

A Guide for Better Work



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Preface

Finland's chemical industry employer organisation Kemianteollisuus ry (Chemical Industry Federation of Finland), together with trade unions Teollisuusliitto ry (Industrial Union), Ammattiliitto Pro ry (Trade Union Pro) and Ylemmät Toimihenkilöt YTN ry (Federation of Professional and Managerial Staff) have agreed to promote well-being at work and productivity in the companies of their industry. Cooperation will be implemented with the “Hyvää huomista” (“Better Tomorrow”) program, which has been a part of the industry's collective agreements since 2009.

The “Hyvää huomista” program creates new approaches, distributes information and encourages networking. Based on the projects implemented in the program, several guides and tools have been produced for use in companies.

This Guide for Better Work came into being as a part of a project which aimed to find ways to improve the intrinsic motivation of personnel working in manufacturing in six different chemical industry companies. In this case, intrinsic motivation means the motivation based on the work itself, in comparison with motivation induced by external rewards or incentives. The target group of the project was manufacturing personnel, as generally speaking the companies felt that the manufacturing personnel was often left out of the ‘well-being at work’ projects, where the training usually focuses on managers. The results of the project can, however, be applied at any organisational level.

Filosofian Akatemia acted as a partner in this project, and through their measurements of intrinsic motivation and the improvement measures realised, the building blocks of intrinsic motivation for employees were found. The results of the project are presented in this guide as concrete suggestions for action which companies can implement at an individual level, a team level and a company level.

The Finnish working life is generally very open and the hierarchies are rather democratic. Personnel is encouraged to take part in matters and to improve their work and workplace. Improving working life in companies is something that happens on a daily basis together with the personnel representatives. On company level, local agreements are encouraged. There is close collaboration between social partner organisations, and because of that, among other things, this guide could be made. The procedures brought forth in this guide have been deemed suitable for Finnish working life. We hope that these approaches help to improve working life elsewhere as well.

**“Hyvää huomista” program
Chemical Industry Federation of Finland
Industrial Union
Trade Union Pro
Federation of Professional and Managerial Staff**

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Introduction

Work is undergoing great changes. The constant state of change in technology has led us to a point where most industries cannot be sure what their approaches will be in the next five years. Our way of doing things will surely change in major ways.

In 2014, ETLA (Research Institute of the Finnish Economy) estimated that a third of the work now done in Finland will move elsewhere or will be done by robots by 2020. Most of this was assumed to be manufacturing work. After that, the estimates have widened to also include higher education level tasks (such as work done by doctors and lawyers). In any case, the growing prevalence of robots and artificial intelligence means there is a need to develop new approaches and to produce products of higher service level.

This, from the employees' point of view, means constant learning and willingness to develop work profiles. Learning new things, keeping up with changes and creating future possibilities are only possible if the work itself is meaningful and rewarding. No one has the energy to learn new things and develop new approaches on a daily basis if the work itself is not interesting. That is why in the future no one can say "I just work here". Work will demand more, but it will also be more rewarding.

Because of this, it is ever more important to improve the joy and meaningfulness of work in everyday leading and approaches. Today the ability to lead the motivation of employees still gives a competitive edge to companies, but in the future it will be a requirement for any kind of competitiveness.

This publication includes ways to strengthen the meaningfulness of work and remove any barriers based on six manufacturing workplaces in the chemical industry. The example companies the guide uses are: Borealis Polymers Oy, Exel Composites Oyj, JM Huber Finland Oy, Oy Innogas Ab, Pipelife Finland Oy and Premix Oy. The building blocks of meaningfulness and barriers at work were outlined with a questionnaire which measured how interesting the employees felt their work was and asked their intrinsic motivation for work. The results were then discussed with these same people and based on this, it was decided which ones should be solved and how. After a supervision period of slightly less than a year, the questionnaire was repeated to assess the effectiveness of these solutions.

There are always three levels to the suggestions for approach in this guide: what the individual can do, what the work community as a whole can do and what the management can do or encourage to do. With this segmentation we wish to make it clear that building a good workplace is a joint venture. It cannot be seen as the management's job, nor can it happen without support from the management. This is a venture that requires everyone to do their part. Most likely the tips should also be tuned to fit your organisation better. There are no panaceas or silver bullets that would work in all work organisations.

Or, actually, there is one. It is developing the approaches together. One way to develop approaches together is to read this guide and think together how the tips mentioned here can be applied to your work.

The logic of motivation and key factors

The most important elements of work meaningfulness in these six chemical industry workplaces were:

- 1) The feeling of autonomy and empowerment
- 2) The opportunity to learn new things at work
- 3) The feeling that people trust me and that I can trust them
- 4) Feeling of meaningfulness caused by work

These four elements can be assumed to be the building blocks of work meaningfulness in other companies as well. This assumption can be made because these four things are, scientifically speaking, the requirements for intrinsic motivation in humans. In addition, psychologists also call four things similar to these as the basic psychological needs of humans. We are attracted to activities where these basic needs are met. That is the logic of motivation. When people talk about motivation leading (at work), they mean making these four things possible at everyday work situations.

1 Autonomy and empowerment

The feeling of autonomy has a key role when we want to make work feel like a part of us, interesting and meaningful. Losing the sense of autonomy leads to passivity and work that is being done worse than it should be.

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The feeling of autonomy is based on many things. It is built on influencing possibilities and also on how much the employee has wiggle room in their job. The feeling of autonomy is also affected by a bigger question: does work just feel like an unavoidable nuisance or does the employee still remember why they chose their industry and work tasks (either in the past or in the future) and why were they interesting to them.

In the latter case, work is perceived to be more of a voluntary action. Work makes it possible to do things one enjoys and learn things one wants to learn. One's own job feels good, somehow. You can utilise your strengths and use your personality doing it. It just feels right.

