its customers and therefore most production processes are tailored to the individual. In this case, a combination of professional knowledge of workers, a high level of their practical skills and long-term experience within the industry is a predominant factor for guaranteeing the required quality. As such, the company thinks of its most experienced employees as a major asset which must be secured to succeed on the market.

An inherent part of ZEMAT's corporate culture is to place importance on lasting cooperation with employees and the development of their personal and professional competencies. In practice, this pro-employee attitude can be reflected for example by assuring high transparency of decisions within the

company, fostering a family atmosphere within the organisation, introducing initiatives like a social fund, flexible terms of employment or flexible working hours for older employees as well as periodic trainings. All of these efforts comprise a unique working environment which results in a very low fluctuation within the company, high representation of people 50 years plus and of those working in ZEMAT for several years.

This approach is in line with the fact that the local labour market offers almost no alternative – there are few candidates available that could bring in the required competencies to the organisation. There are several potential reasons for this situation. There is no formal education in the field of high frequency technologies that would provide the labour market with relevant specialists in this area. Similarly, there is a severe competence gap with regard to vocations like turners or ironworkers – there are almost no young, highly qualified people in this field. This situation is a consequence of negative stereotypes concerning vocational education (being an option of second choice) and vocational professions (low wages, low level of public esteem) as well as an unsuccessful reform of the vocational education system in Poland (not aligned with the actual needs of the labour market). In practice, new employees are usually recruited from other production companies which undergo restructuring processes or collapse.

The social impact of ZEMAT's policy may be considered in the context of improving employability of both older people and younger people by providing them with qualifications that are highly desired by the market.

## 14.2. Guidance activities

### 14.2.1. Identification of activities

ZEMAT implemented a concept of increasing engagement of older workers in managing processes whereby older employees gain new managerial and technical skills while improving their performance at work and gaining new career perspectives.

### 14.2.2. Description of guidance activities and methods

In 2012, ZEMAT launched an implementation of advanced project management schemes. These schemes are aimed at improving the company's economic performance via an increased engagement of selected workers in managing processes.

Growing competition, accompanied by a rapid development of IT technologies, posed new challenges related to increasing the effectiveness of production and logistic processes in ZEMAT. The ability to address these issues is crucial for ZEMAT's future success and expansion on the market. This requires the company not only to modify its organisational structure, but also to improve the performance of its employees as well as introduce a mechanism for their continuous self-improvement.

The project management schemes applied in ZEMAT offer its older employees new possibilities of professional development. Further, they promote their engagement at work and introduce mechanisms for identification and development of talents. The implementation of this system brought significant changes to ZEMAT's relations with its employees. The new position of supervisors is being introduced at the production site as well as a new task-based incentive system of daily wages. Prior to their implementation, both solutions were preceded with relevant trainings and workshops.

The company expects that about nine to 10 employees attain a status of supervisor and that at least half of them are 50+ <sup>(21)</sup>. In practice, supervisors become coordinators of production processes instead of being subject to them. Each new order (e.g. for the construction of particular machinery) is perceived as a separate project which has its own supervisor at the production site, and is planned, initiated, realised and evaluated as such. The supervisor's role is to manage the project realisation in terms of assuring accurate supply of necessary elements, timely realisation and compliance of the final product with initial specifications of the order. This new approach is linked with an incentive system of bonuses calculated using a combination of parameters related to performance in terms of the three aforementioned aspects.

ZEMAT's task-based incentive system of daily wages is addressed to a group of production workers who are not supervisors but are responsible for the manufacturing of certain parts as an element of a larger project.

The system provides tools that enable assessment of effectiveness of their work in the context of particular tasks.

The head of the division responsible for production planning assigns estimated times needed for manufacturing of a certain element and records them on technical drawings which are distributed to constructors. A comparison of the estimated times with those actually needed for realisation of a task provides

---

<sup>(21)</sup> At the time of elaboration of this case study, the new system was in an initial phase of its implementation and not all of the employees eligible for this position were identified yet.

information which can provide a rationale for additional daily wages for high-performers, identification of talents, assessment of individual predispositions for the realisation of certain tasks (better match of tasks with workers' individual predispositions).

The implementation of this new system for the organisation of work was preceded by necessary trainings on project management and dedicated IT systems. Likewise, workshops were provided which were aimed at, for instance, the presentation of the idea of planned changes, increasing engagement of employees in this process, presentation of success factors of their work, communicating employers' expectations with regard to employees' performance, increasing awareness of how each employee may contribute to ZEMAT' success, or promoting corporate values. Such workshops were provided by an external training company.

Despite the fact that the project management scheme was planned on a group level, its actual impact as a guidance activity can also be analysed on an individual level. The system enables gathering of various data concerning the performance of particular employees, which should help managers coordinate their work to provide them with a valuable feedback.

The measures chosen for increasing engagement of older workers in managing processes have been formalised and are based upon detailed procedures and standards.

Employees' engagement in the course of the implementation of the system is crucial for the success of their professional development within ZEMAT. The new mechanisms pose new expectations with regard to quality of production work while providing, at the same time, tools for improving employees' position within the company and on the labour market.

It should be stressed that one of the ideas behind the schemes is that they are supposed to provide employees with new opportunities (new skills, promotion, higher incomes, etc.) and not to discriminate – those who are not interested in engaging, developing skills or improving performance would probably still maintain their previous level of incomes.

The guidance offered to older employees complies with an idea of learning by practicing/doing which is considered as one of the most effective techniques of professional development. It is an on-going process, but its effects can be measured based on a temporary assessment. The scheme provides new possibilities in terms of the development of workers' skills and managing employee careers.

#### **14.2.3. Experiences with implementation**

The measures described in the previous section (introducing the position of supervisors and task-based daily wages) are a natural follow up of the process of ZEMAT's development on the market. They are compliant with its strategic assumptions related to high quality of products and services, orientation towards employees' development as well as transparency of management processes.

In practice, the system was launched in its present form at the beginning of 2013. For this reason, no evaluations of its effectiveness have been made so far – neither of its impact on ZEMAT's competitiveness nor on the worker's satisfaction or competencies. Moreover, it is expected that most of its effects on employees will not appear in a short run, as they are expected to be a consequence of an on-going learning process and probable changes in attitude to work or self-perception. However, the regular assessment of performance of each employee should enable the on-going monitoring of their progress in gaining new skills and competencies. The information might also be used to assess the quality of the learning process, both in a short and long-term perspective.

Although the short history of the programme does not allow for the formulation of sound conclusions concerning the barriers to its implementation, initially there could be observed some reluctance to it among the older employees. This could, however, be explained by a threat of the unknown and reluctance to changing status quo rather than rational arguments against the proposed solutions. To diminish this negative perception, the implementation was preceded by intensive internal communication for example in the form of group workshops.

### **14.3. Outcomes and results**

#### **14.3.1. Individual level**

It is expected that the proposed approach offers individuals the possibility to gain new managerial and IT skills and widens their perspective on different areas of business operations. Improving project management skills should give a feeling of better control over more complicated processes and therefore lead to the enhancement of self-confidence both at work and in personal life. Moreover, the appointment for the position of supervisor can be perceived as a promotion within the company and should make the employees feel appreciated. Likewise, it can also give them a sense of active contribution to ZEMAT's success. Consequently,

such situations should increase employee satisfaction and improve their self-esteem.

Similarly, the implementation of task-based daily wages should contribute to the promotion of active attitudes and high performance at work; therefore becoming an effective incentive for continuous self-improvement. The company expects to foster employees' engagement in the identification of potential innovations and improvements to production processes in ZEMAT by showing the workers some new perspectives which are related to better performance and the increase of income.

In the long term, both measures should contribute to enhancing the employees' willingness to extend the period of their professional activity and to consider flexible forms of cooperation with ZEMAT when retired.

The knowledge and experience gained within the new schemes help to identify those skills and capabilities that are necessary to succeed at work. For this reason, it is envisaged that the new systems should also facilitate the process of preparation of new employees for work in ZEMAT. At the same time, one can expect that the schemes become a mechanism of self-enhancement which will provide employees with new possibilities to identify shortages of their competencies.

Finally, new skills and experiences and higher self-esteem should improve the position and potential mobility of employees on the labour market.

#### **14.3.2. Organisational level**

The company expects that the implemented changes should increase ZEMAT's competitiveness on the market, for example by a positive impact on its cost structure. More effective use of materials and reducing time for processes are examples of direct effects. Similarly, the new mechanism should improve the quality of products and services which increases customers' loyalty, opens access to new markets or may reduce costs related to potential complaints.

A constant strive for improvement should foster innovations in ZEMAT. This might be a very important effect, as innovation is one of the key values that historically determined the company's success on the market.

Moreover, increased satisfaction and engagement of workers should enhance their ties to the company and minimise the threat of outflow of employees. This can also strengthen the company's reputation as an employer of choice.

#### **14.3.3. Society level**

On the one hand, ZEMAT's approach to age management helps to overcome stereotypes that discriminate older people as employees. The example shows

that older workers can be a high performing, driving force of production teams; are able to adapt to new working environments; are capable of dealing with new technologies and can still learn and develop new skills. On the other hand, by doing so, the company may also positively contribute to changing the social perception of vocational professions.

#### 14.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

There is no evidence of the positive effects of the recently implemented measures yet. However, the earlier experiences of ZEMAT, resulting from its orientation towards older employees, prove that such a business model may contribute to the company's success on the market. One of the key success factors in the field was ZEMAT's ability to create a working environment that helped to integrate older employees within the company and maintain positive relations with its employees. As a result, the company was able to secure the necessary resources of qualified workers and effectively use their potential.

The chosen approach which focuses on increasing engagement of older workers in managing processes is characterised by a high level of transferability. It builds upon the universal idea of incorporating a project management approach to production processes and linking performance on task level with a premium system. Moreover, the ability to develop lasting relations with older employees very much relies on a transparent communication policy, creating mutual trust and family atmosphere at work, and possibilities for personal and professional development – rather than some industry specific factors.

#### 14.5. Conclusions

The company's strategy in the field of age management envisages the effective use of older workers' potential to strengthen ZEMAT's competitiveness on the market. It is focused at assuring high quality of production and services by the development of long-term cooperation with ageing workers and increasing their involvement in management processes. The newly adopted solutions not only create favourable conditions for continuous development of their professional skills, but also shape employees' attitudes to work and their orientation towards improving the organisation's performance.

The chosen methods facilitate the combination of individual goals (related to personal development or higher income) with those of the organisation. Moreover, it combines the development of skills and increasing awareness of

one's competencies with everyday work – which assures the on-going perpetuation of the process.

Despite the fact that the accuracy of the recently adopted measures cannot be evaluated at this stage, focussing on sustainable cooperation with older employees may be a good choice for manufacturing companies which suffer from a qualifications' gap on the labour market.

#### 14.6. List of interviewees

Witold Krotewicz; General director.

Monika Duraj; Human resources main specialist.



## CHAPTER 15.

# Paloma

### 15.1. Description of the approach

The company Paloma d.d. (Paloma – *Sladkogorska tovarna papirja, d.d., Sladki Vrh*) operates in the paper industry, or to be more precise, in the manufacture of household and sanitary goods and of toilet necessities (NACE classification: C17.220). It was established in 1873 in the borderland with Austria. According to the number of employees, it is a big company with 755 employees (31 December 2012). It is selling its products on the Slovenian market (17% of income) as well as south (19% of income), east (13% of income) and westEuropean (51% of income) markets.

The work place organisation is classically functional with a high share of older employees and an average age of 47 years (Table 4). The type of management is more task-oriented than relational because of its strong tradition. The new management is trying to implement some elements of relation management.

Table 4. **Paloma d.d. employees by the age groups**

Age	31 December 2009	31 December 2010	31 December 2011
18-24		3	5
25-29	9	6	5
30-34	32	29	22
35-39	91	77	64
40-44	182	160	128
45-49	243	229	233
50-54	238	244	239
55 or more	58	30	59
Total	853	778	755

Source: Paloma d.d. (2012, p. 40).

Additionally, the educational levels of the employees are low on average. The employees' distribution by the levels of formal education are represented in Table 5.

Table 5. **Paloma d.d. formal education of employees**

Educational level	31 December 2009		31 December 2010		31 December 2011	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Uncompleted primary school	65	7.6	46	5.9	40	5.3
Completed primary school	266	31.2	240	30.8	231	30.6
Short-term vocational upper secondary education	7	0.8	6	0.8	5	0.7
Vocational upper secondary education	241	28.3	233	29.9	227	30.1
Technical and general upper secondary education	184	21.6	170	21.9	166	22.0
Higher vocational education	47	5.5	2	5.4	44	5.8
Professional or academic higher education	43	5.0	40	5.1	40	5.3
Master degree	0	0.0	1	0.1	2	0.3
Total	853	100	778	100	755	100

Source: Paloma d.d. (2012, p. 40).

The company has recently been facing the following changes and developments:

- (a) change of leadership in 2011;
- (b) after few years of financial loss, the company started to earn profit in 2012;
- (c) permanent investments in the modernisation of the equipment;
- (d) permanent development of products, brands and internationalisation.

The general aim of the approach is to transfer the knowledge from older workers to younger ones. With such an approach, the company wants to keep older workers longer in employment on the one hand, and, on the other, shorten the learning process of younger workers who have no practical knowledge or experiences on particular working place. It is particularly aimed at workers in the production process.

