People in designing work and the working environment

A handbook for the proactive planning of work and design of working environments

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**People in designing work and the working environment -
a handbook for the proactive planning of work and
design of working environments**

Sitowise Oy
Matias Halmeenmäki, Annika Myrsky

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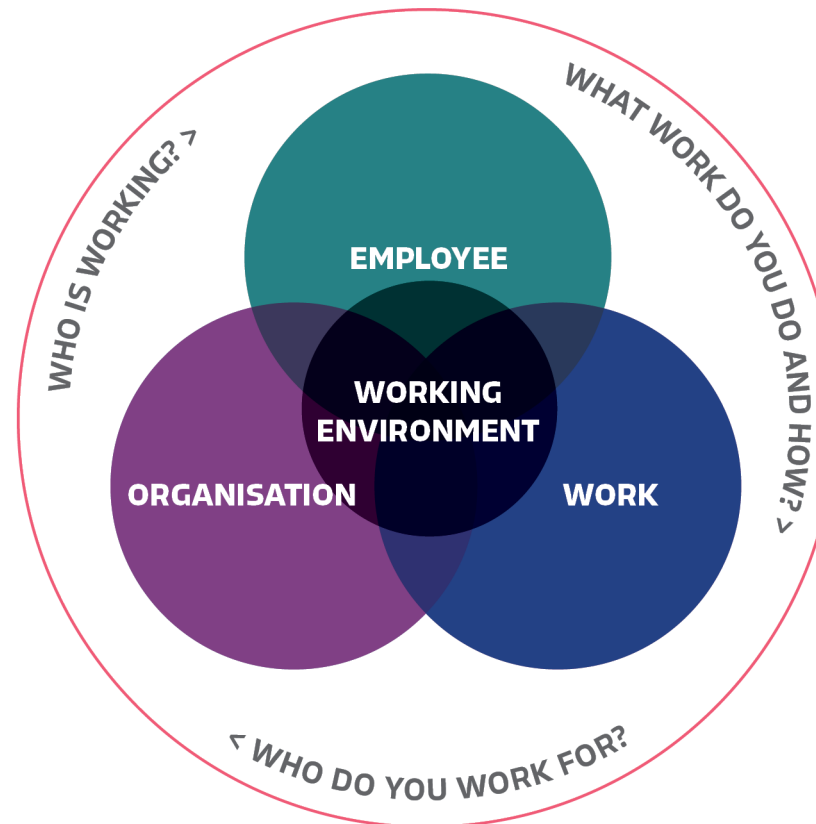
SITOWISE

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The starting point of this handbook for designing and planning work and the working environment is the transformation of work and technological development identified in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's strategy. The aim of this policy extending to 2030 is supplementing the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's strategy in fostering healthy and safe work at all workplaces regardless of the form of employment. Proactive planning of work and the working environment and early identification of workload factors will promote employees' coping and comfort at work.

This handbook is part of the *People in designing work and the working environment* project that supports the effectiveness of Ministry of Social Affairs and Health policies. In addition to the policies, the work is based on valid legislation, particularly the Occupational Safety and Health Act, which contains a specific entry on the design of work and the working environment.[1]

At the heart of this handbook is a concept for proactive planning of work and designing working environments, which includes tools to be utilised at workplaces, such as a model for the work planning process, the working environment design process and a general continuous development model.

The views presented in the handbook are based on source literature, articles, guides, interviews, workshops and the authors' views. Companies and public administration organisations have also been interviewed for this document to assess the current state and needs of the planning and design of work and the working environment.

Diagram: Elements in the design and planning of human-centred work supporting employees and work content.

EMPLOYEE
- Abilities and competence
- Personal characteristics
- Attitude
- Cooperation skills

WORK
- Tasks
- Amount of work
- Stress factors
- Processes
- Working approaches
- Development and learning opportunities

ORGANISATION
- Strategy
- Work culture
- Resources
- Management
- Communication

WORKING ENVIRONMENT
- Physical
- Mental
- Social

The handbook is intended as a low-threshold tool stimulating ideas for those working in offices and as experts, anyone involved in planning and designing work and the working environment. Our hope is that the handbook will help planning and designing better work and working environments, which promote employee wellbeing.

1.2 What is good work and working environments made of?

People spend a large share of their lives at work. As a result, work has a major impact on building a person's self-image and meaningful life. According to Statistics Finland's 2019 quality of work life survey, 60 per cent of Finnish wage and salary earners considered gainful employment a very important area of life. Since 2008, the importance of gainful employment has increased in all levels of education. According to the survey, both women and men consider the content of work as more important than salary. Finding work meaningful is deemed particularly important among young adults. People wish to express and develop themselves at work.[2]

Good work is meaningful, motivating and safe. Work brings meaningful activities, a social aspect and learning of new things to people's lives. The work community and manager must support and promote employees' wellbeing and coping and provide support for these as necessary. The employer, employees and work community all contribute to good work.

Working in offices and expert positions is usually independent of place. The working environment has diverse effects on work performance. The working environment affects the functionality of the work community, comfort at work and occupational safety, and, through these, also has a direct impact on coping at work.

Open offices and multi-space office concepts have been popular in recent years. However, noise and lack of a peaceful working atmosphere are strongly connected with how meaningful those working in open offices find their work .[3]

In the best case scenario, the working environment supports work performance and comfort, which increases employee engagement. Therefore, offices or working spaces should bring such added value to work that employees cannot get from anywhere else.

As working life changes, so does the way we work

The transformation of work is a multidimensional phenomenon - work becomes increasingly fragmented, the ways people work change, and forms of work become more individual. These changes concern aspects such as the employment relationship, places of work, and working hours.

Technology has already replaced routine tasks and will do so increasingly in the future. This results in a change in workplaces and job descriptions. As the amount of brainwork and work involving thinking is increasing, physical strain caused by work is likely to reduce or change while mental strain will increase.

The digitalisation of work was the special theme of the Statistics Finland's 2019 quality of work life survey. Digital technology has enabled work that is independent of time and place, which has changed the work and working life of office workers. Digitalisation has not only affected people's job descriptions and ways of working, but also on the organisation of work, social relationships, communication and, through these, wellbeing at work. [4]

Artificial intelligence will supplement work requiring a high level of competence. Digitalisation and automation of work may allow people to focus on solving problems. As work is changing, people are required an ability to learn, motivation and opportunities to continuous learning as well as human-centred planning of work.[5]

1.3 The core of the concept and description of its areas

What?

This handbook and the tools it contains form a concept, i.e. a whole comprising content and activities for the design and planning of work and the working environment. The concept offers low-threshold tools for proactive planning of work and designing working environments based on work content and the person performing the work.

The set of tools presented in the handbook is limited, and the concept should be perceived as a first step towards a broader discussion on planning and designing work and the working environment that supports the content of work, work processes and employees. We also encourage using other approaches and tailoring the models we propose to suit your specific activities.

For whom?

This handbook is intended for persons working in offices and in expert positions who are involved in planning work and designing working environments in various ways. The persons can be employed in managerial or HR positions, as team leaders or as persons responsible for occupational safety and health or work premises. We have compiled observations essential for the concept for each target group on the table below.

Why?

