Case study FUJIFILM: collaboration pays off!

About stakeholders and sustainable employability at FUJIFILM


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Prologue
Prior to the establishment of Schouten & Nelissen in 1980 Jan Schouten had already established, by means of a research study, that the employability of Dutch workers would benefit from specific education and training. He also pointed to the dual role of businesses in this regard. They are both contributors to the employability of the individual employee and they benefit from focused employability strategies, education and training. This is subject to the condition that the individual training requirements of the employee are central and that learning programs are focused within the work context (Schouten 1974).

2012 finds Schouten & Nelissen still working on the employability of both youthful and senior employees in the work context - on behalf of both government and private sector clients. The need for this work is increasing, as demographic and techno-economic necessity increases the demand for worker performance. On the one hand ageing and dejuvenation trends are rapidly increasing: the earnings of a shrinking group of young people must provide for an increasingly elderly society. On the other hand, the rate of new, technological development is increasing, while the economy continues to lag.

Focused training, publications, clinics, research and network meetings have positioned sustainable employability as a daily item on the business menu. What we have not yet seen is a description, made together with a client, of the specific steps involved in an employability intervention. This chapter takes you through the process applied jointly by our client and ourselves, aimed at improving worker employability. We do this by presenting a case study from several perspectives. In doing so we will hear from our client, FUJIFILM’s Jan van Reijsen (HR manager) and Tessa van Puijenbroek (former HR advisor), and from Schouten & Nelissen’s Jasper Verhelst (learning consultant) and Evelien Bults (employability consultant).

We start with Wilmar Schaufeli, on the subject of sustainable employability: With continued health and wellbeing, employees can (continue to) perform their current and future work (whether self-employed or employed). Performance without consumption is working in such a way that you can continue work in the future (Schaufeli 2011). Our case study concerns the relationship between the employee and his work - and the role of the work environment. It also shows that focused collaboration of the relevant people is key.
STEP 1: Identifying stakeholders and urgency

FUJIFILM has maintained a focus on employee vitality, together with several stakeholders, since its major reorganization in 2006. While many companies focus on older employees, this project was different. The Tilburg company anticipated and defused the issue of employability of older workers by attending to the employability of all workers. The stakeholders speak: We start with the external consultant’s primary client contact in the company, followed by the client’s HR manager.

Jasper Verhelst: 'I have been calling on FUJIFILM for many years. It is a good business, with its roots in the province and the city. In 2009 I received an interesting question from their HR manager. About 120 employees had registered for several behavioral training courses, like every year. It struck the HR manager that these registrations had been made rather blindly, without due consideration. It seemed that neither managers nor employees had first considered what they wanted to achieve as a result of their training. Candidates who had not checked training course content then, unprepared and perhaps unfitted, underwent the prescribed process of intake scans, 360 degree studies, workplace tasks and classroom sessions. Working with our client we decided on a creative development process, starting with a closer study of the bundled intake groups. This produced immediate results. The initial 120 participants were reduced to 90 and these, via a process of stringent intake interviews, became 60 motivated participants. From the eight, most popular training courses we then compiled six, customized, in-company programs for our chosen 60 workers. The most noteworthy programs were Influencing Without Force, Effective Communication and Time Management.

This new approach, combined with classifying participants into levels, improved results while lowering costs. The new system also facilitated thorough engagement on topics important to the company. Our consultants' consultancy skills were challenged (more so than in the open training courses, which had involved mixed groups). At the same time, the training program allowed an increasingly clear picture to emerge - of the vitality of the FUJIFILM employee. In 2011, and in this regard, I introduced my fellow employability consultant, Evelien Bults.'

Jan van Reijsen: 'The urgency of the matter was clear: the employee had to remain vital and dynamic, in motion. Regarding the stakeholders: HR leads and involves management, employees, the company doctor, the healthcare insurer and the works council. The involvement of Schouten & Nelissen was not a coincidence. A culture change had been introduced a number of years earlier, working together with stakeholders. In 2006 the company had reorganized, as a result of the digitalization of photography and discontinuation of the film factory. The company had parted with more than 500 employees, equipped itself for greater innovation and adapted itself to the reduced foreseeability of business conditions and ongoing change in customer requirements. A strategic change was instituted: from simple, commercial exploitation to 'exploit and explore'. For the employees this meant the end of the lifetime employment idea and the start of investment in employability, in being more widely deployable, both within and outside the organization. This led, in 2008, to the ‘breathing organization’, a more flexible organization, one providing career guidance and one that also breathes the air of its environment.'
STEP 2: Developing the research objectives

Client and consultant were on common ground. Here they give their individual perspectives, looking back on the research requirements.