Two target groups of workers can be identified who take an active part in the measure:

- (a) older workers;
- (b) younger workers.

Workers in production lines are the ones mainly taking part in the measure. In general, older workers have low educational levels, but these workers have a huge amount of experience, special skills and knowledge. On the other hand, younger workers have the knowledge acquired in schools, such as using information technology and software but are missing experiences and special skills. Therefore, each group can teach the other special skills and share its experiences and knowledge. On one side, it helps younger workers to adopt knowledge on how to manage work on machines in paper production more

quickly, and on other side, it helps older workers to get familiar and able to work with information technology and to keep working longer. With the approach, the company gives older workers also the feeling that they are still needed in the company and encourage them to work longer. Therefore, the positive effects are mutual for both groups of workers.

This approach was internally developed by the company Paloma d.d. to replace older workers who will leave the company and retire in next few years. It particularly addresses the problems with acquiring new workers with appropriate knowledge. It is practically impossible to get workers that already have the special knowledge needed to work in a paper production company. The company implemented the approach to overcome the problem with older workers who should retire in several years, while they have to be replaced by new workers who will be able to manage machines in paper production. With the approach of knowledge transfers from old to new, young workers acquire practical skills and knowledge to be able to independently manage machines in paper production. The approach was approved at the higher level of management and it is therefore a part of company's strategy. The approach was developed because of changed conditions on the market. Namely, the special secondary school for paper industry was closed several years ago. Therefore, young workers do not have enough expertise needed in paper industry or in the particular company.

## 15.2. Guidance activities

First, there is a brief description of the approach, as it is implemented in the company Paloma d.d. The case of transfer of knowledge among generations is based on cooperation among two groups of workers, namely older and younger ones. The human resource projections showed that the company would lose several key workers in the paper production after their retirement. Therefore, they were forced to accept some viable strategies to replace them or to keep them employed. The strategy adopted in the company was twofold, aimed at older and younger workers. The human resource department developed the mentoring system where one old and one newly employed person were working together. Formally, the older worker was a mentor to the young one. The aim of the approach is that the older worker teaches the younger one how to manage the work on the machines in paper production. Such an approach should shorten the learning process of young employees to be able to operate machines independently. On average, it takes at least five years (or even more) before they acquire all the knowledge needed to independently work with one of the production machines. The second aim of the approach is that older workers

within the mentoring system get special attention in the company and have the feeling that they are still useful for the company. With sharing the knowledge with young employees, their attitudes toward retirement changes and they are more willing to stay active. The third aim of the approach is to raise the level of knowledge on information technology among older workers. Therefore, younger workers are teaching older mentors how to use information technology and software, which has an additional positive impact on older workers.

Activities developed:

- (a) learning by doing or learning in the workplace: all activities were developed in the workplace. It means that older workers teach younger ones step by step how to handle the machines in paper production. Younger workers were working with them all the time, observing them how they handle the machines and then they try to repeat the same procedures. Older workers explained everything about the specific machine. The same process was applied when younger workers taught the older ones using software and other information technology. They explained to older workers the process of using software and then older workers tried to repeat the whole process;
- (b) praxis: older workers were practicing using information technology and different software and younger workers were practicing handling with machines in paper production;
- (c) conversation: during the process of learning by doing, conversation between older and younger workers took place;
- (d) exercise: the exercising was used during all the learning process (explained in the 'learning by doing or learning in the workplace' method).

The company selected the workers who had to participate in the approach. The main activities that can be distinguished in the approach are:

- (a) mentoring: newly employed young people are assigned a mentor (an old worker before retirement) who supervised them;
- (b) training and teaching: older workers teach younger workers how to manage machines in paper productions, while younger workers teach older workers how to use the contemporary technology (mainly work with information systems, different computer programmes, etc.) which enables older workers to stay longer in the workplace;
- (c) sampling: older workers acting as mentors are in charge to transfer knowledge and experiences to younger workers. Younger workers teach older workers how to use information technology;
- (d) enabling: with the approach, the company enables workers to learn in the workplace and to share knowledge and experiences.

#### **15.2.1. Description of guidance activities**

The main aim of the guidance activities is to improve own competencies and to raise e generic and specific skills: with learning by doing and learning on working place, older and younger workers gain additional competencies, knowledge and skills which help them to do their work better and with fewer errors. Additionally, the aim of the approach was also to plan and to develop the career of younger workers with the goal of enabling them the promotion in the company's systemisation of working place.

The total concept of the approach was prepared by the human resource department in the company and approved by the director of the company. Afterwards, the plan was explained to the involved employees (older and younger) and they were encouraged to positively accept the proposed approach. Because all activities are implemented internally, no special or additional budget was needed.

#### **15.2.2. Description of methods**

All methods are described for a group, regarding the total approach, roles and activities that have to be implemented during the mentoring programme. All methods were developed by the human resource department of the company and they are not prescribed by other organisations. Guidance was organised for 15 individuals in the paper production department of the company.

Applied methods:

- (a) career guidance: the human resource department helped employees to make decisions about their education, training and profession, and enable them to manage their individual life paths in learning and work. The aim of this method was to encourage employees to seriously think about their careers;
- (b) coaching: each participant in the approach was encouraged (by the human resource department) to prepare its own professional development plan;
- (c) appraisal: the human resource department made an assessment of the individuals' abilities, experiences and knowledge. The aim of the method was to estimate each participant in the approach;
- (d) peer counselling: older and young workers were consulting and advising each other about how to perform their work;
- (e) continuous training/continuous professional development: employees in the approach were improving their formal education with special knowledge, acquiring their core competencies and additional qualifications;
- (f) follow up: the human resource department observed the development of the individuals to attain the aim of the approach;

- (g) assessment and evaluation: the human resource department regularly evaluated the implementation of the approach.

The target group are workers in production; therefore, older workers who have low educational levels while acquiring additional education during their working years. The younger workers have also lower levels of education, mainly technical vocational education without working experiences. Employees were mainly male because of the characteristics of the paper production. The employees were very involved and also the most important part for the success of the approach.

Internal actors were included in the guidance process, among others the human resource department which has prepared the total approach and supervised its implementation and progress. Providers of the approach were older and younger workers. All participants were appropriately skilled to perform their part of activities. They did not receive special training because they were performing their every day job and at the same time explaining and teaching the other part how to perform this job.

One of the reasons to implement the approach was also to plan and develop the career of younger workers with the goal of enabling them the promotion in the company's working place systemisation. The other one was to keep older workers more actively included and to give them the feeling that they are still useful for the company. Guidance processes were on-going, lasting a few years, because of the specific skills which younger and older workers were expected to attain.

#### **15.2.3. Experiences with implementation**

The approach was not adapted/adjusted during the implementation because the initial approach has proven to be successful.

The main barrier in the implementation was that older workers saw younger ones as their direct competition. Therefore, at the beginning of the implementation, older workers were hiding their knowledge and skills, and were not prepared to share it with younger workers. On the other side, younger workers were over confident about their own skills and technical knowledge. Consequently, there were some conflicts. Eventually and after discussions and explanations by the human resource department, the relations improved and both sides were cooperating. There were no special external actors involved, because the approach was developed and implemented internally. The quality of the implementation was measured by the knowledge acquired, or more specific, by the ability to manage machines in paper production.

### 15.3. Outcomes and results

Short-term effects for participants at individual level are acquiring new skills, competencies and experiences. Long-term effects are the knowledge about career paths for new employees and for older workers as well as job satisfaction. The intangible result of the approach is the transfer of tacit knowledge possessed by older workers. It is the knowledge that older workers have accumulated over the years and which can't be coded and converted into handbooks but it can be transferred when older and younger workers are connected in mutual exchange of knowledge and experiences.

Short-term effects for the company are better inclusion of older workers and their loyalty. Long-term effects for the company are a sufficient number of workers with appropriate knowledge base, skills and competencies, qualified workforce and human capital.

Short-term effects of the approach on the society level are that older workers stayed active for more years during the time mentoring younger employees. Additionally, the company employed 15 young workers from the local environment and improved the employment statistics of the region.

A long-term impact on the society level is that older workers extended their active life and that younger workers got the opportunity to develop their career in the company for a long time.

Furthermore, there were no other results/effects noticeable related to the implementation of the approach/activities.

The approach was successful in the paper production part of the company, therefore they used a similar approach in other parts or functions (e.g. paper confection, logistics) in the company, with the difference that there was no new employment, but they moved employees from other positions and accustomed them to new positions.

### 15.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

The approach can inform other organisations about how appropriate planning of guidance activities can be successfully implemented despite initial problems with employees' cooperation. Additionally, it also exemplifies how effective measures can be implemented with internal participants and with low budget needed.

The approach is broadly transferable because it is easy to implement and generalist in the way that it combines employees from different generations and requires their cooperation and sharing of knowledge on the workplace.

The human resource management has the main role because they prepared the concept of the approach, managed its implementation, supervised it, regularly took care of the problems and solved them on time. This is probably the key success factor that the approach was implemented successfully.

There have not been any other evaluations than described above, because it was a totally internal measure. The case is transferable to other companies, especially in traditional manufacturing industries and in manufacturing sectors where older workers have specific skills and knowledge, and younger workers need practical experiences.

The policy-makers and others involved stakeholders should particularly make visible the successful cases from the local environment, which can represent the pattern for further development in guidance. Additionally, in Slovenia, there are not enough short- or long-term programmes and initiatives to promote and support guidance activities of older workers on national or local levels.

## 15.5. Conclusions

The main aim of the approach in the company Paloma d.d. was to overcome the problems with older employees who planned to retire in the paper production department. On the one hand, the company tried to keep active older employees as long as they could, and on the other hand, they had to find new employees who were not available on the market. Therefore, the human resource department of the company decided to prepare this special approach on how to overcome those two problems that were connected. They decided to employ 15 young workers who started to work on the lowest position in the company and with the mentoring by older workers they developed their skills and abilities to handle big machines in the paper production. They learned step-by-step for a longer period (around five years) to master handling the machines.

The approach was successfully implemented and the younger workers learned quickly. On the other side, older workers, who were mentors, were taught by younger workers how to use the information technology (software). At the beginning, the company faced some problems with cooperation among the two involved groups of workers, but with conversation and discussion they overcame these problems. However, the company is convinced that the approach is successful.

One of the most important aspects is that the planning of the approach and its guidance by the human resource management department was the key of success, because at the beginning, workers were not prepared to cooperate and



to share their knowledge. They were anxious and afraid to be replaced in the short term, but after transparent explanations they acknowledged that they are very valuable for the company and that they can contribute to its future success.

## 15.6. List of interviewees/contact persons

Darko Bračič; Director .

Jožica Leopold; Human resources department director.

Franc Perko; Director of paper production department.

Damijan Perko; First assistant of machine-minder.

## 15.7. Literature list

Paloma d.d. (2011). *Annual report 2010*. Sladki Vrh: Paloma d.d.

<http://web.paloma.si/en/files/default/Letna%20poro%c4%8dila/Annual%20Report%202010.pdf>

Paloma d.d. (2012). *Annual report 2011*. Sladki Vrh: Paloma d.d.

<http://web.paloma.si/en/files/default/Letna%20poro%c4%8dila/Annual%20report%202011.pdf>

Paloma d.d. (Internal document, n.d.) *Medgeneracijski prenos znanja v družbi Paloma d.d., verzija 1" [Intergenerational transfer of knowledge in the company Paloma d.d., Version 1]*.

Paloma d.d. (Internal document, n.d.) *Medgeneracijski prenos znanja v družbi Paloma d.d., verzija 2 [Intergenerational transfer of knowledge in the company Paloma d.d., Version 2]*.

*Sladkogorčan*, No 2, July 2009.

[http://web.paloma.si/si/files/default/Sladkogorcan/sladkogorcan\\_julij\\_2009.pdf](http://web.paloma.si/si/files/default/Sladkogorcan/sladkogorcan_julij_2009.pdf)

*Sladkogorčan*, No 1/2, July 2010.

[http://web.paloma.si/si/files/default/Sladkogorcan/sladkogorcan\\_julij\\_2010.pdf](http://web.paloma.si/si/files/default/Sladkogorcan/sladkogorcan_julij_2010.pdf)

*Sladkogorčan*, No 1, April 2012.

<http://web.paloma.si/si/files/default/Sladkogorcan/%c4%8casopis%20Sladkogorcan,%20april%202012.pdf>

## CHAPTER 16.

# Crédit Industriel et Commercial

### 16.1. Description of the approach

The Industrial and Commercial Credit (CIC, *Crédit Industriel et Commercial*) is a French bank founded in 1859. It was nationalised between 1982 and 1997 before being acquired by the Federative Bank of the Mutual Credit (*Banque Fédérative du Crédit Mutuel*) in 1998. It has been part of the Crédit Mutuel-CIC group since that date. Since 2004, the CIC is divided into six French regional banks, each one covering a different area of the country: CIC Est (East); CIC Ouest (West), CIC Nord-Ouest (North-West), CIC Lyonnaise de Banque (area of Lyon); CIC Sud-Ouest (South-West) and CIC Paris (Parisian Basin area); plus a bank in the country of Luxembourg.

