

# Are Line Managers Prepared to Manage an Aging Workforce? Evidence from HR Managers

Author: Carina Wigbels  
University of Twente  
P.O. Box 217, 7500AE Enschede  
The Netherlands

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose** - The last decade has seen a steady increase in the participation of older employees in the labour market, which may become an issue for line managers in the future. This increase may require line managers, who are directly supervising older employees, to develop special competences to manage an aging workforce in the future. Older employees may also need special practices geared to their needs. This paper aims to find out whether line managers will require distinct competences in the future for the management of older employees. It further investigates which special characteristics older employees hold and whether organizations have suitable practices in place to manage older employees.

**Methodology and Findings** - This paper draws from several semi-structured and structured expert interviews with HR Managers from different industries that have been conducted. After coding and analysing the interviews, it has been found that HR Managers think, line managers will not require competences specifically for managing older employees in the future. Further it has been found that no practices geared specially to older employees are in place yet. Correspondingly this research shows that some further developments might be necessary in the future.

**Research Limitations** - A main limitation is the subjective nature of semi-structured interviews. Further the amount of interviews could have been higher, also including interviews with line managers to increase generalizability.

**Practical Implications** - This study closes with suggestions for further research, by advising organizations to implement practices geared to older workers in the future and train line managers to handle the increasingly older workforce.

**Supervisors: Dr. A.C. Bos-Nehles and Mr. M. Renkema MSc.**

## Keywords

Line Manager, competences, aging workforce, characteristics, needs, future development, HR Managers, HR practices

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The last decade has shown a steady increase in the participation of workers older than 55 in the labour market (Leisink & Knies, 2011). However according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) employment of older employees has fallen everywhere during the last decade. In OECD countries retirement age is between 60 and 63 and less than half of the male population at age between 55 and 64 are currently working (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2005). A large amount of employees born during the so-called baby boom are currently reaching retirement age (Colby & Ortman, 2014). This is likely to be a problem in the future, as it will lead to an increasing amount of older employees in organizations and most likely labour shortages when they retire. So it is likely that employees will have to work longer in the future and that the retirement age will increase. The United Nations and several studies have focused on the future trend of an increasing population of older employees in the labour market (Remery, Henkens, Schippers & Ekamper, 2003; United Nations, 2002, 2007; Parker, 2006; Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009). Future can be defined as the time and events that are yet to come in the following five to ten years.

Thomas Calo (2008) defines two situations line and HR managers may face with an aging workforce. The first one especially concerns the retirement of this knowledgeable and experienced generation, who have not transferred their valuable knowledge to others in the organization. A second scenario is the fact that people will retire later in the future (OECD Pensions Outlook, 2014). Thus the working population ages and employers need to keep their employees employable until they retire. Thus especially HR and line managers should have HR practices in place that help handling this situation. According to Kooij et al. (2013) it might be that the influence of HR practices on employees will change with age, and work-related motives have been found to change with age. HR practices in general have been found to have a positive impact on employee well-being, as for example job satisfaction, organizational commitment and fairness and do also have a positive impact on employee performance, for instance on job performance (Guest, 2011).

Kooij, Jansen, Dikkers and de Lange (2008), categorize HR practices into four meaningful bundles that will meet the needs and goals of an aging workforce and therefore may be helpful for line managers in managing an aging workforce. MacDuffie (1995) states that a HR bundle is a set of interrelated and internally consistent HR practices that are built around an organizational logic. The four HR bundles are, development, maintenance, utilization and accommodative HR practices. Firstly development HR practices can be for instance career planning. Maintenance HR practices can include practices such as safety and health training. The third bundle, which is utilization HR practices, can for example be job redesign, and lastly the accommodative HR practices can include practices such as adjusting work planning or reducing the workload (Armstrong-Stassen, 2008; Kooij et al., 2008; Pinto, Ramos & Nunes, 2015). Line managers will have the responsibility of implementing these HR practices in the future and support older employees (Leisink & Knies, 2011). Usually line managers can be described as being middle and junior level managers who are responsible for undertaking general management work for organizations (Legge, 1995). They are often defined as having direct supervisory responsibility, usually for non-managerial employees and are placed in the lower levels of the managerial hierarchy (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2003). Line managers furthermore tend to be responsible for the day-to-day

management of their specific business area and are often involved in general management work, however they could also specialise in some functional area, like finance (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2008). Typically the line managers job covered a mixture of traditional management responsibilities, for instance the provision of technical expertise, the monitoring of performance, planning work allocation and providing leadership, however during the last years the amount of people management activities grew constantly (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2008).

As a result of the devolution of HR-responsibilities to line managers, which has been a comprehensively discussed topic in literature in the field of Human Resource Management, line managers already were assigned numerous additional HR tasks (Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Whittacker & Marchington, 2003; Perry & Kulik, 2008). Devolution mainly means the allocation of HR responsibilities from HR managers, working in specialized and central HR units to line managers mostly working in other units (Currie & Procter, 2001; Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Renwick, 2003). The main elements and aims of this devolution are according to Larsen & Breswter (2003) the reduction of costs, providing a more comprehensive approach to HRM, placing responsibility for HRM with managers most responsible, speeding up decision making and providing an alternative way of outsourcing the HR function. The role of line managers became increasingly important during previous years (Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Renwick, 2003). Even the before mentioned devolution is associated with having positive features, it is however frequently reported that line managers lack capabilities as well as responsibility, and certain competences required when performing HR tasks (Renwick, 2000; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; Perry & Kulik, 2008). Also abilities in managing employees, such as team leadership skills (Hales, 2005) as well as a professional and serious attitude are frequently deficient (Renwick, 2000).

Pinto, Ramos and Nunes (2015) state that the participation of older employees in the labour market will increase. Especially important when it comes to older employees is their motivation to continue working (Bal, de Jong, Jansen & Bakker, 2012), which is highly influenced by factors such as organizational support or appropriate HR practices (Armstrong-Stassen 2008; Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009). In order to manage the growing number of aging workers and implementing the above-mentioned bundles of HR practices, line managers may require additional competences. Therefore it is important to find out what the future role of line managers will be in managing an aging workforce and implementing HR practices that help to develop, motivate, accommodate and retain them. It is of further importance to investigate which distinctive additional competences line managers will need for handling this challenge (Leisink and Knies, 2011). As it is already questioned whether they are capable of managing the currently assigned task, it will be of importance to explore whether they are skilled of managing the additional challenge of handling older employees. For organizations it might be of interest to consider it as a future challenge. From this point of view I define the following research question:

*Which competences, skills and abilities will line managers' need for managing an aging workforce?*

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In order to find out, which distinctive competences line managers will need to manage the increasing number of older employees in the future, it is important to investigate, what are the needs and characteristics of an aging population. Furthermore, which HR practices are currently in place for

older employees and which competences and task line managers do possess. This will help to define which competences they are lacking and thus which competences they might still have to develop in the future in order to be successful in managing older employees. The following literature review will try to elaborate on these issues.

## 2.1 Older Employees & HR Practices

The topic of an aging population has been widely discussed previously, including the question of specific needs and characteristics of older employees. Thus, the question is whether they need HR practices tailored to their changing needs (Remery, Henkens, Shippers and Ekamper, 2003; Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009; Kooij, Jansen, Dijkers and de Lange, 2010). It is not only important to retain and motivate older employees to stay and work longer for the organization (Kanfer & Ackermann, 2004), but it can also be interesting and of significance for organizations to attract retirees to work for the organization after they have retired (Rau & Adams, 2005).

With regard to the importance of retaining older employees the concept of social exchange, also referred to as social exchange theory, is interesting to take into account. Social exchange can be defined as being 'voluntary actions' that may be initiated by an organizations treatment of its employees, with the expectation that such treatment might be reciprocated (Blau, 1964). Gould-Williams & Davies (2005) have explored the effect of HRM practices on employee outcomes using the social exchange theory, stating that positive social exchange can result in mutual benefits for both, the organization and its employees. This might mean, that if older employees have the feeling that the organization invests in them, they are more likely to stay employable. Like paying the organization back, by staying committed and motivated. Thus positive social exchange can benefit the organization in retaining older employees.

Kooij et al. (2010) argue that employee needs and the utility of HR practices change with age. With regard to this changed needs Kooij et al. (2010), as well as Kooij et al. (2014) identify four bundles of HR practices geared to the needs of older employees. These are namely development, maintenance, utilization and accommodative HR practice bundles. The first bundle, development HR practices are explained to help individual workers to achieve a higher level of functioning in form of training and internal promotion. According to Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel (2009) training and development opportunities for older employees might include the possibility of more flexible work options. Development practise can further include internal promotion and career development as well as job enrichment (Kooij et al., 2010; Kooij et al., 2014). With regard to older employees these can be practices that for instance help them in performing a mentor role, which does help older employees to satisfy the growing importance of supporting other people. Secondly the bundle of maintenance HR practices will most likely help line managers to give employees the safety and job security that they increasingly value with growing age. When referring to maintaining and motivating older employees, it has been stated that older employees are likely to value higher job security and at the same time have a lower desire to grow, despite the fact that they are generally presented with fewer opportunities to growth (Kooij et al., 2010). Kooij et al. (2010) state several examples for maintenance HR practices, like job security, staffing and selection, rewards and benefits, performance management, participation, information sharing, working in teams, work/life policies and flexible work schemes. The next bundle, utilization HR practices are useful and important as they can help line managers in shaping the work environment of older employees

to fit their changed needs. This can for instance mean, removing job demands that might have become unachievable for older employees (Kooij et al., 2008). These job demands could for example be carrying very heavy items or working in night shifts. This leads to the need to probably utilize and redesign older employees tasks (Kooij, de Lange, Jansen, Kanfer & Dijkers, 2011). Older employees seem to be more agreeable when it comes to changes and furthermore the importance to help other people does seem to increase with age. Mentor roles might be helpful to include this characteristic of older employees and thus utilize their experience (Kanfer & Ackermann, 2004). Older employees that are given the role of a coach or mentor could see that as sort of an appreciation, which will motivate them to work longer (Kooij et al., 2014). Utilization HR practices, can include practices, such as job movement, job redesign or mentoring. Lastly there are accommodative HR practice bundles that might further accommodate line managers and older employees in accepting their changed demands. Older employees value extrinsic job characteristics, such as feeling recognized, having a good relationship with co-workers and fair performance appraisals, such as good pay, with increasing age (Kooij et al., 2010; Kooij et al., 2011). This also means that older employees might set higher priority, when it comes to emotionally meaningful social interactions and goals. These can for instance be generativity, emotional intimacy and social embeddedness (Kooij et al., 2011). Another need of older employees is their higher priority of flexible work options, which can also be named a key for their continued participation in the organization (Walker, 2005; Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009). Therefore several examples of accommodative HR practices can be stated, like additional leave, demotion, reduced workload or working part-time (Kooij et al., 2014).

Furthermore it should be noted, that employers and organizations currently still expect several negative consequences that arise from an aging workforce, that are linked to the changing needs of older employees (Remery et al., 2003). These negative consequences are for instance to be named the possible increase of labour costs, greater resistance of older employees to possible changes, the need to improve work conditions, less enthusiasm for new technologies and a negative impact on the organizations image (Remery et al., 2003). These expected negative consequences could prevent line managers to effectively implement HR practices for older employees since they might lead to prejudices towards older employees. However not only negative consequences are linked to an aging workforce. There are also positive impacts for organizations to mention, as organizations expect older employees to have a greater know-how and experience, which can lead to fewer conflicts may arise within the organization (Remery et al., 2003).

These distinctive needs and characteristics of older employees, call for the implementation of HR practices tailored to their needs. As stated above the needs of employees and thus the utility of HR practices, change with age (Kooij et al., 2010). Currently a number of authors have identified the necessity for HR practices specially geared to the requirements of older employees with regard to the fact that the population is aging and a growing number of employees older than 50 will be present within organizations (Remery et al., 2003; Kooij et al., 2010; Kooij et al., 2011).

## 2.2 The Role of Line Managers

During the past years, a growing number of HRM responsibilities have been devolved to line managers, which made them become increasingly important for implementing

HRM practices in their daily work (Guest, 1997; Bos-Nehles, van Riemsdijk & Kees Looise, 2013). Hutchinson & Purcell (2003) recognize line managers as being an essential part of HR service delivery, while acting as a vital link between the policies developed by the HR department and their later influence on employees and their performance. They are referred as being key players when it comes to delivering and implementing employment policies (Boselie, 2010; Keegan, Huemann & Turner, 2013; Townsend, 2013). This might also be of importance, when implementing HR policies and practices geared towards the requirements of older employees. To a large extent, line managers main responsibilities are linked to operational HR tasks in several areas, such as recruitment and selection, performance management, training and development and work planning (Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Renwick, 2003; Gilbert, de Winne & Sels, 2011). However several authors argue that during the past decades people management responsibilities have increased, which demonstrated the necessity of further abilities for line managers. Certain leadership skills, like supporting, developing, recognizing, constituting and empowering skills are required, in order to provide direction to employees and structure their daily activities (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Yulk, 2002; Hales, 2005; Gilbert, de Winne & Sels, 2011).

It can further be said, that line managers require specific competences in the management of employees. These can be described as being decision-making skills and the ability to manage people (Renwick, 2003). This further indicates that line managers are demanded to have good supervisory skills (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). They furthermore have to be flexible, in order to manage the continuous changes (Renwick, 2003), which also requests for an ability to promptly reach decisions (Perry & Kulik, 2008). As one of their tasks is to plan the work of employees, as well as possible trainings and the collaboration of this, line managers will further require planning skills (Gilbert, de Winne & Sels, 2011). Due to the fact that this can always lead to conflicts, it is additionally of importance for line managers to be able to manage conflicts (Townsend, 2013). However when it comes to the management of older employees, existing research has only briefly touched on which competences line managers might require when managing older employees. It will thus be of interest to find out, which extra competences line managers will need in the future, if any.

Nevertheless it is widely argued, that line managers might perceive conflicting demands and competing priorities (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013; Whittacker and Marchington, 2003). They often face time pressure and other pressures, for instance related to achieving other business targets, which leads to frustration on their side and can also be the reason for a lack of motivation. Furthermore it has been argued that line managers are lacking skills to perform the before mentioned HR tasks effectively (Renwick, 2003; Whittacker & Marchington, 2003). This missing ability of line managers can furthermore be a problem when it comes to the management of an aging workforce. Due to the circumstance that they are now face problems in managing people and are lacking skills it might be even more difficult for them to manage the distinct practices for older employees. Additionally it has been argued that line managers lack motivation, may take people management issues less seriously or might even ignore recent developments in the field of HRM (Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Bos-Nehles et al., 2013). If line managers ignore the present development, like the aging workforce, this will in the long-term lead to problems concerning the management of older employees.

With regard to the implementation of HR practices, HR professionals should provide line managers with support

concerning HR practices intended by them (Boselie, 2010). The line managers are then implementers of actual HR practices (Boselie, 2010). The term actual HR practice recognizes, that not all intended practices are implemented and those that are implemented may differ from the intended (Wright & Nishii, 2007). Furthermore one can identify perceived HR practices, which are the actual HR practices as perceived and interpreted by employees (Wright & Nishii, 2007). Nishii, Lepak & Schneider (2008), mention that employees may respond attitudinally and behaviourally to HR practices, based on what they think are line managers intentions when implementing the actual HR practices. When referring to the changed needs and characteristics of older employees it might be possible that that they react differently towards actual HR practices than for instance younger workers would do.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the previously explained concepts we choose to conduct semi-structured expert interviews with several HR managers of some larger Dutch and German companies. This is necessary in order to find out which future scenarios might be possible within organizations, and which competences line manager will possibly need, when concerning the management of an aging workforce.

#### 3.1 Research Context & Design

Today a growing number of people, especially the so-called 'baby-boom' generation is reaching the age of 50. As described earlier this might be a problem for line managers, since they are directly confronted with managing this aging workforce. HR managers are often responsible to assign tasks to line managers and can be described as being experts in the field. They supervise line managers and closely work together with them. HR managers are supposed to have knowledge on the tasks of line managers and concludingly on what competences they need. We moreover based our decision to conduct interviews with only HR managers instead of additionally line managers, on the fact that previous studies on HR devolution have also concentrated on HR managers knowledge in order to investigate line managers (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; Townsend, 2013). Furthermore on the basis of research by Dunning, Heath and Suls (2004), who wrote "(...) - indeed, at times, other people's predictions of a person's outcomes prove more accurate than that person's self-predictions." (p. 69), we decided that HR managers could more objectively describe line managers. The self-assessment of workers is often flawed.

##### 3.1.1 Expert Profile

We choose the experts in such a way, that we interviewed HR managers from different companies, as well as different industries. This serves the purpose of getting a reasonably large pool of different experiences. Before deciding on which experts to interview, we defined a profile concerning necessary requirements. An expert can be defined as being a professional who has acquired knowledge and skills through study and practice over the years in a particular field or subject (Business Dictionary). According to van Audenhoven (2007) three dimensions of expert knowledge can be distinguished, technical, process and explanatory knowledge. With regard to HR managers' technical knowledge is their specific knowledge in the field of Human Resource Management. Their process knowledge can be defined as their information on routines, specific interactions and processes, for example within their working organization, since the expert is directly involved in this. The third type of knowledge, explanatory knowledge, can be outlined as being subjective interpretations of relevance, rules and beliefs, their ideas and ideologies and their

inconsistencies. In this case it can be knowledge about the tasks and roles of line managers, about HRM in general, about specific contexts in the organization. Furthermore it can be knowledge that they experience in their daily life (van Audenhoven, 2007). Thus we defined that the HR managers who will be interviewed need to have at least three years of work experience, in order to possess the necessary knowledge. They are expected have a sufficient degree of expert knowledge in the field of human resource management. They were further predefined to have experience in dealing with line managers, interactions between them and the HR department and possibly the progress of devolution. Moreover, if possible the experts were expected to have some knowledge concerning the management of older employees, in order to be able to answer questions related to an aging workforce. Expert interviews serve the purpose of learning from HR experts in the field of line managers. The main point of interest are the competences they think are necessary in the future, when managing an aging workforce.

### 3.2 Data Collection Method

In order to collect the necessary information, about line managers and an increasingly older workforce, a number of semi-structured and structured expert interviews were conducted. Belk, Fischer & Konzintes (2012) state that in-depth interviews are “a formal, semi-structured and lengthy interview which tries to go more deeply into the subject as the interview proceeds” (p. 31). In the case of semi-structured interviews not all questions should be structured in advance. They mostly rely on questions that are formulated open-ended. The construction of a semi-structured interview should always be clear and questions be formulated in a neutral way (Babbie, 2007). Furthermore it ought be stated, that semi-structured interviews give the possibility to ask further questions, if that is necessary in order to determine deeper insights and explanations. A disadvantage to be named is the possible subjectivity of semi-structured interviews, as the interviewer has the possibility to guide the interview in a specific direction (Opdenakker, 2006). While conducting semi-structured expert interviews, the participating interview partners have to be well informed about the content and frame of the study conducted. All parts and steps need to be explained to the experts, as well as they have to be clearly informed how the interview material is used and kept (Bogner, Littig, & Menz, 2009).

Additionally a few HR Managers answered questions via email in form of a structured interview, due to the fact that there was no time for a face-to-face interview. In fact, conducting, transcribing and analysing interviews is a very time consuming process (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Bryman (2012) suggest that one hour of tape will take five to six hours to transcribe. For the structured email interviews, the same interview guide was used, which made it possible to compare the results of the different formats (McCoyd & Schwaber Kerson, 2006). In the case of structured interviews each interviewee is presented with the same questions in the same order. This method can also include open-ended questions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). The fact that these interviews were not conducted face-to-face decreased the possibility of the interviewer biasing or leading the answers of the interviewee, making the answers more objective. However structured interviews are not flexible and are not as detailed as semi-structured interviews, since there is no possibility to ask further questions (McLeod, 2014). The privacy of the experts has to be protected, in order to formulate a stable protection to the personal integrity and secrecy of companies' information. This will further help HR managers to express true answers without being restricted.