Evelien Bults: 'In 2011 FUJIFILM asked us to develop, with them, an employability monitor that would facilitate employees to take control of their own careers. We were also asked to guide employees in implementing the results of this research. The task had four parts:

a. develop a research instrument;
b. explore worker employability;
c. stimulate employee self management;
d. assist employee interpretation of results.

Conditions applied. It was intended that employees would get more insight into their talents and motivations. However, participation in the research was voluntary, employees could individually decide whether to fill in the scans. Outcomes, contained in a personal feedback report, would be discussed in a purpose-designed, internally approved 'i-Fit' interview, in which one's degree of 'fit' could be addressed. The assignment was first of all thoroughly explored, together with client.'

Jan van Reijsen: 'The most important reason for our research question went back to 2008. It was in this year that vitality and flexibility took up a permanent place in the mission, vision and strategy of the company. The HR department scanned the organization in 2008, and discussed their most important conclusion with management: at least 70 per cent of employees were 'the same age' - between 39 and 49 years. A potentially serious problem for the future of the organization. How do you ensure that these people continue to perform in the coming years - and how do you remain attractive for the (shrinking) technically-oriented, younger generation?

We have always sought motivated, energetic staff, but the words motivated and energetic did not fit many of our people. We had not earlier recognized that a greying population would be less motivated and less energetic. Together with the stakeholders we studied the literature and research on motivation and age - and discovered that it was not advancing age that resulted in less motivated, less energetic staff. The problem lay in occupying the same position for too long. I developed two new terms in this regard: ‘passion’ and ‘driven’. These terms, combined with the economic necessity of extended working lives, indicated the need to remain 'vital'. I then worked with HR to introduce the subject of 'vitality' into all conversations with all stakeholders.

In the voluntary development interviews that followed (themed 'FUJIFILM's got Talent), we challenged employees to uncover their talents, drivers and passions. The idea behind this was that if an employee had more awareness of this area he would be more self-motivated. I have always accepted that this process cannot be imposed on a person. An employee who
wants to, and who determines his own agenda, will take personal responsibility to act and implement the necessary follow-up!'

**Evelien Bults:** 'This history clarified matters greatly. FUJIFILM had already been on the talent track for some years and our added value could lie in the ability to analyze, guide and indicate the precise direction of future development. I also noted that FUJIFILM was not only aware of the urgency attaching to the issue of employability of older employees but, in addition to the annual development interviews, was paying attention to the vitality and flexibility of *all* employees, in many different ways.'

**STEP 3: Localization and structure of the research**

*The necessity and direction of the research was agreed. The HR advisers and external consultants then worked to ensure that the research study was correctly positioned and relevant.*

**Tessa van Puijenbroek:** 'In 2011, together with Schouten & Nelissen, we commenced the research project - first by placing it in the correct context. Employees already had some insight into their talents and drivers. Now we wanted to challenge them to evaluate how well they (including their talents and drivers) fit the work they did. The research occupied a logical position in this regard. Since many employees had filled the same position for years - and since talents change over the years - the 'fit' sometimes deteriorates. You are fit (in the traditional meaning) when you are physically healthy and mentally flexible. But 'fit' also means 'fitting': Do your talents and drivers fit your work? Do you fit your team and your manager? The double meaning of 'fit' was, perhaps coincidentally, also the foundation of Schouten & Nelissen’s employability research model. Their tool, the 'Fit Monitor', presented to us in a clinic by Schouten & Nelissen, dovetailed with our own 'fit' concept. We decided to give employees the opportunity to discuss their research results in i-Fit interviews with their managers.'

**Jasper Verhelst en Evelien Bults:** 'Together with FUJIFILM HR we determined the Fit Monitor topics in advance. We adjusted the questionnaire and feedback texts to fit the language, culture and opportunities within the organization. FUJIFILM itself attended to the internal communication that was needed to ensure that employees were well informed of the contents and aims of the Fit monitor.'