This is relatively straight-forward. And yet often forgotten in our everyday life.

Crafting jobs to make it look like you

That feeling of voluntary and personally fulfilling work can be enforced by crafting the job profile to fit the employee's interests and strengths even better than before. Crafting the job is not the same thing as work rotation, where people rotate between different tasks and learn how to work in different parts of the manufacturing process. Work rotation offers a chance to learn new skills. It also stabilises the way a manufacturing plant works, as employees can take care of other tasks when someone is absent. Work rotation, however, is not meant to enforce the meaningfulness of work, which is the main point of job crafting. Crafting means changing the job profile to better suit the employee's personal motivational factors.



Job crafting exercise

Each team or shift member gets some slips of paper. On these slips, everyone writes down the tasks they do. The tasks are written as concretely as possible. For example: adjusting the production line, cleaning waste material from my own working area, booking meeting rooms and organising food and drinks, or reporting a security consideration. This can take, for example, 5 to 10 minutes.

The slips are then divided into three piles: one pile has the employee's favourite tasks, one the most hated tasks and one the tasks that are 'okay'. Then everyone takes their hated tasks pile and trades work tasks with their co-workers. This exercise can be done in less than two hours if there are approximately twenty people, as long as the discussion is kept short and efficient.

It is amazing how small the hated task pile can become with this method. In the end, everyone ends up with less work they dislike and more of the work they like or at least don't dislike. It is also important to feel that the work community is interested in helping everyone with getting more interesting work tasks. It speaks of appreciation and caring.



Example

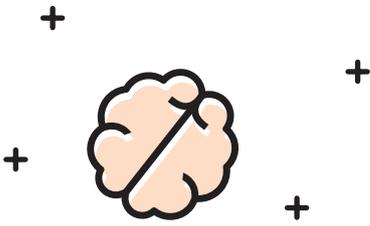


Premix wanted to improve the positive attitude and enthusiasm about work within the staff. The company started to realise this via a job crafting exercise. Each employee rated their work tasks first on their own: what do they do, what do they like and what do they dislike. At Premix, the exercise was not done together. Instead these results were discussed one-on-one with the manager. The employees who did the exercise said they received much needed specifics as to how to improve their work and enjoyed the possibility to discuss the bad things (such as the less-than-optimal work tasks) and the good things (their own interests and possible ways of improving their work).

“Losing the sense of autonomy leads to passivity and work that is being done worse than it should be.”

Notes:





+ Allowing the employees to use their brain

Of course, the feeling of autonomy is also based on the fact that the employee can work independently and use their own brain instead of the manager controlling every single step of the way. The newer and less experienced employees naturally need more guidance and support, but controlling the old hands is just an efficient way of getting rid of any joy in work.

Self-management is a growing trend

Currently, self-management at work is discussed quite often. In the wildest endeavours, the managers have been removed completely: the employees organise their own work together, set their own goals and decide how to reach them. However, a manager can have an important role as support, they can stitch together different shifts and remove work barriers.

It is possible and even likely that self-management and co-management will become a bigger thing in the future. Robots will do many of the tasks that can be planned ahead and thus can mostly be managed centrally. People will work on the tasks that require creative problem solving and human contact. These are the kinds of tasks that cannot be planned ahead. Work-related decision-making is much smarter and more efficient when the employees themselves do it. This also increases the meaningfulness of work, as we have previously stated.

Managers will still, for a long time to come, have the important task of guiding people to find their own solutions for issues arising from their own tasks, helping to adopt self-management skills and tackling work environment issues - and in many places they will also work as the connection between the other teams and higher management.

Inclusive strategy processes

In addition to having an effect on their own team and shift, employees often find it meaningful to be able to impact the bigger picture. Inclusive strategy processes are a good example of this, as is creating new values that guide operations. It is important to ensure that when different views are asked for, they also matter. Fake inclusiveness is even worse motivation-wise than not being able to take part at all.

An interesting idea is to give units or teams their own budget with which they can update their know-how or tools. This so-called inclusive budgeting is now being tested in public areas, such as suburb budgets, but at workplaces they are still relatively rare.

The more radical version of this inclusive strategy planning is to base the future course on employees' learning aspirations. In a quickly changing world, the people willing to learn are a very important part of a company's renewal capabilities. People tend to learn better when they are interested in something. When it comes to success, it might be important to think about this: if the company wants to pursue future possibilities that are in contrast with the employees' learning aspirations or ones that support them. For example, the product development manager Jyri Lindholm, who works in NAPCON, which uses an internal Neste Jacobs start up model, has realised that the biggest achievements have been those that are aligned with the personal learning aspirations of NAPCON employees. The drive to do things is completely different when you are realising your own dreams, not someone else's.

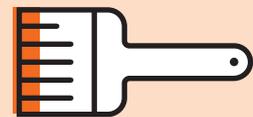
Example



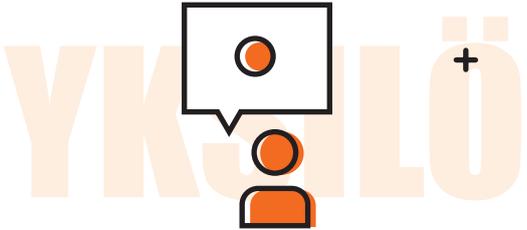
The Borealis Polymers' Borstar Pilot test factory in Porvoo lets the employees mostly manage their own work. The test factory does different kinds of runs, and they themselves know all the details better than anyone else. The operators also decide the run order. The manager of the pilot, Petri Rekonen, ensures that the operators and the engineers can do their work, that the amount of work is sensible and brings in the group development ideas to think about.

“It is the job of a leader to show the way and paint a picture of the journey on which everyone will want to join. And after that, stay out of the way of the professionals.”

