

UPBEAT

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an **EMPLOYER ALLIANCE** Publication

Flexible Work: Where, When and How Work is Done

By Karol Rose,
FlexPaths



A Guiding Hand
- Public Service
Division

**Flexible
Working as a
Strategic People
Management
Tool**
- Credit Suisse

**FWAs is a Big
Draw for Small
and Medium
Enterprises**
- SP Consulting
and Fei Yue Family
Service Centre

**Work-Life
Conversation
with an Expert**
Interview with
Yeo Miu Ean,
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**Work-Life Effectiveness
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About Employer Alliance

Upbeat is a service of Employer Alliance (EA), designed to complement its comprehensive website, www.employeralliance.sg, as well as the numerous Work-Life seminars and forums it organises.

You will benefit greatly from its newest resource, an online one-stop Smart Kit where you can learn from a variety of creative flexible work arrangements, employee support schemes and leave benefits, to suit any company's budget.

Employer Alliance is a network of corporations committed to create an enabling work-environment to support Work-Life Integration. Its vision is to build corporate awareness of the contribution of Work-Life to business results. Singapore corporations are challenged by talent management and staff retention; and a sound Work-Life strategy is key.

More than 900 companies have joined EA as corporate members and the number continues to grow. These corporate members come from different industry sectors such as manufacturing, retail, services, financial and hospitality. Membership is free and member benefits include access to our resources and invitations to forums, events and key Work-Life conferences.

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Message from Chairperson



It used to be that employers depended on the power of salary and benefits to attract talent. Well, no longer. We now know that this is not the primary pull factor in attraction and retention, especially among Generation Y employees. Now, employers have to explore Total Reward Strategy, a notable component of which is Work-Life Integration.

The Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices or "TAFEP" conducted a recent study on Harnessing the Potential of Singapore's Multi-Generational Workforce, and found that among a list of 12 organisation benefits preferred by respondents, flexible working hours ranked second for Generation X and third for Generation Y respondents.

This is an important finding as these two generations form about half the economically active workforce in Singapore and will continue to grow as more Generation Yers enter the workplace. They also found that Work-Life programmes were perceived to be an enabler toward workplace productivity!

A big group in the workforce is the generation of Babyboomers. They are at the life stage where caring for personal health and elderly parents may be of higher priority in comparison with childcare or community service. Providing flexible work options enables them to exercise control and choice in meeting life's challenges alongside fulfilling work commitments.

Another interesting fact is that, although Singapore women form almost half the national workforce, the greatest dip occurred between the ages of 30 to 44, which are the childbearing years. A majority of married women cite the lack of flexibility and part-time work arrangements as the key barrier to continuing in the workforce. Recent research by Boston College Centre for Work & Family also found that the younger generation of fathers embrace equal parenting, which translates into more time needed on the homefront. It demonstrates that Work-Life Integration is relevant for different groups of workers at different life stages.

For individuals whose CEOs have yet to adopt a Work-Life policy, I urge you to become the CEO of your life, by controlling your decisions, eliminating the unnecessary and organising your priorities.

For employers and HR managers who are convinced about Work-Life but have yet to customise a policy that fits their unique organisations, they may want to read how other companies have done it. For this purpose, Employer Alliance has compiled a book this year on Best Practice companies and advice from Work-Life Consultants called *Can We Have It All?* I encourage you to get a copy.

Claire Chiang

Claire Chiang

Chairperson, Employer Alliance



Flexible Work: Where, When and How Work is Done

By Karol Rose, FlexPaths

Flexibility must meet both personal and business needs, and be a shared responsibility between managers and the employees.



Flexibility in where, when and how work is done is increasingly recognised as a business imperative. While in the past, flexible work was thought to be primarily an accommodation for an individual, today the benefits for organisations are compelling, including attracting and retaining talent, lowering operational costs, improving customer service, reducing environmental impact and strengthening business continuity. Which is why more businesses are transitioning to telework and other flexible work models, but this creates new management challenges.