The core idea of the concept is the proactive planning and design of work and the working environment, which is carried out in collaboration with the employer and employees and, if necessary, occupational health care and other experts. The aim is to design work and working environment to support the content of work, taking into account employees' personal characteristics and individual needs.

In planning and designing the content of work and work tasks, it is key to identify workload factors and requirements, and employees' competence, interests and potential development areas. Employees and the employer must have a clear idea of their tasks and responsibilities. The job description and requirements defined at the beginning of an employment relationship are often subject to changes. We consider that work planning should be a continuous process that is carried out and monitored in cooperation between the employer and the employee.

Proactive and interactive planning of the working environment can be used to achieve design solutions that promote the employee's wellbeing at work; performance at work, efficiency, occupational health and comfort at work. These factors increase the employee's motivation and dedication to work and the workplace. In the best case scenario, employees like their work, are interested in performing beyond expectations in their tasks, which also promotes their employer's success.

- Strategic work planning

- Practical work planning

- Personal work planning

MANAGEMENT

SUPERVISOR

PERSONAL WORK PLANNING

- Long-term plan
- Frame and resources for the planning process
- Identifying employees as the company's most important resource

- Coaching
- Listening and presence
- Providing help
- E.g. paying attention to excessive workload
- Planning and continuous development together with employees

- Work planning in the moment (in daily and weekly operations)
- Organisational skills
- Identifying working approaches that work well
- Identifying stress factors at work and reacting to these
- Planning and continuous development together with supervisor and colleagues
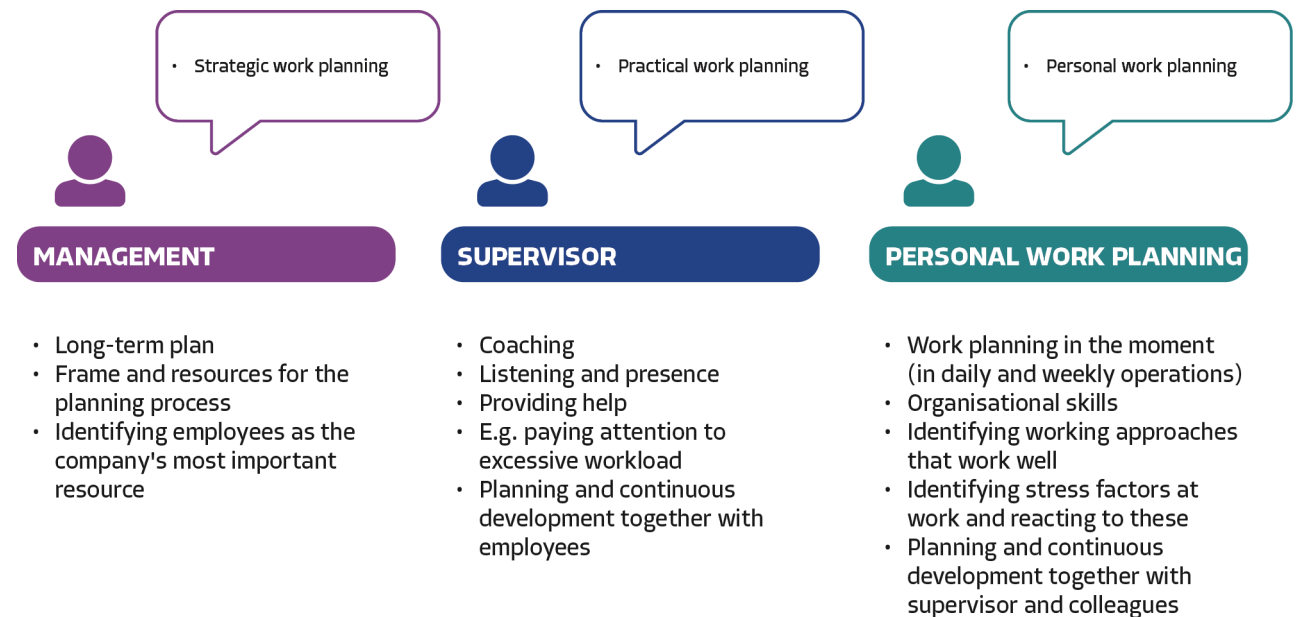
Diagram: Target groups for the handbook

2 Work content and the employee as the basis of planning and design work

2.1 Planning and designing work

Work design involves planning the work content and working processes, taking into account the employee's competence, characteristics, capabilities and interests. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the employer must ensure the safety and health of employees at work. Any hazards or risk factors of work, working hours and the working environment must be eliminated or minimised. In addition, the mental and physical stress factors of work must be identified and assessed in order to reduce and manage them. [6]

Work design is often carried out at workplaces at different levels and by different persons. Strategic design is often carried out by management and HR administration, which is responsible for the organisation's personnel policy, draws up long-term personnel plans and assesses competence needs. At the operative level, work design is often the responsibility of the immediate supervisor or, for example, a team leader responsible for a team's activities and results.

The work design process has been modelled in the diagram on page 8, which also identifies the roles of individuals in the different stages of the process.
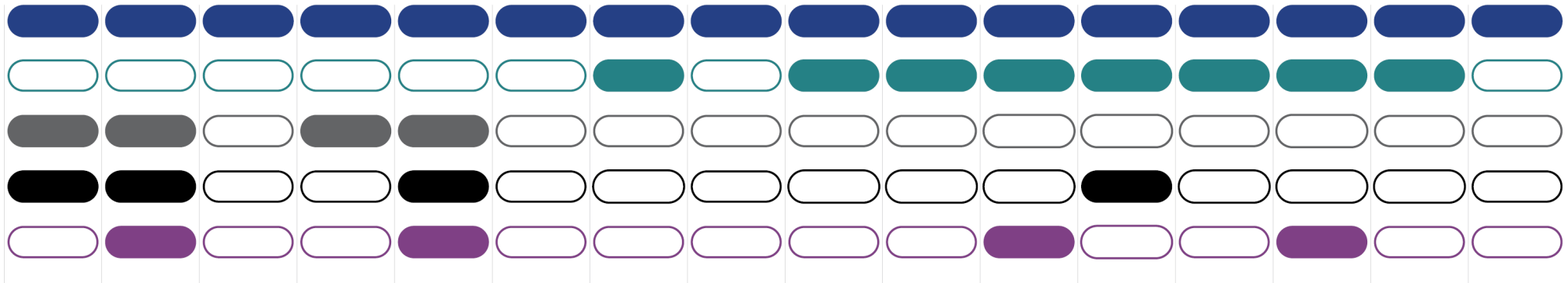
2

EMPLOYER

WORK PLANNINGEXPERT

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CARE

EMPLOYEE

ERGONOMICS EXPERT (HFE)

DETERMININGREQUIREMENTS

Defining work requirements at the employee level	Defining stress factors
• Organisation's documentation of work requirements at a general level	• Identifying, analysing and documenting stress factors at work and in the working environment
• Organisation's performance goals	

DEFINING NEEDS

Need for an employee	Defining work tasks	Defining work requirements at the level of individuals
• Need for a specific employee	• Work objectives	• Hard requirements
• Strategic recruitment	• Tasks	• Soft requirements
	• Job description	• Physical strain
		• Mental strain
		• Rewards system

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment announcement	Job interviews	Selection and hiring