**- Kimmo Kedonpää, CEO,
Pipelife Finland Oy -**



Tips for better work: autonomy and empowerment



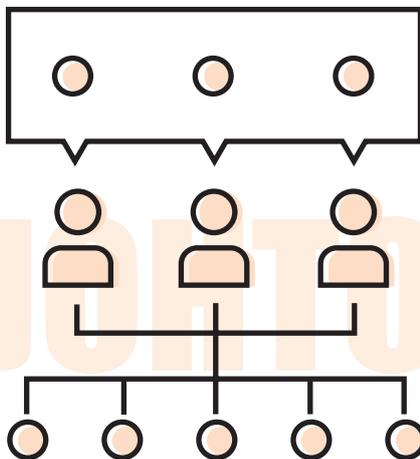
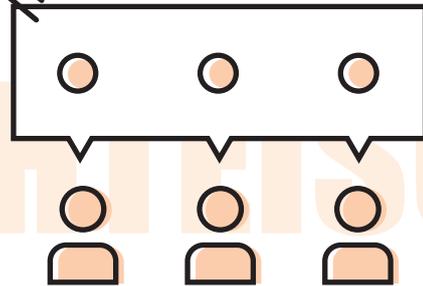
Individual:

Think about why you do the work you do. What is interesting in it or what used to be interesting in it? What would you like to learn in the future? Inform yourself about the future prospects of your own area of expertise and think about where you would like to find yourself in the future. It is very likely that all work will change quite a lot in the next ten years. Think about these things in advance and be active with your future plans, so that you can make the future you want.



Work community:

Take into account what everyone is interested in, what they are good at and what they want to learn when dividing work tasks. Remember to discuss what you are interested in and what you want to be able to do in the future. Let everyone be who they are and learn how to use each other's strengths to your advantage.



Organisational level and management:

Include the personnel in the conceptualising of the future and in defining which skills will be needed. If you have good people working for you, make sure to think if it would be possible to choose a direction which support the employees' interests and learning aspirations. Test out inclusive budgeting and other ways of giving more power to the employees. Let the professionals do their work. Do not meddle in operational matters unless it is absolutely necessary.



2 The chance to learn new things

Everyone has the need to learn new things and improve, one way or another. In some, this need is very powerful, and in others, a bit less so. But everyone has this need, no matter what their work tasks are, where they work or what their educational level is.

Engrossing work means new challenges

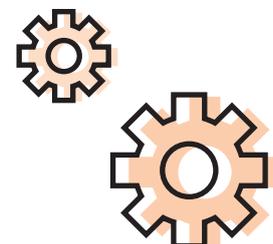
It is impossible to get excited about work, if it stays exactly the same every day, every year. Interest and immersion – the so-called ‘work engagement’ – is only possible when the work is challenging enough, but not too difficult.

The perfect challenge level is, of course, a personal matter, and working around it requires organising tasks in a way where individual wishes and personalities are taken into account. The final reward is an interesting job which people want to do and where they constantly learn new things.

Constantly learning new things does not mean sitting on a school bench every month. Instead everyone can learn while working. There will be problems and they will be solved, and at the same time new things will be learnt about the manufacturing process. The same happens when a new machine will be used, a new approach will be tried out or a new product is manufactured. In a quickly changing world, all work means learning new things.

Good old work rotation

We mentioned work rotation before as a good and proven way for professionals to learn new things. At the same time it stabilises the way the factory functions in case of absences. The trend in work rotation, especially in small and mid-size organisations, seems to be that everyone does everything. Teams are mostly disbanded and people are allowed to gravitate towards the tasks that interest them. In smaller plants it is possible to try out a situation where each employee knows how to do all of the phases of the manufacturing process.



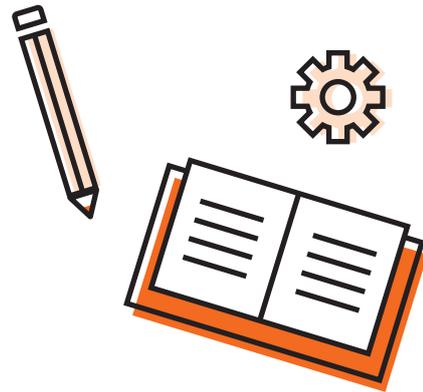
Example



In early 2017, the Pipelife Finland factory in Ii moved on from departmentalised work rotation to a whole factory work rotation. Now everyone does everything. The duty roster states what time everyone should come to work, another list says who is working on what task, and the order list decides what is due when. With these three lists filled with all the necessary information, the employees manage to handle the manufacturing mostly on their own, tells Mika Pälvilä, the manager of the factory. This factory-wide work rotation offers wide development potential for professionals. New people doing new tasks are also able to see the process with a pair of fresh eyes and thus a lot of ideas for improvement have come up. A third important result from this way of working has been the incredible rise in job satisfaction. Before some people may have thought that some tasks or departments are better and that working in them was actually some sort of a perk that people achieved. Now everyone has tried all the tasks, and the grass is no longer greener on the other side.

Joint development offers unlimited learning possibilities

Constant improvement and joint development offer limitless possibilities to learn new things. Developing things together – or ‘joint development’ – works like this: everyone produces development ideas, these ideas are tested and then the best ideas are made part of everyday work. The ideas can relate to anything: the items being produced, production process or other approaches. This means they can be about anything that has to do with work.



“Constant improvement and joint development offer limitless possibilities to learn new things.”



What stage is your organisation at?

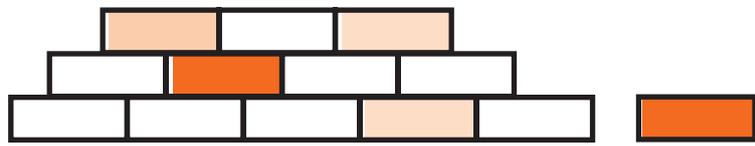
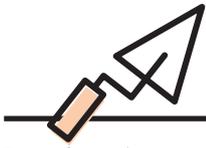
Workplaces can, roughly speaking, be divided into four groups.