In December 2011, the enterprise employed 20 779 persons and had 4 462 041 clients (3 703 056 individuals, 68 065 associations, 580 066 professionals, 110 853 enterprises). The CIC is both a retail bank and a corporate and investment bank. In January 2011, the bank has also gathered its development-capital activities in another unit called CM-CIC Capital Finance.

The *accord seniors* approach of the CIC has two main objectives:

- (a) the planning of the latter part of employees' career and the anticipation of the retirements;
- (b) the transmission of seniors' experience, skills and methods to younger employees.

With regard to actors and target group, specialised human resources managers are involved in this approach. Some human resources managers are in charge of the guidance about retirements procedures; others are in charge of the training; and yet others are in charge of conducting specific interviews with the senior workers. External training centres are also likely to be involved, according to the training needs of the senior workers. Interestingly, the approach targets all employees older than 45 years.

Concerning the reasons for its implementation, the approach was first developed to comply with legal evolutions (the pension reforms and the obligation of adopting specific strategies towards senior workers) and with their consequences (the longer retaining of senior workers in employment).

For the CIC, the major issue was the lack of control on the departures of its employees for retirement. During several years, the enterprise has had some knowledge of the departure of its employees: when an employee reached the

age of 55, the human resources manager knew this employee would quit within five years. However, the pension reforms of 2003 and 2010 had postponed the minimum age of retirement so that an employee reaching 60 years old can now stay 10 years more if they wish to.

Employees can choose to retire once they have reached the minimum legal age or later. The CIC (as well as other French enterprises) is not authorised to force departure before their employees reached the age of 70 and is only informed of their choice to retire two months before their effective departure. Thus, for the CIC, the main risk is to be unable to manage departures and to lose seniors' experience in the process.

Moreover, the CIC has identified a second issue. Its employees used to quit as soon as they reached the legal age for retirement. However, as a consequence of the economic crisis, employees are staying longer and longer past the minimum age. These employees require some guidance activities to plan latter stages of their career that they had not anticipated. This is another issue at stake for the CIC and its human resource department.

As a whole, for the CIC, reinforced guidance of senior employees enables a better planning of the latter stages of their career. This also facilitates their retention in the enterprise and then, their departure. According to the human resources department, a key priority is to motivate senior employees since highly motivated employees are more likely to work in better conditions. However, to motivate these employees, the CIC had to develop specific guidance activities towards seniors.

This approach is different from the traditional age management strategies of the CIC, or of the bank sector as a whole. The human resources tradition concerning senior employees was to develop early retirement plans. The legal evolutions have put these practices to an end and required a radical change, as can be seen with the new strategy of the CIC.

After the pension reform of 2003, the CIC had begun to revise its strategy. The plan for early retirement, built in 2001, ceased in 2006. The enterprise launched a survey among its senior employees to understand their needs. The results of the survey highlight the desire of senior employees to be treated as normal employees, to access special training, to avoid forced mobility, to be able to reduce their workload, and to get a clearer picture of their future. Thus, the *accord seniors* are partially based on these results. The reform context, as well as the economic situation, has encouraged this approach.

## 16.2. Guidance activities

### 16.2.1. Identification of guidance activities

The aim of the guidance activities is first to inform senior employees about their possibilities of development within the enterprise and of the retirement procedures they need to know to quit the CIC without problems. These activities inform the CIC about the wishes of its employees and, indirectly, on their competences.

The guidance activities of the CIC are also aimed at raising the skills of its senior and younger workers. The training plan is opened to all employees but with specific provisions to senior workers, allowing them to plan their latter career stages. The mentor programme allows senior workers to convey their skills and knowledge to younger workers or interns.

The guidance activities can lead to an empowerment of the senior workers. Through interviews and mentoring, senior workers are able to control in some way the development of their career. Each year, the human resources department informs employees older than 45 about the possibility to meet a human resources manager. These employees can either choose to ask directly for an interview, to delay the interview, or not to contact the human resources department. During these interviews, employees can ask for different types of activities: special skills assessment, mobility, new type of position, training, mentoring, information on retirement, specific organisation of work time.

In this line, the CIC has developed the following activities and methods:

- (a) individual interviews about latter career stages. These interviews are the first step to other guidance activities. Indeed, other guidance activities will follow (or not) depending of the wishes expressed by employees during this occasion. The interviews are conducted between human resource managers and senior employees. Each year, human resources managers send an invitation to older employees (those who will reach 45 during the year and above). Employees can choose to respond to this invitation and to meet a manager during an interview. Interviews can also be programmed at another moment on specific demand emanating from employees. The interviews about latter career stages are strongly encouraged by the French law (risk of financial penalties) and are then easier to put in place;
- (b) mentoring of younger employees or interns. Senior employees may volunteer to become tutor. Three types of mentoring are possible: senior employees can either choose:
  - (i) to animate training sessions on a specific subject in front of other CIC employees (group work/lecturing);

- (ii) to train their successor a few weeks prior their departure
  - (iii) to train an intern (most of time, a student in *alternance*, who attends for an academic period and then works for a like period at the CIC).
- The third type – training an intern – is the most often used. The CM CIC Training organisation is training these types of tutors before the beginning of their mentoring. The training of these tutors varies according to the diploma pursued by their intern;
- (c) skills assessments. These skills assessments are open to all employees but designed to suit better senior employees' needs. They are conducted on an individual basis. Senior employees also benefit equal training opportunities. Typical tools used in these skills assessments include written closed questionnaires as well as oral interviews with human resources responsible, where all these tools have been internally developed by CIC;
  - (d) early retirement arrangements. These arrangements allow senior employees to reduce their workload the year prior their departure, from a full-time job to a part-time job. They are being discussed between employees and human resources managers, on an individual basis;
  - (e) guidance regarding retirement procedures. Senior employees meet the human resource manager in charge of this specific activity during an individual meeting. They can further discuss it by phone or mail. During these meetings, employees are informed by the human resource manager about the administrative procedures they need to follow in order to retire and the different types of documents they need to gather – sometimes, years ahead of their effective retirement. Moreover, the human resource manager examines their individual cases and give them an idea of the level of income they could expect once retired. For employees, this is an occasion to discuss with the human resources manager the possibility of working longer to have a better income and thus the planning for a longer career; or the possibility to stop early.

#### **16.2.2. Description of methods/approaches**

First, since 2010, the French law prescribes the use of *accord seniors* to any private enterprise or public establishment with more than 50 employees (enterprises risk a penalty if they do not fulfil this obligation). These *accord seniors* favour the maintenance and/or the recruitment of aged employment, using for this purpose innovative tools defined per each enterprise.

Within the CIC the most used methods are formalised (procedure, actors involved) but give space to informal exchanges, especially for the interviews about latter career stages and retirement procedures. The procedure for

mentoring is also formalised but its content is adapted to the cases. Moreover, the methods are designed internally by the CIC human resources department, although training can be either internal (conducted by CIC training managers) or external (conducted by training centres not related to the CIC human resources department). In this line, the guidance process involves human resource managers in charge of the training, career management and retirement; and external trainers. Most of the training programme is managed by human resources manager of the CM CIC Training organisation (training structure created by the CIC): identification of employees training needs, creation and animation of training activities, monitoring of training activities, relationships with external training providers and management of training budget. Guidance providers do not receive any specific training other than the regular one given by the CM CIC Training organisation.

The CIC Training Programme is available for all employees and not only senior employees. The choice of an internal or external training depends of the aim of the training itself. The CM CIC Training organisation classifies its training activities in three different categories:

- (a) the *filière métiers* which allows employees to evolve towards a new job within the CIC. It involves continuous training at University and the completion of a degree (mostly bachelor degrees). Collective training activities: these activities are mostly development internally, with human resources managers of the CIC;
- (b) specific activities: these specific activities can be managed by external public training centres, like senior skill assessments for example.

All guidance activities are organised for individuals: the interviews as well as the skills assessments and the support given for the fulfilment of retirement procedures. Mentoring is a specific case: it is devised both for groups of employees or for a single intern and is taken in charge by a single senior worker. In any case, the approach targets all employees older than 45 years old.

Employees older than 45 years are invited to an interview about the latter part of their career every year. The intensity of mentoring depends of the type elected by the employee: following an intern implies an activity of several months but animating a training session can be occasional. In fact, senior employees are at the basis of all guidance activities. They have to volunteer for most of these activities (mentoring, skills assessments, and support for the retirement procedures.) The commitment of senior employees is important and interviews about latter career parts are attended by most of them.

On the other hand, guidance activities and methods regarding age management are fully integrated to the overall human resources management.

For instance, the interviews about latter career stages come in addition of the professional interviews, which are compulsory and conducted by the human resources department for each employee every two years. To let employees express themselves freely, the direct supervisor does not take part in this process. (They are also different from the annual assessment interviews, which are not compulsory for enterprises and then not currently being conducted by the CIC. They are normally conducted by the direct supervisor for each employee). These interviews do not follow the exact same method, as the professional interviews and assessment interviews are more formal and oriented towards the assessment of employees. However, the organisation and planning of interviews requires similar work from human resources managers. Interestingly also, the mentoring and the skills assessments are integrated to the training plan as a whole. Moreover, the interviews about retirement are per se more specific to senior and do not follow patterns used for other types of human resources interviews.

With regard to the channel used, the interviews are conducted face-to-face. Furthermore, the training plan can be accessed by all employees online so to assess their skill levels, where these resources are all available in-house.

#### **16.2.3. Experiences with implementation**

With regard to adjustments of the approach during the implementation, it must be said that the approach has not been modified. Moreover, according to the human resources department, no barriers had been encountered. The reform context had lessened the visibility of older employees on their futures. They had thus welcomed any element of guidance allowing them to understand under which conditions they could retire and what their career possibilities were. To the human resources department, it seems that the mentoring programme is fairly appreciated by employees, especially the mentoring of a successor. However, some employees express the desire not to be tutor (lack of time, disinterest for the procedure).

On the other hand, concerning external actors involved, adult learning centres or guidance centres can be associated to the training activities. Additionally, trade unions have been informed of the approach and have been asked to sign the agreement. Some trade unions have refused to sign this agreement. The CFTC considers the *accords seniors* as too weak. They would have wished for an assessment of the guidance action and for a financial involvement of the CIC regarding early retirement arrangements. Employees asking for early retirement arrangements consequently lose a part of their retirement pension, since they work less than they should have in order to have a

full pension from the State. Thus, the CFTC has asked the CIC to contribute to the Pension Fund so that these employees do obtain a full pension. The FO trade union has also refused to sign the agreement. Finally, regarding quality descriptors, the CIC does not have any indicator to measure the quality of the approach.

### 16.3. Outcomes and results

On the individual level, the approach allows senior employee to prepare better the end of their career: they gain knowledge about possible career paths, skills they could develop, and level of income they can expect once retired. According the human resources department, most of them are satisfied and motivated by them. Few of them are formally opposed to certain types of activities (mentoring for instance).

On the organisational level, the approach allows to use the diversity of the workforce as an asset (mentoring), to anticipate departures and to maintain good relations with clients in the specific case of commercial jobs (training of the successor in presence of clients).

Moreover, on societal level, this approach can contribute to a better transfer knowledge between generations. This can also improve the living standards of pensioners since this strengthen their knowledge of the pension system.

As a whole, this approach can encourage the access to guidance activities oriented towards the sharing of knowledge and skills between young and senior workers; the training of senior and the importance of the transition between labour market and retirement.

### 16.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

The context of national reforms played a role in the success of the approach. Reforms have both disrupt the time senior workers had expected to work until retirement and the amount of income they were counted on, once retired. Employees were then in need of guidance. They were in demand of information and help regarding the new retirement procedures. Since they have realised they would worker longer than expected, the planning of the later part of their career was also important to them.

This approach can be transferred to other types of French enterprises that are also legally required to develop an in-house *accord senior*. The interviews are



particularly well-received by employees and could be used in a similar way than the CIC, i.e. as a basis for further guidance activities.

The guidance is successful when it meets the agreement of employees. For the human resources department, another important aspect about guidance is to make sure employees are considered as normal employees and can access to equal opportunities (training, mobility).

## 16.5. Conclusions

The success of guidance in this approach lies upon the adherence of employees to its objectives. The various activities deployed by CIC are based on volunteering and are then more likely to be perceived as assets than as constraints.

As a whole, the activities developed by the CIC succeed in empowering senior employees. These employees are given information and opportunities to evolve and can opt for the activities the best suited to their project.

The development of this strategy was mainly a response to legal obligations. Without the elaboration of a special agreement towards senior employees, the CIC would have had to pay a fine. These guidance activities were thus strongly caused by financial incentives. However, the CIC has been known for the development of specific human resources strategies towards its employees since the 1960's (mostly on the training area). It is then likely that some kind of agreements for senior employees would have been made without financial constraints, in the context of national reforms.

The reforms had made these guidance activities important for employees. Without the reforms, the need may have been less strong and thus, part of these activities might not have been implemented. It is important to point out that mentoring may have been implemented either, since this activity also provides help for junior workers and have been experimented before the *accords seniors* and the reforms (in 1998).

## 16.6. List of interviewees

Corinne Dufermont; Human resource manager.