#### 3.2.1 Interview Construction & Conduction

The interview questions were formulated on the basis of the before performed literature review. For creating the sample, 38 HR managers from German and Dutch companies, that were expected to be in line with the previously defined expert profile, have been contacted. They have been chosen on the basis of our own network and an Internet search of known HR managers via LinkedIn or organizations websites. Thereafter eight HR Managers, who agreed on participating in our research, have been interviewed. They worked for organizations, from the building industry, the construction side, personal service providers, the manufacturing industry, as well as for a food manufacturer.

The interviews have been conducted together with Karina Küper (2015) in a way, that they covered general information on the responded, such as a job description and work experience. Further we sought to explore their general view on the tasks of line managers within an organization, then going deeper into the topic of line managers involvement in the management of older employees, finally asking whether and which additional competences are required (see Appendix p. 13 for Template). On average the interviews lasted about 45 minutes.

#### 3.2.2 Validity of the Data

The interview templates have been developed, in a team of two researchers. This enabled discussion in order to enhance the questions relevance to the theoretical context and to increase the construct validity of the study. Furthermore the interviews were conducted together with Küper (2015), which had the advantage that two people do likely pick up more information than one alone and are more able to recognize when something is missed or understood in a wrong way. With permission of the respondent, we recorded the interviews, in order to be able to transcribe them later, to really get all the crucial data.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

After the process of collecting data, the interview transcripts have been analysed with the help of the coding software Atlas.ti (ATLAS.ti, 1992). This software is mostly used for the analysis of qualitative data. One can insert the necessary documents into the software and then define quotations for those parts of the interviews that might be helpful during the analysis. It is then possible to define codes and connect these to the quotations. The software further provides the opportunity to create several outputs, like showing all quotations for one code. This later helps during the analysis. According to Babbie (2007) the process of transcribing and coding the data will enhance validity and reliability of the data. For the data analysis, parts of the interviews were sorted into categories on the basis of an open coding process. Thereby each part of the interview was read in order to find answers, marked as quotations, to the proposed research question. These are then labelled with codes. The codes can than also be ordered into different categories. In order to fulfil the purpose of the proposed research question, it will be of advantage to form the categories closely to the received material (Bogner, Littig & Menz, 2009). In the first step, all the transcripts were read again in order to acquire a general overview of the information. Then I continued to read each transcript individually, using quotations to mark the statements that I perceived as being important, that would later help during the analysis and in answering the research question. After reading the interviews in detail I started defining codes on the basis of what was repeated during several interviews, issues that were obviously perceived important by interviewees and lastly on the basis of my literature review and the research question. During the literature review literature regarding

devolution, characteristics of older employees and practices that can be used to manage these have been mentioned, which helped to define codes. The research question asks for competences, skills and abilities that line managers may need, which were also used to define codes (see Appendix 9.2 Display of the coding process). After reading all quotations again and giving these codes I started the analysis with the help of the Atlas.ti output.

To further validate our coding process, Küper (2015) and I decided to compare our coding schemes. We constructed the coding scheme independently after conducting the interviews together. We largely perceived the same parts of the interviews as being important and thus our selected quotations were similar. We found that we used different codes with related meanings as well as codes having exactly the same meaning. Even by using some different codes, we reached similar conclusions about line management and devolution in the end.

## 4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In the first section the findings concerning general experiences with line managers, their general tasks, their competences and experiences with assigning additional tasks to them are described (see 4.1 Responsibilities of Line Managers). The second section will explain the findings on an aging workforce and differences between sectors that have been discovered (see 4.2 The Aging Workforce & Line Managers). Further characteristics of older employees will be described, practices that are in place to manage them and the responsibilities of line managers concerning these (see 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 4.2.3). The third and last section will define additional competences that may be needed, program that are in place to develop these, or older employees and perceptions of future developments (see 4.3 Future Developments).

### 4.1 Responsibilities of Line Managers

#### 4.1.1 Tasks & Competences

HR managers described a variety of different tasks of line managers during the interview, whereby all HR managers discussed the HR aspects of the tasks and its importance. In all organizations, line managers are responsible for the usual business tasks they fulfil, such as production, output, and quality of the production. They are then mostly responsible for all operational tasks. Thereby it has also been stated, that due to the high variety of tasks, line managers frequently forget, that they are responsible for HR tasks such as people management issues.

*So it is a mixture in the end, about taking care for the quantity and the quality of production, the lead times, internal customer satisfaction, from supplier to delivery and taking care of their people and if they have to take care of the people. HRM4*

Depending on the industry or kind of organization line managers tasks likewise vary. In the construction industry for instance, line managers, who are the executors, got a huge array of tasks. In the past their field of responsibility was much smaller and they also did some building tasks, worked together with for example the bricklayers. Today they are situated above them in the hierarchy and only help if there is a shortage.

*In the past the 'uitvoerders' were not necessarily above the bricklayers for example, sometimes also in between the bricklayers, sometimes above them. So it is so much more multi – disciplined, there is so much going on, so they have to be on top. HRM1*

Whereas another HR manager stated that line managers are also responsible for leading a team in the sense of HR, but furthermore it will be a mixture of several different tasks in the

end. Like taking care for the quantity and quality of production, the lead times, internal customer satisfaction from the supplier to the delivery and products and next to that also taking care of their people. Concerning their people management responsibility line managers are accountable for disciplinary sanctions concerning employees, which they sometimes even fire. Further they accomplish recruitment, training and development and performance management tasks.

*Besides that line managers are responsible for HR activities, such as recruitment, training and development, performance management etc. HRM6*

Another HR manager stated:

*They are responsible for helping out on illness, on developing, we try to give the line managers as much HR responsibility as possible HRM5*

Due to the high amount of tasks line managers are responsible for, it can be sometimes hard for them to manage all the tasks, as one HR manager stated during the interview:

*They are responsible for a lot of tasks and it is hard to manage their time efficiently. Furthermore, they are not always able to perform their tasks well, because they do not have the right knowledge of skills. Therefore, a strong collaboration between line managers and HR is important. HRM6*

Overall in all organizations where HR managers have been interviewed, HR tasks have been devolved to line managers and they are thus responsible for an array of different HR tasks. The next section will describe problems and resistance on the side of line managers that HR managers still experience.

#### 4.1.2 Problems & Resistance

The problems with managing all their tasks can also lead to resistance by line managers when performing HR tasks. This has similarly been mentioned during the interviews. One HR manager indicated, that in his experience:

*Concerning staff issues, line managers are partly struggling. This is why for example sanctions, such as personnel sanction, only rarely occur. HRM2*

This highlights that probably not all HR managers feel comfortable with managing and sanctioning other employees and also their co-workers. Additionally an experience in one organization is that line managers, handle a lot of HR matters, especially disciplinary issues, in confidence with the affected person, since they do not want this whole paper and administrative work to the top. Another HR manager experienced that problems about time management occur, since the additional tasks cost extra time. He therefore had a very clear opinion on that and in his organization HR managers cannot have any excuses for not having time to handle HR issues.

*As a consequence, a big multinational has also an internal reference framework and lots of administrative parts. So I always try to reduce to the bloody limit, the bloody minimum, the administrative part for the line management. That will avoid us for the excuse trick. To say hey, I cannot do any more, because I am fully loaded due to all the administrative tasks, so I cannot do the important things. So we skip the administrative part as much as possible and then we can focus on the real thing. HRM4*

This demonstrates that there can still be resistance on the side of line managers by having excuses, why they are not able to fulfil the assigned HR tasks.

### 4.1.3 Partnership between Line Management & HR

Nowadays line managers are under huge pressure, not all of them do necessarily want to have HR responsibility, but they have to. As has been stated, they did not always voluntarily take over HR tasks, but these have been assigned to them. This makes some sort of partnership between line managers and the HR department necessary. In several organizations this devolution of HR tasks has happened for the reason that line managers are in between the workers and therefore realize what is happening on the shop floor or in production for instance. The line managers therefore see things that HR managers for example in their offices would not notice. As two HR managers described:

*The HR managers are very close to these line managers, so they know exactly what is happening on the floor, on the departments or wherever. So they are always working in a very close way together so that I am always good aligned on what is happening on these departments and the other way around. HRM5*

*They are supported by decentral HR advisors and a central HR department with specialized HR teams. HRM6*

This displays that the HR department and line managers are regularly working together in a close way like a partnership. This is necessary to handle occurring problems. In one organization the HR manager stated that in their company line managers are raised in a way, that they know HR tasks are included in their work, which leads to very few problems and a lot of good experience concerning the partnership of line management and HR.

*Well everybody here, who works here, knows that it works that way. So everybody is raised that way so to speak. So they know that it is part, of it, that a team manager also is responsible for these HR matters. HRM5*

## 4.2 The Aging Workforce & Line Managers

During the interviews it has emerged that the employment of older employees and perceptions connected to that vary widely between different industries and organizations. In three organizations where HR managers have been interviewed, the average age has been more than 45 years, whereby in one it has even been above 55 years. Overall the amount of workers older than 45 has been quite high in all organizations during this study, as indicated by HR managers. Furthermore, especially in family-owned businesses employees seem to stay a long time, up to 40 years. As HR managers denoted:

*The plant we have around 1200 people working and the average contract period is that people are working here, are working here for 20/25 years. HRM5*

*This used to be, (...) that was a family-owned company. And people stayed a long time in that company. And they are still there. So lots of older people. HRM4*

Concerning employing workers beyond retirement age, sectors and organizations differ considerably. Taking the example of an organization in the construction industry the HR manager cannot imagine employing people beyond retirement age, since in this industry, work is often heavy and thus connected to some mostly physical restrictions and illnesses.

*No. Doing something with their body, almost all people, even here in the office, are happy to retire. HRM4*

The fact that in specific sectors workers are struggling with their health and are not able to do this physically demanding

work anymore has been a frequent reply during the interviews conducted. As has also been stated:

*The workforce is aging, this is a big problem for the organization. Working as a health care employee is physically demanding work. Older employees are struggling with their physical health. So it's not desirable to hire more worker older than 50. HRM6*

*We are working in a 5 shift, in the factory for example and people do not leave the company because we have arranged many things that are very good, but it is ehm, this 5 shifts working for somebody of 60 years and older is a very hard issue. HRM5*

On the other hand, other sectors and organization are more open-minded than for example the building industry, when it comes to employing workers beyond retirement age. However one then has to take into consideration, that this open-mindedness mostly concerns workers from the office, or those that are not confronted with physically demanding work. In this case for example, likewise in the building industry HR managers can imagine hiring older employees.

*Maybe in higher staff we do, like directors or project leaders, or construction leaders. Mostly in the leading staff, but we mostly try to hire younger people. HRM1*

Regarding employing people beyond retirement age, opinions vary between different HR managers. Some already have employed workers beyond retirement age, due to reasons of mentoring, which will be explained in more detail later. Others cannot at all imagine, employing people beyond retirement age. A good example here is a company in the postal sector, which even has a special program for employees to retire early.

### 4.2.1 Experiences with Older Employees and their Characteristics

HR managers and organizations have made several positive as well as negative experiences with the employment of older employees. Thereby an overall experience with older employees has been the fact that the amount of days, not working because of illness has been higher with older employees. This does not mean that they are sick very often, but when they are sick, it may take them longer to recover. The comparison has been made with younger employees who are not sick for long periods of time, but therefore more frequently. This can on the one hand be rated in a positive way, but on the other hand there is the negative effect of the long illness. Further they are probably more likely to have problems with physical illness, which then leads to some extra restrictions.

*Of course a physical aspect is, that part of their life, but if you transfer that into illness for instance, people are old and if they are ill, they will stay ill more long. They are not ill that often. The young generation so to say, is ill more often, than the older generation. And if the older generation is ill, they are longer ill. HRM4*

It has also been stated, that due to their age, older employees, for instance in the warehouse, have problems of maintaining the pace of work that is set in today's tight time schedule. Moreover older employees are likely to face greater problems of working in a system of several shifts. They for instance have problems of changing into a morning shift, directly after a night shift. Whereas younger employees are likely to have fewer problems with that and do not need such long rests in between.

*(...) they sometimes need a longer period of time to recover. If they had a night shift, then you must be sure, that they do not*

*switch immediately from a night shift, to a morning shift. So that they have enough periods of rest in it. HRM5*

Today's time is increasingly fast-paced, which is a greater problem for older, than for younger employees. As one HR manager explained, he has experienced that there is sometimes more resistance by older employees when it comes to changes or new developments for instance. They refuse changes, from the beginning without even really thinking about it.

*Some older people have some resistance against the new things. Before asking, it is already a no. Because it used to be better in the past, and I have done that before and I know how it works. HRM4*

As one HR manager described, this is a problem, since it shows a lack of respect on the side of older employees. They should be open minded and willing to discuss issues emerging, since they are in a professional relationship. On the other hand, when HR managers were talking about positive experiences they have had with older employees, one could say that the focus of their answers was set on older employees' loyalty, flexibility and their experience. It has been stated by all HR managers interviewed, that older employees are often very experienced. They are very knowledgeable in dealing with co-workers and people in general. They want to be treated fairly, as any other employee wants to be, as well.

*A huge advantage of older employees is, that they are used to dealing with human beings. Ordinarily one has less problems with older employees, because due to their life experience they know dealing with human beings and are trained. HRM2*

A further characteristic revealed is that older employees are often calmer in their behaviour and not as impulsive. That however depends on the individual. Nevertheless this has been a general experience with older employees. Additionally older employees are frequently more committed towards the organization and more loyal, even if they seem to be a bit more hierarchically focused.

*They are maybe a little more hierarchically focused. Maybe more than the young generations, they are not impressed by hierarchical order and other things. I also think they are more loyal, committed HRM4*

Generally experiences with older employees are mixed and it has to be emphasized that of course also younger employees can have these characteristics. However the HR managers stated that they have mostly had these before mentioned experiences with the older generation.

#### *4.2.2 Practices*

During the interviews it has further been asked, whether older employees are likely to have any special needs and if any practices geared to older employees are in place within the organization. If yes, it has been asked which practices are in place. Thereby it firstly has become apparent, that no organization has practices in place especially for older employees. They however have some practices in place that are especially useful to them and that do commonly help them. Furthermore it can be said, that the Dutch Law regulates some issues concerning older employees. In this case organizations do not have a lot of leeway to do anything else. This means that there is for instance a law regulating that workers in the construction industry aged 55 and older are allowed to work only four days a week instead of five days a week.

*It is in law, that they can work, when they turned 55, they can work 4 days a week. That is basic law in construction. It is called 55 Plus Law. Every sector has its own laws as well. HRM1*

A further law mentioned has been one regarding seniority days, which regulates that people aged 55 or older do not have to work night shifts any more and are also able to take 30 days of extra holidays a year. This is not at no cost for them, since they only get 85 per cent of their wage on these days. It further became clear, that several HR managers prefer to find individual solutions to problems, rather than putting special practices in place. This means that if an older worker, or any other employee does have a problem, they find a solution for that problem. Two HR managers emphasized:

*When someone is having a problem, we get him a solution and it happens. HRM1*

*And if an older employee has special needs, special problems, we should take care for that as well. But I am not a supporter for that general policy for all the old people or all the young people. I think that is tailor made. That is making HR so interesting. Tailor made solutions. HRM4*

A further reason for this is that HR managers think all employees have their own needs, and all groups do need the same amount of attention. As one HR manager stated:

*The younger ones need as much attention as the older ones. They all deserve they own level of communication, perhaps. I mean if you are a little bit older you should address somebody with a little bit more respect, depending on the culture, but everybody needs its attention. HRM5*

On the other hand, some organizations do have some mechanisms in place that resemble practices, or think that they are necessary. Take the example of warehouse or construction work here. These types of work are very heavy and HR managers believe, that it is necessary to redesign these tasks in order to make the work easier. However since today's business world is heavily concentrated on making profit and being very efficient, it is somehow difficult to find the right solutions there. One HR manager described experiences from his past working life, where it was much easier to redesign tasks for older employees or to give them another type of work. He stated:

*In the past, we had workers in the warehouse, which had the possibility to become an office employee when they are older. Thus they had easier tasks and climbed up the hierarchy. HRM2*

This is substantially more difficult in today's business world, since if you want to do a job, you need a suitable qualification. It further got increasingly difficult due to the changed environment in today's business. In the past, work also in the office, was more paper based. Today everything is basically done with the computer or other technical help. It has become more difficult to change your workplace or job within the organization. Another HR manager stated, that they do not have special practices in place, but he could imagine putting practices in place if necessary. For example these could be internal or external mobility, to transfer the employee to another function, redesign of jobs or special trainings. Concerning the redesign, it has been made possible for older employees to work in teams together with younger ones, so they can divide work and younger ones can take over some heavier tasks. Again another organizations HR manager explained that they put a great emphasize on a healthy life style, which is not only necessary for older employees, but can be especially helpful for them.

*We are especially planning being healthy and staying healthy (...). We have to take care of the health of our people so everybody can have a check-up here, at our health service. Not*

*specifically for older workers. Because we think that a healthy lifestyle is something we think is very important HRM5*

This is also no practice, only for older employees, but it fits their needs. Totally refusing to have any practices geared towards older employees, one HR manager even stated, that he does not think that older employees have any special needs, thus also no special practices are required in his opinion. When he was asked, whether he thinks, older employees have any special needs, his answer was:

*They have too much. (...) I am a member of how do you say, negotiation and delegation and for some years. And if you look at those collective labour agreements (...) it is overloaded with protection, articles, rules for older people. I think that is not, that is pre-historical not from this time anymore, we should change that, it is discrimination. And not needed. HRM4*

#### 4.2.3 Responsibility of Line Managers

Concerning the implementation or execution of the before mentioned mechanisms or practices, HR managers stated, that line managers are always responsible for the implementation. Thus they are also responsible for the implementation of practices for older employees. As one HR manager indicated:

*Line managers are always responsible for the implementation of policies within the organization. HRM6*

*The line managers they have to take care for a good and a thorough execution. That is the part of HR in their task. HRM4*

Another HR manager mentioned, that line managers are not solely responsible for the implementation and execution of the before mentioned practices.

*Yes they always do that together with HR departments, because HR sometimes has a special project or because of law, there are new things to improve or to take care of. So HR can help. HRM5*

### 4.3 Future Developments

During the interviews, the last set of questions was focused on future perceptions, like whether HR managers think that line managers will need additional competences in the future and their general perception about developments in the future.

#### 4.3.1 Additional Competences

Asking HR managers, whether they think line managers will need additional competences in the future, their views differed. Although a frequent reply was, that they surely need special competences, however not only for managing older employees, but employees in general. As one HR manager stated:

*They surely need special competences, but not only related to older employees. They need them for employees overall and not every line manager has these competences. HRM2*

A second HR manager said:

*A line manager who is a good manager is, I think, also capable of managing older people, old and young. - And what I said ten minutes ago, transparency, straightforwardness, honesty, open communication; that is very important for managing different kinds of people. You should switch to the people who are in front of you. And some people expect other things than other ones and the line managers should be able to switch between those different people and their different expectations. HRM4*

Other HR managers thought of competences that might be especially necessary when it comes to older employees, such as flexibility, adaptive power and empathy. However emphasized that line manager also need these competences in general. It was further mentioned that they would need good social

conversation skills and a lot of information. Another point that has been mentioned is that managing people overall is more a matter of experience in general. If you do not have that experience, managing employees is generally difficult, not only managing older employees. A particular good example has been stated for the compliance with older employees. A line manager that is very young will most probably have problems managing a group of employees that is for instance about 20 years older. In many cultures that is a matter of respect. Therefore having a good mixture is always good. Another example pointing out that every age group is different is the following:

*At the (...) company for example, there were always very young people, they started there on their first or second job. And then you have a certain challenge where they are starting, buying a house, getting married, having children. So they are in a very turbulent period of time, in which they have to face so many extra things and building on their career and earning money and etc. That is special group I think. HRM5*

Overall HR managers agree that line managers do not need special competences only to manage older employees, but do need distinct competences in general.

