



A General Task List for Safety Ombudsmen

Sixten Frey

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Laurea University of Applied Sciences

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Sixten Frey
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This is a thesis that aims to improve the role and know-how of the safety ombudsmen, by giving them more time and resources for their tasks and by increasing the co-operation between them, the managers, and their coworkers. This project was conducted with the occupational safety and health department of HOK-Elanto, which is part of S-Group, and is the largest co-operative shop under their jurisdiction. It's a customer owned, democratically managed company that employs around 6000 workers.

This thesis aims to better the co-operation of the ombudsmen and the organization. By improving their skills and increasing the time they need to properly complete their tasks and tour their stores for potential risks, the overall safety culture will rise in the workplaces. The thesis is based on interviews and the experiences of different managers and workers while the theoretical framework provided useful data on setting up the requirements and the need for the ombudsmen.

The results of this study indicate that implementing an ombudsman in a workplace helps the organization to better improve the overall occupational safety. This creates a safer work environment and a better place to work. With a safer workplace, the less amount of incident related sick leaves will occur and will help the organization to be more productive.

Keywords: Occupational health, Occupational safety, Occupational Safety Ombudsmen, Occupational safety workers

Sixten Frey

Työsuojeluasiamiesten Yleinen Tehtävälista

Vuosi

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Sivumäärä 25

Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on kehittää työsuojeluasiamiesten roolia ja osaamista, antamalla heille enemmän aikaa ja resursseja heidän työtehtäviään varten, sekä kehittämällä yhteistyötä heidän esihenkilöiden ja työkavereiden välillä. Tämä opinnäytetyö on tehty yhteistyössä HOK-Elannon Työsuojelu osaston kanssa. HOK-Elanto on osa S-ryhmää, ja on suurin osuuskauppa S-ryhmän alla. HOK-Elanto on asiakkaiden omistama yritys. demokraattisesti johdettu yritys, joka työllistää yli 6000 työntekijää.

Tämä opinnäytetyö pyrkii parantamaan yhteistyötä yrityksen ja työsuojeluasiamiehen välillä. Kehittämällä heidän taitojansa ja antamalla tarvittava määrä aikaa tehdä työt kunnolla sekä kiertää yksikköä, yleinen turvallisuus paranisi työpaikalla. Opinnäytetyö pohjautuu eri johtajien sekä työsuojeluasiamiesten haastatteluihin sekä kokemuksiin samalla kun teoreettinen taustatyö antoi käytännöllistä dataa työsuojeluasiamiesten vaatimuksia ja tarpeita varten.

Tämän opinnäytetyön osana tehdyt haastattelujen tulokset osoittavat, että työsuojeluasiamiehen nimeäminen yksikköön auttaa yritystä parantamaan yleistä työturvallisuutta. Tämä luo turvallisemman työilmapiirin ja samalla paremman paikan työskennellä. Turvallisempi työympäristö vähentää vahingoista johtuvien sairaslomien määrää ja auttaa yritystä toimimaan tehokkaammin.

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis was to improve the general knowledge and representation of safety ombudsmen for the Organization HOK-Elanto where the author was employed during the period in which this was written. Christa Pessi and Riku Heijari from the company's Health and Safety department supervised the responsibilities and the thesis was research based. The following three issues were considered key focus points on the work conducted and provided discoverable information for the employer:

- The co-operation between safety ombudsmen and store/service managers
- The co-operation between safety ombudsmen and other employees
- The overall expertise of the ombudsmen

1.1 Client Company

HOK-Elanto is working on new ways to improve the occupational health and safety of the company during the summer 2022, and this thesis will be a part of it. While this thesis focuses on stores, all of it can be adapted to work on restaurants and their ombudsmen also.