Tel +33 3 20 12 64 16

e-mail: [corinne.dufermont@cic.fr](mailto:corinne.dufermont@cic.fr)

## CHAPTER 17.

# Groupama

### 17.1. Description of the approach

Groupama d'Oc is part of the Groupama Group or GROUPE des Assurances Mutuelles Agricoles (Group of Mutual Agricultural Insurances). The group is present in 14 different countries with 38 000 employees and 16 millions of clients. Their clients are individuals, professionals, enterprises and public actors. Groupama covers a large amount of risks (housing, automobile, life insurance, etc.). Through recent years, Groupama had acquired several other insurances firms (among which the French enterprise GAN) and strengthened its international weight. Groupama also reorganised its local implantation in France through the merger of local establishments (Groupama Grand Est and Groupama Alsace; Groupama Alpes Méditerranée and Groupama Sud).

In particular, Groupama d'Oc is a local establishment of Groupama in charge of the extreme south-west part of France. Groupama d'Oc covers 14 French administrative departments. This establishment gathers 1 541 employees under the terms of *contrat à durée indéterminée* (permanent contracts), of whom 202 are more than 50 years old. The employees older than 50 years also represent 11% of the employees under the terms of *contrat à durée déterminée* (temporary contracts). About 30% of the employees have managerial responsibility. 40% of the positions are held by employees with a tertiary level of education; the others are held by employees with education and training at upper secondary level. The jobs are divided between commercial jobs, technical jobs (insurance) and administrative jobs.

With regard to the *accord seniors* approach, the first goal of Groupama d'Oc was to move the average retirement age of its employees back towards age 60, as required by French laws. The overall objective is to manage better the latter stages of career while anticipating future retirements.

The approach was first developed to meet legal obligations. Since the 1st of January 2010, organisations (public institutions and companies) with at least 50 employees ought to adopt an *accord senior* (agreement for senior workers) or to develop a specific action plan for senior workers.

More precisely, concerning involved actors, the *accord seniors* mobilises human resources managers, training centres and trade unions. Its target group is the employees over the age of 50, with specific provisions for those older than 55 years.

With regard to the overall age management strategy, the group Groupama has signed a Charte de la Diversité (Diversity Charter) in 2008. This Charter addresses the issues of gender equality, handicap policy and age management. This aims to give equal treatment to each worker, regardless of its age, gender or health condition. The Accord Senior follows this principle and reassures an equal treatment and equal access to all human resources programmes (information, training, etc.) for senior workers.

In the past, the Groupama group had developed several plans allowing early retirements for its employees. Its establishment Groupama d'Oc was also concerned by such measures. The average age of retirement was 58 back in 2009, before the implementation of the *accord seniors*. Thus, the *accord seniors* has required a change of the human resources' traditional practices of Groupama d'Oc and, more generally of the group Groupama. More than 75% of the French establishments of the Groupama group have signed *accord seniors* in 2010 to manage better the latter stages of their employee's career. Each establishment has its own different agreement and actions plan.

From a national context perspective, it must be noted that the approval of the agreement took place during a context of public pension reform. The minimum retirement age had been raised from 60 years old (or 40 years of contribution for a full pension) to 62 years old for people born after 1955. The number of years of contribution for a full pension has also been raised, from 40 years of contribution to 41.5. In the meanwhile, enterprises cannot force their employees to retirement before their 70th birthday. These changes include various exceptions and special dispositions. Therefore, seniors worker of Groupama d'Oc have been in demand of information concerning their retirement rights. Thus, this issue had been included in the Groupama d'Oc *accord senior*.

## 17.2. Guidance activities

### 17.2.1. Identification of guidance activities

The *accord senior* of Groupama d'Oc includes three main lines:

#### 17.2.1.1. *The retention of senior employees*

The retention of senior employees aims at keeping active the skills of senior workers within the enterprise. This retention encompasses two main aspects.

First, Groupama d'Oc is now offering limited early retirement arrangements to its employees. This action does not include specific guidance elements since

the change was strictly made at the human resources level. This is a change of strategy rather than an activity in itself.

The second aspect of the retention of senior employees takes the form of specific efforts made towards the recruitment of senior workers. This action also takes place at human resources level.

#### 17.2.1.2. *The equal training of senior employees.*

The equal training of senior employees allows senior worker to learn skills and to plan their career development as any other worker. Thus, the training of senior workers is similar in all aspects to the training of other employees. According to the Director of the human resources department, no specific guidance element particularly aimed at older workers is present in this line, because it is compulsory (prescribed by law). Training programmes are unilaterally decided by the Management Board in general and the human resources manager in particular, depending on the needs of the business activity and qualifications required for each post (without considering the age of the employee). For some posts, specific training leads to promotion prospects.

#### 17.2.1.3. *The assistance of senior employees regarding their retirement process.*

The third line of the *accord seniors* is the one that contains guidance elements. The aim of the assistance of senior employees regarding retirement is to inform them of their possibilities on this specific matter. It is implemented through collective and individual meetings. The collective and individual meetings regarding retirement have been subjected to strong demands of senior workers.

### 17.2.2. **Description of methods/approaches**

With regard to the assistance of senior employees regarding their retirement process, the collective and individual meetings regarding retirement are prepared by the Director of human resources of Groupama d'Oc (the meetings are organised for both groups and individuals). The Director of human resources gathers information about the reform context and other important elements about retirement, such as administrative procedures, he thinks needed. Actually, this internal method is conveyed to all human resources managers of Groupama d'Oc. These talks are not held between the direct supervisor and employees for such supervisors do not have any specific knowledge of retirement procedures changes. Human resources managers on the other hand, are more qualified to help employees in their administrative procedures and overall considerations about retirement. These meetings are not imposed on Groupama d'Oc by law or by branch agreements but are predicated on their own commitment.

On the other hand, the job retention and the equal access to training are prescribed by law, and they are compulsory. No specific guidance element has been identified by the human resources department in these two objectives of the *accord seniors*.

Concerning the people involved in the guidance processes, these involve the human resources department of the different agencies of Groupama d'Oc (located through 14 French administrative departments), training centres and trade unions. The human resources managers have not followed specific training, except regarding the 'non-discrimination' objective. Human resources managers of Groupama d'Oc have indeed been made aware of the equality issues, as part of the implementation of the Diversity Charter. The Diversity Charter has been signed by more than 2500 French enterprises. This charter is not a juridical but a moral commitment, originally launched by a French think tank, the Institut Montaigne. This is supported by non-profit organisations, trade unions, employer organisations and public organisations. The Diversity Charter aims at giving equal opportunities to each employee, regardless of their health, gender, sexual orientation, origin, religious and politics beliefs, age (and more than 11 other characteristics). One of the advised actions is thus to inform employees, and especially human resources managers, about the necessity to avoid discrimination and to offer equal opportunities to each employee. To comply with this objective, the Groupama Group has trained more than 250 human resources managers on this specific subject.

With regard to the features of the target group, collective and individual meetings about retirement can be attended by any worker older than 50 years old, but preferably those older than 55. On the other hand, the recruitment/retention of senior workers involves candidates of 50 years and more.

Regarding the involvement of the employee, it must be said that these meetings regarding retirement are not in any case compulsory for employees. Senior employees volunteer in order to attend the collective meeting. Following this collective meeting, they can decide to ask further information on their specific case through an individual meeting. The main channel used in the process is a face-to-face between employees and human resources managers of Groupama d'Oc. The collective meeting follows a guideline, which evolves yearly according to the pension reforms announcements (i.e. Different themes involved, different kind of information provided). Individual meetings however are informal and adapted to each case. They tend to answer employees specific questions or needs.

From a time perspective, the recruitment and training of the senior employees is continuous. The collective meeting about retirement takes place once a year at the headquarters of Groupama but can also take place in other units, according to the needs of employees or to the desires of the local human resources manager. On the other hand, individual meetings are held on demand at the headquarters.

Taking into account the overall human resources management, the collective meeting regarding retirement is reminiscent of various information and preventions activities, implemented on a single occasion or on a recurring basis, by Groupama for its employees. For half a century, Groupama has elaborated prevention activities at the group or establishment levels. For instance, Groupama has organised Information Days on diabetes for its employees, including senior employee, within its *coeur attitude* plan (heart attitude plan).

### **17.2.3. Experiences with implementation**

With regard to adjustments or modifications, no specific adjustment has been made during the implementation. Furthermore, no specific barriers had been encountered. In any case, the *accord seniors* is now coming to an end, as it was had been signed for three years. The approaches implemented are framed by an *accord*, i.e. an agreement between the enterprise and employees' representatives. This agreement needs to be revised after a fixed amount of time. This also allows the enterprise to discuss the results of the activities with trade unions and, if needed, to officially adjust the activities to employees' needs. Groupama d'Oc would have signed a new *accord senior* for three more years. However, the new French government has proclaimed the need for a new type of plan for age guidance, called *contrat de generation* (generation contract). Groupama d'Oc is thus waiting for the decrees implementing these new measures to be acted in order to adapt its new activities towards its senior employees to legal requirements.

As well as this, the human resources department of Groupama d'Oc already knows some actions would have to be made for young workers as well as senior workers, more particularly through tutelage of young workers by senior workers. However, Groupama d'Oc is not keen to implement this form of mentoring. The current position of the group is to consider mentoring as a way to share expertise between employees, regardless of their age. Groupama d'Oc is expecting legal clarifications in order to redefine its whole human resources age policy.

On the other hand, concerning external actors involved in the implementation, adult learning centres have been involved for the training of

senior employees but, considering the equity issue, no specific actions have been implemented for senior workers at their level.

Other external actors include trade unions, which have contributed to the elaboration of the *accord seniors*. Over the course of the plan, they have been informed of the progresses and advances being made, but normally they do not consider this policy as their priority. In any case, the continuation of the *accord seniors* needs to be discussed with the trade unions.

Finally, regarding indicators and descriptors to measure quality, Groupama d'Oc has developed several indicators concerning its senior employees. These indicators give information on: the average age of the workers under the terms of Contrat à Durée Indéterminée (Permanent Contracts) and Contrat à Durée Déterminée (Temporary Contracts), the access of senior workers to training, the promotions, the mobility of senior workers and other employment data.

Thus, Groupama d'Oc can follow the level of completion of its objectives for senior workers. For instance, for the 2011-12 period, eight senior workers have been hired under the terms of permanent contracts and five senior workers have been hired under the terms of temporary contracts.

### 17.3. Outcomes and results

On individual level, senior workers have acquired better knowledge of the French retirement process, of their rights and of the level of their retirement pension. Though the aim of the approach is to keep employees active longer, the human resources Director of Groupama d'Oc points out that the top priority of senior employees themselves is to anticipate their retirement years ahead in order to retire as soon as legally and/or financially possible.

From a company perspective, the 'accord senior' has a direct effect at the human resources level: this allows better management of changes in the workforce. Moreover, Groupama d'Oc has also reached its objective to move the average age of retirement of its workers to 60 (instead of 58 before the *accord seniors*). Thanks to this change of the average retirement age and to the recruitment of senior workers, the workforce of Groupama d'Oc is now more diversified than before.

On the other hand, at society level, this type of approach can have an effect on the living standards of pensioners, by allowing them to leave the company with a good knowledge of their future income.

Finally, this approach can encourage the access to guidance activities oriented towards the transition between labour market and retirement.

#### 17.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

The collective and individual meetings about retirement may be transferable within France without much modification. The same concept can be transferred in enterprises of other EU Member States: to inform senior employees about their retirement possibilities in order for them to determine the best moment to stop their career and to anticipate the different administrative procedures they would have to tackle with.

On the other hand, the guidance at Groupama d'Oc is mostly effective concerning the retirement issue. This issue is the main concern of senior employees. For this reason, they are likely to attend the meetings and to ask for additional information during individual interviews. Since the retirement system in France is complex, the added value of these information and assistance meetings is almost certain.

With regard to evaluations, no impact assessments or evaluations have been made concerning this *accord seniors*. Some indicators regarding the situation of senior employees in the enterprise have been supplied by the human resources department. The results were officially presented to trade unions during the meeting ending the programme, on Friday 7 December 2012.

#### 17.5. Conclusions

The overall objective of the *accord seniors* approach was to manage better the latter career stages while anticipating future retirements, as well as increasing the average age of retirement of workers. These objectives have been reached. From a national context perspective, it must be noted that the *accord seniors* was approved in a context of public pension reform. Therefore, senior workers of Groupama d'Oc demanded information concerning their retirement rights. In this regard, guidance activities for older workers refer to advice and information about retirement, which is the main concern of senior employees.

The desire of senior employees to retire as soon as possible limits the effects of job retention of senior workers. Even if the firm has reached its objective to move up the average age of retirement of its workers, this may be essentially caused by the legal extending of the retirement minimum age. The assistance meetings regarding retirement procedures appear as the most successful activity, and it is popular among employees because it fits their first priority (i.e. support concerning their retirement process).

On the other hand, older workers themselves (i.e. the target group) tend to plan its retirement more carefully. Some administrative procedures needed for



retirement are better handled by the senior workers, especially complex procedures (e.g. part of the career abroad, etc.).