#### 4.3.2 Programs to Develop Older Employees

Looking at programs in place to develop older employees at the moment or probably in the future, organizations have programs in place. Still these are as well as the practices not mainly geared towards older employees, but also the general workforce. For example one organization puts a special emphasize on employees health and therefore has an own health service in their organization. This can be especially useful to older employees. However this does not mean, that older employees necessarily have greater problems with their health. A program that basically every HR manager mentioned during the interviews is a mentoring program. Within this older employees train or help younger employees in order to transfer their knowledge to them. In two cases it also lead to employees staying in the organization beyond their legal retirement age.

*Furthermore, older employees are often very experienced employees who can be used as a mentor for new or inexperienced employees. In this way, the knowledge and experience of older employees is used and can be transferred to other employees. HRM6*

*One stayed half a year longer, only because we wanted him to be a tutor, for to new people, we contracted and there was not really another option. And he was the one with the best experience and knowledge of this. HRM5*

This will save the knowledge of older employees in the future. Another response concerning mentoring was, that the organization does it, but not formalized, meaning they should consider doing that in the future. Like putting a practice or policy into place. Since a lot of older employees are very knowledgeable and experienced and this knowledge should be used in the future. This once more emphasized that every age group has its special needs and that practices are not only useful and necessary for older employees, but for every age group in the perception of HR managers.

#### 4.3.3 Future Perceptions

Asking HR managers what is their perception on developments in the future, a common reply was, that there will most probably be a shortage on the labour market. This has already been predicted by several studies. As one HR manager stated, in his opinion, the future shortage, will be a critical shortage, since a lot of qualified employees are going to be missing, for which also no amount of workers from other countries could come up.

The reason for that in his opinion is that the baby-boom generation will start to leave soon, which is a particularly large group of employees.

*Yeah, I think there will be a shortage on the labour market soon and this time it will be a critical shortage. The baby boomers will leave, they will go for retirement. The sooner or later, the pensionate in the Netherlands has been increased, from 65 to 67, they will leave and that's a big group, a big number of people. HRM4*

However as most HR managers stated organizations are not yet willing or planning to employ current workers beyond their retirement age in order to reduce this shortage. In his opinion that will change how people are hired in the future. It will maybe change the law, like being flexible on how to hire people and under which conditions. Another HR manager stated they would try to hire a larger number of younger employees in the future in order to be more productive. Others will of course also hire younger employees, but think ahead and are trying to secure older employees knowledge, in order to make sure it will stay in the organization. A further opinion is that the pace of change is already high now and will probably increase in the future. When looking ten years ahead one HR manager stated:

*So we are facing for the future another problem, because we are working in a 5 shift, in the factory for example and people do not leave the company because we have arranged many things that are very good, But it is ehm, this 5 shifts working for somebody of 60 years and older is a very hard issue. So we are facing a problem when we are looking 10 years ahead from now. HRM5*

The overall statement by all HR managers was, that when looking in the future, organizations would especially face problems when employing older employees that have to do physically demanding work. This is due to the fact that retirement age is rising and workers doing physically demanding work, like in the construction industry, the warehouse or the health industry, will not be able to do this work until they are 67 or older.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Many studies have discussed the devolution of HR responsibilities to line managers (Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Perry & Kulik, 2008). This research has likewise confirmed the fact that line managers have to manage an increasing amount of human resource tasks and HR tasks are still devolved, for which they need specific skills and abilities. Although this study additionally emphasized on the difference of line managers tasks between specific industries. Furthermore the importance of the ability to manage people (Renwick, 2003) has been confirmed during this study. However it has become apparent that line managers are still frequently facing difficulties when performing HR tasks, as they face a high amount of pressure and somehow competing demands, as previous research has confirmed (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013).

With regard to the topic of an aging workforce, this study has detected, that older employees indeed have some special needs. Remery et al. (2003) have stated that older employees possess greater know-how and are frequently more committed towards the organization, which has been confirmed by this study. This could be used in the future to create greater positive social exchange, leading to older employees staying longer within the organization and being more committed towards the organization. This will be necessary as retirement age is likely to rise and further labour shortages are likely to occur, due to the baby boom generation leaving the organizations.

Several authors have acknowledged that special needs, due to the age of workers or other factors will result in the requirement of HR practices tailored to these needs (Kooij et al. 2008; Kooij et al., 2010; Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009). Previous research has mainly discussed four bundles of HR practices: development, maintenance, utilization and accommodative HR practice bundles (Kooij et al., 2010; Kooij et al., 2014). Thus the literature shows that increased attention should be paid to older employees special needs and distinct practices tailored to these needs. However this study has not entirely confirmed the claims made by researchers in previous studies. Concerning the first bundle, development HR practices (Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009), this research has found that organizations not specifically named these practices, but have mechanisms in place that could be compared to development HR practices or that could be specified in order to function as a development HR practice. These are for instance the fact that older employees do not have to do night shifts any more or are allowed to work only four days instead of five days a week. They were however not created by the organization itself, but are fixed by law in some industries. Additionally HR managers emphasize that they give older employees flexibility based on their needs, when they for instance want to take care of their grandchildren. In the future organizations should think about putting practices into place to cover the before mentioned scenarios, as they are otherwise likely to face labour shortages. Maintenance HR practices are described to give employees the safety and job security that they highly value (Kooij et al., 2010). This study could not find any distinct maintenance HR practices. However organizations HR managers stated that a majority of older employees are in the organization for many years already. This leads to the conclusion that in these organization there is a good job security. However no practices specially tailored to these needs could be found during the interviews. Taking the development of the labour market in the future into account, which will include a larger amount of older employees (OECD, 2005; United Nations, 2002, 2007; Parker, 2006), organizations should think about practices that help to maintain employees for a longer period of time, as the retirement age will rise. Regarding utilization HR practice bundles, authors have stated that these can help line managers in shaping the work environment, like job movement and redesign (Kooij et al., 2008). This could mean removing demands that are unachievable for particularly older employees. The fact that HR managers, especially when it comes to construction, manufacturing and warehouse work are still searching for solutions to make this kind of work easier, demonstrates the need for actions in the near future. Considering accommodative HR practice bundles this research has not given great insight. It has been pointed out that older employees seem to be calmer and do not want any conflicts which supports the assumption made by Kooij et al. (2008) that older employees want to have a good relationship with co-workers. Practices that support these could not be found in the course of this research.

Taking the previously described findings on the four HR practices bundles into account it becomes apparent that organizations do not seem to have any special policies or practices in place yet that are geared towards the needs of an aging workforce. However organizations seem to have some mechanisms in place that resemble those practices found by Kooij et al. (2008) and Kooij et al. (2010). Only having mechanisms that resemble practices will not be sufficient in the future, considering the trend of an aging population and workforce. HR managers do not appear to take into account what will happen in the future.

This research has not found any significant competences that line managers will require for managing an aging workforce. This will leave line managers largely unprepared to manage an aging workforce, as most likely additional competences will be necessary to implement HR practices geared towards older employees. This further emphasizes that organizations are not yet prepared for the future. On the contrary, this study has found out, that HR managers mainly think that line managers of course need several competences, as has already been discussed in previous literature (Renwick, 2003; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; Perry & Kulik, 2008; Gilbert et al., 2011), instead of thinking about potentially required future competences. One could thus say that HR managers did not yet think about the future of their line managers. They seem to ignore future trends that have been specified by the OECD or United Nations. It has become apparent that HR managers value the differences between each employee, and constitute that each solutions has to be different. In other words the solutions need to be tailor-made. The competences line managers need for finding these solutions, they do not only need for managing older employees, but they require these competences in general.

### *5.1.1 Recommendations to HR managers & Organizations*

From this research we have learned that HR managers do not yet look far ahead into the future. They do not seem to be prepared for the growing amount of older employees, which also leaves line managers unprepared. Line managers have no policies and practices that they can use as guidelines to manage the aging workforce. For the future it is thus going to be of importance that HR managers increasingly take the aging of their workforce into account. It is a fact that a significant number of employees, the baby-boom generation, will leave the organization at the same time. This will lead to labour shortages and also an older workforce in general (OECD, 2002; Remery et al., 2003; United Nations, 2002, 2007; Parker, 2006). Organizations should thus reconsider the fact that they did not yet put practices geared to older workers into place. These distinct practices might indeed prove to be necessary in the future when it comes to managing the increasingly older workforce. However they need to consider that they should not treat older employees with so much difference, when it comes to behavioural matters, in order to avoid discrimination. On the other hand, making work easier for their older employees in the future and redesigning specific tasks for them can always be a possibility and might in fact be essential.

Moreover HR managers should recall their training possibilities for line managers in the future, which will help them to manage the increasing amount of older employees. They could for example implement trainings that show line managers how to redesign tasks for older employees, but also trainings that are especially developed to motivate older employees to stay in the organization for longer. These can be trainings that may increase older employees employability. That does not mean, that these trainings are only necessary for managing older employees, however they will be particularly helpful for this age group. Line managers will thus have to develop further competences in order to manage the changed composition of the workforce, to implement the practices and trainings. The trainings might help them to manage the aging workforce.

## **5.2 Future Lesson**

### *5.2.1 Limitations*

One limitation of this study to be named is the relatively low number of interviews conducted. On the one hand this could limit the generalizability of the study. On the other hand even the relatively small sample size allowed to find several

correlations and similarities between different organizations. This displays that a somehow comprehensive insight could be given, even with the small number of interviews. However one should take into account that every organization is different in its system and internal framework.

A further limitation to be noticed is the fact, that interviews have only been conducted with HR managers, who are experts in their field. In order to increase generalizability it would of advantage to additionally interview line managers on their perceptions or managers from other fields. The interviews with line managers could give a clearer view on actual problems, of which HR managers for instance do not know yet or of problems, which HR managers do not consider to be important. Furthermore the selection of the method of in depth interviews, which is very subjective in nature (Belk et al., 2012), can limit the validity. It can be limited in so far, that on the one hand the interviewer can influence the HR managers opinion (Opdenakker, 2006) and further the HR managers opinion might not be objective and thus not generalizable.

### *5.2.2 Suggestions for Further Research*

Further research will be necessary, concerning the creation and implementation of the before mentioned HR practices. This means that future research can specify which practices could really be necessary, like regarding the four bundles that have been identified. It will be of importance to develop and test training and development opportunities for older employees and also further ways to maintain older employees.

It will moreover be of interest to find out, whether these practices really help and if organizations gain any positive benefits when implementing them. Furthermore it will be of interest to investigate whether the views on further competences required will change during the next years, when the overall situation changes. Assumed that organizations do not yet have practices in place, further studies could also enhance the generalizability of the claims made concerning older employees.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study has been to investigate whether line managers are prepared to manage an aging workforce. This study has identified two important issues that lead to the conclusion that organizations and thus line managers are not yet prepared to manage an aging workforce. The first issue is that organizations do not yet have any practices geared towards older employees in place. HR managers are not thinking ahead five to ten years, but are rather engaged into managing present issues. Within five to ten years a significant amount of workers will leave the organization at once. Therefore it would indeed be useful for organizations to consider bringing practices into place that motivate older employees to stay in the organization and work beyond their retirement age. It is also likely, that the retirement age in general will be higher. Thus the organization will be confronted with managing an increasing amount of older employees. HR managers and organizations in general should consider taking a view that is more oriented towards the future trend of an aging workforce.

The second issue to be named is the fact that HR managers do not see a necessity for line managers to develop special competences for the management of older employees. They put a great emphasise on tailor-made solutions for every employee. However the future trend will create the need for line managers to be able to manage the increasing amount of older employees. This will require them to have special competences and also generate the need to develop and train line managers in this direction.

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## **9. APPENDIX**

### **9.1 Interview Template**

#### **(1) Introduction**

What is your function within the organization?

How long have you been working in the HR area?

Could you briefly describe your work experience?

#### **(2) General questions about tasks of line managers in the organizations**

What are the tasks and role of line managers?

Which additional (HR) tasks did you assign to line managers?

What were the reasons to assign these additional (HR) tasks and roles to line managers?

Are line managers willing to take over basic HR tasks/ HR responsibilities?

If not, what types of problems did you experience?

What are your experience about line managers handling HR responsibilities?

#### **(3) Questions about Aging Population/Workforce**

How many workers older than 45/50 are you employing in your organization? (Percentage/Number)

Will you hire more (due to labour shortages for example) in the future (5-10 or 10-25 years)?

Could you imagine employing them beyond retirement age set by law?

Are you currently employing workers older than retirement age (set by law)?

Could you briefly describe your experience with older employees?

Which special needs do older employees have in your opinion?

Which policies/practices geared to older workers are currently in place in your organization (if any)?

Are line managers responsible for the implementation of these policies?

Do you somehow redesign the tasks of older workers to be more suitable for them?

#### **(4) Questions about competences line managers need**

Which additional competences do you believe line managers need for managing older employees, if any?

Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees?

Which programs do you offer to develop older employees? (For example mentoring programs)

How do you think, can line managers develop older employees?

How do you think the situation (concerning older workers) will develop in the future?

#### **(5) Questions about Diverse Workforce**

What is the proportion of women working for your company?

What is the proportion of people from different nationalities working for your company?

What is the proportion of handicapped people working for your company?

Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company?

Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company?

Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organization?

For the implementation of which diversity practices/policies are line managers responsible?

Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organizational levels?

If yes, what kind of? Examples, please

How do you expect the situation will develop in the future?

What do line managers need to manage a diverse workforce?

Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage diverse workforce?

**(6) Questions about competences line managers need**

Which additional competences do line managers need for managing a diverse workforce effectively?

Which programs do you offer to develop special skills for line managers?

Could you imagine that line managers need to develop extra skills to deal with the future demands of a heterogeneous workforce?

If yes, which?

**9.2 Display of the coding process**

Phrases of Interview	Code
<i>Yes. Lots. The majority. Ob average the age is 47.1</i>	Amount of older employees
<i>Line managers need competences to manage a diverse workforce. Competences like flexibility, adaptive power and empathy are necessary to recognize the needs of the different groups of employees and to anticipate on it.</i>	Competences
<p><i>Furthermore, older employees are often very experienced employees who can be used as a mentor for new or unexperienced employees. In this way, the knowledge and experience of older employees is used and can be transmitted to other employees.</i></p> <p><i>Of course a physical aspect is, that part of their life, but if you transfer that into illness for instance, people are old and if they are ill, they will stay ill more long. They are not ill that often. The young generation so to say, is ill more often, than the older generation. And if the older generation is ill, they are longer ill.</i></p>	<p>Experience with older workers</p> <p>Positive</p> <p>Negative</p>
<i>And it is the same for a line manager: he or she should organize the operators who can do the task, on technical or whatever... A line manager who is a good manager is, I think, also capable of managing older people, old and young.</i>	LM responsibilities for older workers
<i>We do, but not formalized and I think we can improve on that. It's not about discrimination, positive or negative, but it is a matter of employability and to use each other's strengths. We have lots of older employees, they know a lot in their head and we should transfer that knowledge to other people. And that could, for instance, be in an instrumental solution for mentoring or whatever. That's a good one. We do it, but we could formalize it.</i>	Mentoring
<i>When someone is having a problem, we get him a solution and it happens. It happens that one day, you reach the age of fact we help them giving them training and how to spare your back. It's always just what pops up. That's what we are HR for.</i>	Practices for older employees
<i>Within the house held, it is not possible. Within the nursing part of the organization, they work in teams. The team is responsible for dividing the roles and tasks, so it is possible to redesign some of the tasks of the older workers. However, they need to perform routine nursing tasks in order to stay competent</i>	Redesigning
<i>In the health care sector, the aging workforce will be a big problem in the future. Employees need to work longer due to a higher retirement age, but often older employees working in health care functions deal with physical problems.</i>	Developments in the Future

## 9.3 Interview Transcripts

### 9.3.1 Interview Transcription 22.05.2015 – Interview with HR Manager 1

**K:** okay, we will just shortly introduce ourselves.

We are currently bachelor students, in our third year, writing our Bachelor Thesis in Human Resource Management under the supervision of Anna Bos-Nehles. Like we said she recommended you to us. So we got a few questions.

**C:** We are sort of having the same topic, just a little different directions, which makes it possible to do the interview together.

**K:** We are both writing about Line Management.

**C:** What is your function within the organisation?

**HRM1:** Well, it is kind of broad. Starting with internships, trainees and new employees, introducing them, contracting them, all the broad legal stuff. other legal issues

basically from people starting here, till their retirement. Next to that I am the training and development coordinator of this company and responsible for SROI (Social Return On Investment), which means that a (growing) percentage of our employees have to “distanced from the labor market”, for example disabled or unemployed for a long time.

**C:** So your work experience is basically three years.

**HRM1:** Yes.

**K:** Are you familiar with the term line management?

**HRM1:** yes.

**K:** So I will start with some general questions.

What are the tasks and the role of the line managers?

**HRM1:** Well that depends.

Do you know the word for ‘uitvoerders’ ?

**C:** We can check the word later.

**K:** It’s maybe implementers

**HRM1:** Yes, I think so.

**HRM1:** Basically you got the project leaders, who are really leading the early preparations done by the calculation and planners on office, here on office and the uitvoerder who is on the construction side and who is kind of managing the construction side based on technical issues, safety issues, time management, hours clocking, subcontractor management, etc.

**K:** Which additional tasks did you assign to line managers?

**HRM1:** In the past the uitvoerders were not necessary above the bricklayers for example, sometimes also in between the bricklayers, sometimes above them. So it is so much multi-disciplined, there is so much going on, so they have to be on top.

We are basically dealing with a market, which demands a growing complexity of construction projects, which have to be built with greater efficiency in an extremely competitive market and under high pressure. Compared with an increased focus on energy efficiency, stricter codes and sustainability and built for a dominant part by employees from abroad. Uitvoerders have to manage this process on the construction side. For this reason we hire People having a higher degree, like mostly people from Universities of applied sciences. We don’t take them from a lower level.

We also have to work with a lower budget, all these elements.

Line Managers have to be capable of you know to work with them, have to know the methods, have to be technical on a really high level, communication, on innovation, on ICT. They have to be able to work with these things. So that combined makes that kind of work interesting.

**K:** So that is like kind a complex role they have to play.

**HRM1:** You can basically say, that is kind of the hardest task there is.

**K:** Like concerning HR, what tasks do they fulfill there? Will they do appraisal or rewarding, or recruitment, do they help there or ...

**HRM1:** We help them a lot. if there is a trainee from a university of applied science, we always put them with one of the older uitvoerders, so that they can combine skills. We get them a lot of support.

Future... that is how the training was named. So that is kind of explaining it.

**K:** Are line managers willing to take over basic HR responsibilities?

**HRM1:** it is not that they want, but also that they have to.

**K:** And have you ever experienced kind of problems with that?

**HRM1:** yeah, nowadays they are on a huge pressure.

**C:** Could you like tell me, how many people, or older people you are employing?

**HRM1:** A lot. we got people working here for more than 40 years. One started as a helper, a bulding helper and he is now one of the uitvoerders. But we got a jubilaüm soon.