HOK-Elanto is a part of S-Group and is its largest co-op store and one of the most important employers in the metropolitan area. The purpose of customer owned HOK-Elanto is to provide services to its customer-owners and regular households. The company employs around 6000 workers. (HOK-Elanto 2021)

HOK-Elanto has branched into regular stores, department stores, restaurants, fuel, and carwash business. It has approximately 340 places of business and works in Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Hyvinkää, Nurmijärvi, Mäntsälä, Tuusula, Kerava and Järvenpää. (HOK-Elanto 2021)

S-Group is a customer-owned Finnish network of companies in the retail and service sector with more than 1,800 outlets in Finland. They offer services in supermarket trade, the department store and specialty store trade, service station store and fuel sales, the travel and hospitality business and the hardware trade (S-Group, 2021). S-Group consists of 19 independent regional co-operatives and SOK. S-Groups network extends throughout Finland, with a strong regional focus. (S-Group, 2021)

1.2 Central Concepts

This thesis will have mentions using some of our company's social media applications; Workplace and Workchat. These are a business communication tool from Meta, that all the

employees use to communicate within the company. This is also our main source of information since all updates on safety issues, sales info, shift changes, etc. are posted here.

We also have a KAMU, which is a handheld computer size of a phone, that we use in our work. The tool is used for checking product information, ordering more product, changing prices and more. More importantly, it has access to S-Turva, mentioned below, and would be handy for each ombudsman to have their own for workdays. That way if they notice any anomalies in the workplace, they could report it immediately.

The safety report program S-Turva, that I mentioned earlier, is a tool that allows anyone in the store to report incidents, accidents, broken equipment, or close-call situations that might happen. Currently this tool is mostly used by the employees at the info kiosk, or the managers. This is one of the development targets that I will go over since it should be part of the ombudsmen daily tools.

An occupational safety ombudsman is an elected individual in a company that helps the Occupational Health and Safety representatives. (COS 2022) In this case, they are in stores and restaurants. They represent a specific limited group of employees in particular department or division. Their main duty is to work as an assistant to the safety representative but also make sure that their unit, store, or restaurant is safe, and all issues are reported forward. (COS 2022)

Ombudsmen should not be confused with Occupational Health and Safety representatives, who is responsible of the whole organization's safety related issues, rules, and regulations. The rights and duties of occupational health and safety representatives are based on the Occupational Health and Safety Act (738/2002). Occupational safety representatives co-operate with the employer and occupational health care provider. (PAM 2022)

Since the ombudsmen are closest to any issues that might turn up in workplaces, improving their skills and position will help them interfere on dangerous situations, pinpoint possible risk areas, and prevent any future accidents. Currently only a handful of stores have an ombudsman, so another goal for this thesis is to create a unified task list. This list helps make the job a simpler to understand by the ombudsmen and the managers. Most of the managers don't know what to do with and ombudsman and many think that it is not a relevant position, this can be used to justify the need for the position.

I believe that skilled ombudsmen would be an asset to workplaces, because when the store has trained eyes looking for and preventing risks, the overall safety will improve. With improved safety, the less work-related accidents happen which lowers the amount of extended sick leaves (Koskinen and Peiponen 2010). With a skilled ombudsman watching over the store,

the safety culture of the unit has a chance to improve. With people starting to watch over each other when working and warning them if they are doing something wrong.

I will also go through the definition of occupational safety and shortly address the importance of it in a workplace. I have noticed that not many take it seriously enough, especially in retail. This leads to neglect, which in turn leads to people being more prone to accidents. By changing people's view on occupational safety and safety culture, the ombudsmen will also have a directly proportional influence on safety related issues.

I will exclude any mental related issues like, stress, exhaustion, and mental health, since they are not related to ombudsmen related issues and the ombudsmen are not equipped, are under resourced and under trained for those subjects. While these subjects' matter and are important, they are not something that regular ombudsman should handle and are better left to professionals specialized in that area. I will also not try to implement any introduction programs for new employees and instead focus on bettering the ombudsmen.

2 Occupational safety

According to The Centre of Occupational Safety (COS 2022), for occupational safety and employee wellbeing to be in order, the employees must be aware of the organizations processes, methods and environment and the risks that are related. By anticipating the liabilities and issues that might lower the work capacity of an employee, they can prevent accidents and assure that the workplace is safe and functional. The Centre of Occupational Safety also states that, occupational safety is all about co-operation and working on one's own initiative forms the basis for safe and healthy working conditions. With the employer and supervisors acting as representatives are legally responsible for the safety and healthiness of the workplace. (COS 2022)

Occupational safety is also required from employers as part of Occupational health and safety act (738/2002 §8), where it is stated that "Employers have a duty to take care of the safety and health of their employees while at work. For this purpose, employers shall consider the circumstances related to work, working conditions and other aspects of the working environment as well as the employees' personal abilities."