TRIAL PERIOD

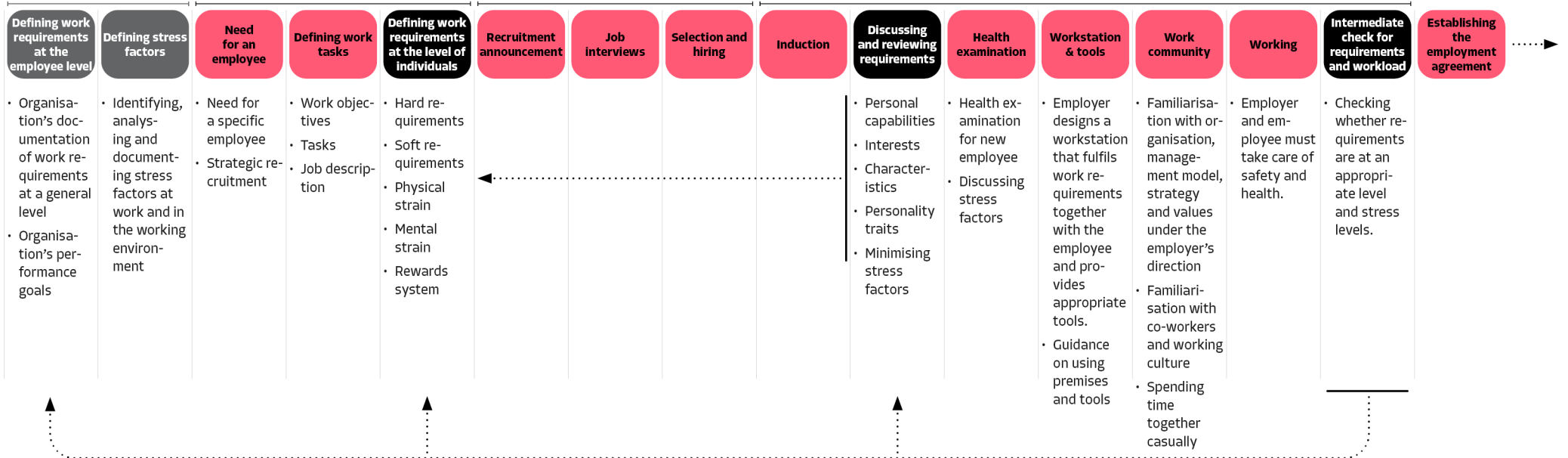| Induction	Discussing and reviewing requirements	Health examination	Workstation & tools	Work community	Working	Intermediate check for requirements and workload	Establishing the employment agreement
	• Personal capabilities	• Health examination for new employee	• Employer designs a workstation that fulfils work requirements together with the employee and provides appropriate tools.	• Familiarisation with organisation, management model, strategy and values under the employer's direction	• Employer and employee must take care of safety and health.	• Checking whether requirements are at an appropriate level and stress levels.	
	• Interests	• Discussing stress factors					
	• Characteristics		• Guidance on using premises and tools	• Familiarisation with co-workers and working culture			
	• Personality traits						
	• Minimising stress factors			• Spending time together casually			

Diagram: Work planning process

Determining requirements

Before launching a recruitment process, the organisation must determine and document the work requirements and stress factors at a general level.

Defining needs

Work planning begins before the start of the employee's employment relationship by defining the needs and tasks of the organisation. Before recruitment, the organisation assesses the more specific requirements set by the work, and mental and physical stress factors, and lists means to prevent and manage these.

Recruitment

A recruitment announcement is drawn up based on the definition of needs, and the skills, requirements and characteristics of potential employees are mirrored to the observations made when defining needs.

Trial period

The trial period follows a pattern that involves familiarising the employee with his or her tasks and enables the new employee to become part of the organisation and the work community. Familiarisation with the organisation, strategy and values and guidance on using the work premises are important stages at the beginning of the employment relationship.

The process of planning and designing work is continued together with the employee at the beginning of the employment relationship. This involves discussing the determined needs and related issues, and complementing and changing these based on the hired employee's characteristics, competence and interest. This also includes specifying and filling out information about identified work stress factors and the approaches that enable preventing and managing these.

Work planning is a continuous process. The definition of needs prepared before recruitment is revisited right at the start of induction and for the following time at the latest at the end of the trial period. Forming a meaningful employment relationship requires continuous dialogue with the employer on the employee's experiences and wishes.

2.2 Safe and healthy work

The Occupational Safety and Health Act aims to maintain employees' physical and mental health and work ability throughout their career. Achieving this goal requires developing different elements of the work and the working environment, such as the content of work, work premises and tools, working approaches, organisation and management culture at workplaces together with the employer and the employee.

Occupational health activities refer to cooperation between the employer, employees and occupational health care services, which promote the work ability and health of personnel in accordance with the Occupational Health Care Act. [7] The purpose of the Act is to prevent work-related illnesses and accidents, and to promote the health and safety of work and the working environment to maintain work ability and functional capacity. This is realised in collaboration between the employer, the employee and occupational health care services. [8]

Occupational health care serves as an expert body for the employer in assessing hazards and risk factors, which helps preventing risks.[9] Employers that do not have sufficient expertise in areas such as identifying and taking into account workload factors should consult external experts. The employer must make sure that the experts have adequate competence and other qualifications needed for carrying out the task properly.[10] Co-

operation between the employer and employees at the workplace plays a key role in developing occupational health and safety. Successful implementation depends on the management of all organisational levels and activities, which requires participation and commitment.

2.3 Productive and smooth work

In expert and office work, work planning is strongly linked to the organisation of work, responsibilities and time use. Studies have found that planning work days has a positive impact on commitment to work, as employees set personal goals by planning their work. Planning work days in advance also give employees peace of mind and help them get a sense that their work is under control.[11] A working culture that has adopted the practice of planning work in advance makes work more efficient, saving time and resources.

The task of the employer, supervisor or some other party guiding work is to describe the goals of work and the described working approaches that enable achieving the required work quality and results. A further aim is to provide employees with tools and support for work planning so that they can develop in their work and also participate in the continuous development of working approaches. Smoothly running and productive work requires the planning of work that has been started early and involves the employee.

3 A functional and comfortable office work environment

3

A functional working environment promotes smooth work, has a positive impact on the employee's work efficiency and mood, and increases work motivation and a sense of community. Ultimately, a comfortable and functional working environment has a positive impact on the organisation's operations and results.

Designing working environments is guided by the Occupational Safety and Health Act, whose aim is to safeguard and maintain employees' ability to work, prevent occupational accidents and diseases and health hazards.[12] The working environment, facilities and equipment used at work must meet the requirements laid down in the Act. In addition, the employer must ensure that the impact of facilities, equipment, tools and potentially hazardous substances on the safety and health of employees is taken into account in designing working environments.[13]

The health, safety and functionality of the facilities must be taken into account in designing the working environment. Alongside these basic issues, it is equally important to take into account the social and psychological aspects of work, such as the feeling of safety experienced by employees and the need for personal space, which all contribute to finding a working environment meaningful.

3.1 Work environments for people

Organisations use design solutions in the working environment to increase interaction and improve the flow of information in multi-space and open-plan offices with different spaces dedicated to various kinds of work. Space solutions have also often been used to lower hierarchy. Informal work spaces have aimed to increase interaction and feed innovation and creativity more than in formal, traditional office spaces. This has also been supported by open and café-like break rooms and various recreational areas.