**The Fit Monitor**

The Fit Monitor is based on the Fit Model, developed by Prof. Dr. Wilmar Schaufeli. An elegant step-by-step rationale is used to explain the model. Every organization contains issues which give energy to people (energy sources) and ones that take energy from them (stress sources). When employees experience a good balance between stress sources and energy sources, they experience the benefits of a good fit with their work, team, managers and organization. Employees who fit well into their work and working environment feel better. This feeling of well-being has a positive effect on their employability and on the organization.
The Fit Monitor maps the balance between stress and energy sources, the fit with work and the work environment, the experience of work and the impact of this on individual and organization. Stress sources are distinguished and defined as physical or mental. And energy sources as autonomous and socially supportive. The Fit Monitor is an online questionnaire, which one can fill in at any time of the day - at home or at work. On completion, the employee gets immediate personal feedback in the form of his personal scores, an explanation of these scores and tips to improve personal employability. The Fit Monitor then provides employees with specific aids for implementing sustainable employability at work.

**STEP 4: Research and training**

While research often commences relatively unnoticed, following a brief kick-off, those involved in this study chose to start it with an interesting combination of training and research. A unique approach was developed, thanks to the strong collaboration on the project: HR employees were trained to help managers in discussing research results with their employees. FUJIFILM took ownership of the research. (Quite correctly!)

Tessa van Puijenbroek: 'Managers were trained to conduct i-Fit interviews and employees could fill in the Fit Monitor before the interview, in order to get a prior picture of themselves. This provided employees with a traffic light report, which they could use as input in the i-Fit interview. According to a number of employees this tool led to better insights, good meetings and even to specific action; while for others, much was already known, and the outcomes were less surprising. In addition to the individual reports for participants there was also a report on completed Fit Monitors at organizational level. This report produced insights, which, together with the results of other studies, served as input for further definition of action points for the coming period, at organization level.'

Jasper Verhelst en Evelien Bults: 'We trained HR (train-the-trainer) so that they could train managers how to conduct the i-Fit interviews. This was, indeed, unusual. It was phenomenal to see and experience an HR department creatively taking the initiative, reaching out to those involved - and not relying heavily on external resources for implementation! The risk of client support provided by (and embodied in!) external consultants can be magnified by the fact that their presence is temporary. The departure of the consultant can mean difficulty for employees in implementing what they have learned. With this in mind we do not build support structures, but prefer to concentrate on guidance and on getting things going!

HR training consisted on the one hand of a substantive element, in which the Fit Model was explained. On the other hand, HR was made to practice conducting i-Fit interviews with a role player. Within Schouten & Nelissen we refer to these interviews as employability interviews.

In the weeks following their training, the HR staff trained all managers in the conduct of i-Fit interviews. When all managers had completed the training program the Fit Monitor was deployed throughout the organization.
Employees then had ten weeks to complete the questionnaire. During this period employees were stimulated to fill in the questionnaire, but not pushed to do so. FUJIFILM therefore consciously chose not to send reminders to employees who had not filled in the questionnaire. After ten weeks, submission of the questionnaire was closed and the data was analyzed. The outcomes were discussed with FUJIFILM in a meeting, at which the results were jointly analyzed and interpreted. A management report, with conclusions and recommendations, was produced on the basis of this meeting.

**Implementation meetings**

Implementation meetings are different than POP and development interviews in that they take the long-term perspective, of 3-5 years. In these meetings, employee and manager discuss expected developments in the business over the coming years and the impact of these developments on the employee. Together with the manager, a path is outlined for the coming 3-5 years, aimed at increasing or maintaining the worker's employability.

**STEP 5: Interpretation and security**

_The results of the research were extremely interesting. Sufficiently pleasing - but also sufficiently challenging to motivate significant action. Interpretation is seen from two perspectives, below: firstly the mainly interpretative perspective of the researcher and secondly the perspective of the HR manager, focused on ensuring results._

**Evelien Bults:** 'The positive rating of the employees of FUJIFILM on sustainable employability was not surprising. The company had actively monitored employability for years, in order to both measure and act on the results. The urgency of the issue concerning the vitality of employees had been known since the beginning of the new millennium. At FUJIFILM good employability seemed to be contagious. Employees who enjoy a good fit with their work and the organization had a greater sense of well-being, were consequently more sustainably employable and enthused those around them. The results indicate that there is a fit between the employee on the one hand and the work and the organization on the other hand, at all levels. Employees also experienced a good balance between their work and private lives. It should be noted that the evaluation of the fit is based on their own experience of it. It could be that the good fit experienced between work, the organization and private life may decrease in the coming years, as FUJIFILM expects employees to fulfill new functions. This aspect will therefore continue to require ongoing attention from the organization.