Regarding safety, employees should never think that someone else will take care of a problem, or that it is not their place to interfere since safety issues belong to everyone. Incidents always have a starting point, and an order caused by incidents and effects. Figure 1 below shows the usual cause and effects in occupational health and safety.

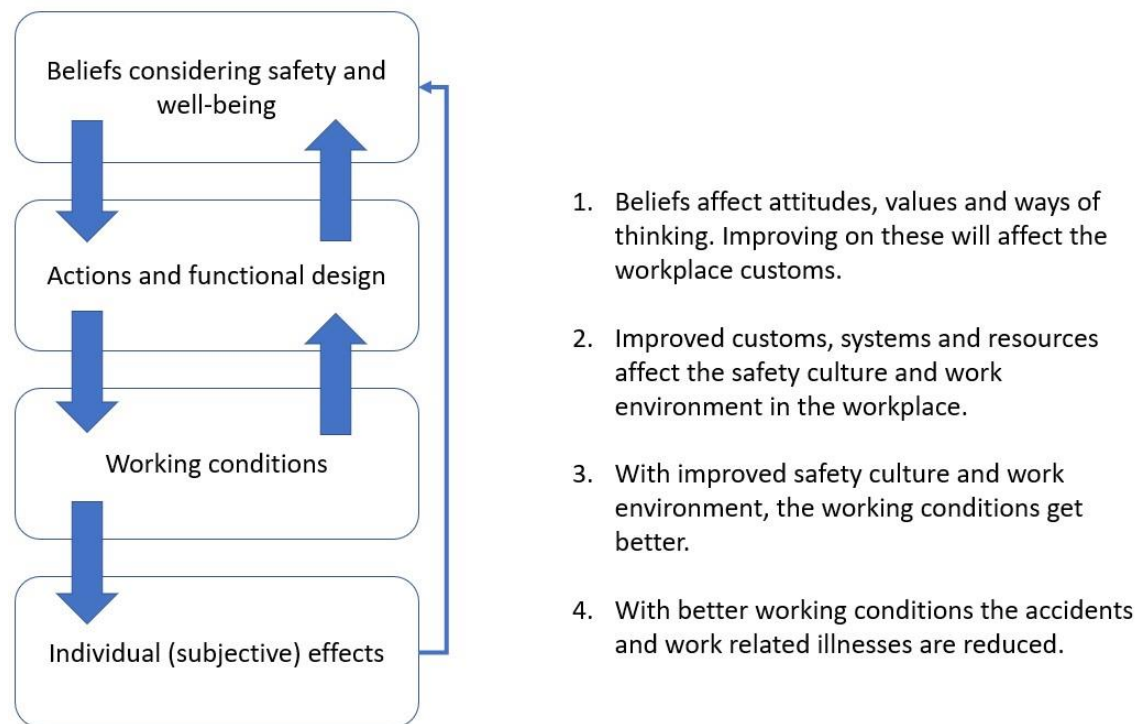


Figure 1 - Most common cause and effect relations in health and safety (Tarkkonen 2016)

According to the figure, employees' attitudes are affected by their beliefs, values, and ways of thinking. This means that if the employee doesn't value safety, they will not care for these values. Thus, improving on making safety issues more important and bringing them up, will affect the workplace customs and help reduce possible incidents. By improving these customs, the workplace's safety culture and work environment will improve. With improved safety culture and work environment the working conditions get better, and with improved working conditions the work-related accidents and illnesses are reduced. (Tarkkonen 2016)

2.1 Occupational safety ombudsmen

According to the Employment Contracts Act (55/2001) Chapter 2 Section 7 (FINLEX) "The employer shall observe at least the provisions of a national collective agreement considered representative in the sector in question (generally applicable collective agreement) on the terms and working conditions of the employment relationship that concern the work the employee performs or nearest comparable work."

Almost every line of work has its own collective labor agreement. According to the retail collective labor agreement and its subsection, occupational safety ombudsmen are not mandatory in workplaces but can be elected via voting from the employees (Kaupan Alan työsuojelun yhteistoimintasopimus 2020).

