

CASE STUDY : DBS BANK

Hedging into the Future with Connectivity

A Values-Based Investment (A workplace that creates both employee and customer value at DBS)

Being one of the largest financial services groups in Asia, DBS Bank strongly believes in the intrinsic value of an engaged workforce. Leveraging on their corporate values which include being “Passionate & Committed”, promoting “Integrity & Respect” and “Value Relationships”, DBS seeks to partner their staff in achieving Work-Life integration in their lives through state-of-the-art workplace environment, mobility-enhancing infrastructural support and innovative flexible work arrangements.

Moving towards Greater Connectivity

With the recent opening of the bank’s brand new 340,000 square feet, purpose-built facility, DBS Asia Hub, DBS is poised

to make a definitive crossover from traditional back-office to a more progressive customer value centre. Opened in September 2010, this facility situated in Changi Business Park will be housing more than 3,000, or over 40% of DBS’ Singapore-based staff. It will accommodate most of the bank’s technology, operations and support functions.

Moving away from traditional cubicle-based workstations, DBS Asia Hub boasts of open-concept workspaces with “social hubs”, designed to foster greater team interaction, breaking down silos, thereby enhancing greater innovation through combining capabilities across functional teams. Staff based at DBS Asia Hub enjoy the convenience of seamless communication and enhanced mobility with wireless technology in all parts of the facility. Some are even able to determine their preferred work stations, according to their work needs at any point in time.

Flexibility in choice of worksites has eliminated the need for a fixed workplace in some cases. Such a hot-desking arrangement is deployed most commonly among the technical support staff in the IT department.

Across DBS, technology is a great enabler. Notebooks, Blackberrys, iPhones and iPads are common sights. Meetings can be conducted via VOIP or through normal voice calls. Teleconferencing is common practice.

Also, an instant messaging system, iChat, implemented company-wide, enables staff to communicate with each other easily.

While staying connected, staff are also able to enjoy the convenience of a stylish in-house café that can accommodate over 300 people and a state-of-the-art 24-hour gym and dance studio.

Meegan Campion, a staff from the Technology & Operations Division, is all praise for the impact of Asia Hub on staff mobility and flexibility. “I think the facilities at Asia Hub are excellent...wireless access from all areas means that you can work easily around

the hub...and this has a definite link to productivity.” While lounge areas and breakout rooms are available on every level for quick meetings and group huddles, it is the chic in-house cafe ambience that makes it a definite draw for meetings as well as impromptu sessions for Meegan and her colleagues.

With the wireless technology, non cubicle-based environment, large common lounge areas, cafe, gym and dance studio in Asia Hub, DBS can certainly bank on a more engaged workforce as an underlying security to deliver improved customer service levels and enhanced regional connectivity.

Flexible Work Arrangement - A Growing Trend That's Here to Stay

Besides the workplace environment, flexibility in work arrangements is a way of life at DBS as well as a talent retention and business strategy. The management's strong endorsement of flexible work arrangements means line managers are empowered to support flexible work arrangements among their people in order to maximize productivity

and foster greater employee satisfaction and staff loyalty.

Recognizing that the impact of working flexibly could make all the difference in one's state of work-life harmony and sense of being valued, be it flexibility in working hours or freedom to telecommute, supervisors pro-actively engage their staff in conversations on any challenges they are currently facing and their views on how the organization could partner them in achieving greater effectiveness at work and at home.

Senior Vice-President of HR Rewards, Cheong Meng Foong, is a firm believer of empowering line managers and staff to identify and mutually agree on the most suitable flexible work arrangements. At the end of the day, these have to be workable, fair and enforceable, keeping in view business and operational goals.

“As a bank, we believe in valuing relationships – externally, with our customers, and internally, with one another. Giving our people the flexibility to manage their work schedules stems from our recognition that when we are dealing with individuals, a flexible

approach beats a cookie-cutter approach. As an organisation, we try our best to be supportive” says Meng Foong. “HR provides the broad framework and guidelines for Flexible Work Arrangements but will not micro-manage the implementation details, such as timing.” This autonomy and implicit trust accorded to the staff exemplifies the management's commitment to make flexibility work, as a culture.

Management Walk-the-Talk

Senior Vice-President Pua Chuey Luan is one firm advocate of the philosophy that organizations that have work-life integration will have a more engaged workforce. In 2008, she converted from working full time to a part-time arrangement of working three days per week at the bank due to a change in her life-stage needs. Chuey Luan discovered that as she avails more time to meet her family needs, she is in turn able to focus and enjoy her work more. She is also grateful that she was still able to contribute to the bank despite the intensity of her family demands at that time. “I have been very fortunate. When I raised the idea of doing part-time...

senior management was very supportive.” The goodwill of management was reciprocated as Chuey Luan converted to a four-day work week at the beginning of this year when her family needs became less intense.

Chuey Luan’s example underscores that for flexible work arrangements to succeed, trust and understanding are two very critical factors that cannot be absent. Flexibility involves giving the staff the responsibility to do a task and trusting that he/she would deliver the outcome. Besides, performance is assessed based on the staff’s key result areas (KRAs) and key performance indicators (KPIs) achievement and not on face-time.

Chuey Luan pointed out that a give-and-take mindset is also key to the success of any flexible work arrangement. “On my part, I do not nitpick and count exactly the numbers of hours that I work.”

As a senior staff, Chuey Luan is mindful that her flexible schedule does not have any negative impact on other stakeholders’ deliverables. She is most amenable to participating in any

conference calls or meetings even on her off-days, as she knows without a doubt that her bosses and colleagues will not call her or arrange meetings unnecessarily on her off-days.

Working part-time has also cultivated good time management habits in Chuey Luan as she is highly aware of the shorter working hours she has due to her flexible work arrangement.

More Flexibility at Work

Other flexible work arrangements currently in place at DBS are staggered hours and telecommuting.

Parents with children of school-going age are particularly appreciative of the availability of staggered hours options, whereby they can deviate from the traditional working hours and start and end work at a mutually agreeable time. This arrangement makes it possible for staff to send their children to and from school, thereby strengthening family ties and family structures. In addition, the bank also provides 2 days of family leave to all employees, regardless of whether they are single, married, or have

children. This allows employees to spend more time with their family. Furthermore, employees with young children are given an additional 4 days of leave over and above the 2 days of family leave, and this additional time off represents quality time which they have to bond with their young charges.

Meng Foong believes that as staff begin to demonstrate better performance as a result of flexible work arrangements, this would be a catalyst for a flexibility mindset to take root and become more widely practiced in the bank. It is her wish to see staff at all levels embracing and promoting flexible work arrangements in support of a strong work-life culture.

Human Capital - Asset Enhancement

Whether it is to meet an individual's request to work away from the office, addressing a business challenge or a strategy to improve effectiveness, weaving flexibility into work arrangements is oftentimes the solution.

As DBS employs various Work-Life strategies to support their staff in achieving better Work-Life harmony, this would in turn create a positive impact on their customers and business. As staff gain greater satisfaction in both their personal and professional lives, they will be more loyal, committed and productive at their workplace. By creating and sustaining a Work-Life friendly culture, DBS remains an employer of choice, one which is better able to retain its valued employees.

Indeed, as DBS continues to invest in its most valued resource (i.e. people), the bank can look forward to an exponential yield on the future value of this human capital.