

CASE STUDY : CARGO COMMUNITY NETWORK (CCN)

Trust Culture- The Foundation of an Effective Work-Life Strategy

Cargo Community Network (CCN) is a global airfreight solutions provider offering cargo community systems for the air cargo industry. Established in 1991, the company has 8 offices spanning the Asia-Pacific region, with its headquarters in Singapore. CCN's General Manager Teow Boon Ling shares that staff retention in the competitive, knowledge-based IT industry is an on-going organizational challenge. CCN has adopted an employee-driven Work-Life strategy to set itself apart from its competitors.

The organization eschews the cost-reduction bottom line mindset commonly adopted by Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Instead, CCN focuses on the long-term goal of addressing staff welfare needs and building a strong team. Mr. Teow explains that as knowledge retention is vital in this industry, creating an employee-focused workplace offers a win-win solution by meeting employee needs and ensuring the retention of key staff.

Building a Culture of Trust

The crucial element in CCN's Work-Life success is its strong organizational trust culture. Mr. Teow believes that a culture of trust and transparency where the staff can trust the management, serves as the foundation for implementing Work-Life measures in the organization. The company also recognizes the role of team building and bonding, in the success of Work-Life initiatives; when employees know each other well, they are likely to work comfortably as a team. This concept of team spirit and teamwork has been formally included in their core values, and can be found on the company website, signaling the management's commitment to creating a positive work experience for all CCN employees.

Communication is Key

At CCN, the management believes that openness and transparent communication is necessary to foster trust-based working relationships. The organization has an Open-Door policy and holds regular meetings between Management and Department Heads as well as between Department Heads and their respective staff. Additionally, CCN conducts focus groups to gather feedback on its Work-Life initiatives. These multiple modes of feedback and suggestions assure staff that their opinions, needs and concerns are being heard.

These various channels work in tandem to create a successful communications strategy for CCN. The flexi-time initiative is a good example of this. When several employees requested for flexi-time in a Work-Life survey, management and

department heads discussed the parameters and ground rules for implementation. The initiative was then piloted for 3 months to gauge its effectiveness. This resulted in a win-win situation for the employees and the company; the staff were able to choose 'shifts' to suit their individual schedules and CCN also enjoyed extended coverage as there were staff working from 7.30am to 6.30pm- longer than the usual working hours of 8.30am to 5.30pm.

CCN's trust culture forms the backbone of the organization's Work-Life programmes. The transparency of processes when implementing Work-Life initiatives coupled with the positive interpersonal relationships have made staff more receptive to the various Work-Life programmes offered by the company. Mr. Teow shares the success story of Ms Koh Hwee Khim, Director of IT who utilized the flexi-time option. She requested to work half-day at home for a month, to care for her son who had health concerns and was taking his PSLE. When she approached the management to work out this special arrangement, her colleagues were highly supportive of her, and were keen to pitch in and help. Ms Koh says, "This flexible work arrangement helped reduce the work stress on me, as well as my anxiety as a mother."

The Importance of Leadership Support

Management support is a key factor in creating a positive trust culture at CCN. The organization's leadership team has consistently spearheaded Work-Life initiatives. Additionally, Mr. Teow an avid sportsman himself encourages other staff to participate in various sports activities. These measures signal to employees that the management takes an authentic interest in their personal Work-Life Harmony, and is committed to creating a positive Work-Life environment for them.

Tapping into External Resources

Mr. Teow acknowledges that CCN experiences financial and time constraints, which are common amongst SMEs. However, CCN has overcome these obstacles by progressively tapping into Work-Life resources provided by the Health Promotion Board (HPB) and Employer Alliance (EA).

In 2006, CCN successfully applied for the HPB Workplace Health Promotion Grant. HPB introduced workplace health promotion programmes to the organization via seminars and briefings and also provided dollar-to-dollar funding for CCN's health plan.

The organization was keen to create a comprehensive Work-Life strategy to meet the growing needs of its employees. Thus in 2008, CCN participated in EA's First Mover Initiative, where the organization was assigned a certified Work-Life consultant who assessed the needs of staff and organizational goals to create an

actionable Work-Life strategy. As a result, CCN implemented flexi-time for its employees. Building on this, the organization expanded its Work-Life offerings to include Enhanced Family Care Leave for all employees, where childcare leave has been extended to cover children up to 12 years of age. An additional 2 days of leave is provided to care for elderly, spouses and children in case of illness.

CCN pilots all new Work-Life programmes (such as Flexible Working Arrangements) amongst staff. This allows the organization to gauge the effectiveness of each initiative and fine-tune them, prior to officially implementing them.

Reaping the Rewards- The Business Case for Work-Life

Mr. Teow shares that the clearest indicator of the organization's Work-Life success is the improved team spirit and sense of camaraderie amongst his staff. As employees' Work-Life needs are met, they are engaged and enthusiastic at work, and Mr. Teow firmly believes this will enhance their productivity.

CCN's has tailored its Work-Life initiatives to suit the lifestyle needs of its staff. The open relationship between Management and employees has allowed CCN to understand the lifestyle needs of its employees, and tailor its Work-Life initiatives accordingly. These include unique ideas such as giving employees 30 minutes early time off each week for their exercise/ sports, on the condition that employees commit an additional 30 minutes of their personal time as well.

There has been strong positive response from the staff towards the Work-Life initiatives. There has been good attendance at the various health and fitness activities and majority of staff have taken up the flexi-time option. CCN's various Work-Life initiatives are also family-friendly as employee's families are invited to join them in the activities. Ms Amy Phoon, Marketing Support Supervisor shares, "I have become fitter and even participated in public runs with my colleagues. Now I jog with my husband and my 2 kids regularly, and this is one activity that we are really enjoying as a family." These events have also created opportunities for staff to mingle freely and bond over common interests. The company has even seen two couples getting married after these get-togethers.

CCN has experienced cost savings as a direct result of its Work-Life initiatives. The organization has seen significantly lower absenteeism and medical claims this year as compared to previous years.

The organization has also received national recognition for its commitment to Work-Life, receiving the Singapore HEALTH Leader Award 2008 and Silver Health Award from HPB in 2008. These accolades have helped to brand CCN as an employer



that prioritizes staff welfare, allowing the organization to continue attracting and retaining key talent.

Mr. Teow emphasizes that CCN's Work-Life journey is a constant work in progress. CCN is currently exploring the feasibility of telecommuting and will continue to fine-tune its Work-Life strategy as employees' Work-Life needs evolve.

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