This document also states that if it's locally agreed to choose an ombudsman, the following points are exercised:

- The domain of an ombudsman can be a part of a company e.g., store, warehouse, or an office
- The domain can also be a specific group of employees e.g., salespersons, warehouse workers, or office workers.
- The employee makes sure that the ombudsman has available the required laws, directives, orders, and guides that are needed for this role.

The tasks that the ombudsman has on their domain include

- Take part in the Occupational health and safety check up
- Take part in the research that are put into motion via risk of accidents or occupational diseases or the possibility of their effect planning and executing Occupational safety work
- Observe and enforce the occupational health and safety rules and notify if they are broken

(Kaupan Alan työsuojelun yhteistoimintasopimus 2020)

2.2 Occupational safety ombudsmen in HOK-Elanto

Occupational safety ombudsmen are elected among workplaces from the employees. In HOK-Elanto, they represent the stores and restaurants, and work together with the health and safety department and the managers. Currently the ombudsmen have no clear tasks because these tasks are planned individually in each unit. They mostly are expected to keep an eye on the store and report any issues they see e.g., broken equipment or damaged infrastructure.

As mentioned in the introduction, the ombudsmen are not expected to provide mental health assistance if an employee might need it. Of course, they should try to talk to anyone showing these symptoms and ask if they are ok and direct them to the occupational health service provider. Any further than that, is on the ombudsmen themselves if they want to be involved any deeper in the employees' problems.

Since this role is vague on what is expected, it has not reached that much of popularity in the organization. Many workers confuse this role with the employee's representative, or shop steward. This role is also considered by many, trivial, since it is often thought, that all of what the ombudsmen can do, can also be done by normal workers. This in turn leads to a situation that many of the ombudsmen are not taken seriously when they try to help or correct

their coworkers. It also creates a situation where employees might not talk about issues because they think that someone else will, or has already told about it, with an ombudsman in the store, these issues would be brought forward with more guarantee.

Improving the visibility, responsibilities, and tasks will help bring the role into light. This possibly helps to increase the amount and credibility of the ombudsmen. With the ombudsmen's credibility and expertise improved, they would be able to better interfere in dangerous situations, instruct better and safer work methods and spot problematic locations in the store.

2.3 Safety culture

Safety culture is essential for the prevention of injuries and illness. Management systems and programs can provide an effective safety framework; however, it ultimately is the worker's perception of the value of safety to himself and the importance of safety to the organization. The biggest impact on occupational safety in workplaces is the attitude towards it. No matter how many rules, suggestions, or regulations are placed on stores, if the employees doesn't care about them or what happens to themselves, the rules will not work (Masdorf 1999). Therefore, improving the mindset towards the occupational safety issues needs to be improved. Currently, many older employees feel like the rules are stupid and that the rules interfere with their jobs, or it takes too much time to work safe.

The employees seem to feel that they are in a constant rush or hurry. This can be labeled as hurry-sickness. Despite the name, hurry-sickness is not an actual medical condition, but a pressing need to constantly be on the move and hurry through tasks. (Raypole and Legg 2021) While the article I referred to talks about office workers, it is easily applied to retail and restaurant issues.

Whether it's in retail stocking shelves or in a restaurant filling orders, one might easily start feel overwhelmed by all they need to do. This might then show up as:

- Speeding through your workplace half walking half running
- Leaving your break earlier than needed
- Rushing through work and given tasks, which might lead to mistakes and having to do them again
- Feeling irritated when faced with delays
- Constantly finding ways to save time

Neglecting to give work the attention it needs usually leads up to doing it again, or leaving it as is, knowing it could've been done better. (Raypole and Legg 2021)

With older employees running around and rushing their work, the new employees might start to feel obligated to do the same. Which results in a vicious cycle of spreading the hurry

sickness. Many new employees are someone who has just started their career life and are very young and therefore easily influenced to do their tasks like the older employees. This phenomenon should be addressed in the orientation phase with the new employee, telling them that it is more important to focus on your work and do it safe, rather than fall into the feeling that you are in a constant hurry. (Raypole and Legg 2021)

3 Methodology

The main method of research for this thesis was the interviews. Interviews were chosen because it was the most efficient way of obtaining same information from the managers and other ombudsmen. Questionnaires, while efficient, would have been redundant in this scale of questioning since there are not that many people to answer the questions. The interviews were aimed for managers, service managers and the safety ombudsmen and it was planned to get answers from each ombudsman and manager.