**K:** yeah, it is the same in german.

**HRM1:** But that is more like an exception.

**C:** Will you hire more older employees, for example due to labour shortages in the future?

**HRM1:** No, especially in the building industry work is to heavy.

We want to hire younger employees, but nowadays, because they got, of course they got rewarded during the days, their salary was rising. but that, especially in crises doesn’t really keep any space for younger employees.

**C:** So you would not choose to hire older people? Concerning all the experience, that they could bring to your organisation?

**HRM1:** Maybe in higher staff we do, like directors or project leaders, or construction leaders. Mostly in the leading staff. But we mostly try to hire younger people.

**C:** Those older people working for you, could you also imagine, employing them beyond their retirement age, that is currently set by

law?

**HRM1:** No. Doing something with their body is a heavy work. Almost all people, even here in the office, are happy to retire and it is even in law. The Dutch law helps older employees with a 4-day workweek, they are allowed to work 4 days in instead of 5..

**C:** Are you currently employing workers older than retirement age?

**HRM1:** Never, they are always going with retirement age.

**C:** But you have got that one person that is.

**HRM1:** Yes he worked here for 48 years, but is now 63.

I think we have both. That is were the younger people come along. Their experience, combined with younger effectiveness.

**C:** Do you have practices in place that are geared to older workers?

**HRM1:** It is in law, that they can work, when they turned 55, they can work 4 days a week. That is basic law in construction. It is called 55 Plus Law.

Every sector has its own laws as well. I can show it to you and it says that especially for construction after the age of 55 you are allowed to work 4 days a week.

**C:** That is a really good law.

**HRM1:** Yes. It is not for the office staff, it is for the people working in construction.

**C:** OK do you have any practices in place, developed from your company?

**HRM1:** Hmm, you know when someone is having a problem, we get him a solution and it happens. It happens that one day, you reach the age of fact we help them giving them training and how to spare your back. It's always just what pops up. That's what we are HR for.

**C:** Okay, then you go up and sort of redesign their tasks?

**HRM1:** Yes, we somehow try to make work for older employees easier.

**C:** Okay. And do you think line managers need additional competences for managing an aging workforce?

**HRM1:** No, not specifically older employees. Making work less heavy, that's already there. Maybe their communication.

I phone training.

**HRM1:** You see Europe, basically. So it's more like, more like in that than in specifically older employees. No.

**C: Okay. Do you have special program in place for older employees?**

**HRM1:** Well, it's, it's more like, it's always in "ergonomie", ergonomics. Like for your backs. Especially when you are in the office, sitting the whole day.

**HRM1:** You know when you need a training in how to properly use your back. All our employees inside we give them a training on how to sit properly, but that is not only necessary for older employees. The uitvoerders for example, I gave 'em iPhone training.

**C:** Okay

**HRM1:** That's also one of the things they have to do. This "uitvoerder" who is 40 years in service, he's got fingers as thick as my thumb. So when he is like, using the iPhone it was kind of tricky. But you know, he has to use the iPhone, to read emails, to take photos and send them. Today it is really necessary.

**C:** Do you also like use the knowledge of older employees?

**HRM1:** They are the teach masters

**C:** So they are sort of mentoring?

**HRM1:** Yeah, they mentor. We call them "leermeesters", we call it like. We always combine them with younger people and together they make a great effort.

**K:** So, I define diversity not just like in the backgrounds of the people, but also like different gender, different maybe sexualities, religions whatever. Like, what makes a people a diverse workforce. So my first question is like: What is the proportion of women working here?

**HRM1:** It's rising. It is uh, it's very low, to begin with.

**K:** Ja

**HRM1:** In the labour force we got zero, but right now we got... you see our financial director right there and we got our BIM, that's a new like a three dimensional, four dimensional construction program. She recently graduated also here in research in new computer modelling. And she is hired, so she is now working, of course in administration.

**K:** What is the proportion of people from different nationalities working for your company? Like a lot of workers like from the Eastern countries; like Hungary?

**HRM1:** Eastern Europe. So it's basically, like we call it, we got our own curn (?), we got our own main file, of specialized experience. We know our quality, we got qualified for that. It works usually like this: The government wants to build a bridge, they are like: we want this problem and this problem, while we need this bridge; who can build it? So we can build it with this quality and this quality; we got specifications (...)

something missing and everything with brick laying is easy (...) but you can also always get them from Eastern Europe and that's it. And that is also one of the biggest issues for these "uitvoerders"

**K:** We think you were talking about what people from Eastern Europe can contribute, e.g. that they are cheaper but lack knowledge in construction?

**K:** Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company?

**HRM1:** Not different, absolutely not different nationalities. Also not women. For longings we have to use that, for social retail investment. And those are people who are unemployed, or who got handicapped or who are...

**K:** Just like the handicapped?

**HRM1:** But handicapped and unemployed. And also that unemployed for one year is about worth like ten thousand Euros and employed for law... And that's it for big companies, they have to get like five percent of their staff of it...

**K:** Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company?

**HRM1:** Well, not especially foreigners, I think that is already on a higher proportion. Women yeah, we expect them because when you look at the Universities of Applied Sciences, the women are rising and that is really a good development and we embrace it.

**K:** Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organisation? I don't know like anti-discrimination policies or stuff like this?

**HRM1:** No, it's not like very we ...business. It's like three kilometers that way; that's where they do the easy pre-fab elements which we later combine in the projects; they got build there. That is mostly what we use well when people have been sick for a long time, when they have had a surgery... Just get used to the lower work pressure there, just to get back, get back in the working process and after that, they can work on projects again. So in a save environment, you could say that.

**K:** Have you ever experienced like problems occurring because of a clash of employees e.g. from different nationalities or, I don't know, religions?

**HRM1:** Cultures?

**K:** Mhmm

**HRM1:** I think so, yeah. Especially when you got a lot of Eastern Europe employees, sometimes they aren't sober. So that's kind of an ...They are really tough, mostly like two years (...) they get kicked off (...) work with us

**K:** Ok, and I asked this one... And like coming back to line managers, do you think that line managers need some special skills to overcome these problems, to deal with a diverse workforce?

**HRM1:** No, no. You have to be enabled to work with lots of changes. Sometimes when a project leader or an "uitvoerder", or a line manager in your story, they don't even know who are working. All they have to be able is to manage change. We call it like "(...)", we call it "(Company Name)" plus; and we come together, like once a month, you have a meeting downstairs in the basement, we got a big room where they share experiences and teach each other how they have overcome experience. Directors are always there, and project leaders who help them overcome these problems, because most problems you start to experience have already been experienced on another business unit. We've got lots of business units in this organization, who all got the same problems.

**K:** Could you imagine that line managers need to develop extra skills to deal with the future demands of a heterogeneous workforce?

**HRM1:** ...Are getting more and more up. You know changes are not exponentially as well, is not like one in five years always

### 9.3.2 Interview Transcription 27.05.2015 – Interview with HR Manager 2

**C:** Also vorstellen muss ich Karina ja nicht. Ich bin ihre Studienkollegin, studiere also quasi das gleich wie sie und ja wir schreiben gerade unsere Bachelorarbeit und benötigen dafür dieses Interview. Also ich würde nun erst einmal mit generellen Fragen zur Person starten.

**HRM2:** Ja.

**C:** und dazu Fragen, was genau ihre Funktion im Unternehmen ist?

**HRM2:** Das war jetzt die Frage?

**C:** Ja, das war schon die Frage.

**HRM2:** Also meine Funktion ist, ich bin hier die Personalschnittstelle im Haus. Wir haben hier verschiedene Sorten Personal. Einmal die Zeitarbeiter, die einen großen Teil hier ausmachen. Dann die festangestellten (...) Mitarbeiter, dafür bin ich die Ansprechpartnerin direkt und die Sogenannten Telelog Mitarbeiter. Das sind Telekom Logistik Mitarbeiter, Mitarbeiter, die wir von der Telekom übernommen haben. Die haben eine eigene Personalstelle, die in Bonn sitzt. Die werden aber durch uns Zeiterfassungsmäßig betreut und rundherum für den Einsatz, die Einsatzplanung, werden sie auch von hier aus betreut. Wenn es um Disziplinarische Maßnahmen geht, dann wenden sich diese Kollegen an Bonn. Das heißt wir haben geteilte Personalstellen. Bei mri ist es hier so, ich bin nur die Ansprechpartnerin vor Ort, weil wir haben eine Zentrale Personalstelle, die bei uns in Hamburg sitzt. Zur Zeit werden wir zwar durch Unna betreut. Dann in Bonn. Das wechselt immer, aber ganze HR Fachbereich sitzt im Moment in Hamburg. Das große Unternehmen (...) hat alles zentralisiert.

(Unterbrechung)

**HRM2:** Also wir sind ja eine 100% Tochter der deutschen Post und fungieren als GmbH. Und die deutsche Post hat ihre Personalstellen, sowohl als auch die Lohnbuchhaltungstellen, alle zentralisiert. Und vor Ort gibt es dann noch einen Ansprechpartner, der die Dinge die Zentral schwierig, oder gar nicht zu klären sind, zu klären hat. Und das ist hier meine Funktion. Ich bin hier Zeiterfassungsbeauftragte und Ansprechpartnerin für alle Probleme unseres Personals rundherum.

**C:** Gut. Können sie mir auch kurz ihre Arbeiterfahrung beschreiben?

**HRM2:** Meine persönliche, oder was heißt Arbeiterfahrung?

**C:** Genau ihre persönliche Arbeiterfahrung.

**HRM2:** Mein Werdegang...

Die Personalerfahrung begann eigentlich im Lager von der damals noch Bundespost, wo ich bereits den Personaleinsatz, und alles was mit Personal zu tun hatte, geregelt habe.

Bin dann vor 11 Jahren hier in die Personal stelle gekommen. Da war es noch eine. Mittlerweile ist es ein wenig zentralisiert worden. Das ist so mein Werdegang in Kurzform.

**C:** Also haben sie gerade gesagt ihre Arbeiterfahrung im Personalbereich beträgt circa 11 Jahre.

**K:** Also dann mache ich nun weiter. Jetzt geht es um die direkten Vorgesetzten, also bei euch dann um die Gruppenleiter/Teamleiter. Die sind ja der Focus unsere Bachelorarbeit.

Und erstmal, was sind die Aufgaben oder die Rolle, dieser direkten Vorgesetzten hier in diesem Unternehmen?

**HRM2:** Ja was ist die Rolle. Ja die kümmern sich im Personaleinsatz, um die Personalpläne, disziplinarisch und das heißt Maßnahmen, zum Beispiel für das zu Spät kommen oder irgendwelche anderen disziplinarischen Dinge. Und natürlich müssen sie den Bereich, ihren eigenen Bereich arbeitstechnisch als Vorgesetzten Betreuen.

**K:** nun hast du mir schon die nächsten beiden Frage eigentlich beantwortet. Welche HR Tasks die quasi übernehmen. Das sind ja zum

Beispiel die Disziplinarverfahren.

**HRM2:** Aber die leiten das nur ein. Also das heißt, wenn eine disziplinarische Maßnahme anliegt, dann hat er das Gespräch mit dem Mitarbeiter zu führen und sagt zum Beispiel, ich stelle fest, zum wiederholten Male bist du zu spät gekommen. Das hat er in der Regel im Beisein eines Betriebsratsmitglieds, der also hier eine ziemlich hohe Funktion hat, zu wiederholen. Und der trägt den ganzen Vorgang dann zu uns, in Form der Mail in der Regel, manchmal schreiben sie es auch auf. Und wir leiten halt, ja dass Papiermäßige ein.

**K:** Und gab es irgendwelche besonderen Gründe, dass die diese Aufgaben nun übernommen haben, oder hat sich das einfach so ergeben?

**HRM2:** Die haben das nicht übernommen, sondern es wurde Ihnen zugewiesen. Weil nur der direkte Vorgesetzte solche Vorgänge ja auch mitbekommt. Sonst keiner nur er selbst.

**K:** Ja okay. Und sind diese direkten Vorgesetzten, generell bereit diese Personalverantwortung zu übernehmen, oder habt ihr da schon einmal irgendwie Probleme erfahren müssen ?

**HRM2:** Also Arbeitstechnisch sind sie alle sehr gut. Sage ich mal für ihren Bereich. Also der Mitarbeiter, der Teamleiter. Warenein- und Ausgänge, das bekommen sie super hin. Wenn es um Personelle Dinge geht tun sie sich Teilweise sehr sehr schwer. Und solche Maßnahmen, wie disziplinarische Maßnahmen treten so gut wie sehr selten, fast nie hier auf, weil das scheuen sie alle. Und wenn erleben ich dass, das weiß ich aber aus meiner Erfahrung im Lager selbst. Sie regeln viele Dinge vor Ort, klein, klein. Und sie wollen dieses Papiermäßige nach oben und das es in die Akten kommt vermeiden sie tunlichst. Also sehr selten haben wir solche Fälle. Wenn dann sind es auch schwerwiegende Fälle. Haben wir natürlich schon gehabt. Aber dann sind es schwerwiegende Fälle.

**K:** Und, findest du, dass diese direkten Vorgesetzten, jetzt darunter leiden, das sie durch diese Personalverantwortung jetzt zum Beispiel mehr Druck erfahren?

**HRM2:** Leiden tun sie darunter definitiv nicht, die werden auch Leidesgerecht bezahlt.

**K:** Okay, die haben also jetzt kein Zeitmanagement Problem.

**HRM2:** Nein, das gehört ja zu ihren Tätigkeiten.

**K:** also das ist schon fest mit eingeplant.

**HRM2:** Das heißt, sie müssen nicht die eigentlich Tätigkeit als Lagerarbeiter ausführen, sie springen schon mal ein, wenn not am Mann ist. Das gehört zu ihren Aufgaben.

**K:** Okay. Ja gut, das wäre es mit den generellen Fragen. Dann bist du jetzt wieder dran.

**C:** Also um das noch einmal kurz zu erklären. Ich habe in meiner Bachelorarbeit, den Fokus auf älter werdende Mitarbeiter gelegt und

**HRM2:** Da sind sie hier richtig.

**C:** und werde nun in dem Zusammenhang ein paar Fragen stellen.

Meine erste wäre, wie viele Mitarbeiter, die älter als 45/50 sind, sind in Ihrem Unternehmen tätig?

**HRM2:** Das könnte ich ihnen eigentlich aus dem FF überhaupt nicht beantworten. Ich kann es aber, weil wir selbst große Probleme damit haben und wir das vor ein Paar Wochen.. ne ist schon etwas länger her, ausgewertet haben.

Und da kann ich dazu sagen, das Durchschnittsalter unserer Mitarbeiter ist auf TeleLog Seite ... Da erkläre ich mal, wir sind 137 (...) Mitarbeiter und 124 (...). Die 124 (...) sind über die letzten 10 Jahre, seid der Privatisierung eingestellt worden. Die TeleLog Mitarbeiter kommen noch von der Deutschen Bundespost. Die Mitarbeiter der TeleLog haben ein Durchschnittsalter von 55 Jahren.

Durchschnittsalter wohlbermerkt. Das ist also schon eine Hausnummer. Die 124 (...) Mitarbeiter, die eigentlich Jünger sein müssten, weil wir sie ja auch erst vor 10 Jahren begonnen haben einzustellen, haben ein Durchschnittsalter von 45 Jahren. Das ist unser Durchschnittsalter hier im Lager, mit dem wir auch sehr stark zu kämpfen haben.

**C:** Okay gut. Dann mein nächste Frage wäre, ob sie in Zukunft planen, noch mehr ältere Mitarbeiter einzustellen, aufgrund von Personalknappheit, oder sonstigem.

**HRM2:** Also das können sie sich selbst beantworten. Nein.

**C:** Okay

**HRM2:** Ganz sicher nicht.

**C:** Und die Mitarbeiter, die so momentan beschäftigen, können sie sich Vorstellen diese über das Rentenalter hinaus zu beschäftigen?

**HRM2:** Auf gar keinen Fall. Weil man muss mal sehen, wo wir hier arbeiten. Wir arbeiten hier im Lager, oder auch als Kraftfahrer oder Staplerfahrer. Das heißt unser Personal ist schwerer körperlicher Tätigkeit ausgesetzt. Und das machen sie nicht mit 70. Das schaffen sie auch in dem Tempo nicht mehr. Und deswegen werden wir das ganz sicher nicht tun. So Leute wie ich, wir könnten natürlich bis 80 arbeiten. Stimmt natürlich auch nicht ganz, weil wir dem Tempo auch nicht unbedingt immer weiter standhalten.

**C:** Noch eine weitere Frage. Beschäftigen sie derzeit Mitarbeiter, die das gesetzliche Rentenalter bereits überschreiten.

**HRM2:** Nein.

**C:** Könnten sie mir dann, kurz ihre Erfahrungen, die sie mit älteren Mitarbeitern gemacht haben beschreiben? Probleme oder positive Dinge, die sie nennen können.

**HRM2:** Ja also positiv ist erst mal rauszustellen, bei älteren Mitarbeitern ist es in der Regel so sie haben natürlich eine gewisse Erfahrung. Sie haben arbeitstechnisch, vom handling her eine Erfahrung, die aber durch Einsatz neuer Techniken ganz schnell wieder wett gemacht wird. Riesenvorteil bei älteren Mitarbeitern ist, das den Umgang und die Erfahrung im Umgang mit Menschen gewohnt sind. Die haben also.. man hat in der Regel mit älteren Mitarbeitern weniger Probleme im Umgang, weil sie über ihre Lebenserfahrung einfach den Umgang mit Menschen kennen, trainierte sind. Sie sind auch, gerade bei jüngeren Menschen, nicht mehr so impulsiv, Vorteil oder nicht Vorteilhaft, weiß man nicht, aber auch nicht so aggressiv. Ja sind ruhiger in der Regel, im Verhalten. Das kann man als positiv herausstellen.

Negativ ist natürlich, die Zeit wird immer schnellerlebiger und sie halte auch im Lager, in der Regel, das Tempo nicht mehr. Sie

fallen, wenn sie krank werden, Krankenstand ist bei uns auch ein riesen Thema. Im Moment zwar nicht so, aber immer mal wieder.

Wenn sie krank sind, fallen sie länger aus. Lang aus. Sie haben häufig auch schwerwiegendere Krankheiten. Ich kann aber nicht sagen, dass sie häufiger ausfallen, insgesamt, also die jüngeren Mitarbeiter. Die jüngeren Kollegen fallen häufiger aus, dafür aber kurzfristig.

**C:** Okay.

**HRM2:** Das ist so.

**K:** Hat alles sein Vor- und Nachteile.

**C:** Gibt es hier im Unternehmen, bestimmte Taktiken oder Methoden die direkt auf ältere Mitarbeiter zugeschnitten sind, um sie beispielsweise zu unterstützen?

**HRM2:** Also danach suchen wir gerade selbst, aber uns fällt einfach nichts ein, was man machen könnte, jemanden im Lager, der Kisten von Rechts nach Links schleppen muss. Also er schleppt sie nun nicht einen Kilometer weiter, dafür haben wir Stapler und Hubwagen, aber er muss schon heben und tragen. So und da fällt uns einfach nichts ein, was man machen kann um ältere Mitarbeiter zu unterstützen. Theoretisch müsste man hingehen, und müsste älteren Mitarbeitern eine gewisse Zeitkulanz geben, weil sie einfach langsamer sind. Aber das gibt das Tempo, der Druck und die Kosteneffizienz nicht her. Und da fällt uns im Moment auch nicht viel ein, muss man ehrlich sagen.

**C:** Also haben sie momentan noch nicht bestimmte Dinge, wie zum Beispiel kürzere Arbeitszeiten oder flexiblere Arbeitszeiten.

