

WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES COMPANIES IN SINGAPORE FACE IN IMPLEMENTING FLEXI-WORK ARRANGEMENTS?

– *by Sher-li Torrey (Founder, Mums@Work)*

- 1) Difficulty in reworking Performance Appraisal to factor in change of job nature
- 2) Lack of know-how on how to restructure a particular job function (Because it involves communication with other team members, sometimes, it can be a challenge)

SOLUTION: Each team supervisor needs to sit down with the entire team (even if only 1 member is going for flexiwork). Because everyone is a stakeholder, the inputs of the colleagues, co-workers in other departments, HR etc is important. Discuss the job functions – which job duties can be taken over by someone else, which can be done from home, which needs to be done in office, which can be removed etc. The specific communication structure and schedule (e.g. when teleworker needs to be available to take calls/ Skype chats from home etc) needs to be clearly discussed and agreed upon.

- 3) Lack of support from Upper Management (Sometimes HR/ Middle Managers want to implement FWA, but have difficulty convincing Top Management that there is a Business Case/ Advantage for doing so)

EXAMPLE: One of our clients had originally put up an ad for a flexiworker (work-from-home) for accounting role. It got cancelled when one of the Directors said no.

- 4) Lack of support from Direct Supervisors (In companies where Flexible-Work arrangements are in the HR Policy) - CEO and HR team fully support it, but Middle managers (or the DIRECT supervisors of the flexiworker) don't really agree with it

NOTE: Often this is the most pertinent reason that our member-mums share, as being their MAIN DRIVING force that causes them to quit. Snide remarks from supervisors, even when they are on part-time mode. Calls at off-work timings etc are examples of supervisors not being supportive.

SOLUTION: Have performance appraisals for the direct supervisor, measuring their actual support of work-life balance. This is best done via 360 deg performance appraisal, where subordinates assess their manager. One real estate firm we know actually does the 360 deg performance appraisal.

5) General fear that team morale is affected when one person is on telecommuting arrangement. (Some colleagues, who do not have flexiwork, may feel that they are not fairly treated). Some supervisors also get nervous that if one staff was given FWA, more might come forward to ask for it.

SOLUTION: When flexi-work is offered, the criteria for approving it needs to be very clear. This was it sets a structured formula to approve or disapprove FWA. For example, being explicit about the criteria for the employee who gets FWA:

- Number of years worked in the firm
- Job Nature
- Past work performance
- Reasons for asking for FWA

6) A concern that the Customer experience is affected if a team member works from home.

7) Lack of A culture of trust – biggest issue

SOLUTION: It has to be constantly communicated that it is a win-win situation. Performance appraisal is based on KPIs that are not tagged to number of hours in office. And remember: it's mutually beneficial, not just employee-privilege mentality.