There are few methods to interviewing e.g., structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick 2008). From these, the semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to diverge and pursue an idea or response in more detail (Gill, et al, 2008). Seeing as my interviews are required to gather user experience data and recommendations on how to improve the ombudsmen, the semi-structured interview method was the most efficient choice. An interview template was constructed that was used with each manager and ombudsman to get coherent answers.

The research process of this thesis started by interviewing the managers of different Prisma's and S-Markets. The interviews were simple and short. The questions were open ended and was designed so that the managers were able to tell their opinions on how to improve the cooperation between them and the ombudsmen.

After the interviews with the managers, I started interviewing the other ombudsmen. This proved to be a small problem, since all of them were either busy, or didn't want to participate that much. After a while, I managed to get enough interviewees to receive enough relevant data.

After the interviews were done, I started going through them systematically. Searching for similarities and contradictions in the answers. I then compiled them together and started working on a way to create a list of what the ombudsmen could and should do in their workplaces. This list is presented to the safety and security board as a method to increase their effectiveness, expertise, and popularity. With a unified task list, the ombudsmen will be doing the same tasks regardless of the unit they are working at, this in turn will make it clearer

for other stores and restaurants what is expected of them and will make it easier to find more applicants to this position.

The interviews were constructed of a few simple questions that were developed with the Occupational Health and Safety unit and were different for the managers and the Ombudsmen. The interview base changed a bit in between the interviews since new points of view came up during them, but this didn't invalidate the previous results and answers.

The questions for the managers were as follows.

- What should the Occupational Safety Ombudsmen do more?
- How often do you have scheduled meetings with them?
- What kind of co-operation you hope from them?
- How well do you know their expertise on S-Turva and first aid skills?

Questions for the ombudsmen

- Why did you apply for this role?
- What kind of safety experience do you have?
- What do you think you should be doing more?
- How do you make yourself known in the workplace?
- Have you had any trouble with the other employees?

4 Interview results

The interviews started with Prisma store managers, also the service managers and then the other ombudsmen were interviewed afterwards. I tried contacting the managers of the S-Market chain, but none of them answered to my e-mails. For this thesis some of the occupational health and safety team were also interviewed regarding their experience on occupational safety matters. The interviews were done via Teams and phone call and were noted down, recorded and, they lasted for 20 to 30 minutes. The interviewees wished to remain anonymous.

The Occupational Health representative of the Alepa chain were also interviewed. From them it became apparent that Alepa is an almost completely different compared to the other chains. Since each Alepa only has approximately 10 workers each, they do things their own way.

Getting enough people to participate in my interviews, proved to be more difficult than expected. Matching timetables with people who all work on different shifts was challenging, but

in the end, there was enough interviews from 13 different people to get relevant data on their experiences.

4.1 Interviewing the store managers

The store manager is responsible for the results of their store. They lead the store in the line the co-operative stores values, business idea and concept. They are also responsible for improving their own, and the expertise of their workers.

There was a manager rotation cycle in December 2021, this means that most store managers shifted into a new unit. This left the managers with less time to get to know the ombudsmen and resulted in answers that were vague, hence almost all of them informed me that the stores service managers are better prepared to answer my questions. Most of the managers also had two Prisma's that they managed, so one person answered for the methods for two units.

When asked what the ombudsmen should do more, and all of them wished that the ombudsmen would make themselves more noticeable since as it is, the role is very invisible. By reminding employees who they are, what they do and how to contact them is a quick fix that can be done easily via our Workplace application. There they could post: a bio of themselves, news regarding safety issues and reminding people how to work safe. Four of the managers also wished that the ombudsmen would keep their eyes open and inform about any issues or defects that might occur in the workplace. They hoped that the ombudsmen would bring these matters, and any possible development ideas, boldly to their knowledge.