As expert work has become increasingly independent of place, the social dimension of work has become emphasised. Workplace is where employee wish to meet their colleagues face to face, have lunch together, share ideas and get to know them better. To enable this, the work environment must provide spaces that allow natural encounters between people.

The location of a workplace also has a significant impact on both accessibility as well as employees' mobility, but also on the employer image. A workplace that can be conveniently accessed makes employees' daily lives run smoothly and attracts them to spend their days at the workplace.

Services that extend outside the traditional working environment have also often been incorporated into the premises of organisations. Restaurants, shops and sports facilities facilitate the daily life of employees and the reconciliation of work and leisure time.

3.2 Areas of designing working environments

Architecture and space planning

The space planning of a building is guided by numerous provisions and decrees of the Building Act as well as health and safety aspects. However, making spaces functional will always require designing them to support the goals set for them and the activities that take place in the premises. Space planning is based on assessing the need for a space that suits work processes, which aims at a solution that is as versatile as possible.

Multi-space offices have made facilities flexible to different needs, allowing employees to choose where they would like to work at a given time. Multi-space offices often consist of quiet work facilities enabling employees to perform tasks that require them to concentrate in a peaceful environment, teamwork spaces suitable for group work, separately booked conference rooms and general open-plan office spaces. An increasing trend in office design is to designate more spaces for encounters, which increases the flow of information and promotes interaction between employees.

A pleasant working environment also has a positive impact on work. A space with personality does better at creating a sense of ownership, which can be expressed by architectural solutions. On the other hand, timelessness and sustainability in the architectural look prolong the life cycle of the building.

Interior design

Interior design is used to create the desired atmosphere in a space by combining furniture, textures, colours and materials. The starting point for interior design is the facilities and their purpose of use, and the people using the spaces. All of these affect the choices of furniture and materials.

ARCHITECTURE AND SPACE PLANNING

INTERIOR DESIGN

LIGHTING

SOUND CONDITIONS AND ACOUSTICS

INDOOR AIR QUALITY

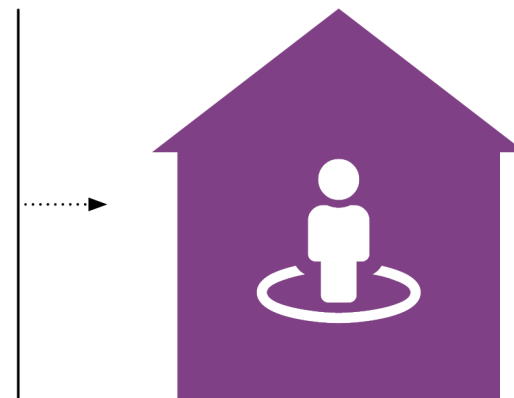**SAFETY AT WORK**

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND ERGONOMICS

Diagram: Areas of designing working environments

Hard materials are primarily selected according to their intended use, the amount of wear they are subject to, and needs related to cleaning. Soft materials, such as curtains and upholstery as well as additional acoustic elements add layers and cosiness to spaces. Finishing touches are added with various interior design elements, such as paintings, decorative objects and plants.

Large surfaces, floors, walls, ceiling and furniture composition are used to create different areas within the space. The extent that they dominate a given space can be regulated through the selected materials and colours, which can be used to either highlight or soften a surface. Subtle use of colours and materials creates a more sophisticated environment. Materials and colours can also be used to create separate new spaces within an open space.

The comfort of a work environment is also linked to wellbeing at work. Comfortable and functional facilities attract employees to work at a workplace. In addition to the comfort of employees, a safe and healthy working environment can also reduce sick leaves.

Lighting

Lighting creates prerequisites for working, seeing and comfortable working conditions and fosters efficient work. Good lighting promotes interaction, sets different moods, promotes health and wellbeing, and supports the aesthetics of the space.

The lighting of work spaces is primarily for the people working in the space. As a result, cost and efficiency criteria and aesthetic solutions should be mirrored against visual ergonomic requirements. Working areas and workstations must be appropriately lit.

Requirements related to the amount, uniformity and glare of light are given for interior spaces in the SFS-EN 12464-1 standard. The lighting of spaces and surfaces suitable for offices can be achieved by selecting the correct light sources, adjusting their positions and lighting intensity, and preventing glare and reflections.

As employees have individual needs for lighting, in an optimal situation, the lighting at each workstation can be adjusted separately. In multi-space solutions and group work spaces, it is a good idea to provide an option to adjust the intensity of light to ensure that the spaces meet different needs as well as possible.

Sound conditions and acoustics

The sound conditions in an office working environment form a whole that is influenced by the premises, their acoustic properties and the users' activities. The acoustic design of a working environment is divided into room acoustics, soundproofing and noise control. The design and implementation must pay attention to the different areas as a whole and comply with the regulations and guidelines set for acoustics.[14]

Office spaces must have sound conditions that ensure that the space promotes working. The most important acoustic criterion for an open-plan office space is appropriate room acoustics. According to studies, those using these kinds of spaces find the speech not related to their work task as most disturbing. Indeed, the key objective of room acoustic design is to reduce speech sounds, in other words to improve the so-called speech privacy. This requires the use of soundproofing materials, screens and spatial dividers in space planning and, if necessary, using auditory masking to cover the speech in the work space. In multi-space offices, the room acoustics of open working areas should be designed according to the need for speech privacy.

In addition to acoustics, employees' behaviour and operating models have a significant impact on the sound conditions in the office work environment and how people experience these. The workplace should promote behavioural models and practices that support an undisturbed sound environment.

Indoor air quality

Several factors affect indoor air quality, including the materials used in construction, moisture and dust control during construction, and ventilation Poor indoor air quality can cause various health hazards that may be connected with musty air, odours or draft. These hazards related to indoor air quality have been observed to affect people's comfort and work efficiency.

Good indoor air is guaranteed when the building is designed, at which point different selections on materials are made. In the construction phase, particular attention should be paid to the prevention of moisture and dust management. Information on the design and implementation of good indoor air can be found, for example, in the indoor climatic classification updated in 2018.

Safety at work

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Act (738/2002), the employer is responsible for the safety and health of employees at work. Employees are obliged to comply with the employer's instructions and also to take care of their own safety and the safety of others when performing their tasks and to report any safety deficits that come to their attention.[15]

Occupational safety is related to all activities at the workplace and therefore all possible harmful factors in the work environment must be taken into account. A

safe work environment has been designed to support the performed work. The principle of priority should be always followed in ensuring safety at work. Based on the principle, the primary aim is to prevent any hazardous and harmful factors.

A working environment with safe working spaces is clean, provides appropriate places for storing necessary items and has workplace structures that do not cause harm to workers, for example due to chemical or biological exposure agents. The tools used at work are suitable for the tasks at hand, and ergonomics have been taken into account in all tasks.

In developing a safe working environment, an open safety culture plays a key role, which involves open discussion on risk factors and how to prevent them.

Occupational health and ergonomics

Wellbeing at work is influenced by physical, organisational and cognitive factors. Physical ergonomics refers to adapting physical activity to human anatomical and physiological characteristics. Organisational ergonomics focus on how work is organised and planned. .[16] Cognitive ergonomics means reconciling work and tools, environments and methods with people's capabilities and limitations related to processing information.

