



Truly A Great Place To Work In

Background

Hilti provides leading-edge products, systems and services to the global construction industry. Headquartered in Schaan in the Principality of Liechtenstein, the company has its own production plants as well as research and development centers in Europe and Asia, employing over 20,000 staff in more than 120 countries around the world. Incorporated in Singapore as Hilti Far East Pte Ltd as a wholly owned subsidiary of Hilti Inc., Hilti Far East has served customers in the construction and energy industry for more than 40 years.

Today, it has more than 120 committed and competent employees in the local workforce working as sales professionals, engineers, testers and providing corporate support.

The Hilti Culture and Work-Life Strategy

Hilti’s work-life strategy is intricately intertwined with its corporate culture, which is committed to the success of its people. Investing in people development, training and culture building is a key strategy Hilti employs to ensure organisational success. Its corporate culture, founded on values of integrity, courage, teamwork and commitment is being cascaded down rigorously from its corporate head office in Liechtenstein to its local offices around the world.

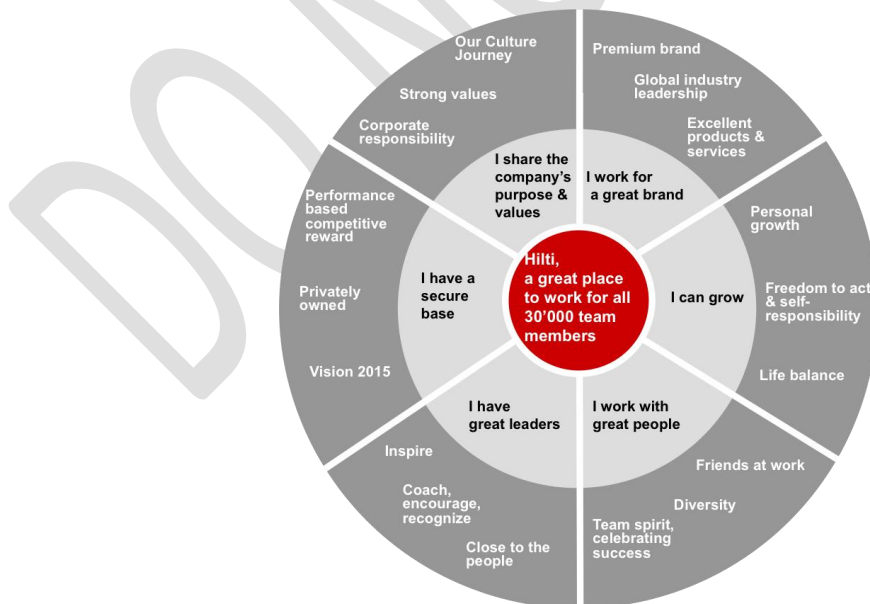


Figure 1: Hilti’s ‘Great Place to Work’ Wheel

Supporting its work-life strategy is Hilti’s Great Place to Work framework, represented by the wheel above. This framework encapsulates the different strategies the organisation has

in place to attract and retain its talent. A part of its Vision 2015 is to create a workplace that employees enjoy coming to work to. Hilti recognises that employees' needs are different at various life stages and these 'work' and 'life' priorities change over the different seasons of our lives. When empowered, however, individuals will take responsibility over their work and achieve harmony in their 'work' and 'life'. The company therefore needs to create an environment where employees are energised, have the opportunity to grow while having fun doing what they do.

It is this commitment to empower the individual employee to achieve work-life integration that has shaped many of their corporate policies. For example, all over its global offices, meetings only commence on Tuesdays instead of Mondays so that employees can spend the weekends with their families and start their travelling on Mondays. The sales team and engineers have the flexibility to work from home to complete administrative tasks if they are not required to be in the office. Where employees' needs requires, Hilti is flexible to design work schemes that best meet the needs of its employees and the business. Its Head of Human Resource for Southeast Asia, Mr Low Khim Wah explains, "It's the little things that make the difference and convey to the individual that we care for them and respect the boundary between their personal and work life."

At present, Hilti is moving towards a more flexible workplace. Its employees in the Singapore office are on various flexible work arrangements. Telecommuting is popular, especially with its sales force, and made possible with laptops made available to all staff. Some of its corporate employees are on part-time work or compressed work-week. Newly hired employees are eligible to take their annual leave entitlement even before their probation period is up, an uncommon industry practice.

With the flexible work arrangement, I have extra days to rest, spend time with my children and to go on holidays over the long weekends. I'm now better able to handle the stress and demands at work; and I find work more enjoyable.

Shannon Liew,
Customer Service Representative

Hilti's Leadership Strategies

Founded in 1941, the worldwide Hilti Group evolved from a small family company. It upholds a clear value orientation and pursues a policy of stakeholder value. The vision of the founding family is to have customers who are loyal and passionate about Hilti's products. It firmly believes that to do so, it has to go beyond providing innovative products.