## 17.6. List of interviewees

Thierry Lacombe; Director of human resources

Tel. +33 5 61 99 44 63

e-mail: [thierry.lacombe@groupama-oc.fr](mailto:thierry.lacombe@groupama-oc.fr)

## CHAPTER 18.

# Rossimoda

### 18.1. Description of the approach

The Riviera del Brenta industrial district is located in the Italian region of Veneto and is specialised in the production of high quality shoes. Despite the fact that the industrial district has relatively maintained its employment levels around 11 000 employees after the economic crisis of 2008, it has deeply changed its profile over the past two decades. Thus, the district has moved from medium-high level firms to luxury ones (the most famous Italian and French luxury brands bought several plants: LVMH, Armani, Dior, Prada). Moreover, older workers were replaced mainly by young migrant women in semi-skilled manual positions, but not in most skilled ones. Also, Chinese factories entered the district in upper manufacturing.

Main actors in the industrial district include local employers' associations, local governments (mainly public societies for innovation and enterprise growth dependant on the local authorities), and local banks. In particular, relevant actors within the industrial district include the following ones:

- (a) a sectoral local employers' association (ACRIB, *Associazione Calzaturieri Riviera del Brenta* – Association of Riviera del Brenta Shoemakers);
- (b) a district brand (*Associazione Maestri Calzaturieri*; Shoemasters' association);
- (c) a territorial-level collective agreement ensuring common terms of employment in any firm of the district;
- (d) the training and innovation centre, Centro Veneto Calzaturiero (shoemaking Venetic Center), denominated since 2001 Politecnico Calzaturiero (Shoemaking Politecnics).

More specifically, Politecnico Calzaturiero plays a crucial role in skills reproduction and regeneration thanks to the interaction of consultancy, training, and technological transfer. It operates in the following areas:

- (a) initial vocational training, in particular related to insertion training (apprentices, temporary workers, disabled). Also, the ITS (a post-secondary diploma) for new technologies in fashion and shoes industries was launched in 2011;
- (b) continuous vocational training in ICT transfer and implementation (for shoes' productive processes), training for entrepreneurs and competence development (by using funds from the European Social Fund and Leonardo,

- and interprofessional bipartite funds, as well as public funds from the Italian Ministry of Education);
- (c) technology transfer, especially CAD-CAM implementation, also by developing ad-hoc software, in cooperation with the University of Padova and ENEA (the National Research Institute for technology and alternative energies);
  - (d) testing and quality control of materials (including e.g. new materials and quality certification);
  - (e) health and safety intervention and training.

The enterprise Rossimoda is the largest shoemaker in the Riviera del Brenta industrial district and is specialised in top quality shoes. It has around 260 employees (380 including several small units, formally independent, supplying shoes components), and a EUR 55 million turnover per year. Founded in 1942, the company is successfully specialised in luxury shoes for the most famous French brands. In 2003 Louis Vuitton bought the control of Rossimoda. Currently, Rossimoda provides luxury shoes for all brands of the Louis Vuitton group and guarantees the highest quality standards thanks to its vertical integration. Rossimoda is fully active in the activities developed within the industrial district, including the participation in the management boards of the local employers' association (ACRIB) and the Politecnico Calzaturiero

Due to the progressive and deep change in the workforce, the traditional skills transmission process both within the district and Rossimoda has been affected. The traditional skills reproduction in manufacturing, traditionally based on informal training (flanking, imitation and observation), has nowadays become viable only for semi-skilled manual positions, which require at most a few months learning process. For more complex tasks within shoe-manufacturing activities, this system does not hold anymore.

Informal training for skilled positions and complex tasks (i.e. pre-assembling and assembling phases) normally relies on junior workers' ability for 'stealing with their eyes' the tacit knowledge that seniors display. This process lasts at least two years. Typically, seniors show their tacit knowledge by means of their gestures and way of working, whereas their verbal transfer is relatively limited. The limited extent of verbal transmission is due to three factors, that is to say:

- (a) a conscious choice of the senior himself, given that tacit skills allow him to negotiate for individual pay increase;
- (b) difficulties to transmit this type of tacit knowledge;
- (c) limited communication skills due to the low qualification of most seniors (usually ISCED-2).

At the same time, and unfortunately enough, the sector as a whole has experienced a progressive decline in attractiveness, mainly because of average low pay, strong seasonality and high manual content. Thus, young workers display low motivation in learning, they do not feel very stimulated to become skilled and they are not as interested in visual observation as seniors used to be.

These factors have led to an insufficient skills reproduction (referring to both the learning and the transfer of skills), which does not match the industrial district's skill needs, jeopardising the long-term sustainability of the district. One consequence is a widespread practice extended among assemblers and pre-assemblers (i.e. the most qualified blue collars), who continue to work after their retirement age, usually at 53-55 years (until the 2011 retirement reform).

Moreover, during the past decade, skilled positions have experienced a significant increase in complexity, as a consequence of the upgrade of the average district production (from medium-high to luxury shoes), which calls for further attention on quality standards. Furthermore, new furs and materials have been introduced, increasing complexity in manual task. As well as this, pre-assembling and assembling machinery has evolved from mechanic to mechatronics technologies, and this requires workers to acquire skills in ICT. These product and process innovations further lengthen the learning process.

## 18.2. Guidance activities

### 18.2.1. Identification of activities

The main guidance activities identified in this case study can be summarised as follows:

- (a) formalisation of existing job-related knowledge in some especially complex tasks and job positions, often acquired after a long working experience (tacit knowledge);
- (b) transfer of these specific skills and job-related tacit knowledge from senior to junior workers.

### 18.2.2. Description of guidance activities

To favour skills transfer, Politecnico Calzaturiero, with the support of social partners, launched several projects, investigating first the demographic composition of the workforce, and then developing proper training approaches.

In this line, the Leonardo project *Au delà de la salle*, carried out in 2010-11, devised a training programme aimed at making explicit the conscious transfer of tacit knowledge from old senior workers to their junior colleagues, by focusing on

pre-assemblers/assemblers skilled workers. In fact, the goal of the project was twofold, that is, and on the one hand, the project aimed at developing cognitive and relational skills among senior workers in pre-assembling/ assembling phases, in view of his promotion as foremen; on the other hand, the project was a tool for training junior workers so to make them move upwards into senior positions.

This project has been subsequently introduced in several local enterprises, also in Rossimoda. Thus, and in the particular case of Rossimoda, the project and the suggested methodology is currently implemented for the pre-assembling/assembling processes. In 2013 it will be generalised for any position in order to increase multitasking and multiskilling for the whole workforce. Accordingly, the management goal is to reinforce expert workers' competence profile around a formal list of competences to improve company performance. The idea is to promote higher awareness over the production process, higher flexibility and inter-changeability, facilitating the introduction and development of a re-engineering process in the whole organisation following lean production principles.

Other specific goals pursued by Rossimoda in relation to the project can be summarised as follows:

- (a) increase the overall workforce cognitive flexibility both in their reference task and in multiskilling, to keep product quality of increasingly variable products with wider fluctuation;
- (b) increase the overall workforce anticipation skills to minimise waste, by anticipating degrading situations;
- (c) develop workforce self-regulation on the assembly line as a whole by increasing individuals' ability in managing their room to manoeuvre, to adapt conveyors' speed accordingly;
- (d) promote mutual learning among colleagues by increasing their attention on the overall production process.

### **18.2.3. Description of methods/approaches**

The methodology used for implementing the project in Rossimoda is similar to the model used in other companies. Thus, a team coming from the Politecnico Calzaturiero (always composed by a work psychologist, a work methodologist and a trainer with strong experience in work organisation in the overall textile sector) works together with a company side team. In the Rossimoda case, eight people have been involved in 2012 in the project, that is to say, one senior worker operating in the pre-assembling/assembling phase, two experts of the overall process (the foremen of the two assembly lines, one devoted only to

samples), and five juniors (less experienced workers) aged from 20 to 40, trained to widen their competences. It is important to stress that the senior involved was a senior worker aged 42 who has already trained other workers, showing his propensity in skills transfer, thus making the project implementation easier.

In a first phase of the project, all team members together analysed the work organisation, to outline process and product peculiarities, so that the intervention fits with the particular company needs. Then, working tasks were analysed by interviewing both the supervisor (usually a former senior skilled worker), and the senior worker. The senior worker was video-recorded in different work situations (these are called learning classes). Finally, he was asked to verbalise the recorded situation by describing the strategies that he implemented to achieve his tasks successfully, so to raise senior's awareness that 'there is a procedure' and can be shared with others by using words. This first phase was complemented by an entry competence balance for both the senior(s) and the juniors involved in the project.

Subsequently, the next phase of the project was built around training activities, in particular learning processes focused on 'on-the-job training'. The overall 32-hours training package was articulated in eight four-hour-sessions and is composed by four modules:

- (a) an introduction to the firm, its process, the assembly-line characteristics and tasks;
- (b) characteristics, functioning and regulation of the equipment in pre-assembling;
- (c) pre-assembling (or, more precisely, mounting the upper on a form) in standard situation;
- (d) pre-assembling with tight upper.

These modules were composed of on-the-job training sessions, where the senior first showed how to perform the task by explaining the whole cycle of activities, and juniors then imitated him. All activities were video-recorded in the own work floor and discussed with the training team together, thus reflecting on how the tasks are performed to make each junior aware of what is tacitly taught by senior workers.

The overall training lasted for about two months (whereas previously to the project, at least 24 months were required so to achieve the same skill level). At the end of the training, a formal 'exit competence balance' was elaborated by both the senior and juniors involved, which included the list of acquired competences. Thus, they gained awareness on what they learnt and how to apply their knowledge at work (e.g. by further specialising in pre-assembling tasks or in other task of the assembly process).

Concerning the key elements ensuring the success of such a methodology, they are mostly related to overcoming the seniors' consolidated resistance. First, seniors fear that any explicitation of their tacit competences would cause a reduction in their individual bargaining power. Furthermore, the shared subculture considers that on-the-job learning processes are basically 'stealing by your eyes and elaborating with your intelligence', so those unable to 'steal by their eyes' do not deserve further training and support. Devising a further career development according to their age played a definite role in gaining their consensus.

Concerning funding, the project was co-financed by Fondimpresa, the largest intersectoral bipartite fund promoted by Confindustria (the large employers' association) and the main trade unions (CGIL, CISL and UIL) for continuous vocational training. It was also financed with a 0.30% levy over the wage bill. Any project submitted to Fondimpresa must include a training plan agreed by the firm with its workers' representatives or local trade unions. In general terms, trade unions pay poor attention to them and usually sign these plans without an in-depth discussion. However, this project deviates from such a general practice, because there is regular informal communication/information between the management of Politecnico Calzaturiero and trade unions over current and foreseen training actions. In contrast, at company level information was quite poor because of the decaying of workers' representative, currently vacant.

#### **18.2.4. Experiences with implementation**

Although still under way, both the firm management and the Politecnico team share a positive evaluation of its implementation in Rossimoda, thanks to a favourable environment towards learning and to a strong management commitment to consider skills development as a strategic firm resource. Further, management informed the middle management about the project goals, methodology and possibilities for dissemination in other processes/activities within the enterprise. This latter acted as mainstreamer towards the overall workforce.

The senior worker experienced a considerable increase of awareness about his tacit manual skills. He also improved communication skills, thus consolidating his propensity to act as a tutor. Such a propensity is related to a consolidated human resources policy in Rossimoda, where internal workforce is traditionally preferred for new and more qualified position to poaching of external workers. This approach reflects the firms' leadership within the industrial district (mirrored by the higher status perceived by employees) and orientation to quality production. This is a key resource for the working environment, and confers a

competitive advantage over external skilled workforce, favouring learning processes among employees. Moreover, this approach was confirmed by the new management as fitting with both LVMH guidelines aiming to develop human and restructuring in a lean production sense.

Also, several interviewed members outline the juniors' different attention according to their age, in the sense that whereas the oldest paid more attention to the manual aspects of the task (gestures, postures), young workers were more attracted by the equipment's handling, including ICT use.

### 18.3. Outcomes and results

This project is part of a deep reengineering process within Rossimoda according to lean principles launched in 2011. It aims at maintaining product quality and increasing overall productivity by revising plant layout, investments in new equipment and ICT, extensive training in both transversal and specific skills and, finally, reduction of waste, both in terms of materials and time.

Training for shop floor positions were started with pre-assembling/assembling positions in 2012 and will be progressively extended in 2013 to all manual processes showing some complexity according to the same methodology. The idea is to increase multitasking and inter-changeability of the overall workforce, develop the ability of anticipate possible problems downstream and favour mutual learning among employees. Such training on specialist skills will be complemented by further training on soft skills, especially communication and team working, which was already carried out for the hierarchic line.

In conclusion, the guidance activities carried out within Rossimoda have resulted in a consolidation of the existing in-house skill level of its workforce, facilitating at the same time the successful transfer of existing in-house skills from senior to junior workers. This policy facilitates the internal retention of skills within the enterprise, and it is a successful tool for facing unforeseen events which may affect workers who have key competences (e.g. absence, resignation, etc.). Also, and for the low skilled workers (irrespectively of age considerations), these guidance activities has resulted in a significant increase in their job profile, which definitively improves their work perspectives, at least in terms of multitasking.

### 18.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

The project *Au delà de la sale* is seen as a great success as it introduces a new methodology in Italian firms for skills transmission. Such methodology focuses on



specialist skills available among old senior workers that were gained through their work experience, including those skills specifically related to their workplace.