Expert work is challenged by continuous interruptions at work, instant messaging applications, e-mails and social media. In addition to interruptions, the sounds and movements in the working environment draw attention away from work and make it more difficult to concentrate. Factors that burden cognitive ergonomics must be identified, assessed and resolved, for example, by space design, the number of programmes used or the common rules of the office.

Diagram: Stress factors

PHYSICAL ERGONOMICS

- Work tasks
- Work processes
- Working environment
- Stress factors

VIRTUAL WORKING ENVIRONMENT

- Work tasks
- Work processes
- Working environment
- Stress factors
- Software
- Telecommuting

COGNITIVE ERGONOMICS

- Abilities and competence
- Personality traits
- Other characteristics
- Attitude

ORGANISATIONAL ERGONOMICS

- Strategy
- Management
- Resources
- Corporate culture
- Operating approaches
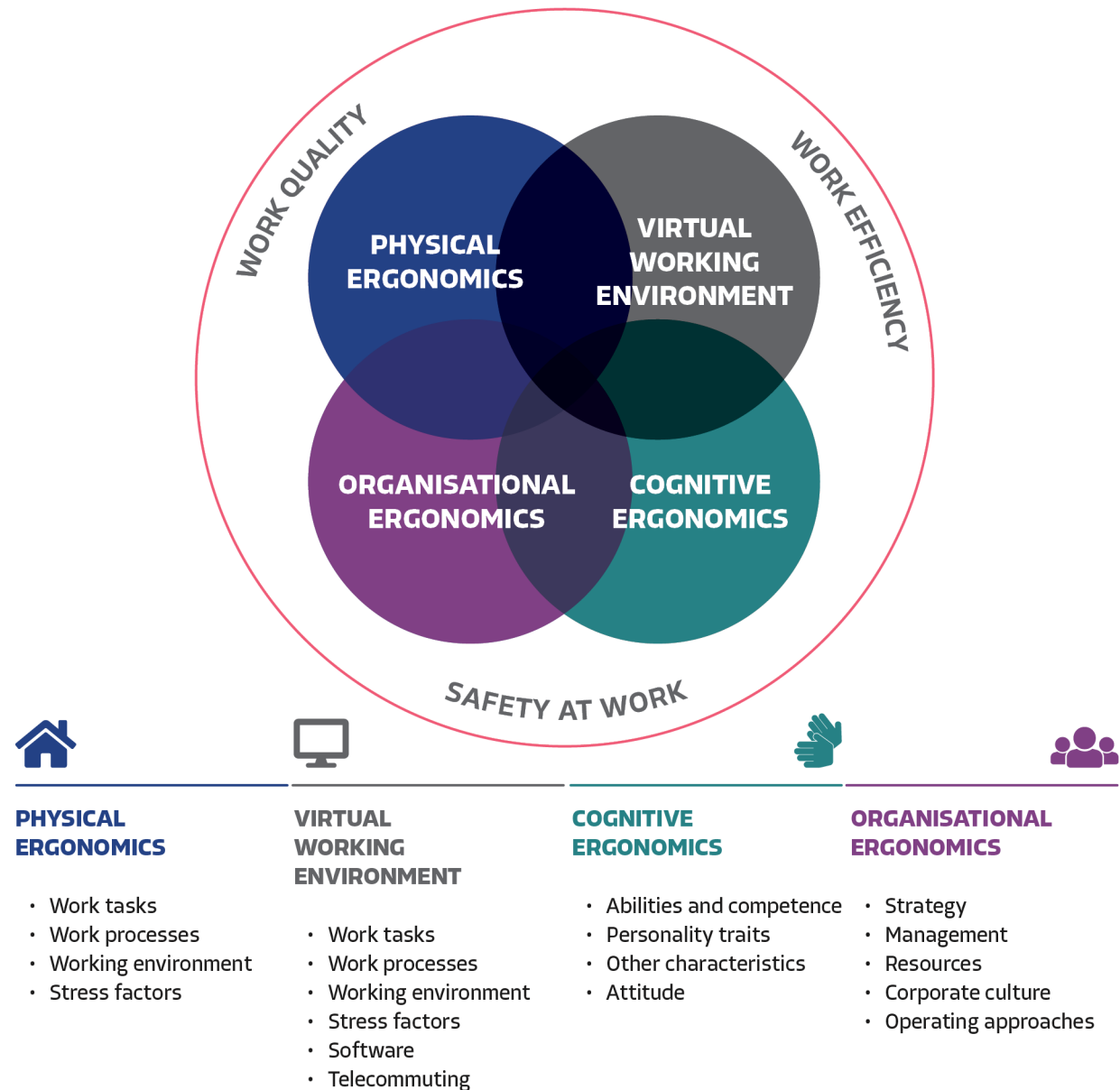
Good physical ergonomics start with an ergonomically correct work position and tools and equipment suitable for the task. Workstation features, such as work position and lighting, should be customisable so that the workstation can be modified during the working day. Spending a long time in a single position causes unbalanced fatigue and burden on the body. Good space planning also encourages physical activity.

3.3 Model for designing working environments

The process of designing working environments has been modelled in the diagram on the right, which also shows the participation of different agents in the different stages of the process. Engaging employees and open and active communications are a key part of the process of designing working environments.

Preparatory work

First, the goals of the design process are determined and the progress of the project is planned. The starting point for identifying needs is the content of the work and work processes to create the best conditions for work in the new working environment. Needs and wishes are heard by involving employees throughout the planning process. A large number of different tasks and wishes can be managed using different user profiles.