**HRM2:** Doch, doch das haben wir, wenn man darauf hin abzielt.

Also die Deutsche Post hat sogar einen Preis erhalten für ihr Altersteilzeit Modell. Das heißt, Kollegen, jüngere Kollegen, die im Unternehmen beschäftigt sind, könne eine Teil ihres Gehalts in ein Altersteilzeitmodell einzahlen. Je nach zur Verfügung stehendem Einkommen. Also 2 % des Gehalts, Urlaubsgeld, Weihnachtsgeld, was auch immer sie wollen und der Arbeitgeber, gibt den gleichen oder einen ähnlichen Anteil auch noch einmal dazu. Ehm sie können dann 3 Jahre bevor sie regulär in Rente gehen würden, das ist in der Regel, also bei den Kollegen die jetzt anstehen, 65/66, können drei Jahre vorher in Rente gehen. Oder auch Teilzeit arbeiten. Die Deutsche Post macht es 2 Jahre vorher Rente. 2 Jahre vorher voll, können sie aussteigen und bis zu drei Jahren können sie vorher Teilzeit arbeiten. So ist das Modell. Also insgesamt 5 Jahre. Das kann man aber entscheiden, nachher, kurzfristig vorher, wie man das möchte. Teile davon Teilzeit arbeiten. Ich muss aber dazu sagen, dafür laufen wir Werbung ohne Ende, weil die Kollegen es nicht wollen. Sie wollen es nicht, weil es ihr Gehalt schmälert. Und wenn man ein Gehalt eines Lagerarbeiters hat, dann ist das auch verständlich. Auffallend ist, dass viele Leute mit höherem Einkommen es machen und die mit niedrigem Einkommen nicht. Und dagegen zu steuern ist schon sehr schwierig.

**C:** Verändern sie Aufgaben für ältere Mitarbeiter um, sie für diese einfacher oder besser geeignet zu machen?

**HRM2:** Sagen wir mal so, als wir noch aus meiner Erfahrung jetzt, als wir noch Deutsche Post waren, war es einfach. Da hatten wir Lagerarbeiter, und denen hat man die Möglichkeit eröffnet, wenn sie älter wurden, Automatisch zur Buchungskraft oder zum Angestellten zu werden. Und dadurch hatten die eine leichtere Tätigkeit, die stiegen einfach auf. In der Hierarchie stiegen die auf, wurden angestellte und hatten leichtere Tätigkeiten. Das gibt es aber in der heutigen Welt nicht mehr. Du hast die Qualifikation als Lagerarbeiter, du hast die Qualifikation als Kaufmann. So und das, dieser Weg ist nicht mehr, in diesen GmbHs diesen AGs nicht durchlässig. Sondern wir bestehen in unserer Gesellschaft auf eine Qualifikation. Und deswegen ist dieser Weg für uns ausgeschlossen. Das heißt..

**C:** Eigentlich schade.

**HRM2:** Sehr schade, das war eigentlich ein gutes Modell, aber das gibt es unter diesen GmbH's, wir sind in Deutschland, mittlerweile so, oder ja in anderen Ländern auch, dass wir auf Qualifikationen Bestehen.

**C:** Okay, bleibt abzuwarten, ob sich das in der Zukunft, aufgrund von Personalknappheit allgemein noch wieder ändert.

**HRM2:** Glaube ich nicht. Die Zeiten in den Büros, in denen man Karteikarten ausfüllte und mit stempeln hantierte, die sind heute auch andere. Und Lagerarbeiter jetzt direkt, die können alle mit dem PC umgehen, aber ob man einen Lagerarbeiter, jetzt 1 zu 1 da direkt ins Büro setzten kann wage ich zu bezweifeln.

Wir haben auch noch ein zweites Problem, dass sage ich dazu. Wir ersticken nämlich in Kaufleuten, wir bekommen also pro Kaufmännische Ausschreibung, 30-40 Bewerbungen, Für einen Lagerarbeiter, keine 3. Deswegen ist das auch nicht mehr durchlässig. Das ist der zweite Grund.

Alle wollen ins Büro, keiner will arbeiten, sage ich mal.

**K:** Warum studieren wir hier?

**C:** Okay jetzt geht es nochmal ein wenig, in eine andere Richtung. Glauben sie das direkte Führungskräfte, bestimmte Kompetenzen benötigen um gerade ältere Mitarbeiter zu managen.

**HRM2:** Sie benötigen ganz sicher bestimmte Kompetenzen, aber nicht nur bezogen auf ältere Mitarbeiter. Sie brauchen sie für Menschen insgesamt. Und nicht jede Führungskraft hat das automatisch.

Wir schulen sie, wir lassen sie schulen, sie bekommen Führungslehrgänge, sie bekommen Trainings, sie bekommen "wie führe ich ein Mitarbeitergespräch" Trainings, sie bekommen "wie hat ein Krankengespräch abzulaufen" Trainings, und bei dem Menschen, der die Neigung dazu hat, mit Menschen gut umgehen zu können, fruchtet das immer. Bei dem Menschen, der die Neigung hat, nicht gut mit Menschen umgehen zu können, können sie schulen wie sie wollen, das ist ganz schwierig. Der kann das auch schwierig umsetzen. Das schwierigste ist, eine Führungsposition zu besetzen, mit jemanden der auch ein Händchen für Menschen hat und das auch zu erkennen, das ist das schwierigste. weil wir ins dieser Gesellschaft, wie gerade der Punkt immer Leistung vorgehen. Wir gucken auf die Zeugnisse und sehen 2,1,2,1,2,1 .. ohh super und dann setzen wir den als Führungskraft ein und merken der kann gar nicht mit Menschen umgehen. Zahlen ja super, technik auch, Software prima, aber Menschen die sind ein Problem. Dann haben wir auf einmal eine Person, die hat nur dreien und vieren und leitet als Führungskraft super ein team und den müssen sie rausfiltern und das ist das Problem.

**C:** Glauben sie, das direkte Führungskräfte Unterstützungsmaßnahmen gebrauchten um ältere Mitarbeiter zu managen?

**HRM2:** das brauchen sie sicher, sie brauchen die Möglichkeit, entweder ja zu sgane ja sie haben mehr zeit, dann müsste das Unternehmen das aber steuern. Das tut das Unternehmen aber nicht, weil wir einem Kostendruck ausgesetzt sind. Wir steuern die Menschen nach Geld, nach kosten. Wobei sie mittlerweile auch Anfängen die Krankenkosten dagegen zu setzen. Aber unterstützt und würden sie sicherlich gebrauchen können, das fehlt ein bisschen.

**C:** Außer der Altersteilzeit, bieten sie da noch andere Programme an, um ältere Mitarbeiter zu fördern oder zu unterstützen.

**HRM2:** Nein.

**C:** Nutzen sie in einer Art, die Kenntnisse, der älteren Mitarbeiter, dass diese zum Beispiel Kenntnisse weitergeben an jüngere Mitarbeiter weitergeben? So als Mentoren tätig sind.

**HRM2:** Ja das machen wir. Das läuft in Form dieser Altersteilzeit. Die Post besteht nämlich darauf, man könnte Altersteilzeit im

Blockmodell machen. Zum Beispiel 5 Jahre vorher arbeitest du Teilzeit, bekommst ein Teilzeit Gehalt. Arbeitest für dieses Teilzeitgehalt und die restliche Zeit kannst du zu Hause bleiben. Das macht die Post nicht nur für 2 Jahre. Für 2 Jahre kann ich im Block vorarbeiten und zu Hause bleiben. Die restlichem 3 Jahre dieser Altersteilzeit muss ich tatsächlich Teilzeit arbeiten. Das heißt jeden Tag in Teilzeit da sein oder auf jedenfall in dem Monat unterhältig arbeiten. Damit in dieser Zeit das wissen des älteren Kollegen an den jüngeren weitergegeben wird. Und wir haben hier 2 Kollegen in Führungsposition, die dieses Modell angenommen haben. Sind alles Mitarbeiter der TeleLog, die ein wenig mehr noch verdienen, weil sie aus der Posthistorie kommen. die haben das Modell angenommen und wir haben Parallel junge neue Führungskräfte, wo wir glauben, das werden die Führungskräfte der Zukunft in ihre Bereiche gesetzt und die werden durch diese älteren Kollegen eingewiesen, unterwiesen und geschult und wenn fragen sind ist der Kollege auch immer wieder sporadisch da. Das machen wir schon.

**C:** und wir denken sie, wird sich die Situation in der Zukunft entwickeln?

Also noch mehr ältere Mitarbeiter oder eher weniger ältere Mitarbeiter?

**HRM2:** Die wird sich so entwickeln, das wir mit den Vorhandenen älteren Mitarbeitern erst mal leben. Versuchen die irgendwie in diese Altersteilzeit Modelle zu bekommen. und das wir das durch jüngere Mitarbeiter aufzustocken und da greift das was ich gerade gesagt habe. Wir haben ein Riesenproblem, die Qualität der älteren Mitarbeiter durch gleiche Qualität jüngerer Mitarbeiter zu ersetzen. Und ich spreche jetzt hier vom Lager, weil wir finden die Mitarbeiter mit der Qualität einfach nicht mehr. Der Markt ist hier abgegrast. Alle wollen ins Büro, keiner will ins Lager. Und die die wir im Lager jetzt finden, das sind sehr schlecht ausgebildete, Leute die wir intensiv schulen müssen damit diese die Prüfungen überhaupt schaffen oder wir haben auch als Lager und Facharbeiter, haben wir Abiturienten angestellt, haben wir auch mal gemacht. Das machen die ungefähr 2 Jahre. die Machen die Ausbildung in der Regel auch recht gut und dann sind die weg, weil die studieren anschließend Logistik. Das ist aber nicht das was wir brauchen. Wir brauchen auch wirklich Leute die hier bleiben und auch arbeiten.

Das wird noch eine Riesen Hausnummer die erfahrenen älteren Kollegen durch junge, gute Kräfte zu ersetzen. Und deswegen bilden wir hier über Bedarf, weit über bedarf bilden wir aus, um wenigstens ein paar der Leute hier zu halten.

**C:** Also gerade weil bei der Arbeit, älterer Mitarbeiter nicht in dem Maße arbeiten können, bis sie 70 sind, wie es zum Beispiel eventuell auf dem Büro in Zukunft möglich wäre.

**HRM2:** Das wäre... war früher wie gesagt durchgängig, da gab's aber auch mehr von diesen Arbeitsplätzen, aber wie gesagt, ja, in Zeiten von Beraterfirmen, von ne... erledigt! Brauchen wir nicht; höher, schneller, können wir einsparen! Weg damit! Insofern fallen immer mehr von solchen Arbeitsplätzen weg.

**C:** OK, ich glaube das wär's für meinen Teil; Dankeschön!

**K:** In meiner Bachelorarbeit geht's darum, dass die Arbeiterschaft immer vielfältiger wird; vielfältiger insofern einmal... bezogen auf verschiedene Nationalitäten, aber auch auf verschiedene Geschlechter; d.h. dass immer mehr Frauen arbeiten; und auch, keine Ahnung, Mitarbeiter mit Behinderung; wirklich alles mögliche was einen Mitarbeiter vielfältig macht. Und jetzt erstmal kommen ein paar Fragen dazu, wie viel ungefähr von jeder Gruppe sie beschäftigen. Also zum Beispiel das Verhältnis von Frauen und Männern, an Arbeitskräften, wie ist das hier?

**HRM2:** Hm, wollen wir mal überlegen... Männer 85%, Frauen 15%; wobei der größte Teil im Büro sitzt. Und Frauen in Führungspositionen: minimal.

**K:** Und wie sieht das aus mit Mitarbeitern verschiedener Nationalitäten?

**HRM2:** Querbeet. Wir haben alles. Von Jordaniern bis zur Elfenbeinküste. Amerikaner haben wir nicht, aber von Engländern bis fast alles...

**K:** Hast du ungefähr einen prozentualen Anteil im Kopf? Wie viele das ungefähr sind?

**HRM2:** Nein, weil wir nicht unterscheiden bei den Mitarbeitern. Wir machen jetzt kein Häkchen dran, á la der kommt jetzt aus der Elfenbeinküste, völlig egal woher der kommt. Im Lager haben wir alles, von Syrern bis ... ich weiß es nicht; alle Nationen. Aber auch erst in den letzten 10 Jahren.

**K:** Ja genau; wir hatten ja gerade schon über behinderte Menschen gesprochen, wie sieht es da aus; beschäftigt ihr da viele?

**HRM2:** Sehr viele! Aber, das hat auch mit unserer Historie zu tun, weil wir mal Deutsche Post waren und die Deutsche Post, als öffentlicher Dienst, hat sich das auf die Fahne geschrieben auch solche Menschen einzustellen. Das ist unter der GmbH natürlich deutlich anders, es zahlen alle lieber, wir gehören nämlich zu einer der wenigen Niederlassungen, die nicht zahlen müssen, weil wir einen sehr hohen Anteil an schwerbehinderten Menschen haben. Wir haben 25 Schwerbehinderte im Einsatz und das bei 300 festangestellten Mitarbeitern. Das ist schon hoher Anteil, ein sehr hoher Anteil. Auch da muss ich sagen, da bekommen wir in den nächsten Jahren immer mehr Schwierigkeiten: Wir haben Schwerbehinderte Menschen eingestellt. Aber dadurch dass die Menschen älter, werden kommen durch Krankheiten, durch irgendwelche Schäden, die die Menschen haben, auch mehr Behinderungen dazu. Und deswegen steigt der Anteil der Behinderten noch an.

**K:** Ja das wäre auch eine meiner nächsten Fragen: Erwarten sie in Zukunft einen Anstieg der Beschäftigung in einer dieser drei Gruppen?

**HRM2:** Bei Schwerbehinderten und Frauen sicherlich wird kein Anstieg da sein, weil auch Frauen sich im Lager schwer tun. Sie wollen einfach auch nicht gerne im Lager anfangen, ganz klar. Der Anteil der Frauen, der auffällig ist, ist natürlich immer bei den Teilzeitverträgen. Bei Aushilfen da sind sie dann wieder präsent überproportional, ganz klar, Männer nicht. Der Anteil der Frauen wird nicht steigen, der ist in den letzten Jahren eher gesunken, [...] und der Anteil der Schwerbehinderten wird steigen, weil wir eben auch viele ältere Kollegen haben, die aufgrund ihrer Einschränkungen versuchen an Schwerbehindertenscheine zu kommen, und dadurch ja in Rente gehen können, ein paar Jahre eher, und deswegen [...].

**K:** Und wie sieht das aus mit Mitarbeitern verschiedener Nationalitäten? Erwarten sie da auch noch einen Anstieg?

**HRM2:** Den haben wir schon. Den haben wir in den letzten 10 Jahren gehabt, wie gesagt, weil wir als Lagerarbeiter auf dem Markt hier in Westfalen - wir haben ja eine Vollbeschäftigung in Westfalen, also annähernd Vollbeschäftigung - weil wir einfach keine deutschen - oder sagen wir - schwierig deutsche Mitarbeiter finden, die mit im Lager die Arbeit machen wollen.

**K:** Gibt es eine Art von Quote, ich weiß nicht, entweder selbst auferlegt oder gesetzlich, für die Beschäftigung eine der eben

genannten Gruppen? Du hattest ja jetzt gerade von den Schwerbehinderten gesprochen, aber es ist jetzt nicht so, dass ihr die haben müsst oder so?

**HRM2:** Es gibt keine Quote, also die Vorgabe ergibt sich eigentlich aus der Arbeit, die wir schaffen müssen. Und deswegen werden wir... wir haben noch zwei Schwerbehinderte hier eingestellt, einmal der Pförtner und noch jemanden im Reklamationsbereich. Haben wir gemacht. Die sind allerdings, muss ich dazu sagen, die haben viele Förderungen in Anspruch genommen, wir haben die Arbeit, in diesem Sinne, des Arbeitsamtes in Anspruch genommen. Da gibt es ja Förderungen und sowas, das haben wir auch gemacht. Nur mit diesem Argument [...] haben wir diese Leute auch angenommen. Dazu sage ich gleich auch, das haben wir nur gemacht, weil es Kinder unserer Mitarbeiter sind. Ob wir das extern gemacht hätten, wage ich zu bezweifeln, aber, wir tun auch was für unsere Mitarbeiter, und wenn wir einen Mitarbeiter haben, und können ihn damit unterstützen, dass wir auch sein Kind unterstützen, tun wir das auch.

**K:** Welche Praktiken oder Maßnahmen zugeschnitten eben auf eine Arbeiterschaft, die sehr vielfältig ist, gibt es? Also habt ihr irgendwie Trainings oder irgendwelche Anti-Diskriminierungs-Sachen oder informationsbezogene ...

**HRM2:** Ja, ohne Ende! Bevor hier einer nur einen Schritt hier in unser Unternehmen jetzt, außer Besucher, setzt, hat er ein Paket von sowas zu unterschreiben, kriegt er eine Einweisung bezogen auf das AGG, also das Allgemeine Gleichbehandlung Gesetz in Deutschland. Da werden die unterwiesen, dass wir in keinsten Form Diskriminierung aufgrund der geschlechtlichen Orientierung, aufgrund des Geschlechts allgemein, aufgrund der Nationalität dulden. Jede rassistische Äußerung oder sowas führt sofort zu einer Entlassung, was wir auch schon hatten. Das hat es also auch schon gegeben. Wir hatten also wirklich mal einen Mitarbeiter der sich geweigert hat als Muslim sich von einer Frau was sagen zu lassen, und damit ist er in Deutschland und auch hier in diesem Unternehmen nicht tragbar und musste gehen. Ja also sowas hat es schon gegeben. Das unterschreiben die hier, und wir weisen auch immer wieder drauf hin. Einmal im Jahr kriegt jeder Mitarbeiter eine Unterweisung und eine Schulung, zu vielen anderen und auch diesen Themen, das wir in diesem Unternehmen solch Formen auch nicht dulden. Interessanterweise, im täglichen Umgang der Menschen miteinander, spielt all das überhaupt keine Rolle. Das ist also ganz deutlich festzustellen. Weder die Nationalität ... Hauptsache sie verstehen sich. Gut, Sprache ist natürlich die Verbindung. Aber ansonsten höre ich hier, und das hör ich auch von anderen Unternehmen, das ganze in der Arbeitswelt spielt keine Rolle.

**K:** Ja, das führt auch schon eigentlich direkt zu meiner nächsten Frage: Haben Sie jemals wegen des Zusammentreffens von Mitarbeitern verschiedener Nationalitäten, Kulturen, Geschlechts erlebt?

**HRM2:** Ja, einmal, den Fall hab ich ja gerade erzählt. Das ist der Fall, der bis zu uns gekommen ist.

**K:** Da sind aber dann noch welche, die unter der Hand dann eben gelöst wurden, solche Sachen oder?

**HRM2:** Ganz sicher, aber das kommt dann nicht bis hier her.

**K:** Sind die direkten Führungskräfte, also die Teamleiter, auch irgendwie dann, weiß ich nicht, wenn es Probleme gibt, direkt involviert in das Lösung finden? Sollen die dann Maßnahmen da ergreifen oder..?

**HRM2:** Maßnahmen ergreifen wenn es wirklich schwerwiegende Vorfälle gibt, falls sich jemand diskriminiert fühlt, oder das er auf Grund seiner Rasse, seines Glaubens, seines Irgendwas da diskriminiert wird... Ne, dann heißt es die Maßnahme klar melden und "Auf wiedersehen"! Damit droht sofortige Kündigung; also da fackeln wir nicht, da sehen wir auch nicht lange zu. Aber das taucht selten hier oben auf.

**K:** OK. Die Frage hatte ich ziemlich schon... Genau, jetzt kommen wir zu den Kompetenzen: Also welche Kompetenzen würden jetzt die Teamleiter brauchen um, wie gesagt, die vielfältige Arbeiterschaft effektiv zu führen, zu leiten? Gibt's da was?

