

## **The birth, rise and success (or fall?) of an intervention project.**

### **GodA<sup>1</sup> – a project set up to test a model of the prerequisites for a healthy workplace.**

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With the ongoing GodA-project as a starting point, the main purpose of this symposium is to discuss methodological aspects of intervention research.

#### *The GodA-project - an introduction and some baseline results, presented by P. Lindberg*

Conditions in today's working life make new approaches necessary in order to limit negative health effects of working life and to enhance wellbeing and health at work. Despite rather progressive legislation, a century of labour inspections, and the efforts of thousands of occupational health personnel, still around 20% of the Swedish workforce report to have had work-related disorders other than accidents during the last year (1). Even if this "elimination approach" partly has succeeded it's obvious that it is insufficient or inadequate for a working life where key issues for progress are motivation, cooperation and creativity (2). In order to achieve a sustainable working life, not the least to coop with issues related to the ageing population in the developed countries, it is likely that strategies and actions from different and new angles are needed.

Healthy workplace has been defined as an organization that maximizes the integration of worker goals for wellbeing and company objectives for profitability and productivity(3). It is noteworthy that the notion healthy workplace is not a substitute for good work environment it is a consequence. Different models, e.g. the PATH-model by Grawitch et al.(4) shows a synthesis of earlier research in a number of different disciplines and frames how a healthy workplace with wellbeing for the individual and organizational improvements can be achieved. Five general categories of healthy workplace practices were identified in the literature: work-life balance, employee growth and development, health and safety, recognition, and employee involvement. Previous research also suggests that the link between these practices and employee and organizational outcomes is contingent on the effectiveness of communication within the organization and the alignment of workplace practices with the organizational context.

The GodA-project aims at investigating if work place strategies in line with the PATH-model lead to better health and wellbeing among the employees as well as organizational improvements.

The GodA project is a 2 year follow up study with a survey feedback design in three companies with

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<sup>1</sup> "GodA" is a Swedish acronym for "Good work environment and healthy workplace"

both blue- and white collar workers within the energy sector. One of the companies serves as “intervention company”, the other two as controls. The project started out with a pre-project, by means of focus groups and individual interviews, in 2012 in order to find out how employees and managers in the three companies describe the concept of a healthy work environment, what they consider to create well-being at work, and how they perceive their own work environment:

*What factors are important for well-being at work? presented by T. Karlsson*

In 2013 a baseline questionnaire where was sent out including items a) based on the results from the pre-study, and b) well-established questions and indices on health and work environment. The results from the survey have been reported back to the companies, which now are processing their results. Research question to be presented and discussed at the symposium:

*Is there a balance between factors of importance for wellbeing at work and the extent to which they are present at the workplace? presented by P. Lindberg.*

*Is there a correlation between psychosocial work climate indicators and work-related well-being? presented by I. Anderzén.*

The PATH-model emphasizes internal communication as critical in establishing a healthy workplace. As the baseline results show that the communication is not very well developed, this is the primary target for our intervention. We will demonstrate a method for how the survey data are presented back to the intervention company and how they are going to work with the results to improve their work environment, and at the same time enhance communication skills.

After our presentation we invite the audience to discuss both the GodA-study and more general methodological issues when conducting intervention-studies, e.g:

- When is a company ready (mature) to take part in research activities?
- What are the pitfalls in workplace intervention studies?
- To what degree can the researchers interact at the workplace and still be objective?
- What is the value of focusing on the items that the employees responded to in the survey?

## **References**

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