The next question was about how often the ombudsmen, and the managers have conversations and how often they should have them. As mentioned earlier, most managers had just shifted into a new unit so almost all of them haven't had the chance to speak or even meet with the ombudsmen yet, but they were working on it. All of them did say that they are planning on implementing meetings twice a year, where they would go through security and safety issues and what to develop in the workplace.

There were a couple of questions regarding the overall expertise of the ombudsmen, and the whole staff. When asked about if the staff knew how to use S-Turva, only a few managers even knew about how many had the knowledge about the application. Rest of the managers did know that the application is mainly used by the people who work at info and the service manager. They don't use the program themselves that much, only to check about the incidents that have happened in the workplace recently and that if those incidents are being handled.

When asked about the current situation of first aid knowledge the answers were worrying. Because of COVID-19 epidemic lockdown in 2020 to 2022, the first aid courses were put on hold, this resulted in the expiration of the first aid card of many employees. Luckily, all the ombudsmen have had their training recently when the restrictions were lowered for a while last year.

4.2 Interviewing the Service managers

The service managers are responsible for the efficient use of staff, expenses, and that the chain operates according to given guidelines. They are also responsible for the realization and improvement of the customer service. They lead the workforce with the given guidelines and following the values and ethical principles of HOK-Elanto.

I started interviewing the Service Managers since almost every store manager had just shifted to a new unit and didn't know the stores ombudsmen yet. The service managers were easily reachable and were glad to help me out.

When asked what they think the ombudsmen should do more, the answers were almost the same that the managers gave. The service managers wished that the ombudsmen would make themselves more visible and make the co-operation between managers and ombudsmen possibilities clearer. The service managers also said that the ombudsmen could be used as the middleman between employees and managers. This is something that also the ombudsmen wished they could do more, talk to employees about possible issues and then bring that info to the managers and vice versa.

It was also asked if there are any general tasks that could be added to the list that is being designed for the ombudsmen a few points were brought up.

- Taking care and informing about ergonomics
- Handling the first aid cabinets
- Quarterly tour of the store and informing about any issues that might show up

These points should be easily implemented in the ombudsmen's task list, as they are each important aspects of occupational safety and they don't take much time to do when needed.

When asked how often they meet up with the ombudsmen, most said that they have not yet had the chance to meet with the newly appointed ones but are planning on having a scheduled meeting with them soon. The ones that have had an ombudsman for a longer period said that they meet up when there's something to report. When suggested the biannual approach, all were in favor. This of course does not mean that if there is something to report, that it should not be brought up until the meeting. The meetings would be more in the grander scale repairs, or changes and reports from employees about issues that needs to be fixed.

4.3 Interviewing the ombudsmen

Getting enough ombudsmen to be interviewed proved to be more difficult than the managers, since they all work in different shifts so getting the timetables to match was bit of a challenge. After a bit of adjusting and persuading, I managed to get enough people to answer my questions.

I started the interview with asking what piqued their interest in the safety area and why they applied for this role. Most said that they were recommended by other employees and kind of went with the flow, and others had genuine interest in making the workplace safer. Most have had a long-time experience working in the store, so they know where to interfere in that regard.

A batch of new ombudsmen started in January 2022, so when asked how often they talk with their service-, or store managers, most of them said that they have not yet had the chance for a proper talk. Whereas the ombudsmen that have been on the role longer simply just go up to the managers if they have something to say. When asked if they would like for an implementation of a biannual chat with both managers all of them were in favor. In these chats they could be able to talk about changes in the safety infrastructure, working methods or bring forward suggestions from the employees.

Next question was about what kind of co-operation the ombudsman wishes from their managers. All the interviewees answered that they wish for support and being taken seriously when they talk about safety or ergonomic issues. Currently most stores have a generation of stubborn workers that know how to work safe but refuses to do so. When confronted about this, they just grunt or laugh saying that it's a waste of time. If the ombudsmen would have the managers support when interfering in these situations, the response might be different. The ombudsmen also hoped for more influence in safety matters.

When asked about the ombudsmen's credibility and whether employees take them seriously in the workplace, many of the new ombudsmen said that there are issues with the older generation not complying when asked to follow the lifting instructions or other safety procedures. The ombudsmen that have been working for longer told that there haven't been any issues since all the employees know them and that they need to be taken seriously.

