



About the company

Ilmarinen Mutual Insurance Company specialises in underwriting statutory earnings-related pension insurance. Ilmarinen have been responsible for employee pensions for 40 years, ever since 1961 when the Finnish employment pension system was created. Ilmarinen have an extensive service network throughout Finland. The Main Office is situated in Helsinki. Ilmarinen Company is responsible for the pensions of the employees and self-employed people who are unable to work because of illness, who become unemployed, or who retire due to old age. Ilmarinen collaborate with the social partners and other stakeholders to improve the earning-related pension insurance system and its long-term financing.

The staff numbered 603 at the end of 2000. The growth in the number of employees is due to the legislative reforms implemented in recent years, expanded operations, modernised services and provisions for an increasing number of employees going into retirement. For three successive years the average age of an Ilmarinen employee has been 42. Almost throughout the 1990s, the annual personnel turnover has been 2-3%. In the last few years, the staff loss has risen to some 5%. Half of the personnel have secondary school training, 30% have academic degrees, and 20% basic training. 71% of the staff are women, 12 % of who are in supervisory or managerial posts. The corresponding percentage for men is 19%.

Developing the work community

One of Ilmarinen's values is to develop the work community. In Ilmarinen's opinion work ability of an employee consists of professional competence, the work and the work environment, social relations, team function, good health, and a vision of the organisation, values and the personnel planning. In order to reach the goals, Ilmarinen carry out a survey every two years called questionnaire on Company Management and Policies. The personnel development and improvement of management are projects that are partly based on the results of this survey. The biennial survey is a part of Ilmarinen's management strategy.

Giving employees a voice

The improvement projects are based on the Company Management and Policies questionnaire. The survey questions shed light on the staff opinions on the management system, actions of directors and supervisors, information systems, well-being at work, work satisfaction, work community, customer orientation, stress, equality, and the implementation of Ilmarinen's values. This survey has provided a lot of information about current trends. The results are analysed both at whole company level and at the level of each department. Dissatisfying results lead to development and improvement projects and interventions. The improvements can concern the whole company as well as a smaller unit. The effects of the actions may be perceived rapidly or

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they may take a long time. After an intervention, the results of a new Company Management and Policies questionnaire reveal the effects of the actions. The timing of the survey is such that the results can be used in next year's action plan.

Making company's strategy and vision understandable

The development projects based on the questionnaire in 1999 (response rate 80%) rose in two main areas above others: the readability of the Company's strategy and vision, and the quality of supervisor-employee discussions. The third improvement area seemed to be the charting of the professional skills of the employees.

Firstly, making strategy and vision more understandable was important. It was motivating for the staff to understand the company's strategy and vision. The 1999 questionnaire indicated that scores in understanding the strategy and vision were 3.52 (on scale 1-5). The strategy and vision were perceived as complicated wordmongering, and there was no connection between the stated objectiveness and practice. It was felt that this result was not good enough.

During the year 2000, the improvement actions to help the employees understand and clarify Ilmarinen's strategy and vision were: training, issuing information at different meetings, information on Intranet, recording goals on the result cards i.e. balanced scored card of the departments and of every employ-

ee, and improving the supervisor-employee discussions.

The result of the 2001 survey on company management and policies showed favourable development. The scores of understanding the strategy and vision were 3.93.

Creating continuous personnel development

Secondly, regular development discussions (performance appraisal discussions) between supervisors and employees are important for supporting continuous personnel development and for helping employees to act according to the principles taught. According to the 1999 questionnaire the score on questions about these areas was 3.12 (on scale 1-5).

For improving the content, regularity and quality of these discussions, following actions were planned: a new procedure for the discussions, basic form for the discussions, and a training programme for all personnel on supervisor-employee development discussions. In the discussions it is essential to assess Ilmarinen's values and vision and the employees' own attitudes. It is also important to promote good relations between the employees, to discuss the pressure and the independence of the work, and the company targets.

In 2001 this area improved from 3.12 to 3.43 (on scale 1-5). The development of these discussions is still going on, however. As a result of the dual-workplace health promotion projects, the survey on company Management and Policies 2001 shows improved scores in the project areas.

Looking for further improvements

The first human resource accounts describing the structures, background and the contributions of the staff and the employer were published in 2000. In 2001, the emphasis in these accounts will be on the development of occupational skills.

Knowledge management at Ilmarinen and development of the employees' professional skills and know-how in accordance with competence strategy is a part of continuously improving business operations. Ilmarinen have fixed core areas of competence and started a survey of know-how needs and initiated certain development programmes. The business units are responsible for basic, advanced and updating training, the personnel development team is in charge of training that paves the way for future development, and the Service Department focuses on workstation training.

Company health care endeavours to prevent the employees' work capacity from diminishing through rehabilitation and provide other means that best suit the individual and work organisation. The project to maintain working capacity is making progress in a couple of departments. The examples mentioned above demonstrate that the improvement of one part of the WHP areas also has an effect on the others. At the moment, there is a training programme on WHP projects for managers and supervisors at Ilmarinen. But the previously described projects also contribute positively to this ongoing Workplace Health Promotion project.