Redefining Flexibility

Flexibility means granting employees greater choice and control over how, when and where they work. Typically, flexibility falls into one of the following categories:

- Formal Flexible Work Arrangements – a change in location and/or time that is ongoing
- Occasional Flex – a temporary change in location and/or time
- Career Flex – opting in or out, dialling up or down in the course of a career

Flexibility must meet both personal and business needs, and be a shared responsibility between managers and the employees. Today, flexibility initiatives have become an important component of many organisations' ongoing culture change effort as well as addressing environmental and transportation concerns. For example, flextime and compressed schedules may allow employees to avoid commuting at rush hour, part-time work means fewer trips to the office, and telework can have the biggest impact by eliminating trips to the office all together.

Why Flex, Why Now?

The need for a new way of thinking and talking about flexible work has become mission critical. However, much of the way we still think about key issues related to flexibility don't make sense. For instance, it used to be that work stayed in the 'work place'. When employees left the work place, they left the work behind and the work was still there when they returned. Today, technology, business needs, and changing employee life styles encourage, and often demand, mobility and the ability



Knowledge work requires the employee's intellect and emotion – what we call 'engagement' – for maximum results, so employers must pay attention to employees' overall well-being.

to work anytime, anywhere. But frequently, those responsible for planning facilities or creating mobility and transportation plans are not involved in the discussion about policies and practices related to flexible work arrangement.

In addition to work being more mobile, work products must now be customised and personalised. Instead of work done the same way every time with consistent employee input in order to get consistent output (standardisation), we now require a high degree of customisation with just in time delivery. Innovation that comes from uniquely human talents is the name of the game.

What Companies Are Doing

Many industries are experiencing talent shortages. And, with the boomers beginning to retire, it will become more and more difficult to find comparably skilled workers to replace lost talent. Companies realising they can't afford this 'brain drain' are trying a variety of ways to reach and retain key talent, including offering greater flexibility.

In addition to keeping the best talent, organisations need new ways to define and measure performance. In the manufacturing age, production was visible and managers judged performance by seeing the work being done. However, in a knowledge environment, 'I can see them so they must be working' is inadequate since the actual work cannot be observed, only the output. This means that knowing how and where the work is done becomes less important. Although machines could run 24/7 and had replaceable parts, long hours that exhaust people (human capital) and make them less thoughtful and clear headed are actually a threat, not a badge of courage or something to be rewarded. Knowledge work requires the employee's intellect and emotion – what we call 'engagement' – for maximum results, so employers must pay attention to employees' overall well-being as a source of what their business produces. Changing business needs help explain the increase in flexibility today.

Making Flex Real

Flexibility shines a spotlight on good management practices, and requires rethinking, and in many cases, changing the organisation's existing policies, programmes and benefits. Whether an organisation is initiating, enhancing or advancing its flex initiative, there is a need to establish and coordinate internal processes. Many questions need to be addressed, such as: How 'public' is the organisation's support for flexibility? Can managers and employees easily find the tools and information they need when they need it? Do staff in HR, transportation, IT and other areas know about flex and how it impacts their work?

In order to be effective, key internal stakeholders must be involved in the process of creating a flexible culture so that the business case, roles and responsibilities, internal and external communication, top down and bottom up actions, as well as expected results, are all aligned. Flexibility can be implemented in phases, focused on one area of the organisation, or covering the entire enterprise. Some organisations focus on one flex option like telework, while others incorporate more choices so that both individual and organisational needs can be met. Successful implementation of

flexible work requires management for performance with a focus on output.

Become Part of the Process

From the perspective of transportation and mobility experts, it is important to be included early on in the flex process. There are challenges in 'selling' and appropriately positioning flexible work, and particularly telework, as a win/win solution to both management and employees. Most organisations already have some flexibility or are in the process of including it. But, these discussions often take place in Human Resources from a policy and practice perspective.

We can no longer afford a siloed approach to flexibility in how, where and when work is done.