**HRM2:** Nix besonderes, was sie nicht sonst auch eigentlich können müssen. Nein, nein.

**K:** Alles klar. Und...

**HRM2:** Also, wir schulen nicht speziell in diese Richtung, das gar nicht.

**K:** OK. Also dann hast du mir gleich meine nächste Frage beantwortet. Also es gibt irgendwie keine Trainings oder so irgendwie...?

**HRM2:** Es gibt Trainings, aber nicht in diese Richtung.

**K:** Auch für die direkten Führungskräfte?

**HRM2:** Es gibt Trainings, auch speziell für die direkten Führungskräfte, viele und immer mal wieder. Wir haben nächsten Monat nochmal eins zum Thema Krankenstand und Umgang mit Kranken, ne also das wohl. Die werden ständig trainiert, also einmal im Jahr immer wieder. Aber nicht speziell... Das ist auch kein Schwerpunkt, kein Problem, da haben wir andere.

**K:** Ist ja gut, wenn das kein Problem ist. Genau und, ja dann wäre ich auch schon bei meiner letzter Frage: Können sie sich vorstellen, dass die direkten Führungskräfte weitere Fähigkeiten entwickeln müssten in Zukunft, wenn das halt noch mal zunimmt, ich weiß nicht, zum Beispiel mit der Beschäftigung von Behinderten oder keine Ahnung? Auch nicht?

**HRM2:** Nein, ich glaube nicht.

**K:** Das wäre es dann schon. Wunderbar.

### 9.3.3 Interview with HR Manager 3

#### (1) Introduction

*What is function within the organization?*

HR manager Regio Oost (Twente, Achterhoek)

*Could you briefly describe your work experience?*

- Recruiter StudentenWerk Arnhem
- Human Resourch Officer – Payroll
- At the moment: HR manager Regio Oost

*How long have you been working in the HR area?*

From December 2008 till now.

*What exactly are your fields of responsibility within the company?*

My area is Twente & Achterhoek -> 7 branches (2x Enschede, 2x Almelo and 2x Doetinchem + Wageningen) These are 1800 employees.

## **(2) General questions about tasks of line managers in the organizations**

*What are the tasks and role of line managers?*

I'm a staff manager, our line manager (for our region) is responsible for the region. I support the region about HR.

*What were the reasons to assign these tasks and roles to line managers?*

He keeps control over the region and he needs staff managers to support him in a special area.

*Which additional tasks did you assign to line managers?*

*Are line managers are willing to take over basic HR tasks/ HR responsibilities?*

If not, what types of problems did you experience?

*What are your experience about line managers handling HR responsibilities?*

I think its better to have an HR manager with HR skills than a Line Manager with a lot op responsibilities and with less experience with HR.

## **(3) Questions about Aging Population/Workforce**

*How many workers older than 50 have you employed in your organization? (Percentage/Number)*

CompanyName Regio > 30%.

*Will you hire more (due to labour shortages for example) in the future (5-10 or 10-25 years)?*

We would like to try to get less people older than 50 years because cleaning is a very heavy job....

*Could you imagine employing them beyond retirement age set by law? No.*

*Are you currently employing workers older than retirement age (set by law)? No*

*Could you briefly describe your experience with older employees?*

We are happy that employees are able to work long by this organization. But a cleaning job is heavy and we see that people older than 50 are more sick.

*Which policies/practices geared to older workers are currently in place in your organization (if any)?*

Less hours, more time to do the job.

*Are line managers responsible for the implementation of these policies?*

Yes.

*Do you somehow redesign the tasks of older workers to be more suitable for them?*

Yes, more time to do the job...

*What do line managers need to manage older employees?*

Information

*Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees?*

HR support, no judgement, open conversation

## **(4) Questions about competences line managers need**

*Which additional competences do you believe line managers need?*

Social, conversation skills, rest, able to make a decision.

*Which programs do you offer to develop older employees?*

POP, extra time to speak with a manager (what do you need etc.)

*How do you think, can line managers develop older employees?*

To take time and speak with them.

*How do you think the situation will develop in the future?*

In our business it's hard to work with an age of 65+ so that will be a adventure.

#### **(5) Questions about Diverse Workforce**

*What is the proportion of women working for your company? (percentage)*

60%.

*What is the proportion of people from different nationalities working for your company? (percentage)*

30%

*What is the proportion of handicapped people working for your company? (percentage)*

15% (social return)

*Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company?*

No, there is no quota at this moment.

*Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company?*

Yes, people are working longer at one company. Our employees are working a long time at the company.

I can not answer a lot of questions about this, because at this moment we do not have a policy for these groups. We are going to work on this....

*Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organization?*

*For the implementation of which diversity practices/policies are line managers responsible?*

Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organizational levels? No, we are very happy with these differences. The company is a very social company.

If yes, what kind of? Examples, please

*How do you expect the situation will develop in the future?*

*What do line managers need to manage a diverse workforce? A open mind!*

*Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees?*

#### **(6) Questions about competences line managers need**

*Which additional competences do line managers need for managing a diverse workforce effectively?*

Open mind

*Which programs do you offer to develop special skills for line managers?*

Network groups

*Could you imagine that line managers need to develop extra skills to deal with the future demands of a heterogeneous workforce?*

If yes, which? At this company we are used to work with these groups!!

Thank you very much for your help.

Carina Wigbels & Karina Küper

### 9.3.4 Interview Transcription 01.06.2015 – Interview with HR Manager 4

**C:** Okay should we start?

**HRM4:** Yes.

**C:** Okay, we will first ask a few general questions.

For the beginning, we would like to ask you what your function is within the organisation?

**HRM4:** I am for three years working in the company now. And I was hired as HR director for Northern Europe. And that is the existing countries, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. And that is the whole bunch of HR, there are some departments in every country. Some are too small, where I only have an assistant, but others have a bigger plant. I am covering this area.

**C:** And could you also briefly describe your work experience?

**HRM4:** Yes I can. Besides the study, which I did in Amsterdam. Sociology and Economics, I worked in many organisations. I was temporary worker on the HR field, projects and practical support jobs, training and education officer, I was in fact, I did all the things just to gain on experience.

After that I was hired at the company. I have worked there for 11 years in several HR jobs. I developed myself towards, from very green and young, inexperienced, after school towards a more senior HR Manager. Good and nice organisations, good memories. It is like your first love... first employer, first love.

So after 11 years I thought to myself, so this a nice opportunity to do something else, so I started at an organisation which is a Dutch cable company, a Dutch cable manufacturer, but also R&D and Sales was in it. And that so called... responsible on HR activities, so that was the first time that I lead a team. And I was responsible for a social plan and closing factory. Closing the plant and to deal with the unions and etc. and the whole. Well that is a different position, in a team or the only one as an end responsible. I did that for 5 years and as I said in 2012, I started here.

**C:** Okay that is a long time in the HR area. Our next questions would then be, how long you have been working in the HR area?

**HRM4:** It is almost, yeah it is 20 years more or less. And that is besides my study. That was in 1993, I started for free as a HR advisor, where I graduated at a certain organisation. You know it right?

**C & K:** Yes.

**HRM4:** And they had a big problem, financially said. It was crisis. They did not have any money, so to spend for a new worker. But I said, I don't need money, I see all the work here. If you could give me the experience, I will take care for my energy and the work and then I will be for free. I thought to myself, it is good on your CV and to gain on and build on experience.

**K:** All right. Then we will continue with some general questions about the line managers in the company. And what are the tasks and the role of the line managers here.

**HRM4:** Yeah first of all leading the team, and trying to develop the people. And that is a nice HR answer, but reality is sometimes different. Sometimes they forget, because there is a huge product and output demand, which has to be achieved every day. So it is a mixture in the end, about taking care for the quantity and the quality of production, the lead times, internal customer satisfaction, from supplier to delivery and taking care of their people and if they have to take care of the people. You are talking about hiring. Together with HR by the way. And together with a temporary recruitment agency. But also for development of people, sometimes they fire them, if they did not do a good job or due to some other issues.

**K:** So they have been assigned some additional tasks from the HR field as you already mentioned, like recruitment for example?

**HRM4:** Oh yes. I can tell you there is a lot of difference between organisation and the position of HR. You should have read some books. I did as well. Metres, kilometres of literature there is to find, but the position of HR here, you may check in your survey is quite strong. And not only because HR is quite strong, or the HR manager here is quite strong. It is also in the minds of people. So that is the best. You do not do all the things by yourself, otherwise you are... It should be spread out, also to the shop floor.

**K:** Okay, and what were reasons, to assign like extra tasks to HR managers?

Like, are there any reasons for that?

**HRM4:** Yeah, it is the very principle 'HR on the Line' period. There are two kinds of integration of HR activities. You could say in the tasks of the line managers and into the strategy. And there are two integration perspectives, and one of them is quite a principle thought, a vision. As much as possible in terms of HR. If a leader wants to lead the people, than HR is an important part of it.

**K:** Okay. And are your line managers willing to take over some of the tasks and responsibilities, like did you experience resistance or problems with it?

**HRM4:** Sometimes, sometimes we do. And it is not about how important training and education is, it is about how important it is to hire the right people, it is not about, when someone is being fired, who is doing that. That is not the issue. But as you maybe know, our company it a big multinational. Worldwide, global 190.00 people. 56 countries and that has to be controlled. As a consequence, a big multinational has also an internal reference framework and lots of administrative parts. So I always try to reduce to the bloody limit, the bloody minimum, the administrative part for the line management. That will avoid us for the excuse trick. To say hey, I cannot do any more, because I am fully loaded due to all the administrative tasks, so I cannot do the important things. So we skip the administrative part as much as possible and then we can focus on the real thing. But there is some resistance every time, for myself also. There is a squeeze. Because in the end, HR should also think and expect that we facilitate to the max instead of creating resistance, by dull useless administrative parts. And I am very bad at administration. Really and I am proud of it. Because that is, gives me the necessity to organise a team around me. Some people in terms of diversity, who are able to organise that part and I cannot. I do not do that.

**K:** Okay, then I think time for your part Carina.

**C:** Okay I will first ask some questions about the increasingly older employees. I don't know if that is a problem here, but we will find out now.

My first question would be how many workers that older than around 45/50 years are you employing? Do you know that number?

**HRM4:** Yes. Lots. The majority. Ob average the age is 47.1. Last year November we did an employee satisfactory survey. And half year before that a health check and that is why we know. French people, this is a French multinational. They always want to know, want to have facts and figures. They are very keen on big presentations with very, lots of numbers etc. So 47.1 this used to be, in this location, were we are now. This was the former organisation that was a Family-owned company. And people stayed a long time in that company. And they are still there. So lots of older people.

**C:** Do you plan to hire more older employees, in the future, if necessary?

**HRM4:** Yes, why not, but there are two things to consider. People are getting older and younger at both. If you know what I mean.

**C:** Yes, I think so.

**HRM4:** My father was 70, and he was an old man. Today, I think when I am 70. I have to still work. And if I don't need to work any more. Hopefully I have got the health to travel around the world which is more common for people at the age of 70, than it was before. So people are getting older/younger. Secondly, I do not want to discriminate and that allows me to find the best people. In terms of balance, we need maybe more younger people, but not quite necessarily. Because if we hire people, they should have a good experience. And sometimes I say to the management. Hey, you can invest lots and lots of money in a young, high potential, but be aware, he or she could move out in three years. If you invest in an employee who is a little older, they are more loyal, they are more committed, they will probably stay longer in the company and then it is more, could be a better investment as well. It is always a matter about which team is it. What is the best, how many females/males are there, what background, what nationality, what age and then we try to hire the best in that case.

**C:** Okay thank you and could you also imagine, employing current employees beyond retirement age that is set by law? If they are willing to work longer.

**HRM4:** On I... base, yes, I did already. I organised it already. As ... we had some very specialist jobs and we organised, with the big experience, ex- employees to come back. For a project. I know one was 66 and one was 69 or 70. No problem. In Norway we do the same. We have a customer service employee. 50 Years in service. 50 years, it is really amazing. But he knows a lot. So we will stay in contact and he will be back if there is a problem.

**C:** That's good. So you basically answered my next question already.

Then I would like to ask, if you could briefly describe your experience with older employees? So if there are any problems or positive things?

**HRM4:** First of all it is about, it depends on, who you are from yourself. And I was brought up by my parents to have respect, for everybody in the world. For young, for my midst and also for the old people. And I am always, I am convinced that what you give, what you show, that is something you will get back.

That not dependent older people, but zooming in on older people. I have some experience with them. Everyone wants to and also they want to be treated fairly. They are maybe a little more hierarchically focused. Maybe more than the young generations, they are not impressed by hierarchical order and other things. I also think they are more loyal, committed. Of course a physical aspect is, that part of their life, but if you transfer that into illness for instance, people are old and if they are ill, they will stay ill more long. They are not ill that often. The young generation so to say, is ill more often, than the older generation. And if the older generation is ill, they are longer ill.

**C:** Yes we have heard that already. Basically the same words.

**HRM4:** And of course. Some older people have some resistance against the new things. Before asking, it is already a no. Because it used to be better in the past, and I have done that before and I know how it works. So I don't do it, forget it, but I do not accept that. So because that is not showing respect and if I show respect, I want to receive the same respect and if people do not do that they have a big problem with me. It does not matter who they are. Maybe it is god or the queen or the king, does not matter. If I show respect and people do not. They have a problem with me that is our professional relationship. Same for older people. So straight forward and be honest and transparent and discuss about the things that are in front and if you do that with some natural approach as a person who you are, my experience is that you can achieve everything. With every kind of people.

**C:** And do think that especially older employees have some special needs?

**HRM4:** No, on the contrary. They have too much. I am negotiator in a collective labour agreement. We have one ... in the southern part of Limburg which is also part of Europe and for the ... I am a member of how do you say, negotiation and delegation and for some years. And if you look at those collective labour agreements, you know them?

**C & K:** Yes.

**HRM4:** That is, it is overloaded with protection, articles, rules for older people. I think that is not, that is pre-historical not from this time anymore, we should change that, it is discrimination. And not needed. So look... Based on the individual, there is, you can define a solution for that person and the younger people we should take for that. If for instance he or she is just married and has a child, they have some special needs. Flexible work hours, part time, or telework or whatever. We should take care for that. And if an older employee, has special needs, special problems, we should take care for that as well. But I am not going, I am not a supporter for that general policy for all the old people or all the young people. I think that is tailor made. That is making HR so interesting. Tailor made solutions.

**C:** Okay. You do not have any special practices for older employees here?

**HRM4:** No, we have lots of rules, we facilitate a lot, but that is in the collective labour agreement. Seniority days we have, extra holidays, people with the age of 55+ do not have to work anymore in the night shifts. They can chose not to do that and so on and so on and so on...

**C:** Yes we already, heard that in the construction industry, they are allowed to work 4 days a week instead of 5.

**HRM4:** Yes, in this company they can also create that, they have the same possibility. Because we have more than 30 seniority days for people. Above a certain age, which is ridiculous.

**C:** Next to the normal holidays?

**HRM4:** Yes that is about 25 days. Plus 30 or more. Than you can create, you can easily go for a four days working week. The only thing is, the seniority days give you only 85% of your income for that day. But yeah what are we talking about. Then they can work 4 days a week. Cost one day, but does not cost 20 %. Cost only of that one day, 15%.

**C:** Are line managers in your company responsible for the implementation of these policies?

**HRM4:** No not for the implementation, but for the execution. You can distinguish who is the policy maker, that is the unions and the employer on the negotiation table. That is the collective labour agreement. Then you have to implement the policy on organisational level. And in Luxembourg I have an HR Manager who is taking care for that. She has to do that, that is her responsibility. She has to implement and the line managers they have to take care for a good and a thorough execution. That is the part of HR in their task. That is the three way distinction.

**C:** My next question would be about competences line managers need.

They are more future type of questions. My first one would be if you think that line managers would need additional competences in the future to manage older employees, like if the amount of older employees is going to increase maybe.

**HRM4:** Additional competences...

**C:** Like additional skills and abilities. Trainings you could offer.

**HRM4:** This is an interesting question. It is a little bit a suggestive question, because you maybe are thinking that the normal set of competences might not be enough.

**C:** Yes, might be...

**HRM4:** No what do I expect from a leader, from a line manager? Leadership and leadership is container, is a big word and blablabla... But in the end, they need to know about their people, they need to know about themselves, of course they need professional luggage... if it's your affinity, if I'm are working in a technical environment I should know something about technical and environmental issues, but I don't need to know all the details because when I'm a leader I need to organise people who can do that. And it is the same for a line manager: he or she should organise the operators who can do the task, on technical or whatever... A line manager who is a good manager is, I think, also capable of managing older people, old and young. And what I said ten minutes ago, transparency, straightforwardness, honesty, open communication; that is very important for managing different kinds of people. You should switch to the people who are in front of you. And some people expect other things than other ones and the line managers should be able to switch between those different people and their different expectation. Maybe that's an additional one, because in theory from the past, maybe management was more of a straightforward vision how to become a good manager. Maybe the change is that is not only about how to become a good manager, how to become a good human being, how to become a good leader who is aware of the differences in his or her team, form the background specifically.

**C:** Ok, I will ask the next question then. Do you offer any programs for older employees? An example of a program would maybe be a mentoring program that older employees can teach their experience to younger ones or stuff like that.

**HRM4:** We do, but not formalized and I think we can improve on that. It's not about discrimination, positive or negative, but it is a matter of employability and to use each other's strengths. We have lots of older employees, they know a lot in their head and we should transfer that knowledge to other people. And that could, for instance, be in an instrumental solution for mentoring or whatever. That's a good one. We do it, but we could formalize it.

**C:** For example you mentioned in the beginning that you like getting older employees back to do special programs, so these could give their experience to younger ones.

**HRM4:** Yeah.

**C:** And one last question to conclude: How do you think the situation will develop in the future? Do you think there are going to be more older employees? Are there going to be problems in finding employees at all?

**HRM4:** Yeah, I think there will be a shortage on the labour market soon and this time it will be a critical shortage. The baby boomers will leave, they will go for retirement. The sooner or later, the pensionate in the Netherlands has been increased, from 65 to 67, they will leave and that's a big group, a big number of people. In our organisation it is, but also in the whole world, at macro perspective. So that brings a big shortage on the labour market. How to find the people is maybe changing the law, the rules, maybe breaking the rules... And to think more flexible about how to hire the people and under which conditions to hire them, that's from employer point of view. From employee point of view, they should also be flexible on their mind-set; it is a win-win situation.

**C:** So this will maybe also lead to employing older people again? Because for my experience I know in the past it was harder for older employees to find a new employment, especially in the building industry and now they have to employ older workers because they do not find younger people who want to do the job anymore.

**HRM4:** Right. Maybe you could do it geographically? In this country, twenty years ago there were not so many Polish people, or Rumanian or Bulgarians. So you can broaden the borders, but it will be not enough. It's also about employability of the people. That said, many employers need a new way of thinking, because many employers are not willing to hire older people due to some think they think there are in; so that image will change and it is changing now. I am from the generation of more than forty, when I was young, like 18,20, being older than 40 was already a drop out looking for a job, 45 was really old and 50 was 7 years before retirement. I fired lots of people who were 57 and a half years old because for social reasons, for restructuring, for the bigger social plan, for big money in the pocket; it was crazy, it's amazing. We cannot afford it anymore, but it was common sense back then. We are talking about the period until 2000 right now.

**C:** So I think that would be all for my part. Thank you for answering my questions. Now it's Karina's turn.

**K:** Yeah, I take over now. Like I told you, my focus is the diverse workforce. And diversity is characterised rather broad: by different religions, different cultures, different genders, handicaps; whatever makes up a diverse workforce. And firstly there will be some question about proportions within your workforce. Like the first one will be concerning the proportion of women working here; is it rather equal or...?

