



Data-driven work ability management – overview of the situation and development needs from the perspective of companies

Data-driven management is crucial in the management of work ability. Data-driven work ability management means a conscious approach applied in an organisation, where information related to work ability is systematically collected, analysed, refined and utilised in decision-making in order to promote work ability and to manage disability risks. Digitalisation and technological development provide organisations with increased opportunities for data-driven work ability management. We conducted a survey on the current status and development needs of Varma’s client companies concerning data-driven work ability management.

Management’s understanding of data-driven work ability management is crucial

At best, data-driven work ability management is part of an organisation’s daily management and processes. In this case, it is also more efficient. The survey results indicate that organisations understand rather well that work ability-related matters and data-driven work ability management are important success factors for an organisation. Of the respondents, 60% estimate that data-driven work ability management is part of their company’s strategy. The majority also estimates that their company’s management team regularly discusses matters related to work ability.

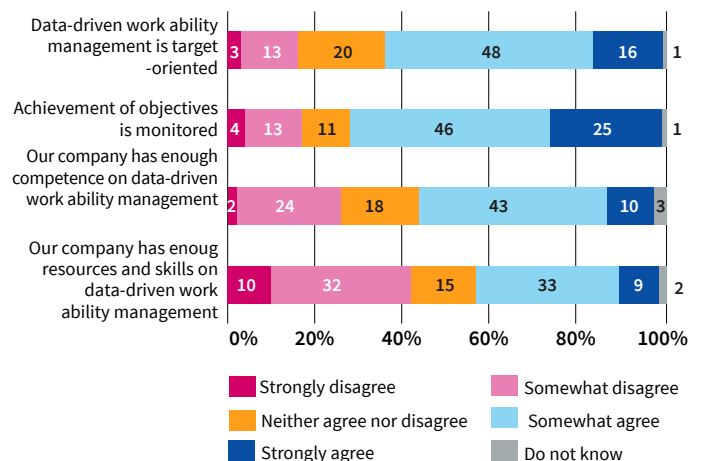
Efficient data-driven work ability management is target-oriented

Data-driven work ability management requires that objectives are clear and results are monitored. It is also important to ensure that sufficient competence and resources are in place for data-driven work ability management. The majority of respondents

estimated that, in their company, data-driven work ability management is target-oriented and the achievement of objectives is monitored. Based on the results, further development is needed, especially in relation to the allocation of tasks related to data-driven work ability management and concerning resources and skills. Competence development needs involve the strengthening of the skills of HR, management and supervisors alike.

Work ability management requires understanding of the overall situation of work ability

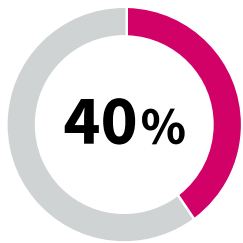
Relevant information concerning work ability is key to data-driven work ability management. Typical indicators concerning work ability include sick leave, occupational accidents and various questionnaires and surveys concerning the status of work ability and the factors affecting it. The majority of companies regularly



collected information on the employees' work ability at some level. Usually, information was collected on sick leave and its causes (96%), the costs of occupational health care (95%) and occupational accidents (91%). This was also the information that was utilised most regularly. Approximately 60% of the respondents estimated that their company had access to a sufficient amount of high-quality, up-to-date data for data-driven work ability management. The development areas that were identified included, for example, the ability to interpret data and comprehensive utilisation of data as part of decision-making. Data on work ability was also often considered to be fragmented and spread out among various parties. Very few respondents were completely happy with the key indicators used for data-driven work ability management or their company's overall level of data-driven work ability management.

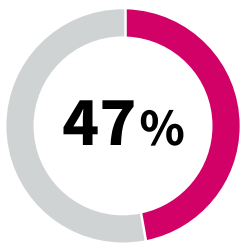
Satisfaction on the indicators used for data-driven work ability management

very and somewhat satisfied 40%



Satisfaction on the company's overall level of data-driven work ability management

very and somewhat satisfied 47%



Data alone is not enough –the ability to utilise data is the key

Successful data-driven work ability management requires that the collected data is utilised. In most companies, work ability-related data was reported and analysed on a regular basis. In the majority of companies, activities related to work ability were also developed based on accumulated data. Instead, systematic utilisation of machine learning and data mining for the prediction of disability risks was almost non-existent. In addition, only approximately half of the respondents estimated that the efficiency of activities related to work ability was monitored. Predictions and data-driven management of operations will likely increase when there is more work ability-related data available for utilisation.

Networks are of paramount importance for data-driven work ability management

Nearly all respondents said that they utilise co-operation partners for data-driven work ability management at least occasionally. Occupational health care, employment pension insurance companies and research institutions are key co-operation partners for organisations. The importance of well-functioning networks increases parallel to the complexity of questions related to data.

Characteristics of efficient data-driven work ability management

- target-orientation and systematic approach
- comprehensive understanding of data and related possibilities
- up-to-date and diverse data
- extensive utilisation of data
- predictive and future-oriented approach
- efficient measures that are based on data
- joint interpretation of data and conclusions
- evaluation of activities and continuous joint development

Results through co-operation

Managing work ability is challenging or even impossible without sufficient and reliable data on work ability. Data-driven work ability management requires understanding of the factors affecting work ability and the effects that changes in work have on work ability. When there are changes in the work that is assessed and developed, the requirements for data also increase. This means that continuous dialogue and interaction is needed within the organisation and with the co-operation partners. The organisation's ability to utilise data and predict the future are crucial in order for the work ability management to be efficient. Varma supports its client companies in this work.

The results are based on a survey aimed at Varma's client companies with the aim of obtaining information on the current state of data-driven work ability management and the related development needs. The target group included persons working in HR and in positions related to well-being at work and the managing directors of organisations for which there was no HR-responsible person in the client register. A total of 141 HR professionals and management representatives responded to the survey. The survey was conducted as an online survey in September–October 2020.

Further information is available in the publication [Data-driven work ability management – an overview of the situation and development needs from the perspective of companies](#) (in Finnish)