Karol Rose is the Chief Knowledge Officer of FlexPaths, a certified women-owned business founded in 2005. FlexPaths is a leading provider of web-based and consultative flexible working solutions for corporations, governments and people seeking employment in organisations that have a flexible working culture (www.flexpaths.com).

A Guiding Hand

- Public Service Division

As the central people agency for the Public Service, PSD believes that fostering a conducive work climate for public officers will result in an engaged and productive workforce.

PSD set up a Work-Life Unit in 2007 to foster greater commitment from public agencies in cultivating a Work-Life friendly culture. The intention is to nurture a work environment where the employee, supervisor and employer are committed to discuss and address each others' work and personal needs. This would serve to attract and retain talent, improve organization performance as well as build organizational and individual capacity.

To guide agencies, PSD developed a Work-Life Framework (refer to Page 11) to articulate the Public Service's vision for a healthy, resilient and well-rounded workforce. The framework is premised on the belief that Work-Life Integration is a holistic goal that encompasses four key areas in an individual's life (i.e. Self, Family and Friends, Community and Work). Based on the framework, an agency can widen the opportunities and options available to employees, be it in personal development, flexible work arrangements, socialisation or community involvement.

While PSD sets the broad directions for agencies' Work-Life strategies at the



Ms Shahrany Hassan from the Subordinate Courts appreciates the flexibility at her workplace, especially as a career mother. Photo courtesy of Challenge Magazine.

whole-of-government level, agencies have the autonomy to implement customised Work-Life interventions and programmes which suit the context of their business and operating environments, e.g. Flexible Work Arrangements are implemented

across various public agencies wherever they meet operational and employees' needs (refer to Page 11).

Another important contribution to achieving Work-Life excellence in the Public Service is the network of Work-Life Advocates and Ambassadors from every public agency. The Advocate, typically the Deputy Secretary at Ministries or a Deputy Chief Executive at Statutory Boards, champions Work-Life initiatives in the organisation. The Ambassador, usually an HR staff, plays a key role in changing the mindsets of management and managers to exercise flexibility at the workplace and implementing work-life policies and strategies that would best meet their agency's needs. The network of public sector Work-Life practitioners is engaged regularly through platforms where best practices are shared.

The effort of Work-Life Ambassadors and Advocates has helped to bring about successful implementation and more awareness of Work-Life strategies in the Public Service as a whole. Organisations in the private sector with multiple sites or offices in Singapore, in the region or



Armed with the office laptop and mobile, Mr Song Kian Yong from the Public Service Division is able to work anytime, anywhere. Photo courtesy of Challenge Magazine.

world-wide can develop similar strategies to promote and implement Work-Life programmes throughout the entire organisation.

PSD also provides training and support for supervisors/managers to further bolster Work-Life efforts at its agencies. Together with its training arm, the Civil Service College, PSD has designed two courses to facilitate Work-Life effectiveness at its agencies:

- (1) 'Essential Managerial Skills for Work-Life Integration' - this two-day

“Through flexible work arrangements, our agencies are better able to help their employees meet their personal and work responsibilities. The paradigm has shifted, from face-to-face management to an outcome-based approach to management; thus employees have more control over how, where and when they work. This flexibility also allows employees to build in time to fulfil their individual social responsibilities to the family and community.”

Ms Bernadette Sim, Director, Careers & Attraction, PSD, PMO

workshop teaches managers and supervisors how to apply the skills to evaluate, implement and manage flexible work arrangements in their departments.

- (2) 'Work-Life Harmony for Individuals' – this course was put together with employees in mind. It aims to help them develop and articulate action plans to decide which flexible work arrangements suit their style of working.

These multi-pronged initiatives contribute towards a supportive work environment for public officers, enabling them to be effective and committed to the demands of both their personal and work lives. By helping public officers with Work-Life Integration, PSD believes that they will be more productive as they work towards securing a brighter future for Singapore.