Next question was about how the ombudsmen bring themselves known to the employees and what they do to remind people of safety issues. Most answered that they have posted a flyer of themselves in the break rooms notice board and made an introduction in Workplace. They also use Workplace for posting and sharing safety news whenever they are updated, or new information is shared by the Occupational Health and Safety Department.

When asked about what they hoped they could do more, or should be added into every ombudsman's task list, nearly all of them said that they wished for a specific time when they could do a tour of the store specifically to look for broken equipment, structure flaws, talk to employees if they have noticed anything, and so on. This would be beneficial improvement since it allows the ombudsmen to prevent possible accidents and at the same time make themselves known better in the workplace. Talking to employees gives the ombudsmen perspective on different tasks in the store and allows them to see flaws that they might have not previously known to even look for.

4.4 Interviewing the safety department

I interviewed the secondary Occupational Health and Safety representative of HOK-Elanto regarding these issues, but since the questions were firstly planned for managers and other ombudsmen, I had to do some improvisation.

I asked about what the ombudsmen should do more in the workplaces. The interviewee told me that it would be good if they would interfere in situations, take care of employee well-being and watching the store from the employee point of view. Making sure that the floors are intact, transport routes are clear, shelves are steady, etc.

They also mentioned that the job of an occupational safety person is to be a team player, to be in contact with the employees, managers, and the maintenance crew of the store. They also should, in the interviewee's opinion, improve their communication skills. That when a situation occurs, they can turn it so that it will be beneficial for both parties.

When asked about how the ombudsmen would gain credibility in the workplaces, it was said that repetition is key, and confidence goes a long way. Meaning that doing the same thing repeatedly, the ombudsmen gain confidence and with that they can interfere easier during dangerous situations that might rise. The interviewee also said that fixing little things increases the trust in the employees for the ombudsman which again in turn, increases their credibility.

The interviewee also said that it is important for the ombudsmen to not to feel alone and remember that they have a support group of other ombudsmen and occupational safety workers. They should feel that they have someone to reach out to when in a pinch or if anything is unclear. The interviewee also said that it would be important for the ombudsmen to meet up to lower the threshold to call someone, in their opinion, when people have met up once it is easier to contact them again in the future.

5 Improving the role of ombudsmen

As mentioned before, it was planned with the Occupational Health and Safety Department about generating a new task list for the ombudsmen, so that everyone would have the same tasks regardless of the unit they are working in. With a unified task list, it is easier for the stores to manage the ombudsmen and customize their tasks to fit their unit.

Currently, the tasks that the ombudsmen are expected to do, are not mentioned at all when the position is promoted in units, which leads to employees overlooking the flyer thinking that it's something they don't have the experience or training to do. By creating a proper and universal task list for the ombudsmen, the job can be made clearer and more approachable. So that when an employee checks out the flyer on what is required, they can determine with more clarity whether it is something they would be interested in.

During the interviews the managers, service managers and the ombudsmen were asked what they think should be included in this list. With their help, my own ideas and the help of the companies Occupational Health and Safety Department, we came up with this list. These tasks should be included with the one that is mentioned in the collective labor agreement.

The list was constructed from the results of interviews and the opinions of both the managers and the ombudsmen on what would be important to focus on.

1. Checking the first aid cabinets and making sure that they are full, and the equipment is not expired.
2. Safety walks where the ombudsmen can walk around the unit without interruptions checking of malfunctions, irregularities and talking to other employees if they might have noticed anything.
3. Making sure people work safe and ergonomically
4. Communicating with the managers about safety issues
5. Teaching and guiding employees in better work methods
6. Being the middleman between employer and employee
7. Using S-Turva to report situations, but especially close calls.
8. Reporting to the Occupational Health and Safety Department periodically on how things are going in the unit.

While the list is not all-inclusive, and not in the order of importance, it is meant to be a tool for each ombudsman that helps them get started in their workplaces. With this, the manager and the ombudsman can check which tasks are applicable to their unit and can remove or add into it if needed.

The tasks on the list show us that they are something that usually can be done during working hours, so it is not necessary required to give them extra time to fulfill their role. The exceptions to this are points 1 and 2. These are tasks that should be handled with time and care and if possible, give time to do outside the ombudsman's normal working hours.