Designing and implementation planning

Providing employees and others using the working environment with opportunities to influence the design work increases their commitment. Designing spaces to be as flexible as possible also enables enhancing their functionality based on feedback and gathered experiences, even after implementation.
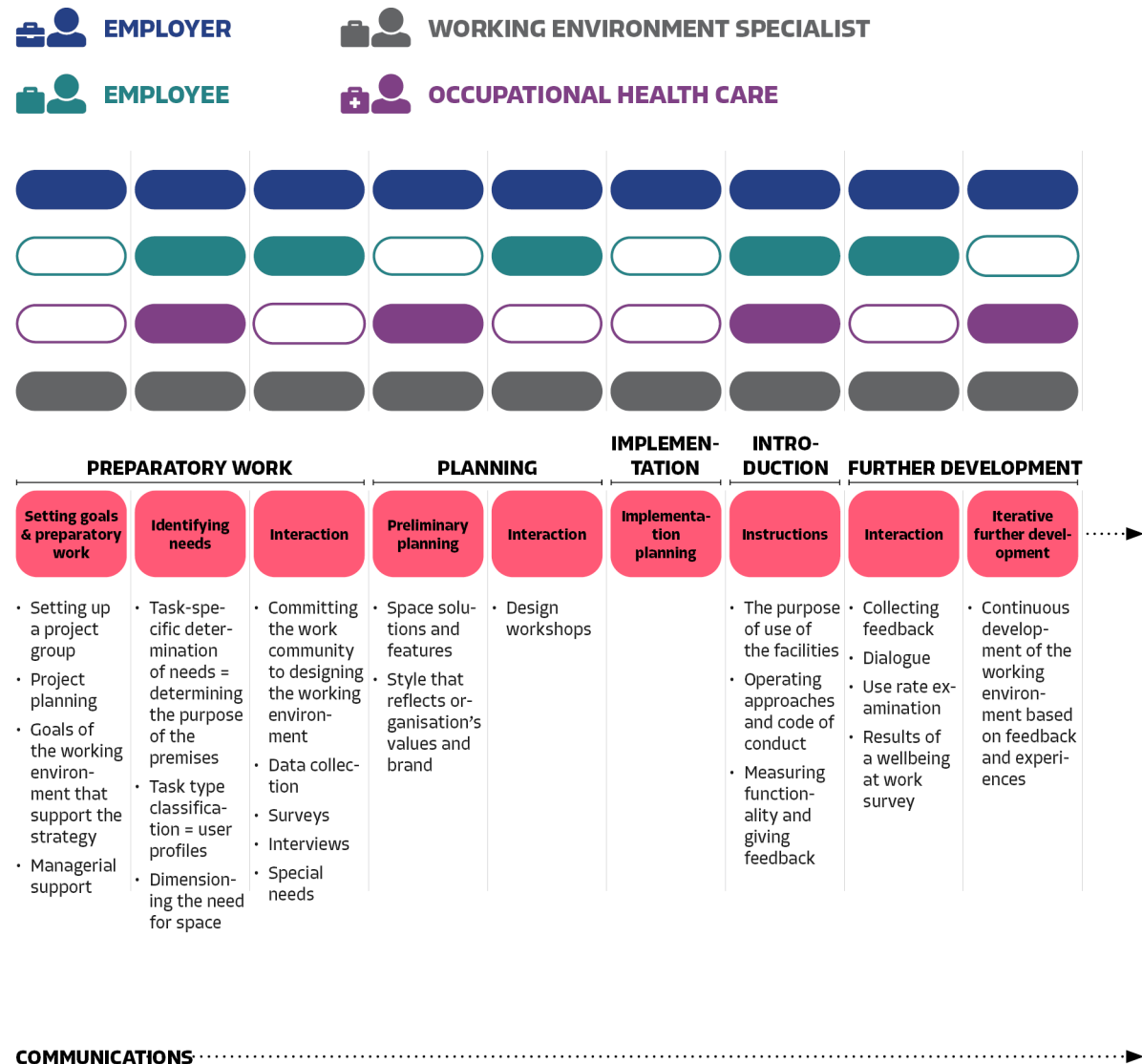
EMPLOYER **WORKING ENVIRONMENT SPECIALIST**

EMPLOYEE **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CARE**

PREPARATORY WORK			PLANNING		IMPLEMEN-TATION	INTRO-DUCTION	FURTHER DEVELOPMENT	
Setting goals & preparatory work	Identifying needs	Interaction	Preliminary planning	Interaction	Implementation planning	Instructions	Interaction	Iterative further development
• Setting up a project group • Project planning • Goals of the working environment that support the strategy • Managerial support	• Task-specific determination of needs = determining the purpose of the premises • Task type classification = user profiles • Dimensioning the need for space	• Committing the work community to designing the working environment • Data collection • Surveys • Interviews • Special needs	• Space solutions and features • Style that reflects organisation's values and brand	• Design workshops		• The purpose of use of the facilities • Operating approaches and code of conduct • Measuring functionality and giving feedback	• Collecting feedback • Dialogue • Use rate examination • Results of a wellbeing at work survey	• Continuous development of the working environment based on feedback and experiences

COMMUNICATIONS ···►

Diagram: Working environment design process

Implementation

A project plan is drawn up for the implementation of new workspaces and instructions on using the facilities, a so-called user manual, are prepared. The manual contains the code of conduct and rules for the space. The introduction of the new premises requires training and familiarisation with facilities, tools and equipment for those using the spaces.

Further development

After implementation, there is dialogue between the different levels of the organisation and feedback is collected. Any spaces and features that need more development are improved based obtained feedback and user experiences.

4 Continuous development model

The model created for identifying development targets related to work and the working environment illustrates the role of different agents in identifying development measures and driving them forward. The model illustrates the role of different organisational levels in identifying development measures related to work content and the working environment and proceeding with them. The idea is that issues at different levels related to the planning of work and designing working environments move to both directions in the organisation and any observations made are documented.

An identified development measure may be, for example, an idea for improving an individual work task that has emerged at the operational level, the inefficiency of a process detected at the tactical level or a wider need for competence identified at the strategic level.

Many factors affect the operating environment of an organisation. Different measures and tools are available for identifying them. SWOT analysis can be used from the perspective of responding to external threats (T) and making use of opportunities (O), and from the viewpoints of developing internal weaknesses (W) and supporting strengths (S).

We want to use this handbook to encourage a culture of rapid experimentation at workplaces. Everyone working in the organisation participates in making observations on development needs. Solutions for identified needs are sought by testing and modelling. A rapid experiment initially started on a small scale can later be expanded into a pilot project.

The PDCA model (plan, do, check, act), which is in line with the Lean ideology and which we have applied to this handbook as a continuous development model, supports making progress related to the identified development needs.

The continuous development model (p. 18) starts from a situation where the organisation has identified a need to change or develop something related to work or the working environment. The change and its implementation are managed throughout the process and through a clear division of responsibilities. The following phase involves planning different organisational levels, which includes the measures needed to implement changes and determining how the experimentation of the measures will be organised. Indicators used to measure the success of the experiment are determined, and can include:

- Hard indicators: workload, quality of work, efficiency, time, other use and loss of resources, billing rate, customer satisfaction, need for work management, etc.
- Soft indicators: employee satisfaction, functionality, comfort, safety, health, motivation, personal initiative, etc.

The aim of the experiment is to receive quick feedback on what was found to work well in the experiment and what should be further developed. If the experiment is successful based on the set goals, the lessons learned from it can be put into practice, and information and instructions on it can be provided in the organisation. If there is a need for further development, a new experimentation round is carried out using the process, modifying the content of the experiment. The organisation can carry out as many rounds as needed.