Types of Flexible Work Arrangements in the Public Service

- **Flexi- hours** – Under this policy, public officers can opt for different start and end times, contingent on the fulfilment of a minimum of 42 working hours in the week, and subject to the operational needs of the agency. This policy is available to officers across the Civil Service where work obligations can accommodate it.
- **Part-Time Employment** – A part-time employment scheme is also available to civil servants. Ministries have the discretion to set their own criteria, taking into consideration operational and employees' needs. Working hours can start from a minimum of 11 hours and up to a maximum of 36 hours per week (42 hours is considered a full working week). The salaries and benefits of part-time officers are pro-rated.
- **Telecommuting** – For officers who have off-site access to the office server, working from home or any other off-site location is an option. Most agencies offer this option on an ad hoc, casual basis. Discretion is usually left to the manager to determine how this option is utilised within his team. Telecommuting can also be facilitated by workplace redesign, an initiative recently undertaken by PSD.

PSD replaced its traditional individually-assigned cubicles with an unassigned open-desk system. This arrangement, known as hot-desking, is akin to desk-sharing and well-suited for departments where employees frequently work out of the office.

Hot-desking allows for better use of office resources and encourages cross-unit collaboration, as employees can choose to sit in project teams rather than permanently with their own departments. More than that, hot-desking has encouraged a shift in mindset in how work is done, stimulating employees to be more flexible in the way they work and encouraging them to use technology to work from any location.

PSD Work-Life Framework



Flexible Working as a Strategic People Management Tool

- Credit Suisse AG

Credit Suisse AG, one of the world's leading financial services providers, offers clients its combined expertise in the areas of private banking, investment banking and asset management. Operating in over 50 countries worldwide with approximately 49,200 people, the Bank provides advisory services, comprehensive solutions and innovative products to companies, institutional clients and high-net-worth private clients globally, as well as to retail clients in Switzerland.



Panel discussion on FWAs hosted by Credit Suisse's Work-Life Integration Forum in Singapore

Credit Suisse strives to create an environment in which its people feel respected and fulfilled – both personally and professionally – and look forward to coming to work. This is part of the Bank's focus on attracting and retaining the most talented people and being an employer

of choice in the industry. Therefore, it tries to give its people sufficient control over their work, freedom of choice and accountability for their results.

Furthermore, Credit Suisse is open to considering a range of flexible work options for employees, including

telecommuting, working part-time, job sharing and may even permit employees to 'compress' their work week or personalise their work schedule. Each flexible work arrangement is assessed on an individual basis. It is important to Credit Suisse that all arrangements take into consideration not only the employee's personal requirements but also the business objectives of the team and the impact that the arrangement may have on clients and stakeholders.

Mr Osama Abbasi, Chief Executive Officer of the Asia Pacific region at Credit Suisse, said: "Our workforce is evolving and diversifying. We must therefore consider the benefits of different work patterns which enable our employees to effectively manage demanding work commitments alongside personal and family commitments. Aligning ourselves with progressive work practices enables us to adapt to the needs of our people and to our changing environment, resulting in greater engagement, retention and productivity. At Credit Suisse, we see flexible work arrangements as a strategic people management tool rather than an employee perk or entitlement."

A culture that takes into account the well-being of employees helps to create motivated teams, which in turn leads to better performance and service to clients. With this in mind, flexible work arrangements available at Credit Suisse – circumstances permitting – include:

Telecommuting: the employee works from home or from another location for part of the week and stays in touch with his or her co-workers or clients remotely via the telephone, fax and internet.

Working part-time or job sharing: the employee works for two to four days per week or shares their job with another employee who has complementary skills.

Compressed work week: the employee restructures his or her working hours, for example by completing longer than average hours over four days in the week and having the fifth day free.

Personalised work schedule: the employee agrees with management on the number of hours to work per week and then completes these hours at his or her discretion. Typically, this arrangement is only suitable for roles that can be carried out by an employee without contact with co-workers or clients throughout the day.

A Vice President in the Bank's Shared Services function who supports Foreign Exchange Sales explained why he took up the option of flexible work arrangements: "It enables me to pursue my studies. This, in turn, provides me with the opportunity to interact and network with other professionals within the industry. More importantly, the knowledge and skills I've acquired through my studies creates a competitive advantage not only for me but also for my team and ultimately the firm when it comes to providing the best service to our clients."