**HRM4:** No, no, no by far not; industrial company... Every two months I have a meeting with all my European HR colleagues and we share our feelings about diversity. Diversity is a hot shot theme at in our company... and one of the most important aspects of diversity in the organisation is the lady. It makes sense, because we don't have too many ladies... On the shop floor it is 10%, in middle management it is a little bit more and in "cadre", "cadre" is French for management staff and higher, it's 17 or 18 %. So we are measuring the hiring of ladies and we try to hire the ladies if they are equally qualified for hiring... if not I always want to hire the best one and I sometimes have to defend myself to the highest executive committee in Paris. Besides age, we discussed already,

background, nationality... In Luxembourg there are 8 nationalities, for instance, but here there are six or seven.

**K:** This already concerns my next question: How is the proportion of people from different nationalities in your company?

**HRM4:** That is a good one. It is spread, the majority is Dutch, of course. We are an international multinational company, and that is what we want to be.

**K:** How about the proportion of handicapped people working for your company?

**HRM4:** Not too many, we have got 4 working here. But we have also an agreement with an organisation not far from here, for so called social disabled people, they are not handicapped in the terms of arm or legs less, but they are mentally disabled. One of the things why I am proud to be working for this company is we are keen on facts and figure, and big presentations and lots of numbers etc., I told you. The Americans do the same, but the American social heart is quite... straight. It is not in this company, this French company has a big social heart. Of course we need to achieve our results and promises, otherwise we have a problem with the budget, but it is a social company. We are focusing on many aspects of diversity, actually on all.

**K:** Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company?

**HRM4:** Ja, a quota for hiring women we have. But there is a big danger, which I always say in those say European HR committees: Let's not focus too much on hiring women, because image you are a woman and we are hiring you or you get an internal promotion and you will always ask yourself the question: hey is it because of my quality or is it because I am a lady? It is an instrument to achieve your goal, it is not a goal on its own. Diversity, I am favoured about it. Not only by ladies, but everything because the more diverse the more innovative, the more the outcome – I believe in that statements. If we only hire women that will be a big mess for the company because if you put 10 women together in one room you will become completely crazy. Men have another attitude than women. If you put 10 men together in one room, they will all be machos and therefore it is not diverse, it will not create any innovation.

**K:** OK: Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company?

**HRM4:** All. We are forced to do it by Dutch law, the so-called participation law. Secondly, there is a corporate policy for diversity. It is one of our four axes, you know HR policy, diversity, commitment is another one... they measure, they are demanding and we have to follow their rule and will achieve something in that.

**K:** Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organisation? Like trainings or anti-discrimination policies?

**HRM4:** Especially for those groups?

**K:** Yeah, but also for the whole workforce.

**HRM4:** Yeah, we have a gender- awareness obliged for all managers, we have diversity-awareness training obliged for all managers; anti-corruption training obliged for all managers; we have lots of trainings.

**K:** Are line managers responsible for the execution diversity practices/policies?

**HRM4:** They are obliged to follow that training also, e.g. the gender-awareness training.

**K:** Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organisational levels?

**HRM4:** No, look this is just a company like as all companies. Of course we have problems sometimes, we have problems between people and departments, in corporation, in communication; but I don't think that is because of diversity. So sexual orientation is not an issue, maybe it is not an issue because it is not spoken out loud, but it is not an issue. Discrimination of colour, skin... there are working e.g. Turks, all kinds of nationalities, no problem. In our employee satisfaction survey, we have some question on that theme and when it comes to bullying or sexual harassment, we are very sharp on that. Every single complaint is one too much.

**K:** OK. Coming to the competences: Do you think line managers need additional competences for managing a diverse workforce effectively?

**HRM4:** I think the answer is the same that I gave to Carina. I think it is.

**K:** And are there, I don't know, programs in place in order to develop line managers further in that matter?

**HRM4:** Yeah, besides the training I mentioned, for the top management because we are convinced that everything starts at the top. For the top management we have workshops on diversity, last year we had one, this year we will have one; so this is one the executive level. HR is organizing it together with the top management.

**K:** I think that was it from my side. I don't know if you have got any further questions?

### *9.3.5 Interview Transcription 02.06.2015 – Interview with HR Manager 5*

In the beginning we introduced ourselves.

**HRM5:** Yes okay, as you can see on the whiteboard there, this plant is the plant in Enschede, we are currently building one in Hungary. That is on the right, which we started a few month ago. This will be a complete new big plant, which will focus on OE (Original Equipment), whereas Enschede is focusing at the moment, for the replacement market for the tyres. We also have a CEO here, a German (...).

And I am responsible for sales, sales also in Europe and America, tool and tyres, the bicycle division and OE which is a very small part now at the moment, but will be growing because it is a new area we are facing, we are looking at the moment. HR Quality is not my responsibility that is for another HR manager. So I am more supporting everything, but the plant, also supply chain, marketing, product management, accounts, everything but the plant. So that is my sector so to speak, where I am responsible for as an HR manager. I am working here since the first of January in a permanent position, before that as a junior manager, that is how i started here and I though that is just a temporary option and there where so many things that changed. So that is here in this company, there are so many opportunities, also for me, it is good for me to stay. And before that, I was a head of HR in a cooperation in the agriculture branch and before that HR and sales manager at Randstad staffing services. So that is my background. 25 years of HR and Sales. So 10/12 years of sales and 12/15 years of HR. So that is a little bit of my background. I am living in Hengelo and I think it was you (Carina) that called me for an interview last week I had to go to Italy on short notice, so it is good for us that we have an hour for now.

**C:** Yes it is really good, that it still worked out.

**K:** Very nice.

**HRM5:** Yes and I was very curious what kind of other companies you are interviewing at the moment. Because that is always something also for me to learn from.

.....

I thought well, once I found people who helped me, so let's try to do something back for you.

**K:** Yes that is really nice.

**HRM5:** Wonderful.

So shoot with all the questions.

**C:** Actually our first question you already answered quite well in your introduction.

**HRM5:** Yes I thought that was good, so you can see what my responsibility is and perhaps for you interesting to know and look at the numbers not only the divisions.

We are talking about 150 sales people in the sales nations in Europe and America. And about 250 people in supply chain and all the staffing sides. That is kind of numbers of responsibilities. Perhaps that is interesting for you to know as well.

**K:** Yes of course. Okay since you introduced yourself pretty well. I think we can already continue with our first set of questions concerning line management.

**HRM5:** Yes.

**K:** In this organization what are the tasks and role of the line managers?

**HRM5:** I am sorry, but what do you mean by that?

The HR responsibilities or?

**K:** First in general and we will later go to the HR responsibilities.

**HRM5:** It is quite diverse. Cause you have the plant here. There we have different layers of managers, who are responsible for one group of, for a team of production people, but we also have managers here who are responsible for a complete group of people for supply chain or, so they are responsible for profit and loss, responsible for production numbers, they are responsible also for the people. And depending on the department where they are responsible for, let's say marketing for example, we have a head of marketing, and below that we have 5 or 6 managers and each have responsibility for 5 or 6 product managers or event managers, or communication people who are working there. So that depends very much on, if you are talking about staff here at the office or staff in the plants. So that is quite diverse, but everybody has its own group of people and performance.

**K:** Okay, all right. So now coming to the HR tasks. Which additional tasks did you assign to your line managers?

**HRM5:** Ehm there are responsible for helping out on illness, on developing, we try to give the line managers as much HR responsibility as possible. Of course we are supporting that and we are, we have a function like to signal if we see things, or to advise if they ask for it, and also if they do not ask for it. But we try to put as much of HR responsibilities into line management as we can. I think we can improve that even more if we do right now.

**K:** okay, what were the reasons to assign these tasks to the line?

**HRM5:** Because I think that all the line managers, we should, every line manager or coordinator is trained in leadership, and in leadership he should give the right example and he should manage its own team and be responsible for his actions and the decisions he makes. And of course he never stands alone, of course he always will be helped, but it's, we think that to as self-supporting as possible and to put the responsibilities as much as possible towards the people instead of putting it all at the direction, or, general managers level for example.

**K:** Okay, and are the line managers generally willing to take over these HR tasks ?

**HRM5:** Yes, we are very lucky in this company, that especially when we look at the managerial capacity, and of course we can improve, even today, that.. Well everybody here, who works here knows that it works that way. So everybody is used that way so to speak. So they know that it is part, of it, that a team manager also is responsible for these HR matters. And you don't organize that in one day. This is the result of our HR director who put that in action for many, many years. So it is very common in this company. But I know companies, who always think, well, if there is a problem, then go to the HR department, that is not my problem, you know? And that is not how it works here. Thank god! But also that means that HR, the HR managers are very close to these line managers, so they know exactly what is happening on the floor, on the departments or wherever. So they are always working in a very close way together so that I am always good aligned on what is happening on these departments and the other way around. But the one who is the responsible, not me, but the line manager.

**C&K:** Sounds very good.

**HRM5:** Yes it is really a privilege to work that way as an HR manager. Because I also know that it can be completely different. That if there is a problem then go to HR, so and then you are always active as a trouble-shooter.

But not as a business partner and that is what we exactly are here.

**K:** All right. I think it is your turn now Carina.

**C:** Yes, as I already told you, I am focusing on the topic of an aging workforce and would first ask a very general question that is could you tell me how many older workers, like 45/50 you are employing here?

**HRM5:** I am not exactly sure about the numbers, because then I have to check on the data, but our average age is 47/48. And in the factory, the plant we have around 1200 people working and the average contract period is that people are working here, are working here for 20/25 years. So we are facing for the future another problem, because we are working in a 5 shift, in the factory for example and people do not leave the company because we have arranged many things that are very good, But it is ehm, this 5 shifts working for somebody of 60 years and older is a very hard issue. So we are facing a problem when we are looking 10 years ahead from now.

**C:** Okay, and are planning to hire more older employees, due to for example labour shortages in the future?

**HRM5:** No, we are not planning based on age, because as I said, our group is getting older. So it would be, if we would choose, for age, which we do not. Then we would chose for younger people. So that we have a good average in our age, but that is not what we are looking for. We are especially planning on skills. And on being healthy and staying healthy because we do not want them to leave. We

have to take care of our, the health of our people so everybody can have a check-up here, at our health service. For how about their condition, their ears, their lungs, everything. So we have our own health service here. So that is good arranged. Yes it is a privilege.

**C:** And could imagine employing people, currently working here, beyond retirement age that is set by law?

**HRM5:** Sometimes we do. We do not do that very often. Because I think they deserve to retire when they have this age and this age is rising. Right?

So most of the time people want to take care of their grandchildren or something like that. But sometimes, as we have an example this week. Someone is saying goodbye who retired last year, but stayed half a year longer, only because we wanted him to be a tutor, for to new people, we contracted and there was not really another option. And he was the one with the best experience and knowledge of this. Special market, so we asked him to stay and he wanted to do that, but it is an exception. We stimulate them to retire. They deserve that, and then we have a place for younger ones. To build his or her career.

**C:** Okay I think I will get back to that later again. Could you maybe also briefly describe your experience with older employees. Are there problems, or positive things you could, mention?

**HRM5:** Well yes, at the (...) one company for example, there were always very young people, they started there on their first or second job. And then you have a certain challenge where they are starting, buying a house, getting married, having children. So they are in a very turbulent period of time, in which they have to face so many extra things and building on their career and earning money and etc. That is special group I think, when you have only people of that age. Let's say 25-35. That is a very turbulent group. If you are talking about let's say 45 and older, maybe in the plant, sometimes, we have somebody who has extra physical, restrictions because of its age. But here we.. I have good experience when you have good mixture, because when the older, they are, they know how to 'relativieren, I am not sure, what this is in English, you know they do not get upset that much. And they are more like a tutor to the younger ones. The other way around, the young ones bring in new ideas about social media and if they are preparing to be open and learn from each other, then it is always wise to have a good mixture. As well as when you have male and females on one floor. It is always good to have mixture, then bring in the best of everybody. That is what we try to stimulate. So for me for example, I am turning 50 this year and ehm this organization does not look at age, they look at what experience do I need for this job. And sometimes it is good to be a little bit more senior in a difficult setting, than to send somebody young to this position. So sometimes it is even an advantage. But on the other hand, physically it can be tough to work in a five shift, to switch all this schedules always. That is getting hard for the ones of 60 years and older.

**C:** Yes I can imagine. Okay, do you think that older employees have special needs, or other needs than younger employees?

**HRM5:** Yes, I think that they are, especially when you are talking about 5 shifts, they sometimes need a longer period of time to recover. If they had a night-shift, then you must be sure, that they do not switch immediately from a night shift, to a morning shift. So that they have enough periods of rest in it. And especially take even more care of their health. So this is why we do this health checks and we also have now a, this bicycle, so that we can measure capacity of lungs and heart and we want to improve this health. So this is to be a more, when it is not too late, to see in an early stage if somebody is not that fit, as we want them to be.

**C:** Okay that is good and do you have any policies or practices, like HR practices in your company, for older workers, or especially for older workers.

**HRM5:** Not specially for older workers. Because we think that a healthy lifestyle it something we think is very important. So we simulate for example a marathon here in Enschede, we sponsor it, but we also invite everybody to participate. Or other sports activities we sponsor or stimulate that very much. So we put more attention to the positive things than saying well, somebody who is older should be taken care of and we.. No please, we put it in a very positive way and try to challenge the people to participate in these things.

I mean somebody of 60 years can have a better health condition than I have for example.

**C:** Are line managers responsible, for the implementation of this practices or things, that you just mentioned?

**HRM5:** Yes they always do that together with HR departments, because HR sometimes has a special project or because of law, there are new things to improve or to take care of. So HR can .. for help. Or when somebody sees this one, there is something, he is ill for second or third time, then the HR department together with the line manager will talk to this person, to see if there is something going on we should know about, helping, supporting. Or whatever. So line manager is always responsible for his personnel, but HR also looks at it.

**C:** Okay, do you think that line managers need special skills to manage older employees?

**HRM5:** Ehm, yes. but I think it is more a matter of experience. And experience comes with age. So I think, when you have a very young, line manager for example 25, and he has to manage a department and most of them are 55 or older. Then it is getting difficult. Because then that would be hard for him. I think then there is no, I think that is also a matter of respect. Especially in countries, not in the Netherlands, but other countries, so like in the south, age is something you, respect you earn, but when you are a little bit older you have respect because you are older. That is especially in the south. Hungary for example. Turning grey is something that gives you extra respect, the Indian culture, we are Indian company, is somebody who is older has more respect and they will listen to him or her not to the younger one. Then it is getting difficult, that is very depending on the culture in the company i think. So I would never advise to be a manager, when you are 25 of a group who is 50 and older because, what does he know, you know. I don't think that is a good mixture.

**C:** Okay.

**HRM5:** Not specifically older ones but as I said we were focusing on health and force them "you check everybody". And for health for example I talk to a group of line managers every six months to see who is ill who is healthy, who turned ill for third or fourth time, what is happening over there, what do we have to do, perhaps we should advise him or her to talk to our health service or what do we need to do in that case. So it is... we don't put them aside as a special group, we give everyone as much attention as they need.

...

The younger ones need as much attention as the older ones. They all deserve they own level of communication, perhaps. I mean if you are a little bit older you should address somebody with a little bit more respect, depending on the culture, but everybody needs its attention. And somebody of 25 can as easily be ill as somebody of 50 or 55, and it's not that somebody of 50 or 55 is getting more often ill or whatever. When he gets ill he sometimes takes one or two days longer until he recovers, but that's it. So we are trying to get

an advance out of it and trying to be preventive about it.

**C:** OK. Do you offer any programs for older employees to develop them? Programs like the mentoring you already mentioned in the beginning that the older employees train the younger ones, or are there any other programs like this?

**HRM5:** Yes, we work with tutors who help the younger ones in developing themselves and that depends on if the senior manager, so to speak, wants to be a tutor – not everybody likes that – but there are some who are a father figure and love to do so, that's where the younger ones always address to; so that's more of a natural role but in general because of leadership we want everybody to be responsible of his own development, own activities, of his own employability and we stimulate everybody in the company to take care of his own employment. We stimulate studying, development, training as much as we can, also for the temporary workers we put in a lot of effort in the end that they can be able to get a permanent position here as well. So we don't have extra programs for the senior as in age, of course when somebody is more experienced automatically he is the first in line to be a coordinator of a department, but it doesn't mean that the oldest one has the most knowledge, depends on the level as well of course and on the ambition. Not everyone wants to be a director.

**C:** And maybe not everyone wants to lead a group of people because maybe there are not good with people.

**HRM5:** Right. There are people who love to be a tutor but there are also enough people who say: "please, don't because I don't want all these matters".

**C:** OK, one last question to conclude: How do you think the situation, like especially on the labour market, will develop in the future? What problems will you maybe face or...?

**HRM5:** Well, I can imagine that because of the changes that are coming towards us, if it's this company or whatever company, the changes are changing rapidly and even in a higher tempo than it used to be. So on digital marketing, social media, online activities... I can imagine that, let's say 20 years ago sometimes there was a change, now every week there is a change. You have to get used to that and I think that when you are getting older that it hard to cope with all the changes and the speed with which the changes are following up. And I think that it's something which is a problem, on the other hand the labor market is - thank god - growing since this year, and there are more opportunities. So young guys get the possibilities to start a career, get the possibilities to start a job because they were unemployed in the last two, three years, now they are getting more opportunities. I think it will be wise for a company, not only for very conservative companies, to not only look at the older ones because they have all the knowledge, but especially learn the younger ones, because they have the knowledge in the future, especially around this digital developments. That would be wise to always have positions for younger employees in your company because they bring in new influences otherwise there will be some kind of blindness in your company. You work like this because you always did it that way, and that is not the right answer. I think it's wise on the one hand, but on the other an employee should always take care of employability. For example there is another product instead of the tires that would come to the market and then we won't be able to sell all our tires and we organized to close a part of our company, then what? If somebody can only work here and not ever have learned to work in other situations, then I think we have missed our chances. So you must always be able to cope with different situations and that's where you have to train our people in. And that's even more important now than 20 years ago. 20 years ago the people stayed in their job until their retirement, but that's not anymore.

**C:** So, I think that was all for my part, thank you for answering my questions.

**HRM5:** You are welcome. I hope I was of any help.

**C:** I'm sure of that.

**K:** Now I am going to take over. So the focus of my bachelor thesis is the diverse workforce. Diversity is characterized in my case in terms of different nationalities, but also different genders, I don't know, different religions, different cultures, whatever makes a diverse workforce diverse. First, I have some question concerning proportions in your workforce. So could you maybe tell me roughly the proportion of women working here?

**HRM5:** Well in the production there is hardly working anybody because it's a tough job over there. We wanted more ladies but it's physically hardly to achieve. Here in the head office there are more women working, but I think its 20 % in total. It's good that in the top of the organization we have a head marketing which is a lady, so it's good for us, since last July, so it's the first time that we have a lady in the board, so that good news. And this organization is very fond of diversity, not only because of international diversity, but also in gender and everything. High performance organizations in general, it's not because they do have women in the board but because they are open for different ideas that makes them having a higher performance than the ones who only look at: "we want them in one color, in one way...". So it's not the fact that there are women, but they are open to other points of view or styles of communication.

**K:** How about the proportion of people from different nationalities working for this organization?

**HRM5:** Well that's very difficult to say. Because we have the sales nation in 14 countries where people are working, so 14 nationalities. Here we have about different 8 nationalities working, Indian, Dutch, German, British, Italian. And then we have, which I almost forgot to tell, R&D, the Research and Development part close to the university, there are working all kinds of nationalities as well. So in numbers: 14 in the countries, 8 here, more than 20 so to speak, 20 to 25 nationalities.

