



Darul Ghufuran Mosque

Pusat Pilihan Bagi Pendidikan Dan Dakwah
The Centre of Choice for Education and Dakwah

Leading with Heart – A Non-Profit Organisation’s Savvy Work-Life Strategy

Background

The Darul Ghufuran mosque is the second largest mosque in Singapore with a seating capacity of 4,000. Here, a lean and dynamic team of 49 employees work together to serve its congregation and the wider community. The workforce at Darul Ghufuran spans from Millennials and Generation X-ers to mature employees, with the oldest employee being 72 years old. The management believes that every employee is a valuable contributor to the team; the younger staff deliver fresh ideas while more seasoned employees are able to pass on their wealth of knowledge and service experience.

Recruiting and retaining talented employees is a challenge in every industry, particularly for non-profit organisations. The management at Darul Ghufuran counters this by providing a high standard of staff welfare and an effective work-life strategy that helps employees to manage their careers and personal lives effectively.

Organisational Work-Life Strategy

Darul Ghufuran’s work-life strategy aims to provide employees with greater flexibility and autonomy to decide when and how they work – this cultivates an engaged and satisfied team of staff that provides quality service and care for its congregation.

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) are a core component in the organisation’s work-life strategy. Darul Ghufuran offers employees a variety of flexible work options including staggered working hours, telecommuting and part-time work. Of these, telecommuting has been the most popular, with 13 employees currently utilising this FWA.

Due to its relatively small workforce, the organisation is extremely nimble, and has on various occasions, been able to customise FWAs to fit employees’ specific work-life needs. For example, an employee who was pursuing higher education was offered the opportunity to work part-time on a temporary basis, in order to focus on his studies. In another scenario, a Customer Service Officer, whose official working hours are from 8.30am to 6.30pm, found it a struggle to go home to cook dinner for her family. The management proposed that her working hours be shifted to 8.00am – 6.00pm to allow her to meet her work goals without compromising on her familial responsibilities.

“When our staff are happy in the workplace, our overall operations are better. Each staff may define happiness differently – but we do our best to empower them to achieve it.”

*Abdul Matin
Chairman
Darul Ghufuran Mosque*

The management also makes it a priority to ensure that employees are treated fairly, and that each staff has the opportunity to achieve work-life integration. Due to the nature of their work, many of the FWAs such as telecommuting cannot be extended to teaching staff. Thus, the management offers other work-life initiatives such as a family room with a children’s play and study area, for their use. Teaching staff with short-term childcare needs may opt bring their children into work and use these facilities. During non-teaching hours, teachers may bring their laptops into the family room and continue working, while staying close to their children.

As a non-profit organisation, Darul Ghufuran has maximised its work-life budget by utilising the various government grants available for work-life friendly companies. By tapping on the WoW! Fund¹, the organisation was able to substantially reduce the cost of setting up the family room, installing camera monitors, as well as investing in laptops and VPN access for its employees. The management has also utilised the Workplace Health Promotion Grant by HPB to conduct talks, workshops and group exercise sessions, to promote health and wellness amongst staff.

The management and HR have also collaborated on other impactful yet cost-effective measures to enable greater flexibility for employees. One example is of how the HRM system was refined to efficiently track FWAs for all staff. An employee who is utilising an FWA has to record this in the HRM leave system, at least one week in advance. The staff will need to indicate the type of FWA utilised, the exact duration they will work remotely and details of the project they will be working on. Employees are also offered flexible benefits which can be used for personal and career development courses.

Organisational Leadership Strategies

At Darul Ghufuran, the Board which is appointed by MUIS on a bi-annual term oversees the management and operations of the mosque. The Board members believe that the organisation should be an Employer of Choice, and aims for its staff welfare level to serve as a benchmark for other organisations.

The Board members also provide middle managers (Heads of Divisions) with the autonomy to offer work-life solutions to their team members when appropriate. In one such case, a teaching staff needed to temporarily work on a part-time basis due to her care-giving duties. Her HOD was able to offer her a part-time work arrangement for one-and-a-half months, and arranged for a relief teacher to fill the additional hours, to avoid increasing the workload of the current team of teachers during this period.



The staff at Darul Ghufuran mosque enjoying themselves at team bonding events (left) and monthly birthday celebrations (right).

Information Management Strategies

A strong communications strategy contributes to the positive work-life culture at Darul Ghufuran. Staff contact meetings are used to build team dynamics and encourage a healthy attitude towards work-life integration that is rooted in organisational values such as teamwork and life-long learning. Here, HODs takes the opportunity to share important work-life updates, success stories and also organise team building games. This motivates staff to work cohesively and encourages them to utilise FWAs when needed, as they are assured of receiving the support of their team.

¹ With effect 1 April 2013, the WoW! Fund has been replaced by the Work-Life Grant under the WorkPro Programme.

In order to encourage a fully flexible work culture, the various FWAs and other employee engagement schemes have been formalised as part of the organisation's HR manual. Employees are able to independently refer to the manual for the various work-life options available to them, even before approaching their HODs and HR. This makes the application and approval of FWAs a clear and transparent process, reducing misunderstandings between management and staff.

Maintaining open communication channels between senior management and the employees is emphasised at Darul Ghufuran. After a recent employee engagement survey, a staff retreat was held where employees were presented with the survey results and given a clear explanation by senior management representatives as to why some work-life suggestions would be implemented while others would not. This allowed the senior management to effectively implement work-life solutions while managing employees' expectations.

Performance Management Strategies

The organisation has implemented a simple yet effective performance management system, which is designed to engage staff and motivate them to give their best at work. At the start of each year, employees meet with their respective HODs to set goals and action plans in place. At these sessions, measurable KPIs are set for each staff to meet. HODs then proactively follow up with feedback on their performance, throughout the year. At the end of each year, employees are appraised based on how well they met their goals.

As a non-profit organisation, Darul Ghufuran also considers feedback from various stakeholders such as its congregants, when assessing work performance. This may be provided in the form of verbal feedback or written feedback forms.

Outcomes and Conclusion

Providing an effective work-life strategy differentiates Darul Ghufuran as an Employer of Choice and serves as a good retention strategy. 19 of their employees including 3 HODs, have been with the organisation for between 11 and 23 years. These long-serving employees have been able to pass on their wealth of experience and knowledge for newer staff to build on.

Darul Ghufuran mosque has shown that with strategic planning and strong management support, it is possible to create an effective people management framework that offers opportunities for work-life integration and boosts employees' engagement at work – even with a limited budget. With close collaboration between the senior management, HR and HODs, Darul Ghufuran has successfully instituted work-life programmes and policies that empower staff to achieve work-life integration, while still maintaining a high quality of service for the community.