To select its portfolio of flexible arrangements, Credit Suisse uses a number of tools to gather feedback from employees. For example, Credit Suisse's Work-Life Integration Forum aims to help educate employees in Singapore about ways to effectively balance multiple roles and responsibilities. It also seeks to promote a healthy and productive workplace culture.



Employees take a break from an informal networking session to enjoy local fare.

Feedback is gathered through focus group discussions and online surveys. Through these channels, employees have the opportunity to share their ideas and to help shape Work-Life initiatives.

Besides Employee Networks, another important source of feedback is the Employee Engagement Survey, which serves to evaluate employees' ability to manage their workload and to balance work and personal commitments, and also helps the Executive Board and senior leaders to measure the overall involvement and motivation of employees against industry benchmarks. Credit Suisse believes that an intrinsic link exists between employee engagement and business performance. This is reflected in last year's results, when the business performed well. From 2008 to 2009, for the Asia Pacific region, Employee Engagement Survey results showed a 3

percent increase for "balancing work and personal commitments" and a 6 percent increase for "workload management".

Recognising that work patterns are constantly changing, Credit Suisse recently launched a "Smart Working" project. It focuses on harnessing technology to enable flexibility and workplace preferences. Best practices in other industries and competitor benchmarking will also be examined as part of the project.

In recognition of its efforts to actively promote progressive work-life practices and to be aware of the needs of its employees, Credit Suisse has been awarded a number of accolades this year including the Work-Life Achiever Award organised by The Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy.

The Case for **Work-Life** *Integration*



Life is not just about work. Employers who recognise that their employees have other commitments, and help them fulfil these objectives, can better retain their employees. In IRAS, we help our employees integrate their Work-Life by organising various pro-family activities and giving them flexibility to meet their personal commitments, for example, granting them study leave. Our employees are therefore happier and more productive at work.

*Mr Andy Seah, Assistant Commissioner (Corporate Services),
Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore*

Enabling our employees to balance the demands of life and the challenges of work is an important goal for Cargill. We aim to create an environment where our employees can feel a sense of achievement and enjoyment every day. For us, this is the basis of successful employee engagement.

Mr Abraham Cornelis Klaijsen, President and Regional Director, Cargill

NTUC First Campus is in the business of enabling work for working families, especially women. We provide a safe, conducive, and enriching environment to help young children grow and develop, so that working women have peace of mind at work. Naturally, we believe that our own employees deserve the same supportive environment to help them achieve the appropriate Work-Life harmony. By embracing flexible work, we are true to the values that we stand for. We have also been able to retain some of our good staff. It requires more planning, and some degree of give and take. Overall, it has worked out to be a good arrangement for both employees and the organisation.

Mr Chan Tee Seng, CEO, NTUC First Campus

We believe that our associates' overall well-being plays an important part in enabling the Hotel to achieve its business goals. To facilitate and encourage our associates to establish Work-Life harmony and happiness in their career here with us, we introduced a Work-Life Excellence framework which is constantly reviewed and enhanced with new programmes since its inception. In all, we have seen a tremendous improvement in associates' health, productivity and satisfaction with their careers here at the Hotel, which in turn benefits our guests. As a result, Sheraton Towers Singapore Hotel has one of the highest numbers of happy and return guests whose patronage we value.

Mr Steven Long, General Manager, Sheraton Towers Singapore

FWAs is a Big Draw

for Small and Medium Enterprises

- SP Consulting and Fei Yue Family Service Centre

Leaders of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) may think it is difficult to implement Work-Life programmes due to their limited resources and manpower, but here are two SMEs that have proven it can be done and that there is a strong business case.

SP Consulting is a provider of value-added management system consultancy, training and products. The company has won Family Friendly Employer Award, Work-Life Excellence Award and Leading HR Practice Award.

Fei Yue FSC is a non-profit voluntary welfare organisation which oversees centres for family services, student care and retirees. It offers counselling services and runs programmes for children, youth, parents and the elderly.