**K:** That's already quite a number.

**HRM5:** Yes, yes, but that's also because we have got these sales nations, so Scandinavian and everything...

**K:** Ok, and what's the proportion of handicapped people working here?

**HRM5:** That's a difficult one. On Monday we have an HR meeting, with our HR colleagues, we talked about it because there is a new legislation coming up where we have to have at least a certain percentage or number of people with a handicap. I don't know, we don't register that. I know we have one in the works counsel who has a wheel chair and I'm sure there are more people with a handicap, but I don't know.

**K:** The law you mentioned already concerned my next question: Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company?

**HRM5:** Yes, there is a legislation coming up by the first of July in which we have to have a quota of people with a handicap or who have a long distance to the labor market, so we see how to help them out. And that is something which is on the agenda next week, to see about how many people are we talking, how many do we have in the company and then how do we want to act on that. So it's just

a week to early.

**K:** Ah pity.

**HRM5:** Yes, we are talking about that because we have to look into our policies on that item.

**K:** And do you expect an increase in the presence of either of the aforementioned groups?

**HRM5:** Yes, because of the legislation. We are a company that is well known not just because it is big, but because we have a very social culture. We want to take care of our people. What we always do is we are trying to contract people who are unemployed for many, many years so that give them some training, to see that we can create an opportunity, a little bit of work experience for them, and when they worked here for two years they go back to the labor market and find quit easily a new job, because they have worked here. So we are well known for our social character and we are trying to help because we have a responsibility for that as one of the biggest employers around here. I think we will increase because it's regulated by law, but I think we have already... If we would put that in as a goal itself, I think that if we checked in our administration, then I think that perhaps we already have achieved that goal of numbers, but that's not our way of working, our way of thinking.

**K:** And how about women in your company? Do you also expect an increase there?

**HRM5:** Yes, absolutely, especially on marketing, HR. It is not a goal on itself, so we have no policy that when we have two applicants and they are equal that we have to choose for a lady. But we want to be a modern company, so there will be more women joining me.

**K:** And about the people from different nationalities as well?

**HRM5:** Yes that's something we absolutely want to stimulate, although it's not a target set or something. Because we are an international company and we want employees from others companies here to understand each other better and to exchange about nationalities and cultures.

**K:** Do you have policies or practices geared towards a diverse workforce currently in place in your organization? Like awareness trainings or information sessions about it?

**HRM5:** Let's see if we have special programs on that. Well we did that in Hungary. We started a factory in Hungary, we are building that and besides building this factory we are also creating teams which have to manage the factory next year. There we had a special program implemented by London, where there is our Global Office on cultural differences because there in Hungary, European and Indian people had to work together. Within Europe there are already all kinds of different cultures and differences, but not that big of a difference, but between Europe and India that is a huge difference. There we had a program and a training in order to learn to understand each other a little bit better. So that was one of the first thing we implemented there because the team has to work together to make this factory a success.

**K:** And are line managers somehow involved in these trainings as well?

**HRM5:** Yes, this is line managers and HR managers, always together. So we don't make a difference between them, it's not only a line matter or only an HR matter; we always do them together.

**K:** Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organizational levels?

**HRM5:** Yes. Genders no, nationalities yes. But that's what I said these cultural differences, they can be so different. Especially the Indian versus the European. I mean we are Dutch. Dutch people are very direct and if our boss tells us so it doesn't mean that we do exactly what our boss tells us to because we have an own opinion and fight for our own ideas. And that's something the Indian people are not used to, they are thinking much more in hierarchical layers and ways and protocol. It's not really clash but a big difference and sometimes there is a lot of misunderstanding. It's not because they don't want to but it just happens.

**K:** Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage diverse employees? You already mentioned the HR support.

**HRM5:** Yes, especially when for example people coming over here we always help from HR not only to find a place to stay but also how things work. So most of the times we are the first address they can contact if they are things they don't know how it works here in Holland. Line managers for example must be informed about the culture of the one who is coming in. So they must know some things about how it is working in India or in Italy. We try to inform our line managers on that but that is something we should really try to improve. Because I'm from HR and I'm experiencing all of these things for the first time, so I can share my experience regarding these countries, but we can improve on that, there is an opportunity.

**K:** Do you think that line managers need additional competences for managing a diverse workforce effectively?

**HRM5:** Hm, that is a good one. I say yes but what kind of competence would that be? They should have a lot of empathy, to be open to understand that it's not a problem to be different – try to learn from it, try to be curious about it and pick the good things out of it instead of just hierarchically saying: "this is how it works here!". I think empathy, openness, transparency, good communicative skills – I think that is something the line managers absolutely need first of all to contact, to reach out, to understand, to help somebody to find his place in the team; absolutely yeah.

**K:** And do you offer any programs to help the line managers develop in that way?

**HRM5:** No, not yet. I think we could improve on that as well. We are helping on the spot but not in a good prepared program yet. I think this will be something for the future as we are now opening up much more to this diversity issue.

**K:** OK, I think that was it from my part already. Thank you! I don't know whether you got any more questions?

**C:** No, not for the interview.

**HRM5:** I hope I gave you a good idea about how we act as line and as HR managers, how we help each other and that there is not a big gap between it – as in the real HR business partner role. For example if there is a recruitment issue and if I didn't agree or the line manager does not agree then it doesn't go on, so we should both agree upon on a new candidate. Both our votes count the same. So that's I think a very clear picture of how it works here and I know that it is not that way in all the companies.

### 9.3.6 Interview with HR Manager 5

#### (1) Introduction

*What is your function within the organization?*

- I'm a HR specialist in a health care organization, responsible for improvement of HR processes. For example, I organize sessions with employees of the HR administration in order to make their work more efficient and to ensure higher quality. Besides that I'm leading HR projects, like the implementation of a performance appraisal system or participating in HR projects like reduction of the workforce.

*How long have you been working in the HR area?*

- I'm working for 1.5 years in this organization. During my studies, I worked in the HR area as well. So I'm almost 5 years working in the HR area.

*Could you briefly describe your work experience?*

- My experience in HR is related to HR policy making and performing HR projects. Some of the projects I've done: actualisation of HR policies, like policies about working conditions and absenteeism, development and implementation of E-HRM within the organization, improvement of the performance management cycle.

## **(2) General questions about tasks of line managers in the organizations**

*What are the tasks and role of line managers?*

Line managers are responsible for a rayon. They are responsible for all the operational activities, managing the operational costs, managing employees, dealing with institutions and customer satisfaction.

Besides that line managers are responsible for HR activities, such as recruitment, training and development, performance management etc. They are supported by decentral HR advisors and a central HR department with specialized HR teams.

*Which additional tasks did you assign to line managers?*

*What were the reasons to assign these tasks and roles to line managers?*

*Are line managers are willing to take over basic HR tasks/ HR responsibilities?*

*If not, what types of problems did you experience?*

They are willing to perform the basic HR tasks. But they want support from the HR department to perform their tasks. Such as HR policies and HR practices to deal with the HR matters.

*What are your experience about line managers handling HR responsibilities?*

Line managers need to be responsible for HR tasks. I think that line managers experience sometimes problems to perform their HR tasks, due to a lack of capacity and lack of competence. They are responsible for a lot of tasks and it is hard to manage their time efficiently. Furthermore, they are not always able to perform their tasks well, because they do not have the right knowledge of skills. Therefore, a strong collaboration between line managers and HR is important.

## **(3) Questions about Aging Population/Workforce**

*How many workers older than 50 have you employed in your organization? (Percentage/Number)*

*Will you hire more (due to labour shortages for example) in the future (5-10 or 10-25 years)?*

The workforce is aging, this is a big problem for the organization. Working as a health care employee is physically demanding work. Older employees are struggling with their physical health. So it's not desirable to hire more worker older than 50.

*Could you imagine employing them beyond retirement age set by law?*

The organization is in a big crisis, so the workforce should be reduced. Therefore it is not desirable to employ people beyond retirement.

*Are you currently employing workers older than retirement age (set by law)?*

A few employees.

*Could you briefly describe your experience with older employees?*

Older employees have a lot of knowledge. But especially in the house held part of the organization, you can easily gain knowledge to perform the work well. As said before, a lot of older employees deal with physical problems, so the absenteeism rate is high and lead to high costs.

*Which special needs do older employees have in your opinion?*

They need more tools to deal with the physical work.

*Which policies/practices geared to older workers are currently in place in your organization (if any)?*

There are no special policies/practices related to older workers.

*Are line managers responsible for the implementation of these policies?*

Line managers are always responsible for the implementation of policies within the organization.

*Do you somehow redesign the tasks of older workers to be more suitable for them?*

Within the house held, it is not possible. Within the nursing part of the organization, they work in teams. The team is responsible for dividing the roles and tasks, so it is possible to redesign some of the tasks of the older workers. However, they need to perform routine nursing tasks in order to stay competent.

#### **(4) Questions about competences line managers need**

*Which additional competences do you believe line managers need?*

Line managers need competences to manage a diverse workforce. Competences like flexibility, adaptive power and empathy are necessary to recognize the needs of the different groups of employees and to anticipate on it.

*Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees?*

Managers need to have some tools to manage older employees. Performance management is an instrument to get insight in the issues employees deal with in their work. Furthermore, managers need to be provided with information about their workforce in order to manage the required quantity and qualities of employees now and in the further.

*Which programs do you offer to develop older employees?*

No specific programs.

*How do you think, can line managers develop older employees?*

It depends on the specific situation of the employee. Individual interviews with employees can help them to get insight in the needs of the employees. Then different HR practices can be put into practice; for example, internal or external mobility to transfer the employee to another function, job redesign, training etc. Furthermore, older employees are often very experienced employees who can be used as a mentor for new or unexperienced employees. In this way, the knowledge and experience of older employees is used and can be transmitted to other employees.

*How do you think the situation will develop in the future?*

In the health care sector, the aging workforce will be a big problem in the future. Employees need to work longer due to a higher retirement age, but often older employees working in health care functions deal with physical problems. It is necessary to anticipate on it, to redesign jobs for older employees and to secure that their knowledge and experience will stay within the organization.

#### **(5) Questions about Diverse Workforce**

*What is the proportion of women working for your company? (percentage)*

*What is the proportion of people from different nationalities working for your company? (percentage)*

*What is the proportion of handicapped people working for your company? (percentage)*

*Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company?*

No there are no quota at all.

*Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company?*

Maybe an increase in handicapped people, due to the 'participation' law.

*Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organization?*

No specific policies/practices.

*For the implementation of which diversity practices/policies are line managers responsible?*

Line managers are always responsible for the implementation of policies within the organization.

*Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organizational levels?*

*If yes, what kind of? Examples, please*

No.

*How do you expect the situation will develop in the future?*

The diversity of our society grows. So I expect the diversity of the workforce will increase as well. So more different nationalities, religions etc.

*What do line managers need to manage a diverse workforce?*

Same answer as older employees. It is all about managing different types of employees within an organization; different nationalities, ages, gender etc.

*Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage a diverse workforce?*

They need to get insight in the different needs of the employees. Then they need to be supported with the right tools to manage this diverse workforce.

## **(6) Questions about competences line managers need**

*Which additional competences do line managers need for managing a diverse workforce effectively?*

Same answer as older employees.

*Which programs do you offer to develop special skills for line managers?*

There are some special master classes which are offered to develop skills that line managers needed to perform their job well, for example a verbal communication program how to deal with difficult employee interviews.

*Could you imagine that line managers need to develop extra skills to deal with the future demands of a heterogeneous workforce?*

If yes, which?

It becomes more important to be able to customize the implementation of policies/practices into the organization. Line managers need to be flexible and adaptive. They need to anticipate constantly on the changing internal and external environment of the organization, as well as the changing workforce.

Thank you very much for your help.

Carina Wigbels & Karina Küper

### **9.3.7 Interview with HR Manager 7**

#### **(1) Introduction**

*What is your function within the organization?*

HR Manager

*Could you briefly describe your work experience?*

I have worked at numerous companies, starting as a HR Advisor and now I am HR Manager at this organization. Next to that I also have my own business

*How long have you been working in the HR area?*

About 15 years after my studies

#### **(2) General questions about tasks of line managers in the organizations**

*What are the tasks and role of line managers?*

- Business development
  - Marketing and sales to find new clients for the industrial unit
  - Contribute to the development and managing of existing clients
- HR
  - Coaching and managing of employees working in group 1 of the industrial unit (currently group Edward)
  - Execute HRM strategy
  - Managing project
  - Be responsible for own project(s)
- Managing project
  - Be responsible for own project(s)

*What were the reasons to assign these tasks and roles to line managers?*

Fits organization goals and mission/ direction

*Which additional tasks did you assign to line managers?*

*Are line managers are willing to take over basic HR tasks/ HR responsibilities?*

*If not, what types of problems did you experience?*

In this organisation we have made clear agreements on this

*What are your experience about line managers handling HR responsibilities?*

It is my experience that this differs per person, type of organization and the way that roles and responsibilities are managed; there is not 1 general conclusion because there are several factors that have an influence on this.

### **(3) Questions about Aging Population/Workforce**

*How many workers older than 50 have you employed in your organization? (Percentage/Number)*

About 25% of the workforce are older than 45

*Will you hire more (due to labour shortages for example) in the future (5-10 or 10-25 years)?*

Yes we will grow and we need more staff members

*Could you imagine employing them beyond retirement age set by law? No*

*Are you currently employing workers older than retirement age (set by law)? No*

*Could you briefly describe your experience with older employees?*

No bad experiences, motivated and flexible

*Which special needs do older employees have in your opinion?*

None

*Which policies/practices geared to older workers are currently in place in your organization (if any)?*

None

*Are line managers responsible for the implementation of these policies?*

No, they execute them

*Do you somehow redesign the tasks of older workers to be more suitable for them? No*

*What do line managers need to manage older employees? N.A.*

*Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees? N.A.*

### **(4) Questions about competences line managers need**

*Which additional competences do you believe line managers need?*

There is nothing general to say about this. We feel that every person is different so everyone's target form and goals are different.

*Which programs do you offer to develop older employees? None*

*How do you think, can line managers develop older employees? N.A.*

*How do you think the situation will develop in the future?*

### **(5) Questions about Diverse Workforce**

*What is the proportion of women working for your company? (percentage)*

The workforce comprises two thirds men and one third women.

*What is the proportion of people from different nationalities working for your company? (percentage)*

About 55% of our employees are Dutch, 12.5% are French and 12.5% are German, the rest is made up of people from other nationality.

*What is the proportion of handicapped people working for your company? (percentage)*

Zero

*Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company?*

No

*Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company?* No

*Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organization?* None

*For the implementation of which diversity practices/policies are line managers responsible?* None

*Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organizational levels?*

None

If yes, what kind of? Examples, please

*How do you expect the situation will develop in the future?*

I think it will be the same

*What do line managers need to manage a diverse workforce?*

Our line manager are managing a different group of people, there is nothing special they need.

*Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees?*

None I think this is no problem

#### **(6) Questions about competences line managers need**

*Which additional competences do line managers need for managing a diverse workforce effectively?*

Our line manager are managing a different group of people, there is nothing special they need.

*Which programs do you offer to develop special skills for line managers?*

Nothing general, all is tailor made

*Could you imagine that line managers need to develop extra skills to deal with the future demands of a heterogeneous workforce?*

No

If yes, which?

Thank you very much for your help.

Carina Wigbels & Karina Küper

### **9.3.8 Interview with HR Manager 8**

#### **(1) Introduction**

*What is your function within the organization?*

HR Business Partner Supply Chain

*How long have you been working in the HR area?*

4,5 years

*Could you briefly describe your work experience?*

See LinkedIn profile

#### **(2) General questions about tasks of line managers in the organizations**

*What are the tasks and role of line managers?*

Mostly we don't have dedicated line managers, which means that we have managers with strategic/tactical responsibility in their area's with direct reports who cover the operational part. An example is a Customer Service Manager who builds, maintains and strengthens relations with a customer. This CS Mgr has several direct reports for solving issues.

*Which additional (HR) tasks did you assign to line managers?*

Managers are responsible for recruiting, developing and rewarding their people and in addition execute adequate performance management.

*What were the reasons to assign these additional (HR) tasks and roles to line managers?*

Ulrich's model

*Are line managers willing to take over basic HR tasks/ HR responsibilities?*

Not in all cases. What you see mostly with basic administrative tasks is that they, due to low frequency, don't have a clue what to do. That's a waste of time. Developing and assessing in performance depends on the line manager. One is better than the other. Also an international context where you might not sit in the same office, or even another timezone is difficult in managing.

If not, what types of problems did you experience?

*What are your experience about line managers handling HR responsibilities?*

They often need help in the basics, but have an high interest and accountability in taking up the rest.

### **(3) Questions about Aging Population/Workforce**

*How many workers older than 45/50 are you employing in your organization? (Percentage/Number)*

30% or so

*Will you hire more (due to labour shortages for example) in the future (5-10 or 10-25 years)?*

Not specifically a strategy

*Could you imagine employing them beyond retirement age set by law? No*

*Are you currently employing workers older than retirement age (set by law)? No*

*Could you briefly describe your experience with older employees?*

Highly experienced, but also limited due to 'been there, done that'-attitude or physical restraints.

*Which special needs do older employees have in your opinion?*

It depends on the person, situation, work expectations, etc.

*Which policies/practices geared to older workers are currently in place in your organization (if any)?*

Extra holidays when aging, possibility for early retirement, policy to work 80%, 90% paid, 100% pension.

*Are line managers responsible for the implementation of these policies? No*

*Do you somehow redesign the tasks of older workers to be more suitable for them?*

It depends on the situation. In the end there's still work to be done.

### **(4) Questions about competences line managers need**

*Which additional competences do you believe line managers need for managing older employees, if any? None*

*Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage older employees? None*

*Which programs do you offer to develop older employees? (For example mentoring programs) None*

*How do you think, can line managers develop older employees?*

It depends on the need for the employee. We don't treat older employees different than others

*How do you think the situation (concerning older workers) will develop in the future?*

**(5) Questions about Diverse Workforce**

*What is the proportion of women working for your company?*

40%

*What is the proportion of people from different nationalities working for your company?*

Don't know, possibly around 30%

*What is the proportion of handicapped people working for your company?*

Very low, estimate 1% (percentage)

*Is there a quota (internally or externally fixed) for employing a certain amount of either of the aforementioned employee groups within the company?*

Yes, we will have the legal obligation (participation law) and we are actively employing so called 'Wajongers' in internships.

*Are you expecting an increase in the presence of either of these groups working in your company?*

Not specifically. As an organisation it would be valuable to be a representation of the consumer market, but it's not a target in itself.

*Which policies/practices geared towards a diverse workforce are currently in place in your organization?*

*For the implementation of which diversity practices/policies are line managers responsible?* None

*Have you ever experienced problems occurring because of a clash of employees from different nationalities, genders, religions etc. on the different organizational levels?*

We have a Maternity/Paternity portal with tips and tricks, sometimes events.

If yes, what kind of? Examples, please

*How do you expect the situation will develop in the future?*

I don't understand this question.

*What do line managers need to manage a diverse workforce?*

Not different than any other employee; focussing at the need and perform adequate management.

*Which support mechanisms do line managers need to manage diverse workforce?*

No

**(6) Questions about competences line managers need**

*Which additional competences do line managers need for managing a diverse workforce effectively?*

Not applicable

*Which programs do you offer to develop special skills for line managers?*

(Name of the Company) Management Development Programs in several phases, relevant workshop (f.e. mental resilience or coaching), intervision/reflections, etc.

*Could you imagine that line managers need to develop extra skills to deal with the future demands of a heterogeneous workforce?*

No, as said diversity or age should not be a discriminator as people of all backgrounds and ages are different.

If yes, which?

Thank you very much for your help.

Carina Wigbels & Karina Küper