



A Flexibility Framework for Sustainable Talent Retention

Background

Citi Singapore is a leading financial services organisation and the country's largest banking employer, providing employment to over 10,000 individuals who work across three main locations in Asia Square, Changi Business Park and Capital Square. As a global bank, competing in a demanding and fast-evolving industry, Citi Singapore recognises the importance of aligning workplace considerations to business strategy. As its people are its most valuable asset, the company has initiated various people strategies with the mission to create an environment where employees can be successful personally and professionally, and derive satisfaction in building their career with them.

Organisational Work-Life Strategy

Over the years, Citi Singapore has progressively cultivated an effective flexible work culture for its employees. The company's Citi Work Strategies Programme is a global initiative that has played an important role in embedding flexibility in the company's DNA. Through this programme, Citi Singapore offers employees a wide range of mobility and flexibility options; individuals can choose to work in alternative locations and outside the traditional working hours, allowing them to configure the best working conditions for themselves.

The Citi Work Strategies Programme has a clearly articulated structure that is easy to understand and adapt to. This initiative consists of two broad segments; 'work styles' which define the various remote-work options, and 'flex schedule types' which lists the different configurations of working hours that employees can choose from. Employees are able to mix and match options across both segments, to devise a tailored Work-Life solution that will allow them to maximise their personal and professional efficiency.

"At Citi, we recognise that flexible work arrangements are mutually beneficial to the employee as well as the organisation. For this reason, we do not measure staff productivity by face time. Rather, we establish clear expectations with employees on their goals and they are evaluated accordingly. By giving our employees the flexibility on how, where and when they work, we create a culture where they can excel personally and professionally."

*Ms. Evangeline Chua
Head of Human Resources
Citi Singapore*



At the Citi Family Day, more than 1,600 Citibankers and their families built over 750 sandcastles, to which Citi Singapore pledged 70 bowls of rice per sandcastle to benefit less privileged families in the South East district of Singapore.



As part of the Association of Banks in Singapore's (ABS) 40th anniversary celebrations, Citi Singapore joined foreign and local banks in planting 230 trees along Singapore's Marina Coastal Drive.

The Citi Work Strategies Programme	
Work Styles	Flex Schedule Types
Flex Resident Employees can choose to work remotely up to one day per week.	Flextime Employees must work at pre-determined core hours and can vary their work day start and end times.
Agile Employees can choose to work remotely 2-4 days per week, and may spend 'in-office' time at various Citi locations.	Compressed Workweek Employees can work longer scheduled days to meet the required working hours each week, with the intent of working fewer days each week.
Telecommuter Employees work remotely 5 days per week.	Job-Sharing Two employees can share the workload and responsibilities of one full-time role.
	Part-Time or Reduced Schedule Employees can choose to work lesser hours than a full-time role.

The Citi Work Strategies Programme has a clear and transparent implementation process, which is typically initiated by the employee. Employees would first need to conduct the self-assessment available on the Citi Work Strategies website to ascertain if their personal working style and job scope are suitable for a flexible working arrangement. Each request is then assessed by the relevant team managers who will discuss with their employees to offer the best Work-Life solutions while still ensuring that business needs and client priorities are met.

The comprehensive formalised Work-Life framework presented through the Citi Works Strategies Programme signals the organisation's emphasis on Work-Life integration. As a result, the management has also noticed an increasing trend of informal flexibility; as managers and employers grow more confident that flex-work is viable, these flex options are now also frequently utilised on an informal basis as flexibility is embedded into the organisation culture. A substantial number of employees have an agreement with their managers on how and when they can utilise flexible working arrangements.

Organisational Leadership Strategies

The active buy-in from leadership has been instrumental in Citi Singapore's Work-Life success. Through regular communications, the senior management has signalled its long-term commitment to effective Work-Life integration for all employees.

As a highly regulated financial institution, the security of client information is a top priority. As a result, specific roles in operations and relationship management are not deemed suitable for remote-working options. However, employees in these roles can opt to work on other flexibility schemes such as part-time or job-sharing arrangements, which allow them to have better Work-Life integration without compromising the business needs of the company.