1. Workplaces where everyone can constantly come up with improvement ideas and they will be considered straight away. Almost all of the good ideas will be implemented one way or another rather fast.
2. Workplaces where improvement ideas are handled and realised through a systematic process.
3. Workplaces that collect improvement ideas, but rarely use them for anything.
4. Workplaces that never even bother to collect improvement ideas, as no one will do anything with them anyway.

The success stories of the future will move from the fourth group to the first group.

Where would you put your organisation? Ponder this together with your team, shift, department or the whole factory.

What are the downsides if you do not improve your operations together?



In a fast-changing world, the only way to stay afloat and create your own future in an active way is constant improvement. Even the smallest improvements take matters forward and keep up the routine of learning new things. In this way, starting joint development has two important results. The first one is the obvious one: the production process and the work environment get better when they are being developed constantly. The second one is less clear, but in the end more important. Joint development changes the work culture and the relationship employees have with their work. It builds a constructive discussion culture and creates a more active way for employees to manage their tasks. This latter change can even be surprising. For example, at JM Huber, where the work environment already was relatively open, the better discussion culture and feeling of “working together” is now perceived to be the most important result of the whole project.

Building a joint development process

A joint development process has seven areas to plan.

1. What is being developed? What are the ideas about? Why is this joint development effort done?

The “why” question is especially important, and it should have a clear and thorough answer. If there is no reason, you will most likely get no ideas, either. It is also worth it to clearly define the development target. For example, will you only gather internal process development ideas? Or maybe only development ideas to do with the manufacturing quality? Or maybe you want ideas about everything?

2. How will the ideas be gathered?

Will there be a red post box in the hallway where everyone can drop their development ideas on little notes? Or will there be a form with a few specific questions about development idea? Or perhaps the collection will be done electronically, for example via Trello, SharePoint or a shared Excel file?

3. Who will go through these ideas? How? How often?

Processing the ideas should not be the job of only one person. A small team filled with good employees is usually a good solution, but it has to be small enough to keep the discussions short. This team must have the power to decide what to try and how to formulate the experiments.

4. What criteria are used when choosing the experiment ideas?

These selection criteria can be, for example, costs, time spent on the implementation and effectiveness.

Cheap and effective ideas should, of course, be tried out instantly, but for bigger and longer investments it is worth to weigh the pros and cons a bit more carefully.

5. How will the experiment be formulated?

Development by experiment means that the development idea is perceived as an experiment. The idea will be tried out in practice in some specific form and then judged: did it work? It is possible, for example, that the previous shift is asked to brew the coffee ready for the next shift before going home. After a two week experiment period, everyone sits down together and discusses the pros and cons of the experiment and then decides if in the future the shifts should brew their own coffee or if this should become a new everyday custom.

6. How to communicate about the experiment?

Joint development cannot succeed without ideas being implemented fast in practice, otherwise the employees will lose their trust in the worth of their ideas.

The ideas in development can be mentioned on a list hanging on the wall of the break room where everyone can see the ideas waiting to be implemented, the ideas on experiment period, and the things learned from them and what has been deemed successful.

Until the joint development projects starts properly rolling, there is no such thing as too much communication.

7. How do you learn from the experiments?

Joint development makes no sense if nothing is learned from it. The development by experiment comes from natural sciences, where first there is a hypothesis and then it is tested.

The hypothesis can be, for example: if the previous shift brews the coffee for the next shift, it is nicer to begin start your work. The whole shift will feel more relaxed and little issues will be solved faster. The trust and communal spirit will improve between different shifts. At the end of the experiment, these hypotheses shall be assessed. Was it nicer to come to work? Was the whole shift a tiny bit better? Did the attitudes towards the other shift change for the better? If the answer is yes, the experiment was a success and the approach can be made a part of normal tasks.

If the questions were answered with a lot of negative answers, everyone can think why that is (all the people of the shift prefer tea or nobody had time to drink any coffee or there were so many issues that the coffee did not really help anymore). The experiment can be adapted (brewing tea ready) or it can be forgotten.

The most important thing is to do things in a deliberate way whilst analysing what was done and why.

Lessons learnt when starting joint development: Case Borealis Polymers and their Borstar Pilot unit



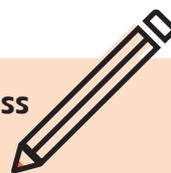
Borealis' Borstar Pilot decided to try joint development to improve different approaches and the meaningfulness of work. The starting point was already good, but the aim was to develop the unit's work culture to be even more self-managed and progressive.

Now, a bit over a year after the start, things are really getting somewhere. This is a relatively good time span. It usually takes a year before the improvement ideas start to come up actively.

For success, these things have been important:

1. The whole project was specified to be an experiment. If joint development did not seem to benefit anyone, the experiment would end.
2. A detailed analysis on the differences of initiatives and joint development was made. By making plenty of initiatives, a worker at Borealis can earn money, so the start of the joint development, naturally, caused some concerns about these earnings being lost. They found out that initiatives and joint development are not mutually exclusive. A development idea can at the same time be an initiative and a joint development idea. The initiative process works the usual way, and any initiative might, some day, become a reality in the whole organisation. A joint development idea can, then again, be implemented instantly in this very unit.
3. Communication: The whiteboard of the control room was named the joint development board. The ideas in trial and awaiting to be put on trial have their own, clearly separated boxes, as do things that have already been tested and confirmed as a part of everyday tasks.
4. The joint development process work group was chosen, and it had someone from each shift. All of Pilot takes part in these experiments, not just some of the shifts.
5. The fact that the manager has been committed to the joint development process and believed in it has been a requirement for the new approach to work. The manager of Pilot has been very persistent in driving the joint development forward, but has also made sure he is not leading it alone. The whole point is, after all, that the employees develop their own work and the manager is only there to make it possible and to support the employees.