The transfer of the key skills in the most complex manufacturing phase (the pre-assembling/assembling phase) was considerably shortened (from two years to two months) by developing seniors' communication skills. This was achieved thanks to the support of experts from Politecnico Calzaturiero and the own enterprise. This gives room for further refinements according to materials, type of shoes, etc. (left to implicit patterns), and to increase multitasking in the overall workforce.

Politecnico Calzaturiero managed this methodology in a flexible way, by adapting to the employers' need and seniors' characteristics and perspectives, thus stressing idiosyncratic and particular aspects in each case. Interestingly for participant seniors, they were offered a foreman position or a position as trainers, thus devising a lateral career development.

One element limiting the effects of the project relates to the fact that training/tutoring positions are not foreseen by the national labour contract and its reward is left to individual bargaining or unilateral reward. This clearly limits the shared perception of the career opportunity, and therefore of the actual guidance design, left to informal arrangements. This discrepancy between national rules in workers' classification and the envisaged competence levels in Rossimoda may be a possible source of conflict. Preventing these divergences requires high level of consensus among all actors. In this sense, the mainly formal involvement of trade unions along the whole project, principally due to contingent problems, is probably a weakness of the project.

## 18.5. Conclusions

The approach developed by Politecnico Calzaturiero and implemented in Rossimoda is a great innovation regarding several aspects. It introduces a training and knowledge transfer methodology centred on actual skills for craft-like tasks, which are at the heart of the Italian leadership in fashion and design sectors (the 'made in Italy' cluster). These skills strongly rely on experience, and are therefore mainly held by older workers.

## 18.6. List of interviewees

Mario Zambelli, CEO Politecnico Calzaturiero, Vigonza (PD)

Mauro Tescaro, manager Politecnico Calzaturiero, Vigonza (PD)  
Daniela Saccà, human resources specialist, Rossimoda, Vigonza (PD)  
Tiziana Basso, trade union officer, Filctem-CGIL Veneto, Mestre (VE)  
Maristella Viola, trade union officer, Filctem-CGIL Padova, Padova.Ms.

## 18.7. Reference

Politecnico Calzaturiero, et al. (2010). *La valorizzazione dei saperi taciti: una sfida tra presente e futuro [The appretiation of tacit know-how: a challenge between present and future]*. Leonardo project *Au-delà de la salle*, final report.

## CHAPTER 19.

# Glual

### 19.1. Description of the company and its approach

Glual Hydraulics is a Spanish company founded in 1969 and located in the town of Azpeitia (Gipuzkoa, Basque Country). It has developed its own engineering processes specialised in the automatization of industrial processes related to hydraulic and electronic systems. The company is part of the Glual Group a set of specialised companies with clear international vocation. In particular, Glual Group is composed by the following units and divisions:

- (a) hydraulics: engineering, design and manufacturing of hydraulic cylinders;
- (b) electronics: engineering, design and manufacturing of hardware and software;
- (c) commercialisation: Hydraulic and electronic components sales;
- (d) after sales costumer services: maintenance, repairing;
- (e) innovation: R&D.

The original and most important company is the Glual Workshop (also known as Glual Hydraulics), which has around 90 employees. The rest of the companies of the group have around 30 employees. Thus, Glual Group has about 120 workers in total. More precisely, the group has a team of highly qualified engineers that constantly provide technical advice, product innovation and customer service.

Given the importance of their own in-house engineering and manufacturing processes, internal training is an essential component of human resources policies. In this sense, continuous training is the main answer for reaching workers' polyvalence, which is of the utmost importance given the current economic crisis context and the continuous technological advancements in the sector.

Therefore, Glual is interested in providing accessible training to workers so that they can easily carry out different tasks related to diverse posts. Polyvalence is very beneficial for both the worker and the company. The worker can develop a wider variety of tasks and it is easier to avoid the feeling of monotony. Meanwhile, the company has greater flexibility for work organisation.

Normally, training is organised at internal level, and it is provided by the most experienced workers (e.g. intermediate supervisors, who actually access this post due to their knowledge and experience, or older workers). The main reason why internal training is so important is that the processes and products

developed by Glual are very complex and specialised. In fact, it is the work experience in this very particular sector which provides the widest and best knowledge to workers, and it is very difficult to find training programmes in external schools.

In some particular cases, when training programmes are related to more general topics (not specifically linked to this particular sector) training may also be external, mainly through VET Centres from the same geographical area, with which Glual has a close relationship.

Concerning professional careers, personal development is based on two aspects: continuous training and internal promotion. Continuous training is directly related to the general strategic plan of the company. For instance, given that the internationalisation of the company is one of the main strategic aspects, there are several workers teams who are learning English. On the other hand, Glual goes for internal promotion, and most of the vacancies are covered by employees within the organisation.

On the other hand, concerning age management, the company does not have an overall age management strategy pre-established or formalised. In any case, the problems or difficulties confronted in the last years have led the company to implement the two approaches analysed in this study, and to think about better organising the issue of age management.

In particular, the two different approaches applied by Glual with regard to age management are:

- (a) the 'knowledge transfer' approach for two highly qualified workers who were about to retire;
- (b) the 'adaptation of physical requirements' approach for workshop workers.

The overall objective of the 'knowledge transfer' initiative is to ensure that the company keeps experienced workers' knowledge within the organisation. The idea is that the company does not lose all the knowledge, experience, etc. that qualified experts have accumulated during the large period they have worked for the company.

On the other hand, the aim of the 'adaptation of physical requirements' approach is that workshop operators who are in a more delicate physical condition (i.e. workers over 55 and persons with physical disabilities) carry out easier or less physically demanding tasks. The main reason for this is to fulfil risk prevention plans and to have more satisfied and healthier workers.

Involved actors include direct supervisors/managers and the human resources department, as main instigators and executors of both approaches.

Moreover, both of them have been internally developed to face the needs arisen within the organisation. Up to now, these are not strictly pre-established

approaches. These initiatives have been ‘informally’ developed as a way to solve the difficulties or needs existing at that moment.

These approaches address dispositional (i.e. individual) barriers, related to personal attitudes and physical and mental health. Particularly in the case of the ‘adaptation of physical requirements’ approach, the company Glual tries to face health barriers, by letting workers carry out less tough duties. As well as this, these practices also address institutional barriers, as traditionally Spanish legislation (e.g. eligible pension age, partial retirement contracts, etc.) has favoured early retirement.

## 19.2. Guidance activities

### 19.2.1. Identification of guidance activities

Guidance activities include talks/discussions that take place between the older workers and his/her direct supervisor. These provide assistance and support to workers in a rather informal way. Also, ‘formal’ interviews can take place with the human resources department and/or the general manager to discuss formal issues (e.g. salary, employment conditions, working time, etc.) and provide more information/assistance on workers’ professional careers.

### 19.2.2. Description of guidance activities

The two age management initiatives implemented by Glual (i.e. ‘knowledge transfer’ and ‘adaptation of physical requirements’) have been informally and internally developed by the company itself. Thus, these measures have not been directly demanded by the workers (but they have been accepted by workers without complaints or protests).

In both approaches (but especially in the case of adaptation of physical requirements), most of the talks/discussions take place directly between the worker and his/her direct supervisor, given their close contact. Assistance and support activities are rather informal and continuous, and the company does not follow a standardised set of activities.

Also, both approaches may include several formal interviews with the human resources department and/or the general manager of the company. In these cases, the discussion/negotiation is more structured and planned, and refers to formal issues such as salary, employment conditions, working time, etc. Actually, the human resources department manages formalities concerning age and health issues and working conditions.

In the case of the 'knowledge transfer' initiative, older workers have deep knowledge and experience, and normally hold a post in higher hierarchical level. Thus, their 'direct supervisor' may directly be the general manager.

As the initiatives are mainly decided and managed by the management board of the company, main guidance activities include informing and advising employees on these initiatives. At the same time, and given that workers' satisfaction and accurate performance is of the utmost importance for the company, their feedback on these initiatives is highly considered, and their expectations and needs are taken into account to adapt these measures.

The main aim of this exchange of information between workers and managers (both informal and formal talks) is to gain insight in workers competences and needs, inform them about the options that the company may offer and empower and motivate older workers to continue doing their best under improved working conditions.

### **19.2.3. Description of methods/approaches**

#### **19.2.3.1. *'Knowledge transfer' initiative***

This initiative is an internally developed method, and it does not follow a formalised protocol. In particular it is aimed at specific individuals who have a deep knowledge and wide experience with the company. More precisely, this initiative has just been applied in two specific cases: a commercial director and a technical director, both of them highly qualified workers.

The approach was informally developed a couple of years ago, when both workers were approaching their retirement age and informed the human resources department about their interest for partial retirement, following the Spanish legislation <sup>(22)</sup>. After having worked for so many years, both workers felt tired and were looking forward to their retirement, as a way for exchanging all this work and effort for leisure and relax. This is an extended perception promoted by the general social and legal contexts. According to the human resources manager, their wish for retiring was mostly linked to general social attitudes, rather than to their physical/health condition.

---

<sup>(22)</sup> According to Spanish Law, workers who are 60 years old can opt for partial retirement. The working time reduction during partial retirement can be from a minimum of 25% up to a maximum of 75% (i.e. workers can be partially retired working from 25% to 75% hours less). In most cases, partial retirement is linked to the signature of a new working contract (a replacement contract) with a new worker, normally a young worker. That is, normally the employer signs a part-time contract with the retiring worker and simultaneously concludes a bridging contract with a job-seeker.

It was then when the human resources department became aware of a great threat: the company was about to lose two highly-qualified experts who had essential knowledge for the good progress of the business (e.g. knowledge about production and working process, tacit knowledge, personal contacts, etc.). The objective of the management board was to convince them to stay longer by offering them motivating and satisfying working conditions. Thus, the main instigators of this initiative were the human resources department and the direct supervisors and managers of these two key workers, who had to fight against the social and legal context (early and partial retirement have been traditionally encouraged by Spanish legislation).

The organisation of the 'knowledge transfer' approach was rather informal and adapted to the particular case of these highly experienced employees interested in retiring (thus, also, to some extent 'improvised'). The main channel or method used was face-to-face interviews in order to reach a commitment between workers and managers. In particular, it was mainly the human resources department that was in charge for the negotiation with workers, by offering different gains or advantages in exchange for their longer stay in the company.

The proposal made by the company to the workers consisted of offering better working conditions, with fewer working hours and less demanding tasks, so that they could feel released. The new situation was conceived as a temporary condition for facilitating the replacement of these workers, so that they could progressively transfer their knowledge to other(s) worker(s).

In fact, the substitution/replacement process is a complex and long practice that must be negotiated between workers and managers (particularly the human resources department). Workers express their expectations, wishes, needs, etc. whereas the company tries to offer appealing working conditions that would satisfy them to encourage them to stay longer. The commitment reached between both sides (i.e. the older worker and the management) is formally written and signed. In the particular case of these two older workers, there were no big problems and the commitment was easily reached within one-two weeks' time.

The process of knowledge transfer may take between two-three years. During this transitional period, the older worker continues with his/her former tasks, but at a slower pace and with a lower workload. As well as this, the older worker also adopts a trainer or tutor role towards a less experienced worker who will be the substitute after the retirement. This less experienced worker is an employee who is already working in the same tasks/projects than the person who is about to retire.

Thus, as a general basis, the older worker works together with an assistant or younger/less-experienced worker to teach him/her carry out daily tasks. Moreover, apart from this continuous tutoring job, the older worker is normally asked to teach other workers on specific topics or processes and develop internal training programmes. The older worker is responsible for the organisation of these tasks (the worker has the possibility to organise his/her own tasks and arrange the training courses and assistance duties for which he/she is responsible), and this responsibility is a motivation for him. The older employee does not get internal training for fulfilling this tutor role. So far, it has not been necessary. The deep knowledge and wide experience they have has been enough.

#### 19.2.3.2. *'Adaptation of physical requirements' initiative*

The second measure, or approach, is the 'adaptation of physical requirements' initiative. This measure was also internally developed and it does not follow any strict protocol; it is a rather informal approach.

The target group of this approach is the group of operators who work in the workshop. These workers are characterised by carrying out the hardest work, as their tasks are the most physically-demanding ones. Therefore, the main reason behind this initiative refers to physical conditions and health and safety issues. In fact, the human resources manager defines this approach as a 'common sense' initiative, as a consequence of unavoidable physical health barriers which appear with age.

Obviously enough, the Spanish legislation regulates Health and Safety issues and Glual must fulfil all these formal requirements. However, it must be pinpointed that this 'adaptation of physical requirements' initiative goes beyond legal requests.

In particular, some of the hardest tasks in the Glual workshop are related to the assembly of machinery (e.g. they may have to lift, install, etc., heavy weights and then suffer from back problems). Moreover, moving to clients' premises for assembling products implies 'unexpected' tasks, as each client's needs and conditions are different. This type of 'external work' may also imply overtime work or more complex and tough working conditions. However, work in the own workshop is more mechanical and predictable.