It is therefore the leadership impetus to create an environment where employees are engaged and motivated, delivering differentiating services across the entire value chain.

For this reason, Hilti has a robust leadership development and succession plan in place. As far as possible, the organisation tries to promote from within, looking beyond technical contributions to the candidate's ability to influence and coach his team. He must also demonstrate a positive people development record, able to harness the strengths of the team and build a supportive environment for team members to actively pursue stretch targets. The goal of the team leader is not to achieve targets through pushing, but through relationship building and coaching, understand team members' needs, aspirations and motivations so as to help them achieve both their business and personal targets.

Hilti's Information Management Strategy

To understand employees' work-life needs, it gathers and hears from the ground through other mechanisms like the annual employee opinion survey, career development discussions, corporate camps and team gatherings. Feedback received is acted upon promptly. To benchmark itself, it regularly participates in 'Best Employer' awards to validate its people practices. It won the AON Hewitt's Best Employers Award in Singapore for three consecutive times in 2009, 2011 & 2013.

Hilti's People Strategies

Hilti takes pride in the fact that its passion for people development sets it apart from its competitors. Acknowledging that its team members are at the core of the company's success, it continuously invests in their engagement and development.

Employee Engagement

The organisation makes a conscious effort to engage its employees. Upon the commencement of a new hire's employment with Hilti, team manager must have in place on the new hire's first day of work, a structured 2-month training programme. Spouses and family members are included in Hilti's team and corporate events and activities as part of the organisation's efforts to recognise the support given by family members.

Employee Learning and Development

Team Camp Foundation

- 1st team camp held in 2005
- Cascading of Hilti's corporate values and culture – the Hilti Way
- Individual reflection on what one wants out of life and how his career in Hilti fitted into the life's purpose

Team Camp Rubicon

- 2nd team camp held 18 months later
- Reflection on life's purpose, and progress on physical health, state of mind and relationship with others
- Practical tips to handle busyness at work

Team Camp Pit-Stop

- 3rd team camp held 18 months later
- Physical exercises such as Yoga incorporated into camp

Note: Review of business and team performance and discussions on strategic directions are on the agenda in all 3 camps.

Learning and development is a huge focus in Hilti. Besides having a structured on-the-job training programme in place, all new hires also attend a 2D1N orientation camp facilitated by Mr Low. Between 8 and 15 new hires are involved in the camp at any point in time, which is seen as integral to inculcating the Hilti Way and values in these new hires.

Every 18 months, employees attend a team camp – akin to corporate retreats -- in groups of no more than 15 person, the camps are designed as a time of self-reflection, to strengthen relationships and to build bonds between team members. While corporate directions and strategies are shared during these sessions, ample time is set aside for review at the team level – review of the team's strengths and limitations, business performance and directions going forward. In place since 2005, the Hilti's Singapore office has conducted 4 such camps over the past 7 years. See insert for more information on these camps.

Employee Well-Being and Satisfaction

Hilti also has in place a recreation club managed by staff members. The club organises 12 events in a year and team managers and employees and their family members are encouraged to take part in these events. These events include 'Durian Feast at West Coast Park', 'Movie Night', 'Farm Visits' etc. Team managers are also given a budget for monthly team meals, all part of the organisation's efforts to build camaraderie amongst staff members.

Employee satisfaction and well-being are measured on an annual basis through their annual employee opinion survey. This annual exercise serves as a feedback channel and is seen as a leadership scorecard.

Employee Performance and Recognition

Employees' performance is measured annually through the performance appraisal process. One-on-one performance discussions between managers and employees are held at least 3 times a year. While most organisations stipulate biannual face-to-face discussions combining performance review/target setting sessions with career development discussions, Hilti trains its managers to conduct these discussions separately with their staff.

Including career development discussions, a team leader has at least four formal face-to-face discussions with his team member annually. The career development discussion is deliberately kept separate, as Hilti wants team managers to devote time focusing on the individual – his work-life challenges, his career aspirations, his developmental goals – over and above his work performance and the target setting exercise. So important is this process to Hilti that the company has built questions into its employee opinion survey to measure the degree of follow-through of this process and its effectiveness.

Hilti's compensation package, when compared to other organisations, has a larger variable component tied to the individual's performance. This emphasis on rewarding good performance, regardless of the work arrangement, encourages greater workplace flexibility as part-time and flexiwork employees are also recognised for good performance.

Outcomes and Conclusion

It is heartening to see an organisation that consciously cultivates a culture of care and respect for the individual and emphasises the development of its employees. Hilti demonstrates this commitment through the innovative work-life schemes and comprehensive development programmes that it has put in place. Its strong work-life culture is also exemplified daily by leaders who walk-the-talk, engage and coach their staff, and supported by rigorous organisational policies and practices.