

# Caring = sharing — a participative approach to tackling stress among engineers



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[www.fastems.com/en/home](http://www.fastems.com/en/home)

## The issue

Fastems supplies customised automation systems and so requires specialist expertise in the latest technologies. The work is highly demanding and deadlines are tight, and engineers are often required to travel overseas to install systems. This means the risk of experiencing stress is high and, because of the need for specialists, this issue cannot be resolved simply by increasing resources. This has led to requests for changes in job descriptions, extended family leave and a significant number of resignations, among other issues.

## Action taken

Since early 2009, the Integrated Total Work Stress Evaluation ('TIKKA' (!)) procedure has been used by Fastems in collaboration with its occupational health service partner. TIKKA is a comprehensive assessment of work stress factors conducted via small group interviews, supervisor interviews, personal questionnaire forms and joint meetings of the entire team.

The interviews concentrate on job-content issues (e.g. clarity of work objectives, work pace and workload, provision of feedback) and social climate in work (e.g. community spirit, cooperation, equal treatment). Answers and results from the interviews, as well as suggestions for development and improvement, are discussed in a mutually constructive spirit by workers, supervisors and a human resources representative at 'feedback and support' events.

Personal questionnaires are used to assess fitness for work and the performance ability of personnel. Adverse factors relating to stress are also mapped out using a health questionnaire. On the basis of the answers to these questions, individuals are selected if necessary for a more detailed health examination, and are given support.

Fastems has shifted its approach to a focus on early intervention. In this early intervention model, supervisors are given continuous training and are encouraged to bring up in the workplace potential worries about coping with work, combatting problems at the earliest possible stage.



(!) TIKKA stems from Työn Integroitu KokonaisKuormituksen Arviointi.



## Results achieved

- There has been a significant reduction in stress-related sick leave.
- The number of resignations has reduced.
- Changes in work arrangements, process descriptions and specifications of responsibilities, and an increase in the use of electronic tools, have led to radical reductions in the amount of travelling required.
- A reorganisation of work has improved employee satisfaction.
- The work atmosphere has greatly improved. The implemented procedure has demonstrated that the employer is willing to spend time and money on improving working conditions.
- The TIKKA results of Fastems have led to an increased interest in this process from other enterprises.

*Interview results are discussed in a mutually constructive spirit by workers and supervisors at 'feedback and support' events.*