For this reason, the management of the company decided that workers over 55 should not work outside Glual premises, to ensure that the tasks they develop are not so hard. In other words, the tasks assigned to older workers are preferably support or auxiliary tasks. The idea is to adapt the tasks and functions of the post, but also to consider the company's needs related to workload



requirements and emergencies. In addition to this, younger workers can acquire wider experience in more complex tasks (by working on them, e.g. by doing external work) whereas older workers support and assist them (e.g. support on the phone).

Normally, it is the human resources department who informs the direct supervisor about workers' physical or health needs with regard to older age and disabilities. The direct supervisor is responsible for assigning tasks to workshop operators, so he/she must be well informed about workers' needs. It is the Health and Safety committee who is in charge of assessing workers' needs, following their internal protocol (e.g. carrying out yearly medical checks), which in many aspects goes beyond legal obligations.

As well as this, the person in charge of informing older workers about this approach is the direct supervisor, that is, he/she is the person who directly discusses age management issues with workshop older operators. In fact, there is not a strict communication policy between worker and supervisor: it is a more familiar/improvised process which takes place gradually as the supervisor distributes the workload. In this sense, it can be defined as an 'ongoing' process.

As a consequence, the people involved in this process are the direct supervisor of the older worker and the human resources department. As well as this, members of the Health and Safety committee play a key role in the implementation of this initiative, as they assess and inform managers about health and safety risks and demands. Although there is not a 'formal communication plan', there is good communication and fluent relationship between all the parties involved.

Older workers are very happy with this measure, as they see how their working conditions improve (it goes for their own benefit). As already explained, the initiative comes from the management of the company, so it is not something directly demanded by workers. In any case the opinion/feedback of the worker is highly considered, so all his/her comments are taken into account to improve the measure, as well as to keep workers satisfied and motivated.

#### **19.2.4. Experiences with implementation**

With regard to adaptations or adjustments in time, there have not been big changes, given that employees are in general satisfied with the measures implemented. In any case, it is worth mentioning that the management of the company has noticed the importance of dealing with the issue of 'age management' and the benefits from planning these initiatives well in advance. Therefore, company trends point towards better planned and more formal initiatives.

Generally speaking, there have not been barriers in the implementation, because workers were happy with the measures applied. In the case of the 'knowledge transfer' initiative, the greatest difficulty was to convince the worker to stay longer in the company. The issue is that Spanish legislation in general favours early/partial retirement, so it was not easy for the company to find appealing formulas for encouraging older workers to remain. It was necessary to negotiate 'extra' advantages and conditions for them.

Interestingly also, it is important that the worker is involved in the process of 'teaching' other workers, and that he/she is aware of his/her large accumulated working experience. Normally, older workers feel highly motivated and satisfied when they train less experienced workers. They are happy to have a young 'assistant' and they are pleased to help and teach less experienced colleagues. They also have the feeling that their knowledge and work is valued by the company. As a whole, the programme is highly valued by both workers and managers.

On the other hand, concerning the adaptation of physical requirements approach, there were no obstacles to its implementation, because it is clearly beneficial for workers (older workers are happy to benefit from working on less demanding tasks).

As both approaches are rather informal, there are no proper quality indicators established. The best descriptor of the success of these measures is the satisfaction of the parties involved. Moreover, direct supervisors also asks the young or less experienced workers who are being tutored about their satisfaction with the whole process, and the general opinion is very positive.

### 19.3. Outcomes and results

Age management initiatives help the worker to progressively accept the change from working life to retirement. For instance, in the case of the 'knowledge transfer' approach, the exit from the labour market is gradual, as working conditions are less tough and there are fewer working hours for the older employee. The job profile and activities of highly-qualified workers are modified, and new training/tutoring task are assigned to them. This new role validates their prior learning and working experience. Moreover, workers feel more satisfied, as they notice that the company considers their needs. The human resources manager explained that the company makes an effort to please older employees and motivate them. This is very beneficial for the worker, because he feels more satisfied with what he/she does.

The 'adaptation of physical requirements' initiative has very positive effects on workers' health. Workers make fewer physical efforts; they are less stressed and feel more rested. Furthermore, workers feel more motivated because they see that the company cares for their needs.

From a company/organisation perspective, workers' satisfaction is also very beneficial, because then the worker is more efficient and productive, and the work environment is better. The human capital of the company is reinforced.

In the particular case of the 'knowledge transfer' approach, the company ensures that key knowledge is kept within the organisation, and it is not lost when a person retires. The knowledge transfer initiative allows a progressive and arranged knowledge transmission towards the right people (the employees selected as substitutes), and guarantees the proper development of the whole business.

As well as this, the adaptation of physical requirements initiative also facilitates the training of younger workers, as they have to deal directly with the most complex tasks, but with the support of older workers (e.g. older workers do not carry out external work, which may imply overtime, tougher working conditions, etc.; hardest tasks are developed by less experienced workers, so that they can gain experience).

The idea is to plan or arrange the knowledge transmission so that it is as smooth as possible. Moreover, it is worth highlighting that in this particular economic sector knowledge and training are very specific, so internal training is essential (it is not easy to find adapted courses from external training providers).

More precisely, and after this first and unexpected experience of knowledge transfer with highly qualified workers interested in retirement, the company is becoming more aware of the importance that workers' knowledge has for the progress of the business. This is making them reflect on the issue of age management and act in a more proactive way. For this reason, they have already started to plan the retirement of a key worker who is currently 58 years old, and they are already anticipating this knowledge transfer process. In particular, they have selected an internal worker who will progressively start to work on this person's post, under a tutoring process.

It is expected that age management strategies will be progressively further developed. Looking to the future, it is likely that a programmed set of rules concerning old workers will be gradually approved. The company should seriously consider which persons in the company have this key knowledge, because the organisation is 'dependent' on them. The idea is to try to spread all this knowledge among more workers, and promote workers' polyvalence.

With regard to the society level effects, longer working lives of older workers generate socio-economic effects such as the continuation of the social security and pensions systems. Moreover, this type of initiatives also has an effect on society's view/prejudices towards older workers, highlighting the benefits of their experience and skills.

Finally, concerning lifelong learning priorities, these measures encourage career management skills, and demonstrate the importance of planning and preparing workers' retirement, so that the whole company is not badly affected. As well as this, coordination and cooperation of stakeholders (even if there are only internal stakeholders) is essential for the accurate implementation of the measures.

#### 19.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

The management board of Glual clearly makes an effort to improve and adapt working conditions, so that older workers feel more valued and motivated. A participative and supportive working environment is essential for the accurate implementation of any initiative, as well as for motivating employees. Moreover, older workers' involvement is highly needed; it is important that they feel part of the company and cared for, so that they are also willing to share their knowledge and abilities with other workers and adapt to the needs of the company. Thus, the 'adaptation of physical requirements' approach experienced no obstacles in its implementation, because it implies a distribution of workloads that highly benefits older workers.

Both approaches, but specially the 'knowledge transfer' approach, are interesting for companies where knowledge is very specific, and therefore difficult to be learnt in external training centres.

Generally speaking, the case of Glual is easily transferable to any company interested in supporting aged workers and getting their best performance, while keeping key knowledge within the organisation. The initiative is rather informal, and a helpful and encouraging atmosphere would be needed.

As in most Spanish companies, guidance activities in Glual are not very developed. Communication is continuous and positive, but it is rather informal. Moreover, measures applied were not demanded by employees, but directly implemented by the management (and very positively accepted by workers).

Finally, an important idea suggested by the interviewed members is that in Spain the legal and social contexts do not favour older workers' permanence in employment. Thus, most workers are normally more interested in early retirement than in working life extension. Actually, the success of these initiatives lies in the

ability of the management board to offer appealing conditions to employees so that they are interested in staying in the company.

## 19.5. Conclusions

One of the main features of Glual is that processes and products developed are very complex and specialised, so training is mainly internal (since it is very difficult to find training programmes in external schools).

With regard to age management and guidance, the main aims of the approaches developed by Glual are, first, that the company does not lose all the knowledge, experience, etc., qualified experts have, and second, that operators' tasks are adapted to their physical conditions, so that workers feel healthier.

In this sense, the key for these approaches to be successful is to create a participative and helpful working environment, to encourage older workers' involvement and motivation. Workers feel more motivated and are more efficient when they feel that the company cares for their needs.

As already explained, the age management approaches have been internally and informally developed to face the needs arisen within the organisation. In any case, nowadays the company is becoming more aware of the importance of better planning older workers' management, so in the future they will probably act in a more proactive way.

Finally, concerning the general context, the interviewed people have commented that the Spanish legal and social contexts do not facilitate older workers' permanence in employment, which is a barrier for working life extension. For this reason, it was not easy for the company to find appealing formulas (e.g. personalised combination of working/employment conditions which satisfied both the workers' wishes and interests and the needs of the company) for encouraging older workers to remain.

## 19.6. List of interviewees

Jaione Zubizarreta Arregi; Human resources manager.

Tel.: +34 943157015

e-mail: [j.zubizarreta@glual.es](mailto:j.zubizarreta@glual.es)

Jaime Casina; Sales director (older worker).

## CHAPTER 20.

# Firefighting Service of Zaragoza

### 20.1. Description of the approach

The organisation which will be analysed in this case study is the Firefighting, Rescue and Civil Protection Service of the municipality of Zaragoza (Autonomous Community of Aragon, Spain). The Fire fighting Service is part of the Public Services Department, and includes civil protection, rescue services and technical assistance. The number of employees working for the fire fighting public service, is around 650 staff members (including both operative and auxiliary services workers).

To integrate the fire fighting public service, applicants have to pass a public examination, since all of the employees are civil servants of the local administration. An upper- secondary school qualification level is required, although the education levels have clearly improved and university degrees are not uncommon (e.g. engineering, information technology or law). Thus, the education level of staff members has progressively increased over the years.

The minimum hiring age is 21 years, because this is the minimum age for obtaining the driving licence for heavy vehicles (which is a requisite for entering the fire fighting service). At present, the average hiring age is around 25 years, whereas previously it was around 20 years. Thus, nowadays, the youngest employees are about 24, and the oldest about 59<sup>(23)</sup>. The average employees age has been progressively increasing over the last years, and the current age distribution reflects the importance of the group of older workers. The older workers have most likely been employed with the corps for a long time, having spent most of their professional career in the job as fire fighters.

With regard to human resource policies in general, it is worth mentioning that training is essential for workers in the fire fighting service. Thus, the fire fighting service of Zaragoza has its own training school, internally organised. The corps have its own specialised staff offering expert training programmes, such as refresher courses or programmes for new/less experienced workers. For

---

<sup>(23)</sup> According to the Spanish Law 40/2007, the minimum retirement age (which is 65 on a general basis) can be reduced for particularly dangerous or strenuous works and occupations. Royal Decree 383/2008 established that firemen are affected by the 2007 Law, so the minimum retirement age was then reduced from 65 to 60 years. Thus, in Spain firemen's normal retirement age is 60.

instance, newly recruits are required to pass a Three-month course which is very demanding and necessary to keep the post. In some cases, it is workers over 55 who act as trainers, given their knowledge and experience.

Concerning age management policies, in this particular case the initiative to be analysed is known as 'redeployment of older workers', by which the Zaragoza fire brigade attempts to redeploy firemen aged over 55. Thus, older workers are relieved from their direct intervention tasks and redeployed to the auxiliary services of support, education, and prevention of fire and natural disasters. As well as this, firemen younger than 55 years can also transfer if they can prove in a medical assessment that they have health problems or disabilities.

The initiative was internally approved and it is internally managed, so all involved actors are part of the organisation. The target group includes all firemen over 55. The main reason why the approach was developed lies in the hard and strenuous working conditions that firemen undergo and the physical limitations experienced by workers as they become older. Moreover, the organisation has an increasing number of posts in the auxiliary services section, and it is more convenient to cover these posts with workers who have health/physical limitations.

As a whole, the redeployment initiative aims at improving older workers' health condition, as well as at covering the posts in the auxiliary services by experienced employees. Therefore, the redeployment initiative faces situational barriers related to the organisational needs and social attitudes at the workplace, as well as dispositional obstacles such as physical and mental health barriers.

## 20.2. Guidance activities

### 20.2.1. Identification of guidance activities

Guidance activities in the Fire fighting Service of Zaragoza consist of interviews and dialogues to know older workers' skills and interests and inform them about the redeployment process and occupational options in the auxiliary services unit.

### 20.2.2. Description of guidance activities

Redeployment is compulsory for all workers, given that it was approved by Municipal Agreement. It is part of the working processes in the Fire fighting Service of Zaragoza, so all firemen know and accept this measure when they start working for this fire brigade.

As already explained, employees are civil servants of the local administration, which is responsible for managing human resources. Thus, when

a fireman is about to turn 55 years old, he receives a formal letter from the local administration informing him about his redeployment from operational services to a new post in the auxiliary services. The exact post to which the worker will be redeployed is communicated (and partly decided) by direct supervisors/managers to local authorities.

In practical terms, the planning of this redeployment process starts around six months before the older worker receives the 'official letter' from local authorities (but it depends on the case), and in an informal basis on the work floor. Both the worker and his direct supervisor are aware of this rearrangement of posts, so both of them hold several face-to-face interviews to prepare the worker for the change. As the process is informal, there is no specific guideline regarding the subjects to discuss; actually, issues are mostly improvised.

