15 Effect Chains – A Method for Analysing Qualitative Effects in Occupational Health and Safety at Work

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1 Introduction

The starting situation for activities related to health and safety at work in companies is characterised by a great deal of latitude for interpretation as regards the statutory outline conditions, with which companies respond individually to changes in the world of work and thus are able to open up potential in different ways. The flexibilisation of the world of work brings with it for example fresh demands on the skills and resources of employees. The intensification of work and expansion of responsibility leads to increased psychological stresses on employees. And not least, KRUEGER (2008) also highlights the significance of demographic change, particularly for SMEs: in the next two decades, we may anticipate an ageing (working) population across Europe. It is true that each worker ages differently, but the generally increasing mental and sensory deficits, above all the decrease in the capacity to adapt to changing circumstances, have to be compensated if even complex work tasks are to be performed through to pensionable age. Maintaining the health of employers is thus gaining increasing importance. This is achieved not only by avoiding or reducing absences, but by improving the state of health through improved conditions in the organisation, the work itself, and the development of personal qualities (Fig. 15.1).
In the meantime, in accordance with the law on health and safety at work, in many companies workplace health and safety measures and health promotion measures are being implemented in order to safeguard human resources in a lasting way. These measures also contribute to a positive internal and external corporate image, as well as to service quality. The following illustration provides an overview of the problem areas and objectives that are most frequently addressed within the framework of company health promotion (Fig. 15.2).

**Main themes**

- Physical stresses
- Company atmosphere
- Reducing sickness levels
- Communication
- Workplace design
- Health & Safety topics
- Autonomy
- Management style
- Organisation development
- Stress management

**Fig. 15.2**: Measures in contemporary health and safety at work and health promotion (AOK-BUNDESVERBAND 2007)

The spectrum of measures shows the breadth of contemporary health and safety at work, which includes health protection and health promotion. In addition to the question “How can illness be prevented?”, increasingly the question that is also