Creative use of the joint development process Case Innogas



Innogas also started to use joint development. It is not a big company, so they could easily combine the traditional initiative activity to joint development. The main difference now is that the initiatives are discussed with a larger group: everyone takes part in designing any work improvements and testing new ideas.

Spurred by the growing discussion culture, Innogas decided to also implement a joint development process to define company values. This way the company could create values that truly support every day operations and that the employees feel comfortable with.

All glory to development talks

The idea behind development talks is to guide the employee to improve. In many companies, however, they have dwindled down to be just some scribbles on a form. It would definitely be high time to return development talks to their former glory. In a quickly

changing world, the setting of learning goals and following up on new developments are maybe the most important things for anyone, if they wish to keep up their work skills. When the learning goals are based on the interests of the employees, it is possible to talk about learning aspirations.



Development talks have five functions

1. They work as a feedback channel between the manager and the employee. The manager and the employee constantly “train” each other to work better together.
2. These talks should clearly show what the employee wishes to learn and what he or she would like to do in the future, combining these with the employer strategy.
3. Ensuring that the employee understands his or her role in the employer strategy.
4. Offer a place for the manager to be present. Create and strengthen contact and trust. Offer a space to complain.
5. Follow up on agreed personal goals. A place to think about solutions if these goals have not been achieved.

“Development talk is a feedback channel between the manager and the employee”

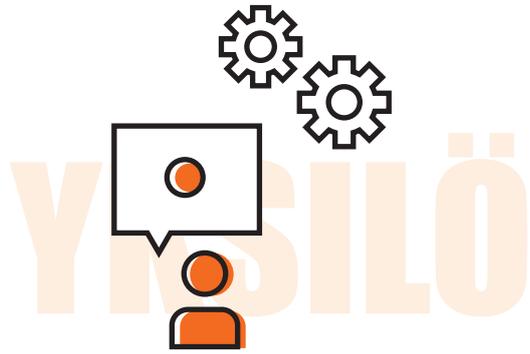
There has been a lot of public discussion about ending development talks completely. Number 3 of the list, “ensure that the employee understands his or her role in the strategy”, can be handled within everyday work just as well. Number 5, “following up on goals”, can be done inside the team, if the goals are joint goals. But the rest of the list includes things that in most workplaces require a place where the employee takes a moment to sit and talk with the manager in private. Talking about learning aspirations can be rather difficult in the beginning, and many people are shy about voicing their thoughts. Additionally, the ability to discuss things with the manager with complete trust might require work and it is something better done without other people present.

Skills can also be led together

Skill management has traditionally meant that the HR team or some other management team decides what the employees need to learn in the near future and then divides the training programs to the employees, sometimes asking them what they want, sometimes not. Organisations that want to utilise the employees’ skills, support their enthusiasm and strengthen the renewing capabilities of the organisation should work together with the employees when deciding on any skill improvement plans.

Skill development strategy can be made, for example, within teams or departments who can decide what skills does the planned strategy require from this particular team, what new skills will they need and how these new skills will be acquired. When people work together on a plan, they tend to choose the skills they are interested in and in this way the employee's interests and learning aspirations automatically become a part of everyday work.

Tips for better work: The ability to learn new things at work



Individual:

Learn to think things as learning challenges. Form hypotheses and test them. Try to always explain in detail to yourself and your colleagues what doing or trying something taught you. Soon this way of thinking will become easy and natural.

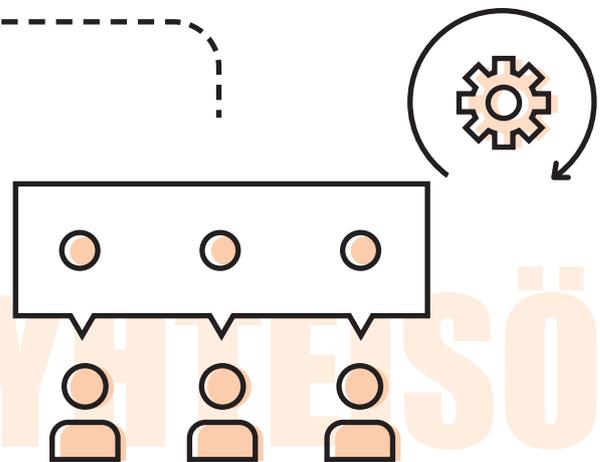
Actively mention your learning aspirations in development talks. You can also think beforehand how you could involve the realisation of them in your work.

Work community:

Start a joint development process and keep at it until it becomes a habit. Cultivate the kind of thinking which enforces constant learning. A rolling stone gathers no moss.

Talk boldly about the things you are interested in or what you would like to learn in the future. What is happening in your industry according to the experts and how you could utilise new possibilities at your workplace.

Think if the work rotation could be a way to constantly improve yourselves and the work itself.



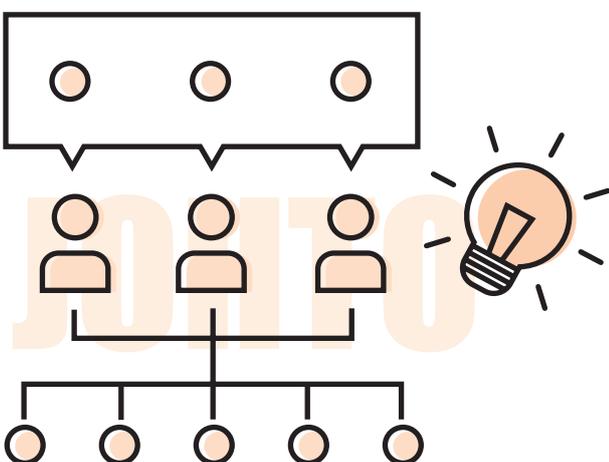
Organisational level and management:

Support and allow new joint development processes. Give teams, shifts, units and departments enough power to solve issues on their own level.

