

Success driven by people

Automation calls for continuous training of the personnel

Mirka puts great effort into personnel training, which has become increasingly important. New skills are needed as manual work is replaced by automated processes.

Mirka has always been committed to training its personnel. In recent years, however, training has become even more important. As more and more processes are automated and digitalised, there are constantly lots of new things to learn. At the same time, focus has shifted from routine manual work towards knowledge and expertise work.

“We really put great effort into training. In addition to training our current employees, we are also constantly hiring new employees to get the right kind of expertise to Mirka”, explains HR Manager Ulla Kauppi.

Generally, Mirka employees are nowadays required to have completed at least a secondary education.

Committed to training.

In 2020, Mirka’s white-collar workers received an average of 52 hours of training, while blue-collar workers

were trained at an average of 16 hours. Despite being on this high level, the numbers dropped a bit compared to previous years because it was harder to organise training during the pandemic.

“In 2020, we were able to train especially white-collar workers, as their training is easier to organise online. Naturally, some of the training was related to the new situation caused by the pandemic. For example, managers had to learn how to lead remotely”, says Kauppi.

Development discussions each year

In addition to training, Mirka employees also participate in development discussions each year with their supervisors. Normally, these discussions take place face-to-face, but during 2020, some discussions were held remotely.

“We have instructed the supervisors to pay extra attention to how the new situation has affected employees. Remotely, it is harder to detect if somebody is not feeling well.”

The main idea of the development discussions is that the employee and the supervisor sit down together to

discuss the employee’s work situation and the things he or she perhaps wants to change.

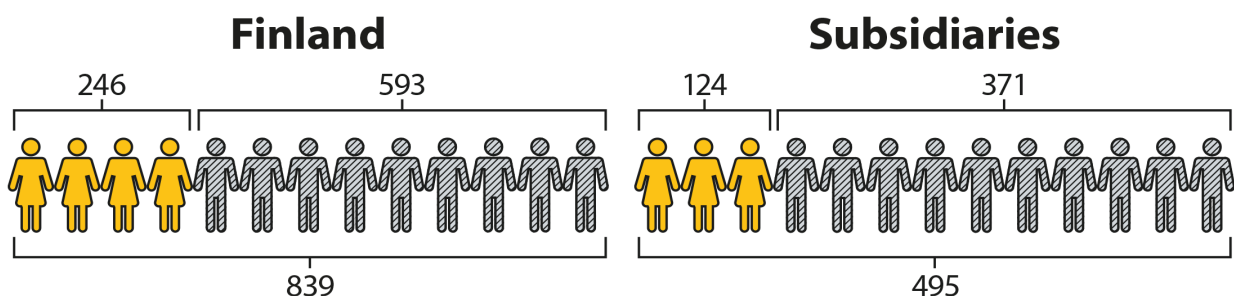
Remote work is here to stay.

Before the corona pandemic, remote work was not that common at Mirka. Ulla Kauppi estimates that remote work is here to stay, even after the pandemic ends. Working remotely from home has gone very well for most people, but there are also challenges.

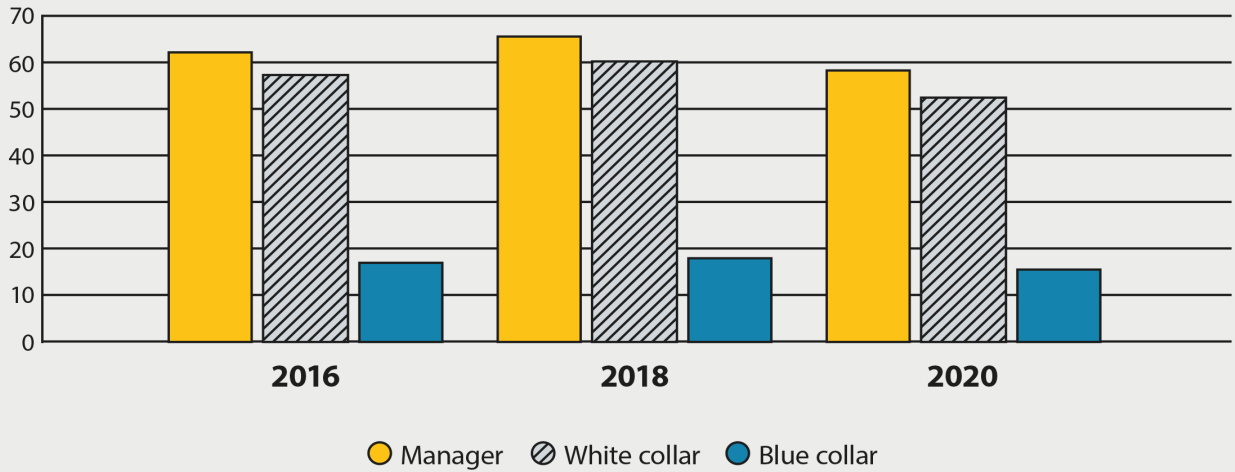
“People need social interaction and want to meet their colleagues. We can also see that interaction between different units at Mirka is not as intense as it was before, which is a shame. I therefore think that some kind of a hybrid model would be ideal in the future, where people can work from home some of the time, but not all week.”