The Fit Monitor is a tool for measuring how satisfied (high energy sources, low stress sources) and how motivated (high energy sources, high stress sources) people are. In spite of the good fit, the employees were not very motivated, but were very satisfied and did not feel tired. This is a striking result in some ways, as higher levels of motivation may be expected, particularly when the fit is this good. It seems that personal factors and work surroundings have a retardant impact on the link between fit and motivation. There was indeed a fit, but this did not translate itself into added motivation because of limited (need for) personal development, and because the physical work environment was not optimal.
It could also be that the work itself failed to provide sufficient energy sources to ensure vitality, commitment and flow.

Employees have a good fit in the areas of drivers, talent, and work/life balance. This, and its resulting indication of positive future fit, offers a sound basis for further work on the employability of the workers.'

Jan van Reijsen: 'The research has stimulated us, together with all stakeholders, to continue this approach. Meanwhile Fit4work, our internal label for vitality and flexibility, has become a movement supported by many managers, and experienced by many employees. This has not only come about as a result of the implemented development interviews. During the culture change, awareness campaigns were a constant feature in the organization, supported by and in close cooperation with the communication department. Managers and supervisors participate in focus groups and in the fit theme. Various FujiFit days are organized; in the shift teams a study was done on the shift timetable - taking health and age into account; in all departments PPAs (potential problem analyses) took place in order to better map both physical and mental working conditions. Employees’ company Christmas gifts and newsletters were placed in the Fit4work context. These measures led time after time to new insights and to new conversations on the various subjects.

A supporting Management Development Program was developed. In it, topics of entrepreneurship, influencing and change management play a central role. Creating 'awareness' is important, if real changes are to be implemented. Management plays a vital role here. It can ensure that Fit4work becomes part of the 'normal' conversation and that this dialogue remains lively.

Employees have participated in Fit4work in many ways. This results in their becoming more conscious of their own situation, as a result of which motivation and involvement increase. We cannot measure this financially, but it can be seen in the culture. So we see that employees more easily look beyond the limits of their own position or department and execute so-called 'micro-jobs'. In earlier days this was absolutely inconceivable. One was constrained by departmental rules and budgets. You also see managers feeling more involved, noting employee behavior, observing that an employee may look tired and inquiring as to the cause. These activities have produced input, which the management team has translated into action points: reduction of workload for night and morning shifts, stimulating mobility in the form of micro-jobs, job rotation, continuing the employability conversation during development interviews, addressing the physical workload of employees and promoting awareness and communication via ongoing attention to the issues.'
**STEP 6: Recommendations**

Research and training led to a number of recommendations. How must the organization arm itself for a demanding future? The researcher and HR manager answer:

**Evelien Bults**: 'A good fit between employees, their work and the organization remains an important issue, given the changes that await FUJIFILM in the years ahead. It is therefore important to keep a finger on the pulse by continuing to measure this fit and by making it a regular topic in development interviews with managers. Maintaining this good fit, given the changing environment, will also be achieved by good management of expectations. Constant, timely and clear communication of what awaits employees and the effects of this on their own work will keep maintenance of a good fit on the corporate agenda.'

**Jan van Reijsen**: 'Employability is about culture change. Learning new and different behaviors requires commitment. In this regard FUJIFILM is still at an early stage. Good employee health is, fortunately, increasingly more open to discussion. We cannot close our eyes to the physical aspect of being fit. If health declines and the fit is not sustainable, it becomes important to find a new fit. Moreover, 'flexicurity' is important for the employee: sustainable income. This also requires attention to employee guidance in migrating from one fit to another - and if needs be to a fit outside FUJIFILM. In the longer term, when there is sufficient awareness and conscious choices are being made, a personal Fit Budget could be indicated. Both organization and employee then invest in 'sustainable employability' and 'sustainable income'.

**STEP 7: Evaluation**

Continuing to learn together gives meaning to the experience key. In the above report, four sustainable employability stakeholders at FUJIFILM have shared the prior events, the process itself and how the company continued, after the external consultants had left, to embed the importance and urgency of sustainable employability of employees into the organization. Together, they have distilled seven tips from their successful cooperation.

