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“Funnel model” for assessing work load factors of mobile virtual work

New developments in information and communication technology (ICT) have changed the way people approach their life and work. Mobile virtual work is no longer bound to fixed locations as utilizing ICT allows people function freely in various environments. An employee is considered mobile when he works more than ten hours per week away from his primary workplace and uses ICT for collaboration. The available research on mobile virtual work argues that there are new complexity and workload factors related to this kind of working (Andriessen & Vartiainen 2006, Hislop & Axtell 2009, Vartiainen & Hyrkkänen 2010).

Better understanding of the work load factors of mobile work is needed not only by employees but managers, HR personnel and the occupational health care professionals as well. They all have a need to cope more effectively with the work demands of mobile work to enhance well-being. However, it is difficult to fully understand the load of mobile work if the paths of mobile employees and their superiors cross only occasionally. The occupational health care professionals meet the same contradiction: they should be able to analyze the load of mobile work as well as the stress and strain of a mobile employee and to offer adequate instructions for optimizing and controlling the load.

This presentation concentrates on describing the virtual workload assessment procedure, which was developed for identifying the work load factors of mobile work, during which employees are working during their business trips in multiple different locations with the help of ICT. The developed procedure and related concrete tools form a flow of actions, which can be described as a “funnel”. The first level tools are generic and aimed for screening and picking out those employees who have high work load factors and thus risk for diseases. The second and third level tools are accurate and aimed for rigorous and detailed assessments of work load factors of employees with severe strain.

This presentation is organized as follows: first there will be a review of recent research concerning mobile work related work load factors. Secondly the iterative developmental process of the assessment procedure will be presented. Thirdly the developed virtual assessment procedure and the tools related will be introduced and discussed. Finally the limitations of the procedure as well as the further developmental needs will be presented.