Understanding Workplace Design for Older Workers

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The Investigation

- Suitability of current workplace design for older workers in two industrial sectors (office & manual)
- The perspective of older workers & management views on employing an older workforce
- The match between older workers’ capacities, abilities & expectations, and organisational requirements & strategies

Objectives

- Identify strengths & weaknesses in the suitability of current workplace design for older workers
- Identify organisational issues to be addressed
- Suggest areas for further research & technical developments that might overcome current barriers

Plan

- Literature review
  Update of latest research & review of its relevance to the study

- Workplace study
  Studies will take place at four organisations to explore the following aspects of workplace design:
  i. task requirements, e.g. cognitive, physical
  ii. psychosocial factors, e.g. social support
  iii. individual capacity, e.g. strength
  iv. environment, e.g. access
  v. work organisation, e.g. training
  vi. workplace culture, e.g. career opportunities

- Focus groups with workers to provide insights into perceptions at different career stages:
  i. 40-49 years
  ii. 50-59 years
  iii. 60 years +
  iv. Retired workers

- Interviews with Occupational Health & Human Resource personnel

Potential Benefits

For older workers

- Raised awareness & potential for pro-active removal of age barriers at the workplace
- Better designed workplaces & work systems
- Greater recognition of the value of older workers

For Organisations

- A better understanding of the needs of older workers & what they require at the workplace to ensure equal rights at work & opportunity for all
- Information on jobs & tasks to be redesigned, including the use of assistive technology
- Guidance for attracting/retaining older workers
- Increased knowledge of strategies, polices, support to meet their workforce requirements
- Appreciation of the advantages of an age diverse workforce

For society

Prioritise future research that will overcome age barriers, inform inclusive organisational strategies & enable the older workforce to maintain sustained levels of productivity and health into later life

Progress at December 2006

- Ethics approval granted by University of Surrey
- First pilot study conducted & data analysed
- Data gathering methods have been modified
- Organisations contacted for main study participation

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