External influences

- Policies
- Major changes
- Documentation

MANAGEMENT
- Vision and goals
- Anticipation

- Optimisation
- Development
- Documentation

SUPERVISOR
- Work tasks
- Work processes

- Needs
- Development suggestions
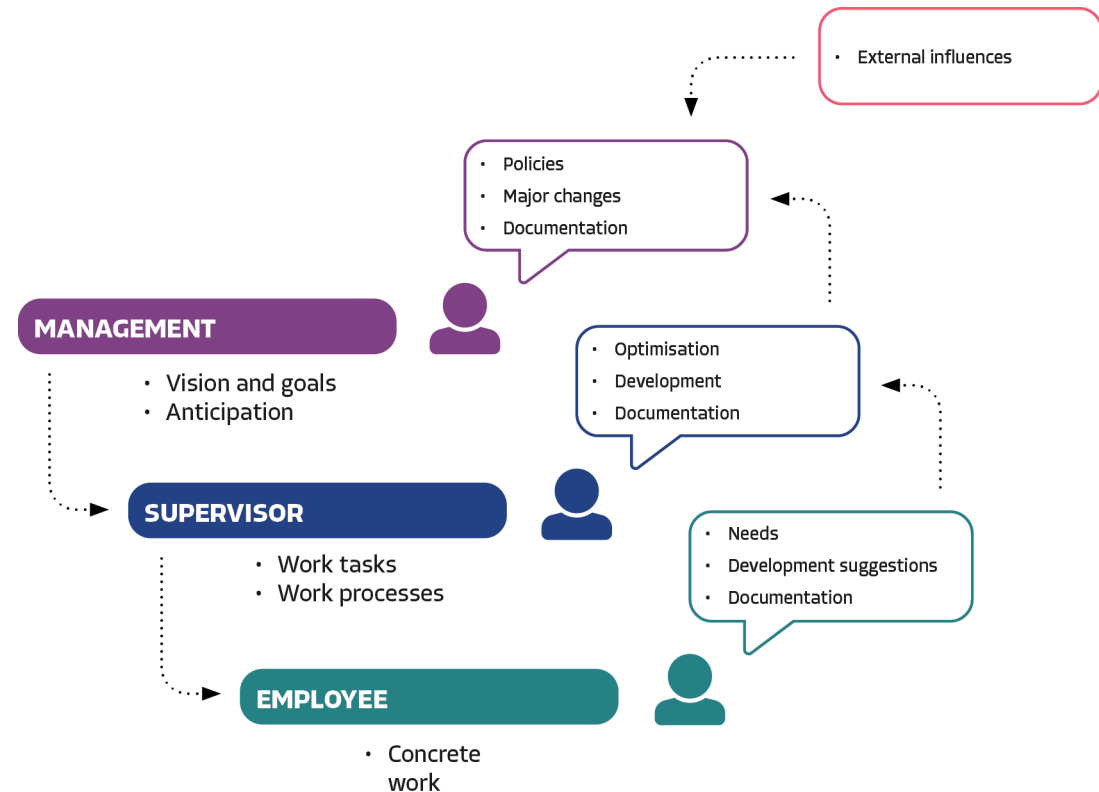- Documentation

EMPLOYEE
- Concrete work

Diagram: Levels of work planning and continuous identification of development targets.

The development process can result in, for example, re-organisation of tasks, improvement of a task or process, or something new and innovative that leads to brand new activities.
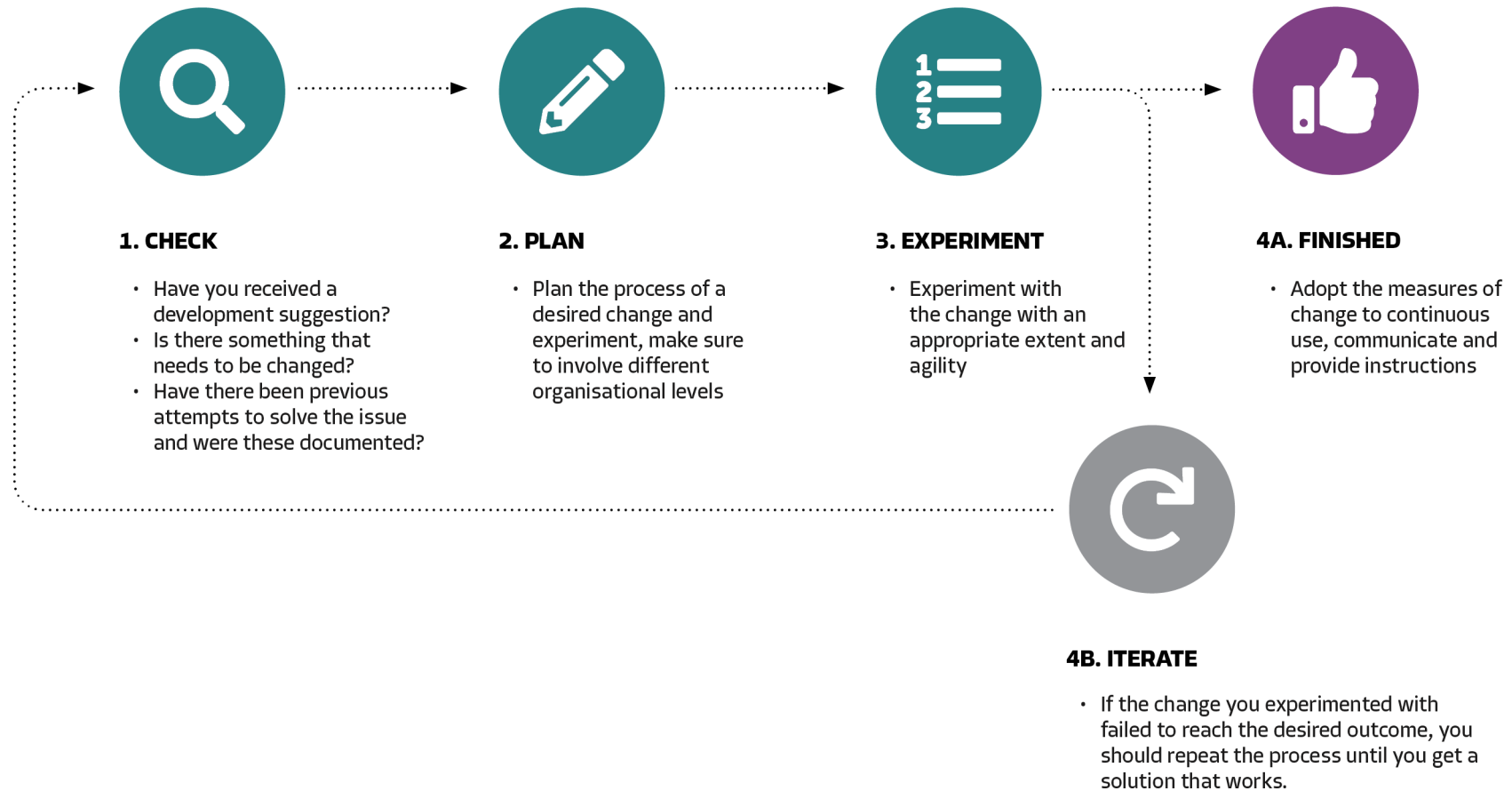
CHANGE MANAGEMENT

1. CHECK

- Have you received a development suggestion?
- Is there something that needs to be changed?
- Have there been previous attempts to solve the issue and were these documented?

2. PLAN

- Plan the process of a desired change and experiment, make sure to involve different organisational levels

3. EXPERIMENT

- Experiment with the change with an appropriate extent and agility

4A. FINISHED

- Adopt the measures of change to continuous use, communicate and provide instructions

4B. ITERATE

- If the change you experimented with failed to reach the desired outcome, you should repeat the process until you get a solution that works.

Diagram: Generic process for continuous development adapted from the lean ideology

5

5 Diverse work and various working environments

Work and the working environment are designed, but how? We interviewed five different organisations operating in the public and private sectors and found that the planning of work and designing working environments is perceived in very different ways – some do it while others do not.

Everyone contributes to planning work

In organisations, several different people are usually involved in planning work. Planning at the strategic level often belongs to HR management, which prepares personnel plans, assesses future competence and resource needs, recruits employees, manages administrative and statutory issues, and supports managers.

However, the responsibility for planning work is quick to fall on managers and employees themselves. Many organisations find that those working as experts and in offices plan their work at their own initiative.