Consultants at SP Consulting spend long hours at clients' premises providing consultation services in management systems, training and products. By giving the consultants flexibility and allowing them to telecommute, it minimises the requirement for face-time in the office and allows them to build closer relationships with their clients and to be with their families.

Observation also plays an important part in crafting the company's Work-Life package. As the majority of the consultants have to juggle between their families and work, they appreciate the flexibility of being able to spend time with their families in between projects. Principal Consultant Mr Lok Ee Choon said, "With school-going children, it is very important to be able to give them proper guidance and supervision in their growing up years. Having flexible working arrangements allow me this valuable opportunity."

Fei Yue FSC runs many programmes for the community outside of normal working hours, like weekday evenings and weekends. Thus, it makes sense for Fei Yue to offer flexible arrangements for its staff. What works for this organisation are



SP Consulting outing to Universal Studios Singapore

telecommuting, flexi-hours and part-time work. The FWAs are developed through two-way feedback sessions with employees as well as needs assessment surveys. This is done with the business needs of the various centres taken into consideration.

The welfare organisation is particularly heartened by the reception of its staff. "We have received positive feedback from employees and their supervisors on the FWA schemes. In fact, the majority of our employees, even those not on flexible arrangements, commented that having FWAs in place is helpful to them," said Ms Nicole Lee, Manager, Fei Yue.

Fei Yue is able to measure staff response tangibly by tracking employees' satisfaction rate and employees' turnover rate. It also tracks business indicators such as customers' satisfaction rating. Fei Yue sees a direct correlation between its FWAs and its ability to retain experienced staff and attract new talent.

Some companies fear that having flexibility options may affect internal communications and team cohesion. There may also be concerns from managers who require more face time to assure themselves of their subordinates' productivity.

To avoid these potential pitfalls, SP Consulting believes in building a culture of trust. "Their performance is monitored by their output, not so much by the number of hours they clock," explained Mr Lim Meng Wee, Managing Director, "Targets are clearly communicated to them; and these come with monetary incentives to encourage them to reach their targets and even exceed them."

One obligation which the leadership at SP is very firm about is the monthly



Fei Yue staff bond outside work on a Dragon Boat

company meeting. This is the main contact point for management and staff who have offices operating from multiple locations. They would discuss current Work-Life practices in the market and clients' projects.

For organisations with employees operating at various sites (home or remote sites) or with different work schedules, it is not unusual to find that disseminating information to all staff may sometimes be a challenge. At Fei Yue, the issue is resolved by coordinating meetings with employees' schedules in mind. Supervisors also take steps to ensure that employees who are absent from such meetings are updated subsequently.

Both these companies have proven that it does not require a lot of resource or manpower to put flexibility in place. Challenges can be overcome by building a culture of trust and good communication. Doing so also sets the companies apart from the other SMEs as Employer of Choice and goes a long way to attract and retain talents.

Both Fei Yue and SP Consulting were recipients of the 2010 Work-Life Excellence Award organised by The Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy.

Spotlight on EA Activities



Guest-of-Honour Mr Hawazi Daipi, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Manpower & Health and Chairman, Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy



The exciting moment!
Unveiling of the new EA Book!



EA Book unveiled!!!

Launch of EA Book **"Can We Have It All?"** 20 July 2010



Mr Hawazi Daipi and Ms Claire Chiang, Chairperson of Employer Alliance, with EA's new book



Mr Hawazi Daipi, Ms Claire Chiang and contributors to the book "Can We Have It All?"



The team from UBS AG who contributed to the EA book



Panel Discussion with Ms Chiang and Work-Life Consultants during the forum

My Work-Life Success Story

Contest Prize Giving



Mr Hawazi Daipi, Ms Chiang, contest winners and their supervisors



Contest winner, Paul Choo, and his manager from KPMG



Prize giving for contest winner, Ms Fazilah bte Comsari from Rajah & Tann LLP

Work-Life Conversation with an Expert

Interview with Ms Yeo Miu Ean,
Employer Alliance



Upbeat: How would you describe the current awareness and acceptance of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) in Singapore workplaces?

