Hints and advice

Borderless work

Job related ICT use has made work away from the workplace and during non-working hours more common. At the same time, responsibility for carrying out work tasks has fallen to a much greater extent on the shoulders of individual employees. In many cases it is difficult to judge when such work tasks have been carried out satisfactorily and can be considered completed.

For these reasons, overwork is clearly a risk. The availability of 24 hour contact with workplace ICT gives us a freedom of action that we appreciate in many cases. In addition, increasing employees' power to influence and control their own work often has a positive effect on employees' health. On the other hand, this same ability to alternate work with private activities blurs the distinction between job and free time. Suddenly the traditional clear and relatively long periods of rest and recuperation from work disappear. Researchers stress that this lack of borders increases the risk of the emergence of stress.

Questions to consider and discuss on an organizational level

Use the questions below as a basis for discussing how your organization deals with borderless work and what strategies you would like to put into effect to avoid the emergence of stress as a result.

Choose the questions that are most relevant for you:

- Do we need access guidelines and routines for work outside the workplace?
- How can we combine freedom of action and the freedom to work outside the workplace with a good work environment and good health?
- Do we need better technical solutions for the borderless workplace?
- How can we be sure that users have a reasonable work load?
- Do we need to clarify demands and expectation on deliveries?
- Do we have good social support at the workplace and does everyone have access to this support?
- Do we need training?

Questions to consider and discuss at the individual level

If you think the borderless workplace is affecting you negatively, you should discuss the matter with your boss. Explain how you feel and how you would like the situation to be. Together you can clarify the needs and expectations at work and try to find satisfactory solutions.

Consider how you can improve your work routines. You might want to:

- make clear for yourself and others when you are available and when you aren't,
- limit the time you work remotely because social contact with colleagues can be good for your creativity and well being,

- plan your work day by making a list of what you want to accomplish: work tasks, breaks, private errands. Estimate the time required for these activities. Compare later with the time each actually took,
- set limits by deciding how your work day will look and keeping to your plan,
- plan contacts with your boss and colleagues,
- plan regular meetings to monitor progress, whether by telephone or face to face,
- take lunch and coffee breaks even when working remotely,
- keep private and work e-mail separate.