"Within the work community, people plan their work in a very self-directed manner on the day-to-day basis. Everyone also plans their own work."

Many of the organisations interviewed for this document feel that experts have the best idea of how and when tasks should be performed. For those working in an expert position, tasks can be assigned by several different persons, which emphasises the employee's ability to manage both their own work and their workload. Employees themselves are often the only people who have an overall picture of their work tasks.

Several larger organisations use a job description bank, which includes information about each person's tasks at the beginning of their employment relationship. In some organisations, new employees fill out an assessment form on the degree of difficulty of their task at the beginning of the employment relationship. However, the job description bank and the form have a limited role as tools that support and guide the planning of work. Continuous planning and monitoring of work often relies on development discussions, annual job satisfaction surveys and interaction with the supervisor.

"Everyone does their work as they best see fit."

Spaces for different kinds of work and working modes

In recent years, different multi-space offices and open-plan office spaces have become increasingly common in office premises. The space solutions have often aimed to increase flexibility, make cost savings, reduce the carbon footprint and improve competitiveness, while increasing interaction and comfort and polishing the employer's image. The majority of experts and knowledge workers in the interviewed organisations also work in premises following the current trend.

Multi-purpose spaces have different facilities for different types of work, which employees feel support their work. Different zones and areas intended for work requiring concentration or working in a group have been created in the spaces. The spaces have been designed based on user profiles related to working. The user profiles have identified an anchor working mainly in one place in the office, a local mover spending time in the property and a mover spending most of their time in meetings outside the office facility.

The facility design process has involved a varying degree of consulting and engaging employees. Some or-

ganisations had created their space concept in a close collaboration with their staff, but in some processes, cooperation had been limited. Involving employees in the design process is essential not only for ensuring a functional and comfortable outcome, but also from the perspective of employee commitment. When employees have been consulted through the planning processes, they are also more likely to have a sense of ownership of the space and find spending time at the workplace more enjoyable.

The introduction of a new space and the subsequent follow-up are an essential part of the facility design process. Adequate instructions and training on the use of the premises as well as preparing ground rules are considered essential for the successful use of a facility solution.

However, there is still a lot of work to be done in traditional office environments alongside shiny and new multi-space offices. Of the companies interviewed, particularly smaller organisations invest much less in the working environment and related design work. In such cases, the organisation's operations are more likely to adapt to the premises rather than the other way around.

More systematic planning and design

Preventive and systematic planning of work requires common practices and operating approaches as well as resources for planning work. The general policies defined by the organisation for designing working environments would improve equality and lay the foundation for continuous planning.

Planning and designing is done for employees. Employees who are feeling well and enjoy their work are more productive and committed to their work, which is very important to the organisation.

6

6 The age of remote work

In spring 2020, the coronavirus pandemic revolutionised the ways people work around the globe. Those in expert positions could transition to remote work relatively easily as their work is independent of place. Based on the "Miten Suomi voi?" ('How is Finland doing?') conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the occupational wellbeing of Finns developed moderately positively during the coronavirus outbreak of spring 2020. There was an increase in work engagement and a decline in chronic fatigue, which is a key symptom of job burnout.

The respondents had a dual view of remote work. Some of the employees had a positive experience of remote work as it meant saving time previously spent on commuting, and increased concentration and flexibility. Some felt bored and were generally dissatisfied with remote work. As schools were closed during the spring, the presence of family at home and lack of a work space also caused additional burden to some employees working remotely.[18]

Work planning reduces excessive workloads, particularly in remote work

Remote work is flexible work based on voluntariness and agreed rules that is done outside the actual workplace indicated by the employer. Laws on work agreements, working hours and safety at work lay the statutory foundation for remote work.

Under valid legislation, the employer is responsible for ensuring the safety and health of the used working approaches. In principle, remote work is covered by the

Working Time Act and requires monitoring of working hours. The length of working days provides one indicator that can be used to prevent excessive workloads. In the context of remote work, the employer must ensure, together with the employee, that work is running without disturbances, safely and ergonomically. The employer must also monitor factors causing excessive workloads.

Remote work emphasises employees responsibility for their own well-being, including making work arrangements and taking a sufficient number of breaks. Anticipation and planning increase wellbeing and productivity. Employees must be able to lead their own work and examine their working approaches critically in order to improve them and prevent stress factors. Occupational health care provides proficient help in risk management. Once the work content and process has been described, the steps it takes to carry out work are reduced considerably. A failure to describe work content and process causes organisational stress to employees.

The future of workspaces
The diversification of the places where people work has been a persisting trend in knowledge and expert work. Even though people work at home, in means of transport, cafés and their clients' premises, work spaces will continue to serve as an important core of information flow and interactions, bringing people together.[20]

The original idea of open-plan offices was to break walls between employees. The idea can be considered to have reached its peak with Facebook's 40,278-square-metre open-plan office in California.[21] In the post-coronavirus era, organisations may aim to move away from open spaces to more closed and private facilities, and are likely to pay more attention to health and hygiene aspects.[22]

More than half of the working hours of knowledge workers are spent on cooperation, meetings and communication through different applications. These constant communications must be offset by an opportunity for withdrawal and silence. Employers can promote finding a rhythm and balance in workdays by providing operating models, tools and technology as well as strengthening a management culture that ensures that employees do not always have to be available and connected to others.[23]

In a news article in the Helsingin Sanomat newspaper, the managing director of the real estate consultancy company JJL's Finnish office notes that the coronavirus pandemic will intensify the previous trend of multi-local working. In the future, increasingly few people will have a designated workstation. This development would at least lead to a reduction in the surface area of office workspaces.[24]

While the coronavirus pandemic can change the design of workspaces, the digitalisation of working approaches and tools will also change the working environment.

A dynamic workplace or hybrid office is based on the logic that fewer employees will be at the workplace every day, which makes it possible to create more flexible workspaces. Isolated boots and conference facilities and café-like networking spaces will persist, but a dynamic office must be a place where people like to go.[25] A director responsible for developing Martela's working environments believes that, in the future, we will no longer talk about workstations but rather a sufficient number of different facilities.

"Hybrid offices are comfortable places that promote encounters and focusing. The space is divided in a way that provides people with freedom of choice instead of a single, permanent workstation." [26]

SOME ISSUES TO REMEMBER

1. Write down the general work task requirements determined by the organisation and identified stress factors harmful to health.

2. Together with the employee, consider the requirements set by individual tasks and the stress factors harmful to health as well as the employee's abilities and tools available for managing the factors.

3. The starting point for designing working environments is the work carried out in the premises. Describe the work processes and first list the requirements set by different tasks for the work environment.

4. Prepare a working environment design process by making use of the model on page 14.

5. When designing the work environment, take into account the different aspects of ergonomics and health-related factors of the working environment.

6. Support an open discussion and feedback culture at your organisation, which can be used to develop work and joint activities, and the working environment.

7. Promote rapid experimentation for testing new operating models at the organisation. Integrate the continuous development model into the organisation's development activities.

8. Design your work environments to be flexible to changes so that you can customize the spaces cost-effectively, also after they have been introduced to use.

9. Take into account the planning of the work and the work environment also when working outside the workplace.

10. Engage in regular dialogue with employees on their feelings and expectations, document the discussions.

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