YME: More companies are becoming aware of the importance of FWAs and desire to learn more with a view to implementing them in their organisations. This is shown by the growing number of companies who have become members of Employer Alliance. The number of corporate representatives at our workshops and forums is very encouraging. During such events, the participants share their organisations' efforts, and we can see that flexible work arrangements can be very creative. There is a wide range of FWAs being practised locally, from the informal ad hoc response to an employee's need, to formalised policies. Through forums, books and this Upbeat newsletter, we have been showcasing all these efforts. One biennial highlight is the Work-Life Excellence Awards (WLEA) presented by the Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy where more than a hundred companies have been recognised for their success in Work-Life Integration.

Upbeat: What are some barriers that slow down the implementation of FWAs in organisations?

YME: A major factor is the mindset of employers. The traditional management style equates physical presence with productivity. Employers and line managers with such a mentality will expect a lot of face time from their staff. They find it difficult to trust employees to do their job when they are out of sight. They are often concerned about the minority of "bad apples" who abuse FWAs. However, instead of focusing on the small percent who may not maximise on the potential of FWAs, companies should instead look at how FWAs will benefit the good performers, retain them and increase their engagement.

Another potential barrier is that HR and operations managers may not know how to implement, and manage staff, on the different FWAs. To learn more, they can attend EA Work-Life events, or engage consultants to develop FWA schemes and conduct training.

Upbeat: How can an organisation embark on FWAs?

YME: Here are some quick tips.

1. **Experiment.** Companies can consider doing a pilot run. Be bold to implement an FWA without the mindset of casting it in stone, i.e. be prepared to finetune or even remove it depending on the impact on operations and the employees' response. Such a pilot should be tested in a suitable department for a specified period.
2. **Communicate.** During the pilot period, it is important to educate the department about the purpose and the nature of the FWA, and how the members can use it to facilitate Work-Life Integration. In some cases, the team may have to work out ways to update each other on their schedules, so that there is open communication despite different schedules. Staff on duty should be able to tell clients when the personnel will be in the office. It is also important to communicate the department's working hours to other departments dealing with them, so that inter-department communication and work processes do not break down. Such communication arrangements are commonly practised in companies with regional or global operations.

3. **Fine-tune.** The pilot period is also a time for gathering feedback on the usefulness of the programme. Response should be gathered from the department members, the supervisor and also from external parties dealing with this department. After the specified period is over, the HR department and operation leaders should examine how they can fine-tune the programme.

Upbeat: What is the best way to initiate FWAs?

YME: Ideally, the CEO should champion FWAs. It's been observed that implementation of FWAs is most effective when the leadership provides the support and resources. In other cases, HR advocates of flexibility can also set the ball rolling by learning about FWAs and presenting a business case to the management and operation leaders. Last but not least, the individual who needs more flexibility to take care of personal emergencies can try to propose an FWA that does not impede the operations of the department. When an FWA proves successful, it can then be formalised as a company policy.

Whether you are a CEO, a HR advocate or an employee, you can initiate FWAs as a win-win arrangement for both employers and employees.

Employer Alliance is a network of corporations committed to create an enabling work-environment to support Work-Life Integration. Ms Yeo Miu Ean is the Director of Employer Alliance. Over the past three years, she has shared the benefits of Work-Life with audiences from hundreds of companies and conducts regular workshops on issues related to the implementation of FWAs.

Work-Life Effectiveness

Personal Notes

At Employer Alliance, we believe that while it is the organisation's responsibility to understand employee needs and implement suitable Work-Life programmes, the individual employee should also take responsibility for their life choices and make Work-Life happen for themselves.

EA organised "My Work-Life Success Story" Contest in July for employees to share how they have achieved a Win-Win from the benefits of Work-Life programmes at their workplaces. Here are the winning entries.

Mr Paul Choo, Senior Executive, Markets Group, KPMG.