Ask the employees what sort of ideas they would have for improving the organisation and what role would they wish to have in these changes.

Make sure that your development talks are done properly: the manager must meet each employee as an individual, think about the ways they want to improve and try to combine their learning aspirations with the plans to renew the organisation.

Work on a skill development plan together with the employees. It is an incredibly efficient way of communicating the strategy and making people interested in realising it.





3 Feeling of meaningfulness at work

Meaningfulness of work = important answer to the question 'why?' on a personal level

The sense of meaningfulness can be created by many different things. One employee might feel it is important to be a part of a company that does its part to develop greener technology options. Someone else, then again, finds meaning in the fact that their work tasks help them realise their learning aspirations. And yet another employee thinks nothing is as good as being a part of a work community. It is thus important to ask what individuals find important and strengthen the presence of these things at work, every day, every week.

The gravitas of objectives

For many people it is important that the work goals feel worth the effort. A person may enjoy their work quite a lot, but if they feel like their employer is doing something wrong in the world or with their actions cause more harm than good, it can be difficult to fully focus on work. Somewhere deep inside, their heart says no. Many companies and employer organisations do plenty of good in the world: they offer products or services that make life easier or design new, more environment-friendly products and manufacturing processes. These are the kinds of things that should be mentioned in any communication – including everyday work communication.

Professional pride is an enormous source of meaningfulness

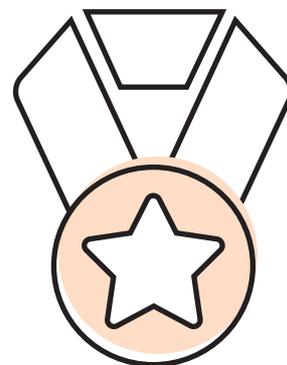
On average, Finnish people are very proud of their work and skills. They feel responsible for the quality of their work. Professional skills are an important part of an individual identity.

Manufacturing employees are very aware of the changes brought on by globalisation and how manufacturing tends to move to countries with cheaper labour. Stories of work that has stayed in Finland due to better results or higher processing levels are legendary and sources of inspiration. And it is not just about your own job. In many smaller towns and villages, shutting down a factory might mean that the whole area will wither.

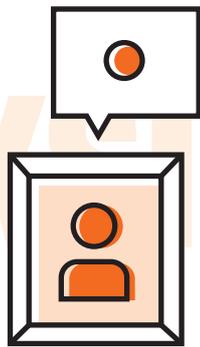
'Made in Finland' is still perceived to be a sign of good quality: in Finland, good-quality products are made from quality ingredients and the work is done with care. And if the quality suffers in normal work, for some reason or other, it has a direct impact on the sense of meaningfulness.

Protection for the people: Case Exel Composites

In the spring of 2016, the halls of Exel Composites were filled with videos about the life in the Greek refugee camps. The Exel factory in Mäntyhärju manufactures the composite support poles that were used in these refugee camps. When your own work is just a tiny part of a bigger manufacturing process, a small video clip can help everyone see what their work actually means.



Tips for better work: a sense of meaningfulness



Work community:

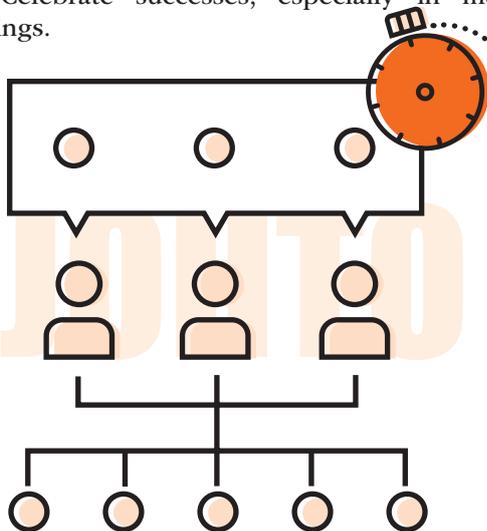
Tell each other what you value in your work. If possible, tune your work profiles (see chapter “Autonomy and empowerment”) so that everyone can focus more on these important things.

Keep the matters of professional pride and meaningfulness of work in the forefront: when setting goals, as one of the goals of joint development and just as a part of everyday communication.

Talk openly about the fact that the pressure for results and the rush to be efficient sometimes means work is done more sloppily than it should be. What would be the quality level you can still be proud of, but that also makes it possible to keep up with the manufacturing goals when it comes to quantity? How can safety be ensured even when it is busy?

Define your own quality standards together. How can you ensure that different people and different shifts work approximately as much and in the same way, so that each and every one of you can be proud about all of the production and the clients do not receive batches of differing quality or look. What are the common approaches that mean even quality?

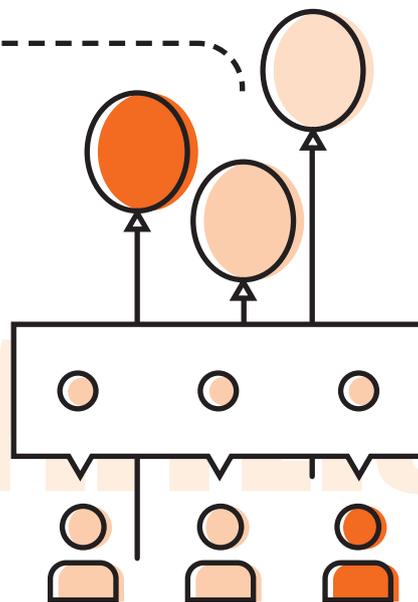
Celebrate successes, especially in meaningful things.