The senior management has also proactively identified the key challenges that hinder Work-Life integration and takes steps to address these. One issue that surfaced was the reticence of line managers to implement flexible working arrangements for their team members, due to the concern that the day-to-day operations would be adversely affected. To address this, the company now educates its line managers on the importance and implementation of Work-Life integration practices. This is done on an on-going basis through email communications and one-on-one discussions with line managers.

A second issue that was raised was the concern that employees on flexible work arrangements would be overlooked or negatively perceived by their colleagues if they utilise flex-work options. The management recognised this as a common stumbling block for any competitive work environment, and felt that the most effective response was to lead by example- as such senior management also tap on the available flexible work options when needed, thereby walking-the-talk and demonstrating their feasibility and giving other employees the confidence to use them when needed.

Information Management Strategies

Citi Singapore recognises that the Work-Life needs of employees are constantly evolving, and prioritises regular and consistent communication with its large workforce, to ensure that Work-Life practices and policies keep pace with the changing needs of its team. Various communication mechanisms are in place to ensure this:

- **The Citi Work Strategies Website**
This site is accessible to all employees via the company intranet, where current information and guidelines on Work-Life policies are readily available.
- **Annual Voice of Employee (VOE) Survey**
This annual survey is used to take the pulse of the organisation- identifying the key issues affecting employees and giving them an opportunity to share their views on how the company can enhance current Work-Life offerings and create a better workplace for all staff.
- **Dialogues or Town Hall Sessions** – Michael Zink, Citi Country Officer (CCO) for ASEAN and Singapore, holds regular town hall sessions to address senior leaders. Individual business unit leaders also organise smaller scale meetings to provide employees with business updates. Important Work-life updates are also included in these sessions.
- **Pulse Lunches** – Pulse Lunches take place every month between the CCO and seniors at Citi. The lunch groups are kept small to enable interaction. Likewise, similar pulse lunches or breakfast meetings are conducted at the department or level by business heads with their employees.
- **Morning Coffee with Michael** – This is a one-on-one session that the CCO conducts with high-potentials across the franchise.

Performance Management Strategies

Citi Singapore has a transparent and holistic performance management system, which also reinforces the Work-Life culture. Here, employees are assessed on the quality of their work, regardless of whether they are on a flexible working arrangement. Managers set KPIs for each team member at the start of the year, and conduct two formal performance appraisals each year to monitor employee progress, flag areas for improvement and assess an employee's effectiveness in their work role.

Managers also make a conscious effort to clarify job expectations with employees who are on a flexible working arrangement and discuss performance goals and work deliverables during the appraisal process. The manager and employee also regularly review the flexible work plan, to ensure that both employee and business needs are met.

Outcomes and Conclusion

Citi Singapore's commitment to creating a healthy flexible working culture has given this leading bank an edge in the competitive industry. Here, employees are more engaged at work and give their professional best to meet client needs, as they appreciate the Work-Life integration initiatives that enable them to pursue personal responsibilities and interests. The company has also gained external recognition, most recently being awarded *Top 20 Best Companies for Leadership* globally by Hay Market in September this year, in addition to being ranked *2nd Best Employer* by graduates in the Banking, Insurance and Financial Services category by GTI Media.

Integrating Career and Family-Life - A Citi Success Story

Ms. Cindy Dermawan is the Head for Talent Development and Management at Citi Singapore. She has been on the Citi Work Strategies (CWS) programme since April 2012. As a working mother with two young children aged 9 and 4 years old, she has worked out a schedule with her manager where she leverages flexible working arrangements, allowing her to start and end work early as well as work two ½-days from home each week.

Ms. Dermawan shares that the strong support from her manager helped her overcome initial reservations about joining the CWS programme. "I am committed to my job and love what I do. Having two young children could have derailed my career aspirations if I did not have the flexibility and support from the organisation." Ms. Dermawan shares that her manager respects her working hours, and makes it a point to schedule meetings on days when she is in the office. She also continues to be given challenging projects and opportunities to perform. Despite working on flexible arrangement, her career progression has not been impeded. In recognition of her contributions to Citi, Ms. Dermawan was promoted in 2013.

For this Citi employee, Work-Life integration is a reality as the company's flex culture has provided her with the autonomy to manage her time. She concludes, "flex culture contributes to productivity and efficiency given the fact that I am connected to work during my waking hours regardless of my physical location".