It would also be beneficial for the ombudsmen to receive a proper training to HOK-Elanto's ways of working, tools, and principles. This would help them get to know how to use KAMU and S-Turva. They all should also go through the basics of workplace safety in the safety courses run by PAM or COS. This helps them work better and with more confidence.

6 Conclusion

The thesis reached its goal to create a universal task list for current and future ombudsmen. This list is fully customizable and can be matched for the unit the ombudsman is working in, whether it is a store, restaurant, or a hotel. This list can be used to improve the amount of ombudsmen in the workplaces, because it clarifies what is required from the applicant.

The thesis would have benefitted from more interviews and in the future, it would be beneficial for the Occupational Health and Safety Department of HOK-Elanto to pursue these interviews when they audit workplaces. It would also be valuable for the company to implement courses for mental first aid to help the ombudsmen help employees that suffer from exhaustion and stress and to try and prevent any damage that might happen from these conditions.

The need for an ombudsman is not necessary, but it is recommended. While it is mentioned in the collective labor agreement, it is not mandatory. With an ombudsman in the unit, however, the overall workplace safety can be improved. With them watching over the other employees they can easily work as hands, ears, and eyes of the managers and report any possible risk forward. At the same time, the ombudsman should work as a neutral party, watching over their fellow employees while at the same time enforcing the rules that are placed by the employer. Getting to know their coworkers is important, the more they trust the ombudsmen, it more likely they come and talk to them if they feel something needs to be improved or fixed.

A safety ombudsman has a chance to make the safety culture in the workplace better. By guiding employees and ensuring that people follow safety precautions, they could spread the awareness of possible risks related to specific tasks. This teaches the current employees to watch out for these risks and tell about them to others. This would create a positive cycle in which the employees start looking over each other and create a safer environment. This is also something that should be addressed in the starting orientation phase, that safety always comes first, no matter what type of situation there is going on.

By giving the time to tour the facilities in set periods of time, the ombudsman can assess and anticipate possible risks. The more they walk around their workplace, the better they familiarize themselves with it and the easier it becomes to notice if something is amiss. This tour is also a perfect time for the ombudsmen to get to know better their coworkers by talking to them if they have possibly noticed anything or if there is something that they think should be done differently or needs improvements.

Co-operation between safety ombudsmen and store and service managers requires that the managers acknowledge and enforce their role. This helps the ombudsmen to be more confident in their role and makes it easier for them to interfere in on dangerous situations or unergonomic work methods. It also helps them spread information on Workplace if there is a manager backing up their message.

Having an ombudsman in a workplace is a boon that should be implemented in every unit. As the research aimed to examine the overall expertise of the ombudsman, the adequate level of expertise is reached by giving them enough time, resources, and training. With more experienced safety ombudsmen, the safer the workplace becomes, and the more the word spreads about their usefulness which helps the recruitment for other units.

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Figures

Figure 1 - Most common cause and effect relations in health and safety (Tarkkonen, 2016) ... 9

Appendices

Appendix 1: Structured interview 25

Appendix 1: Structured interview

Haastattelu kysymykset esihenkilöille

- Mitä odotuksia sinulla on teidän työsuojeluasiamiehiltänne?
- Kuinka usein teillä on yhteisiä keskusteluja teidän TSA:n sekä luottamusmiehen kanssa?
- Kuinka hyvin tiedät TSA:n osaamisen teidän yksikössänne?
 - o S-Turvan käyttö?
 - o Kulkureitit ja poistumistiet hallussa?
 - o EA-välineet sekä taito?

Haastattelukysymykset työsuojeluasiamiehille

- Mitä odotuksia sinulla on tehtävästäsi?
- Kuinka usein keskusteleet esimiehesi kanssa?
- Minkälaista yhteistyötä toivot esimiehiltäsi työpaikallasi?
- TSA:t ja TSV:t tekevät yhteistyötä, miten pidät huolen, että pysyt perillä heidän infostaan ja pidät yhteisen agendan.
- Kuinka hyvin osaat seuraavat asiat?
 - o S-Turva?
 - o Kulkureitit ja poistumistiet?
 - o EA-välineet sekä taito?