Vitality and flexibility had already, since 2008, occupied a fixed place in the mission, vision and strategy of FUJIFILM. All stakeholders were well aware of the urgency of the issue of sustainable employability of employees. The process started with voluntary development interviews, in which employees identified their talents, drivers and passions. The i-Fit interview was a logical next step. Using the Fit Monitor, employees were able to identify the fit with their work. Managers received advance training in conducting employability meetings - or i-Fit interviews. Filling in the Fit Monitor was voluntary and served as a mirror and as input for the i-Fit interview. As a result of these interviews, various agreements were made with employees. The aggregated results were analyzed and discussed with the organization to provide a clear picture, at organizational level, of the sustainable employability of the staff. The project was supported and followed up with an awareness campaign and also with further research. This has resulted in vitality and flexibility being a movement that is supported by many managers and employees.
Employees are, themselves, more aware of their own situation and are more able to look outside the borders of their own position.

The four stakeholders derived the following seven rules from their cooperation:

1. Detect the sense of urgency and identify the stakeholders. Sustainable employability only succeeds when the need is clear. Urgency often comes from the stakeholders themselves.

2. Formulate a perspective on how sustainable employability is to be embedded in the organization. For example: do you want to oblige employees to participate in research, or may they participate under their own direction? This perspective will determine the action to be taken.

3. Create awareness. Many people do not know what is meant by sustainable employability, nor what is expected of them or how they rate in this context. Provide these people with insights.

4. Enter a dialogue. Discussing sustainable employability lowers the threshold to instituting (individual) action.

5. Avoid excessive uniformity. Customize. Individuals have individual requirements for sustainable employability. For one it is more physical exercise, for another it is a change of position. The use of tools (for example the Fit Monitor) also requires a custom approach. People speak several 'languages' within an organization.

6. ‘Walking the talk’. Acknowledging the importance of sustainable employability is different than effectively implementing it. Management plays an important role in this. One that is not easy to master and impossible for some to fulfill. It is a learning process for the entire organization.

7. Persevere. Sustainable employability is a long-term process. Only stoic perseverance, particularly when confronting obstacles, will enable you to maintain your course and book results.

**Jan van Reijsen:** 'I have always believed in the simultaneous development of people and organization - and that is what is now happening here. Personally, I notice that I am now much less occupied with checking things - and much more occupied with searching for the innovations and improvements and that create energy!'
Epilogue

This story from Tilburg shows that the gurus are right. The well-tended plant flourishes. Focusing attention on people and their work brings rewards. FUJIFILM and Schouten & Nelissen joined forces - from customizing behavioral training programs and the Fit Monitor, to training managers in the conduct of employability interviews, to interpreting research results and indicating future directions. In our opinion, this shows the strength of this case study: good collaboration and co-creation. Without becoming dependent on external experts, FUJIFILM works with all stakeholders on an ongoing basis (in their case the board, HR, managers, employees, the works committee, the company doctor and external consultants) to establish, together, a framework for good work.

FUJIFILM confirms the working definition illuminated, from a flurry of available definitions, by research agency ZonMw, working on behalf of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. It is a 'Tilburg' definition, based on the interaction between the individual and his work, in which the context in which the work takes place is expressly taken into account (Bouman 2011).

Sustainable employability means that employees have ongoing access, during their working lives, to achievable opportunities and to the means to continue to work in their current and future positions while retaining health and well-being. This implies a work context which both enables and facilitates the attitude and motivation required to actually exploit these opportunities.

That sustainable employability is, in the words of change consultant Hans Vermaak, a 'tough issue', is clear. The issue belongs to no-one and affects everyone and is, in essence, always unique (Vermaak 2009). It is, for this reason, not always easy to indicate how it should be tackled. The playing field shifts frequently and it is sometimes difficult to know (even with the benefit of extensive academic study) where to begin. A good definition is difficult; the issue crosses the borders of departments and organizations. This, in turn, means that sustainable employability is always an issue shared by a variety of stakeholders who, in turn, are all necessary for its proper resolution. Given our case study's striking demonstration of this aspect we would like, in conclusion, to add to the work context, attitude and motivation cited in the above definition:

.. Identification of and collaboration between the various stakeholders is essential for this purpose.

References