Since 2005, I have been involved with inter-Generational Affinity Project (iGAP) as a volunteer, serving the elderly living in rented one- or two-room flats. Being a volunteer has helped to develop my character, leadership and teamwork skills, which are useful at my workplace. Most importantly, my efforts make a difference to these elderly.

When I graduated in 2007 and started full-time work, I was anxious that I might not be able to pursue my passion in voluntary work. Thankfully, my fears were unfounded! KPMG advocates Work-Life integration; and is an active corporate citizen with its own community projects while supporting staff who volunteer for a good cause. As the firm also supports sports, I could even take time off work to be involved with the 2009 Asian Youth Games, which was an extremely fulfilling experience!

My firm's support and flexibility motivates me to perform well at work. In recognition of my excellent work performance, I was a recipient of the firm's Ovation Award 2009, and was promoted to senior executive position in June 2010.



Mr Paul Choo receiving the Ovation Award from KPMG

Ms Fazilah bte Comsari, Legal Secretary, Rajah & Tann LLP.

My mother was diagnosed with kidney failure and she had to have dialysis thrice a week. She needs a family member to accompany her for the treatment. I considered converting to part-time as I knew that I would eventually use up my leave. This way, I could accompany my mother for her treatment without having to take leave. But, my benefits and salary would be affected. I decided to discuss my options with my bosses, Ms Tammy Low and Mr Paul Tan. They strongly suggested that I should instead opt for flexi-hours, so that I could retain my existing salary and staff benefits. At that time, I was not aware about the firm's flexi-hours scheme. My bosses discussed it with the Head of Department. It was arranged that I would work an extra hour each day so that I could take leave half a day each week to accompany my mother.

I feel that there is trust and confidence from my bosses. I am grateful and happy to know that I am in a firm that cares for its employees.



Ms Fazilah bte Comsari and family

Ms Minna Koh, Accountant, Focus on the Family.

I am thankful that my organisation recognises that family is important, and as a result, I have been able to work happily from home for 7 years now. Apart from taking the effort to work out a suitable arrangement for me, the company also provided me with a laptop as well as staff benefits such as insurance coverage and training. Because of this, I get to enjoy the best of both worlds as a professional and a mother. I take pride in being present for my children since the day they were born, as I feel this is my most important role as a mother.

Thank you, FOF, for believing in me and believing that people can succeed at being employees and parents at the same time!



Ms Minna Koh working from home, surrounded by her children

WoW! Fund

The Work-Life Works! (WoW!) Fund is a government grant given to businesses to encourage employers to introduce Work-Life measures at the workplace. A common tranche for the WoW! Fund and Flexi-Works! Programs was introduced in March 2009 to streamline the funding process. The common tranche will subsidize up to 80 percent of approved project cost, to a maximum of \$10,000 per organization. Subsequently, organizations could proceed to tap on the WoW! Fund for additional funding up to \$10,000 in the enhanced tier and/or proceed to Flexi-Works! for additional funding up to \$90,000 to employ the economically inactive.



Certain criteria from the grant need to be observed to qualify for grants. To learn more about the WoW! Fund or to apply for it, please log on to the Ministry of Manpower website at www.mom.gov.sg/work-life. For a free briefing on WoW! Fund conducted by the Ministry of Manpower, please refer to their calendar of work-life activities found on their website or contact Employer Alliance at (65) 6837 8631 or email admin@employeralliance.sg to register.

Flexi-Works! Fund

Flexi-Works! is a government grant given to companies to hire new workers on part-time or flexible work arrangements.

The scheme offers a grant of up to \$100,000 to support a company's efforts in the recruitment of workers on part-time or flexible work arrangements. The grant can be used for costs incurred for job redesign, consultancy, recruitment, training, absentee payroll and equipment, to put in place part-time or flexible working arrangements.

This scheme is currently co-administered by both NTUC Women's Development Secretariat as well as the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF).

For more information, please visit www.ntuc.org.sg/flexiworks. Queries may be directed to NTUC at wds@ntuc.org.sg or 6213 8427. You can also email SNEF at flexiworks@snef.org.sg.



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