Employees 2020

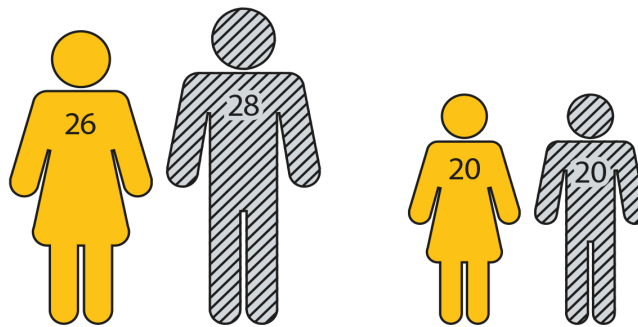
Employees Female/male



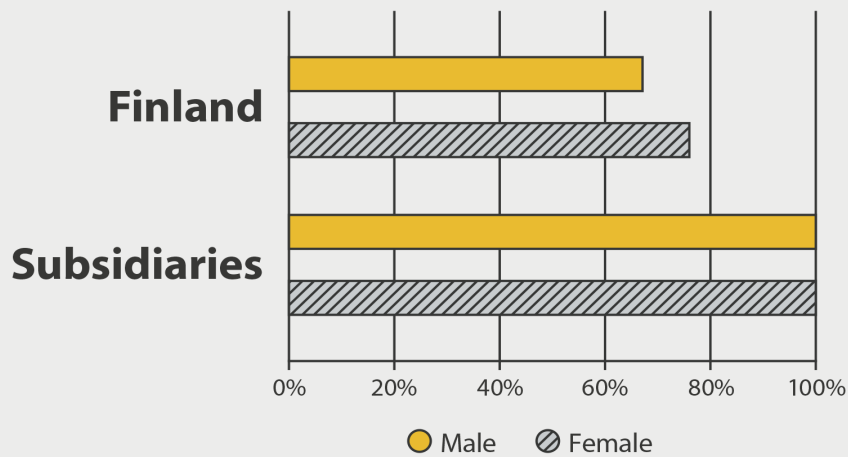
Training hours per employee group



Workforce training hours per person per year



Employees receiving appraisal and performance reviews



Investments in safety and wellbeing at work pay off

Safety and wellbeing at work have for a long time been top priorities for Mirka. The consistent and methodical work has resulted in low accident and sick leave rates.

When a new employee starts at Mirka, he or she undergoes a very thorough and extensive safety training. Employees in production get an occupational safety card that needs to be renewed every five years. These are just a couple of examples of how Mirka takes safety issues very seriously. In recent years, even more focus has been put on safety, as it is also part of Mirka's strategy. This means that the whole company, including the management, is committed to safety work.

Safety issues are reported

Mirka also has a system, where anybody can report safety issues. "We get a lot of reports, which proves that employees in general take safety issues seriously. People can also report positive things, which serves as great examples for others", explains HR Manager Ulla Kauppi at Mirka. In 2020, the safety work was intensified with the launch of the BeSafe campaign. The campaign aimed at raising awareness around safety issues

to an even greater extent than before.

Safety during the pandemic

Mirka's extensive safety work has paid off in low accident rates. In 2020, there were 13 work accidents at Mirka and the LTIR (Lost Time Injury Rate) was 7.0, which is a very low number for any industry.

In 2020, it also became evident that Mirka benefited greatly from previous safety work when dealing with the corona pandemic. The production was quickly organised into different safety zones to prevent employees from meeting each other physically. Thanks to this and other preventive measures, there has only been the occasional corona infection among Mirka's staff, and production and delivery safety has not been jeopardized at any time.

When things are back to normal again, Mirka hopes to be able to resume the so-called safety walks, which were earlier organised on a regular basis. During the walks, people from different departments visited each other to scan for potential safety hazards. This has proven to be effective, as people tend to be a bit blind to their own departments.

Low sick leave rates

In addition to safety, Mirka also works

continuously to support wellbeing at work. The sick leave rate was 4.1% in 2020, which is an unusually low rate for an industrial workplace. The rate dropped a bit from the previous year, perhaps due to low infection rates in general because of the pandemic restrictions.

"As our numbers are already on a very good level, it is not that easy to push them down even further. However, the goal for 2021 is a sick leave rate of 3.7%", states Ulla Kauppi.

What, then, has Mirka done to reach these good rates? As with safety issues, it is all about long-term continuous work that consists of many small everyday measures. And naturally, low accidents rates also translate into low sick leave rates.

Mirka has a so-called early caring strategy, where potential problems are addressed before they grow big.

"The supervisors are instructed to intervene at an early stage and have a set of questions for discussion. There is also a low threshold to involve our occupational health. The methods are quite similar both for factory workers and office staff", explains Ulla Kauppi.

Mirka's injury rate history (IR) in Finland 2010-2020