This guidance activity is carried out in a rather informal/familiar way. The main aim of these interviews and dialogues is to gain insight about the workers' competences and needs, and inform them about occupational options in the auxiliary services unit. In other words, the objective is to evaluate the skills and interests of the older worker, to match them with the vacancies in the auxiliary services section and help design the older worker's professional career. There is not a predetermined guideline or set of skills to look at for evaluating older workers' skills, as the process is mainly 'improvised'. Finally, it is the managers who decide the auxiliary post to which the older worker will be redeployed, taking into account the needs of the fire brigade. In any case, it is considered to be very important that the worker is pleased with his new tasks.

As explained by the interviewed manager, the Fire fighting Service of Zaragoza is "like a big family" (meaning that there is a large part of embedded knowledge of individual skills and skills' needs, relationships among workers are friendly and close, communication is fluent and open, etc.), and formalised guidance activities are not needed. Normally workers spend their whole working life in this service, so direct supervisors and managers know the members of their working team very well. In this sense, the informal guidance procedure they apply is said to be highly satisfactory.

### **20.2.3. Description of methods/approaches**

Zaragoza has been a pioneer among the larger Spanish cities in terms of implementation of an auxiliary activity for the fire brigade. The measure dates back to the 1950s when the creation of an auxiliary service for the fire brigade was approved by plenary agreement of the Municipal Corporation, and it has continued for 60 years now. In Spain, this auxiliary activity of the fire brigade is not common.



Originally, the 'redeployment' initiative was approved by Municipal Agreement on 10 August 1951, and it has been continuously applied until the present day. Therefore, this is a formalised and predetermined measure, internally developed and compulsory for all workers.

When it was approved in 1951, it was a revolutionary and exceptional measure. For over 60 years now, the Zaragoza fire brigade has continued applying this measure, which is still ground-breaking for its excellent organisation and for the variety of auxiliary services and posts in which older firemen can work. In fact, not all cities can afford having an auxiliary services section, as it is very resource-demanding (i.e. not all cities can have their own employed personnel hired for working, for instance, in carpentry, warehouse, infrastructure maintenance, etc.).

The origin of this measure in the early 50's was based on workers' demand. That is, workers themselves were the main instigators for the implementation of this redeployment initiative, due to the physical problems and high risks derived from their work. The management easily accepted their demand, given that they also noticed that workers' efficiency or abilities were not the same as they became older, so the quality of the services provided by the fire brigade could be damaged. This led to the approval of the Municipal Agreement previously mentioned.

From a historical perspective, when this initiative came into force, working conditions for the fire brigade were much worse than at present, and physical conditions of workers declined faster. Therefore, when this measure was implemented, it was a real need from the point of view of workers' health. Nevertheless, at the present time, working equipment are safer and much more efficient, so 55-year-old workers' health is not in such a bad condition as it was 60 years ago. In fact, modern techniques, materials, tools, etc. have made the work easier, faster and safer.

In general terms, the redeployment means that employees concerned leave active service and move into other functions that still entail a degree of direct intervention in incidents or call-outs. Moreover, older fire fighters continue to earn the same salary as in their former position. In any case, it is worth highlighting that older workers in auxiliary positions lose the extra payment for the night working shift, as in the auxiliary section they do not have to work nights anymore.

The auxiliary services section is part of the fire brigade (i.e. it is not a stand-alone department). With regard to the tasks in auxiliary services, redeployed older workers are assigned the following principal functions:

- (a) guarding and supervision of the firemen centres;
- (b) maintenance of infrastructure, materials and equipment;

- (c) carpentry, locksmith tasks, electrical faults, mechanical jobs, etc., where needed;
- (d) administration, services and telecommunications;
- (e) warehouse duties (stock control and provisioning for the centres);
- (f) monitoring and maintenance of hydrants;
- (g) support and information tasks to assist the operational services when attending an incident;
- (h) recharging of fire extinguishers in all municipal buildings;
- (i) training, including prevention and protection campaigns in secondary schools;
- (j) museum services;
- (k) etc.

Thus, the functions that older workers perform nowadays are diverse, and they have been increasing as the infrastructure and the responsibilities of the corps have grown. The jobs at this auxiliary level have become broader and more diversified, and this enlarges the collection of activities that older workers can develop in their later professional careers.

There is not a formal or predetermined training programme for getting the right skills on the new job. In general terms, tasks are relatively 'easy' and linked to workers' previous skills. In case of skills mismatch, the redeployed older worker can always be supported/oriented by his new colleagues or his new direct supervisor.

As previously mentioned, main involved parties in the redeployment process include the worker himself and his supervisor/manager. Both of them decide which post in the auxiliary section best suits the worker, according to his skills and preferences. Moreover, there is also a permanent contact between the redeployed worker and his supervisor, to verify that the worker is satisfied with his new post. In case the worker is not fully satisfied and he is interested in moving to a different post, it is possible to make this change, provided that the conditions/requirements of the company are suitable for this new relocation.

This measure has proved to be a valuable practice from the point of view of both the employer and the employee, and it has contributed to a lower number of employees entering early retirement.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that when an older worker leaves his/her operative tasks, a new vacancy arises. This vacancy has to be covered by a new entrant; thus, the municipality of Zaragoza has to start a public hiring process to employ a new fireman, to maintain the number of workers in the operative sector.

#### **20.2.4. Experiences with implementation**

Generally speaking, there have been no significant changes to the original approach. In any case, it is worth clarifying that initially only workers in posts up to captain level were able to transfer to the auxiliary services. That is, in the very beginning, the measure was specially designed for workers with the hardest working conditions (in lower hierarchical levels). However, in the 90's this was extended to sergeants and sergeant majors. Finally all of the workers in the fire brigade redeploy to auxiliary services at the age of 55.

As previously indicated, guidance activities are rather informal, and there is a fluent and permanent contact between workers and their supervisors. The number of interviews/dialogues among them might vary in each particular case, depending on the variety of posts available in the auxiliary section or on the demands made by workers.

Interestingly also, it is worth mentioning that redeployed workers may change posts according to their expectations/wishes provided that it is not detrimental for the accurate performance of the organisation. In this case as well, fluent communication between worker and supervisor is essential.

With regard to barriers in the implementation, in general both managers and workers are happy with the process, and there have been no relevant issues. A few older workers have initially complained or showed their disappointment about their obligation to move to auxiliary services. Some of them showed their disagreement with redeploying compulsorily at the age of 55, and suggested moving to auxiliary posts later, at the age of 57 or 58. This option would have implied burdensome and long administrative process to change the Municipal Agreement. Finally, no changes have been made, and workers have all accepted the redeployment in a positive way. The main reason why workers may be interested in staying in the operative services is the loss of the extra pay for night working shifts.

As well as this, some older employees may initially feel 'out of place' or a bit 'lost', until they get used to their new colleagues and tasks. Normally, this feeling of 'not-fitting-in' disappears in a couple of weeks and in a little while employees become aware of the benefits of the new post, where physical conditions and working hours are much better.

In this sense, although trade unions do not take part in this process, they also recommend workers to move to the auxiliary services section. The interviewed persons have explained the particular case of an older fireman who complained about leaving the operative section around 10 years ago. In that case, trade unions convinced him that the auxiliary services section would be much more convenient for him giving his age and health conditions. Certainly,

trade unions see this redeployment initiative as a social improvement and advantage for firemen.

As a whole, the company is interested in keeping their employees happy, and therefore, productive. If the worker is not satisfied, he may not carry out his work correctly. For this reason, the continuous communication between workers and managers is of the utmost importance, and direct supervisors try to permanently support older workers. Even if there is not a pre-established protocol, there is a permanent supervision/observation of informal character.

Finally, with regard to quality indicators and descriptors, there are no formal evaluations. The only quality descriptor could be related to workers' satisfaction, communication among involved persons and work environment. In this sense, according to the managers interviewed, all these three factors are positive. As well as this, an indirect indicator for the measure's success is the low level of employees taking early retirement.

### 20.3. Outcomes and results

This measure has been very well received among the members of the corps: both workers and trade union representatives regard it very favourably. What is more, similar measures are being considered for other civil servants (e.g. policemen) of the same municipality.

From an individual standpoint, older workers benefit from a gradual exit from the labour market (gradual in the sense that working conditions are lighter and less demanding). This redeployment initiative gives workers the opportunity of leaving a very physically-demanding post and move to a new post which is better adapted to their health condition. This is very beneficial for workers, as it implies better working conditions and also a better quality of life.

Thus, the move from operational to auxiliary activities is an internal alternative career path, which aims at keeping employees active, adjusting the physical aptitudes in the workplace, and improving functional mobility. Moreover, it is also satisfying for workers to notice that the company takes into account their skills and expectations when redeploying them to a new post. In general terms, most workers are happy with their new post; they feel relieved, less stressed.

At an organisation level, the fire fighting service of Zaragoza has the opportunity to cover auxiliary posts with already existing workers, instead of covering these vacancies through hiring new employees or externalising this service, which would imply extra costs for the organisation.

Thus, this initiative is a way of finding a new post for older workers to be more productive. In fact, if older workers stayed longer in the operative section,

they would not be able to carry out all of the tasks and be fully productive, due to health and physical barriers. Thus, thanks to this redeployment, the company makes sure about the efficiency of its workers. Other benefits include a fall in absence due to illness and general absenteeism.

It must be said that needs in the auxiliary section are growing. Over the last years, the number of auxiliary posts has gradually increased, so the redeployment of older workers is very advantageous for the organisation.

As well as this, the redeployment initiative guarantees knowledge transfer from older workers to less experienced ones, especially if older firemen are deployed to training posts or are assigned tutoring activities. The management recognises that the practice has allowed the corps to benefit from the accumulated experience of workers who can look back on a long professional career. This is also a benefit for the company and its performance.

From a society level point of view, the measure has social and economic effects such as keeping the social security and pension systems affordable. In fact, auxiliary activities are regarded as an alternative to early retirement. In other words, given that firemen can carry out satisfying tasks adapted to their health/physical condition, they are not in such an urge to retire.

Moreover, the fire brigade of Zaragoza has recently opened the 'fire museum', conceived as an awareness raising project aimed at educating the population on fire prevention and informing them about how fire fighting services and equipment have evolved over the years, among others. These types of social activities are mainly carried out by redeployed older workers in auxiliary services.

With regard to lifelong guidance policy priorities on EU level, guidance activities are rather informal and not very developed. In any case, the fire fighting service of Zaragoza clearly makes an effort to encourage career management skills and coordinate internal stakeholders involved in the process (i.e. the worker himself and his supervisor/manager), based on close personal relationships and fluent and continuous communication.

## 20.4. Reflection on success and fail factors

When reflecting on the success of the measure, the interviewed manager recognised that the initiative is very old (it was approved 60 years ago), and certainly health conditions of firemen at the age of 55 are not the same currently than 60 years ago (due to working conditions and prevention equipment used). In this sense, from a critical point of view, it has been noted that maybe it should not be such a bad idea to allow older workers' redeployment at the age of 57-58, if they really want to (instead of making it compulsory at 55). In any case, this

modification would imply a very long administrative process that probably even trade unions would not support.

One of the main aspects to be learnt is that the auxiliary services section means an opportunity for older workers to give their professional career a new direction. Concerning transferability, in fire brigades where there is not an auxiliary services section, older firemen are not redeployed to new posts. In these cases, firemen just stop doing part of their job, but they are not formally redeployed to a new post with new tasks. Thus, part of their abilities and working time are lost. Not all fire brigades can afford having a specific unit for auxiliary services. That is, the main reason for not having an auxiliary services section is the availability of resources.

Finally, with regard to the element of guidance, it is said to be satisfactory and adequately developed. From a critical point of view, the only negative aspect that has been mentioned is that maybe the whole initiative should be a bit more flexible and allow further participation and organisation from the employees' side. But the initiative is compulsory for all workers and it was established by Municipal Agreement, so it does not provide much leeway. All firemen know and accept this measure when they start working for this fire brigade, and flexibility and participation have not been a big issue so far.

## 20.5. Conclusions

According to Spanish Law, firemen's normal retirement age in Spain is 60. The redeployment initiative analysed in this case gives the opportunity to older employees to work in auxiliary services during their last five years of their professional career (i.e. from 55 to 60). Thus, older workers are relieved from direct intervention tasks and are assigned less arduous and/or stressful tasks.

This 'redeployment initiative' was internally approved and it is internally managed. Moreover, it is compulsory for all workers, given that it was approved by Municipal Agreement in the early 50's. In general terms, practically all workers are satisfied with the new posts to which they have been redeployed, as they feel physically relieved thanks to their new tasks and working shifts.

The guidance activity is carried out in a rather informal/familiar way. The objective of these talks/interviews is to evaluate the older workers' competences and needs to match them with the vacancies/needs in the auxiliary department. Interviewed members have explained that formalised guidance activities are not needed, since the informal guidance procedure they apply is satisfactory.

## 20.6. List of interviewees

Mariano Fontecha; Service manager.

Teodoro Lacueva; Employee responsible for maintenance services, over 55 years old

Public Firefighting, Rescue and Civil Protection of the municipality of Zaragoza;  
Valle de Broto, 16; 50015 Zaragoza  
Tel: (+34) 976 721 600;  
e-mail: [secretariabomberos@zaragoza.es](mailto:secretariabomberos@zaragoza.es)