Individual:

Think what is that meaningful “big picture” in your own work. Remembering it might help you get things done on the days when nothing really seems worth it (we all have those days, so you probably do as well).

Work in a way that makes you proud of what you did. Most of us do not get paid enough for the money to make up for the lack of feeling good about your work.



Organisational level and management:

Finding out what the employees think is important in their work. Keep these things in the forefront when communicating. Is it possible to build special projects, social activities, events or media exposure around the things that are perceived to be especially important? In this way the employees are more likely to be committed to your organisation.

Discuss openly about the relationship between quality and haste, and ask what the employees think is at the heart of their professional pride. Think carefully how far this limit can be pushed. Short term optimising might eat up long term winnings. And yet, good profits are also a source of professional pride.

Ensure, even in haste, that work is done safely. Work is supposed to serve life, not the other way around.

4 A feeling that people trust me and I can trust others

The sense of trust means many things. First, trust a professional. This has to do with the sense of autonomy, which was discussed in the beginning of this guide. A professional wants to do their work autonomously and decide things based on their skills and experience without asking for permissions in the midst of their work. Constant unnecessary criticising and meddling is a sure-fire way of ruining any joy in work.

Autonomous work does not, of course, mean that the rules do not apply or that disruptive behaviour is allowed. Rules and agreed ways of working are there for a reason. They have a point. They are safety measures, necessary for good quality or simply just efficient ways of working. And if there is no point to them, the matter should be discussed in the joint development process. Rules that are created together and approved together are easy to follow. And then it is easier to trust that everyone abides by them.

Trust takes two

It is a two-way street that has existed in some cases for decades. Lurking and unequal treatment means that people will behave exactly as you are afraid they will. And on the other hand, trust is rewarded by being worth it. Or that trust will be lost.

Building trust is a very fickle process. Both parties interpret the other party based on their own prejudices. Small gestures and steps make the parties slowly feel closer to each other. And even little mistakes can cause this progress to backfire. It would be good to discuss things as openly as you possibly can, so that any misunderstandings could be kept to a minimum and everyone would understand each other as well as possible.

In most workplaces the situation is naturally not very dramatic. But there are always some inequality in work life and in the employer/employee model, and if the goal really is to create a trusting climate, it is necessary to speak about many things openly and publicly.



The way information is shared defines the culture

A culture of secrecy and withholding information basically scream mistrust. At many workplaces this is not even something people think about. It is just the habit to share information on a “need to know basis”.

And when the higher management does this, everyone else starts doing the same to avoid mistakes.

Even when withholding information is involuntary, the practice still feels like a sign of mistrust and lack of appreciation. Withholding information also makes it impossible for people to understand the bigger picture and self-manage themselves at work.

Because of these reasons, sharing information makes employees feel appreciated and trusted, and also makes it possible for them to use their own brain at work. This then again leads to smarter and more active working style, which increases trust with colleagues, direct manager and also higher management.

Joint development requires trust

There can also be some trust issues in joint development. Why is the joint development even being done? What is the real reason behind it? If we make the manufacturing process more efficient, will I end up unemployed? This concern was already noted in the 1960s at Toyota's car factory, where Lean, the father of all joint development, was born. One principle of Lean is that no job should be threatened because of constant improvement. It is simply not a reason for dismissal. It makes no sense to expect people to give in development ideas, if they do not feel comfortable with this.

The climate of trust is very important for joint development, and it applies to all things, not just the relationship between employees and management. It also has to do with the relationships between employees and the relationship with the closest manager. No one wants to tell their ideas in a climate or culture where they have to be afraid that someone will laugh at them.

This is why it is extremely important to create a work culture where developing work and even getting excited about it is perfectly normal. There has to be a culture where people keep spouting development ideas without much of a filter. Assessing ideas and further planning happens later (see chapter 2 about building a joint development process). The culture must be such that the only way to fail is to even refuse to try. Everything else is a part of a learning process and thus incredibly important.

Trust can be built with fairness

In this case, the sense of fairness is also intertwined with trust. In joint development – as in all work – it is important to give credit where credit is due. This is something a lot of managers have to think about: will they take all the credit from their own manager or will they give credit to the team they manage? It is also a matter for work communities: can everyone focus on what is important or are some of the working hours spent on discussing who did what wrong or who is to thank for positive situations? Most of the time any new, good approaches included surprisingly many people in the planning phases. Recognising everyone's contribution strengthens the feeling of fairness and trust. It is also worth noting that “mistakes” are usually made because several other people have failed to act properly previously. Something has not been mentioned, things have not been explained clearly or something else like that has happened. “The culprit” is rarely one person, and this is something that should also be mentioned.

The members of the best teams like each other

The best teams in the world have one thing in common: people know each other personally in them. Instead of being half of a person at work, they can be fully themselves. They know what the others are interested in and what their personal situation is like, so they can celebrate and commiserate, if need be, things that happen in their lives. The most important thing is that colleagues treat each other in a positive and accepting way. It does not mean that you should like everyone equally much or that you should be friends only with your colleagues. It means that when you get to work, you feel accepted as you are and that you are an important part of the community.

A friendly and welcoming climate can be built in many ways. Brewing coffee for the next shift, which was mentioned earlier, is one small example that can have bigger consequences.

