

## Age management supports the building of sustainable work ability at the workplace

Age and work ability are intertwined in many ways. The causes of disability partly differ between people of different ages, and the risk of disability increases with age. It is important for the employer and supervisor to understand and take into account the significance of age and ageing with regard to work and work ability. This can help to prevent disability.



### WHAT IS AGE MANAGEMENT?

There is no single unambiguous definition of age management. Age management can refer to the management of employees of different ages, with the key objective of ensuring the smoothness of work and work ability. In age management, it is important to take into account the needs and situations of employees of different ages in the planning and organisation of work. At its best, age management is part of an organisation's proactive and goal-oriented management that supports work ability.



### SOLUTIONS

#### Reinforce age awareness.

Positive attitudes towards age and age awareness are an important starting point for good age management. Also, open discussion about age and ageing can reduce age-related biases. Remember that partial work ability is not an obstacle to participation in work.

#### Take strategic actions and anticipate.

Analyse the age structure of the personnel, the work ability situation and future prospects. For assistance, you can use surveys, occupational health care data and performance appraisals, for example. Set targets and indicators for age management. Ensure common operating methods and take measures to support the work ability of people of different ages. Monitor and evaluate activities.

#### Lead and support.

Management's commitment to age management is important. Make sure that supervisors have a sufficient understanding of the significance of

age and ageing in terms of work and work ability. Make sure that the individual's workload is balanced with their resources.

#### Strengthen competence.

Provide employees with opportunities and support for continuous learning and development, regardless of their age. Identify and leverage employees' strengths. Utilize the expertise of experienced employee, for example as onboarders and mentors.

#### Adapt the tasks.

With age, the need for job accommodation often increases, especially in physically demanding work. Accommodate the tasks, working hours and work arrangements as necessary. Develop work ergonomics and the working environment. Support adequate recovery and maintenance of work ability.

#### Co-operate.

Make sure that occupational health care takes age and ageing into account in supporting employees' work ability. Occupational health care can, for example, offer age-specific health examinations and questionnaires or guidance from an occupational physiotherapist.

# 23%

estimate that the workplace has a comprehensive understanding of age management

# 26%

estimate that supervisors are well prepared for age management

# 46%

estimate that age management plays a key role in managing disability risks

\*Shares of respondents who agree.

Source: Preliminary task for age management workshops, Varma, 2025.

## What do we know?

Age management is typically perceived as management that takes into account the needs and situations of employees of different ages. Age management is often reactive, not proactive. Several workplaces have identified the strengths of employees of different ages and the key age-related risk groups for work ability. Development needs are related to, for example, age awareness, leadership and operating methods. Individual solutions that support work ability can be implemented on a case-by-case basis, but not necessarily systematically.

## Why is this important?

Age management is a key part of effective work ability management and supports building a sustainable working life. Taking age into account in management helps to ensure that employees' work ability is supported at different stages of life and in different situations. Good age management can help in the early identification of risks related to work ability. Age management is one of the ways in which the workplace supports the extension of careers and continued employment.

## What should be done?

It is good to strengthen workplaces' capacity for age management. At the workplace, it is important to ensure that management and supervisors have sufficient competence in age management and a good understanding of the significance of age at work and from the point of view of work ability. At its best, age management is part of the organisation's strategic, proactive, data-driven and goal-oriented management.

Good age management practices include strengthening age awareness and positive attitudes towards age, systematic development of competence, supporting musculoskeletal health and accommodating work and working hours to individual needs. Accommodating work in case of challenges with work ability requires a workplace culture that understands and accepts different ways of working. Taking age and ageing into account is also important in occupational health cooperation.

Age management is part of effective work ability management.

## WORKPLACE METHODS FOR SUPPORTING THE WORK ABILITY OF EXPERIENCED EMPLOYEES



- **Supervisory work:** Confidential and open dialogue about work and work ability, ensuring the balance of work requirements and resources, identifying risks related to ageing, influencing the age awareness and attitudes of the work community.
- **Competence development:** Encouraging experienced employees to learn new things and leveraging their experience, for example as mentors and onboarders. An individual competence development plan in the late stages of career can support the work ability of an experienced employee.
- **Performance appraisals:** Surveying the development needs and career goals of experienced employees. Talking about work ability is also an essential part of the performance appraisal.
- **Working hour arrangements:** For example, shortened working hours, part-time work, remote work and flexible work shift planning can reduce the workload and promote the recovery of an experienced employee.
- **Job accommodation:** For example, making the workload lighter, reducing stressful work tasks or work rotation can support the work ability of an experienced employee and allow them to continue at work or return to work after a sick leave.
- **Musculoskeletal health:** Good work ergonomics, taking breaks and using various aids are examples of ways to reduce the workload. Experienced employees should also be encouraged to maintain physical fitness and make lifestyle changes.
- **Cooperation with occupational health care:** Occupational health care plays an important role in supporting the work ability of experienced employees. Early signs of work ability challenges can be identified during health examinations, for example.

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### HOW THE BUSINESS BRIEF WAS PREPARED

The solutions are based on the publication *Ikäjohtaminen osana vaikuttavaa työkyvyn johtamista – tutkittua tietoa ja ratkaisuja työpäikoille* in Varma's publication series "Tietoa työkyvystä" (in Finnish). The research material used includes workshops aimed at Varma's customer organisations that took place in spring 2025.

Read the report on our website at [www.varma.fi/tutkimus](https://www.varma.fi/tutkimus)

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