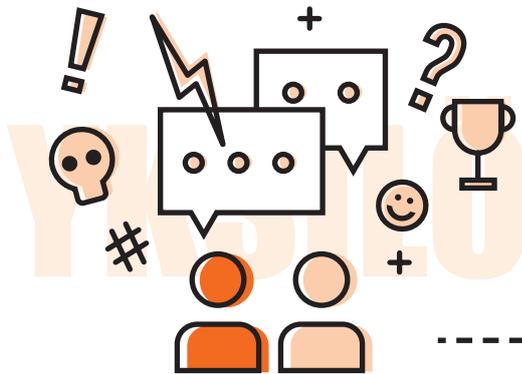
“The best teams in the world have one thing in common: in them people know each other personally”

Start a new row from “Case Exel Composites”



The Exel Composites factory employees realised that it was much nicer to come to work if the previous shift loaded the necessary materials and adjusted everything ready for the next manufacturing run. The difference was notable. Before everyone had to start their day by cleaning up the mess left behind by the previous shift before even thinking about their own shift. The change also was beneficial for sharing new skills. In production plants, all shifts often have slightly different ways of doing things. With this new approach, the way the previous shift did things became clear for the next shift, and they could see if there was something to improve in their own approaches and could change accordingly.

Tips for better work: strengthening trust



Individual:

Do not carry a grudge or speak bad of others behind their backs. Be open and honest. Set your limits and live by your values.

Give credit where credit is due.

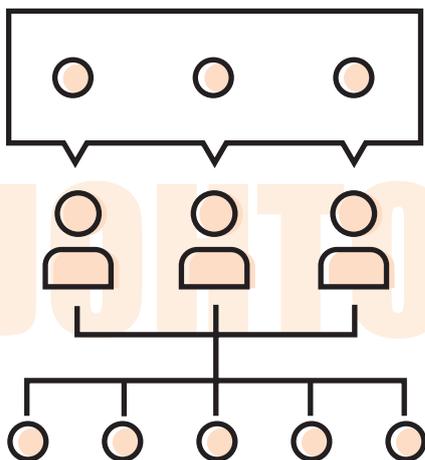
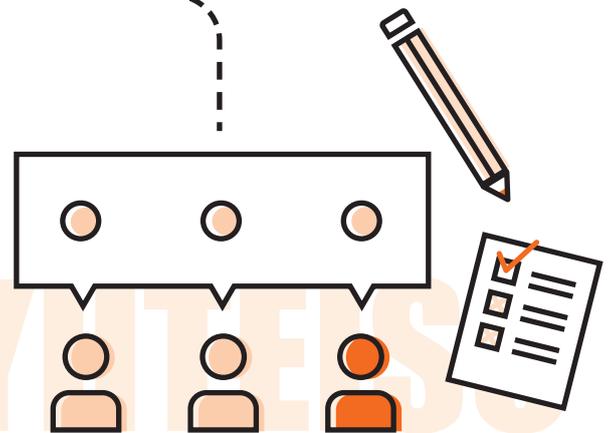
Do your work and take care of your responsibilities. Talk about things even when it is difficult.

Work community:

Share any information openly. Not saying something might feel like a small thing, but these small things help create a culture of secrecy that has long term consequences.

Deal with “mistakes” as a way to learn. Ensure to the point of unnecessary repetition what was learnt and what cannot be done in the future – or what should be done differently. Do not try to find guilty parties and do not shame individuals. Respect each other's ideas and skills.

Discuss things in a concrete, clear way. People can handle opinions that differ from theirs surprisingly well. But uncertainty and unknown people usually cannot handle.



Organisational level and management:

The idea that trust must first be earned is a bad one. Most of the time, people act exactly the way you treat them. If you treat them as being unreliable, they will be unreliable. So start with the trust already there. It can be destroyed later, but in the beginning it has to exist unconditionally.

Let the professionals work in the way they feel best. Responsibility and power always go together. In no situation is there first responsibility and only then power.

Share information openly and encourage the whole organisation to do the same.

Be honest and keep your word.

Develop a warm-hearted organisational culture. Unofficial events, such as Christmas parties and summer kick-off parties are important ways to build up team spirit (even when the discussion ends up being a bit more... animated).

Conclusion

Improving work actually has to do with some very basic things. How do we treat each other and how do we organise our work together as fairly and conveniently as possible.

The basic question is: do we think people are actually lazy and selfish and want to always do things in the easiest possible way, or do we have trust in the fact that people are actually active beings who want to do things they enjoy, together with other people.

For some reason, in the past the previous assumption has been the prevalent one. Many work practices and approaches are based on this assumption. Afterwards the latter version has become more important. Our work life is only now changing its practices to trust the idea of an active and excited being that likes to have responsibility.

Other important questions we want to mention as a part of this conclusion are the fast-paced way the world changes and how that requires us to constantly learn new things. We need new approaches which, more than before, intertwine the learning aspirations people have and the (renewal) strategies companies have. The speed with which we need to learn new things is so fast that it is impossible to learn the necessary skills if the employee finds it all rather boring.

For human beings, learning things by doing things together is a natural state. That is why joint development works so well after some early bumps on the way. Pipelife Finland CEO Kimmo Kedonpää sums it

up nicely: [with better management] we “in a way return to people the child-like way of natural learning and personal fulfilment”. People are made to solve problems together with others. This is a feature that suits the current work life perfectly, as long as we can create approaches that make use of it.

One thing that is closely related to these two things is the ever stronger need for good discussion culture. Creating a future requires constant excited and solution-based discussion. Good dialogue skills can only be developed through constant exercise.

We hope this guide offers plenty of pointers on how to discuss things together in all workplaces.

A Guide for Better Work

In the chemical industry, ways to improve the well-being of personnel are actively sought. Cooperation happens, for example, within the “Hyvää huomista” program mentioned in collective agreements. In the spring of 2015, a group of chemical industry companies started a project: to find new ways of improving the active job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation of the employees. The consortium of four companies received a development allowance from The Finnish Work Environment Fund, and two other companies took part with other funding. Development project experiences gathered from chemical industry companies have been the basis for this Guide for Better Work, which explains, with examples and exercises, some good ways to improve the active job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation of employees. The guide is meant to be utilised on all organisational levels. Take heed of the tips the guide offers and start working together for better work and better workplaces!

