



Creating a Flexible Organisational Work Culture

Background

First established in 1990, Polycom® is the global leader in secure HD video and voice conferencing technology solutions, with over 70 offices worldwide. As increasing mobility transforms the workplace, Polycom aims to offer powerful, secure, user-friendly technology solutions that provide high quality audio and video to everyone, everywhere. Polycom technology facilitates a high degree of mobility and flexibility across client organisations.

As an employer, Polycom has harnessed its IT expertise to create a flexible working environment that offers employees full mobility to work in a manner that maximises their personal efficiency and results in Work-Life integration for everyone. Polycom's APAC regional headquarters in Singapore is staffed by a team of more than 100 employees that is entirely mobile; all employees actively tap on flexible work arrangements that best suit them.

Organisational Work-Life Strategy

Polycom Singapore has successfully created an effective organisational Work-Life strategy that meets both employee and business needs. Employees are empowered to tailor their personal Work-Life solutions – deciding when and where they will work to allow them to meet their work objectives as well as attend to personal responsibilities and interests. On the business front, the company experiences the reciprocity of providing these Work-Life solutions; employees are more engaged, loyal and willing to meet and exceed customer expectations.

At Polycom Singapore, a flexible workforce is seen as a business imperative, and not just an employee engagement strategy. Client servicing has become more complex as clients are looking for cost-effective solutions as well as increased interaction and face-time with vendors. The technology has also changed to keep up with the changing needs of the market place. Videoconferencing has extended from simple meeting room based teleconferencing, to now enable people to connect face-to-face from anywhere through laptops, tablets and smartphones. As a global company, Polycom recognises that employees are increasingly required to work outside of traditional hours to meet client requests and attend virtual meetings. To facilitate this, the company does not require employees to be within the office during the traditional working hours of 9am to 6pm. Instead, employees manage their own work hours to ensure that work goals are met.

“The flex culture is well-ingrained at Polycom. Rather than fire-fighting when employee engagement and operational issues occur, we are focused on intentionally instilling a healthy work culture.”

*Mr. Eric Wong
Head of Talent Acquisition,
Learning and Development,
APAC, Japan and China
Polycom Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd.*

Self-management and accountability are strongly emphasised at Polycom Singapore. Employees are encouraged to assess their personal goals and responsibilities and weigh these against their work objectives, and freely utilise the available flexible work options to achieve these, without feeling any guilt or suffering burn-out. This approach has paid off for

the company, as employees are highly aware of the work expectations, and strive hard to work efficiently and meet these, to ensure that their abilities and contributions are felt by their managers. Ultimately, these self-motivated employees require minimal monitoring and can work well independently.

A positive trust culture has been a key factor in Polycom Singapore's Work-Life success. Employees have the confidence that they will not be penalised for utilising flexible work options, and the management trusts that employees will meet work objectives even as they work remotely and at different times outside of the traditional working hours. This trust culture has gradually strengthened over the years through the management's consistent and repeated communication on the importance of Work-Life; the senior management and line managers conscientiously remind their team members to utilise flexible working arrangements when needed.

Organisational Leadership Strategies

Polycom Singapore's senior management fully supports the organisation's Work-Life integration practices, and has several strategies in place to ensure that the flex culture continues to thrive in the long term.

Firstly, the organisation focuses on hiring quality talent that are a good fit with the current culture. While potential hires need not have extensive experience utilising flex practices, they must possess key qualities such as good work ethic, accountability, flexibility and the ability to collaborate with others. Mr. Eric Wong, Head - Talent Acquisition, Learning and Development, APAC, Japan and China shares that these attributes determine how engaged employees will be in their roles – ultimately, this will indicate if they can fit into the Polycom culture and work independently on flexible working arrangements.

The company's senior management also uses flexibility in a tailored approach to attract and groom potential talent. Polycom Singapore has an unconventional internship model, where interns from tertiary institutions serve a one-year internship, rather than the usual 10 weeks which is the industry standard. Interns are attached to the company on a full-time basis for 10 weeks, after which they are provided with laptops and work part-time while continuing with their education. Through this flexible internship scheme, interns are more engaged as they receive exposure to different departments and challenges, and the company gains high calibre employees.

Management has also identified that employees may need to opt for ad-hoc flexi-work in emergency situations. In order to make flex options fully accessible to employees at short notice, the company has engaged an employment agency to ensure that temporary staff coverage is available for employees, within 24 hours. This ensures that the flex options remain relevant and user-friendly for all Polycom Singapore employees, including administrative roles such as receptionists, and instils confidence in them to utilise these as needed.

Information Management Strategies

As the global leader in secure, open, standards-based HD video and voice conferencing technology solutions, Polycom taps on its in-house expertise to enable flexible working for all its employees. More specifically, employees are given the hardware and software to allow them to work virtually from anywhere and still collaborate and interact with team members and clients with the same efficiency and frequency.



Employees can work virtually from anywhere and interact with team members and clients through the use of video and voice conferencing technology solutions.

These tools include:

- Video collaboration software on web-enabled devices such as mobile phones and tablet computers which allow individuals to participate in multi-party conferencing, and share content and documents in real time.
- Office-issued laptops which are enabled with software that integrate various communication tools in a single device; these can be used for videoconferences, internet phone calls, to send and receive email, share and access calendars and communicate with colleagues via an internal chat system.

In order to make flexible working even more convenient for its employees, Polycom has a 'Bring Your Own Device' ('BYOD') initiative where individuals can opt to enable their personal smart phones with company email, Microsoft Lync instant messaging software and free Polycom software that will allow them to securely collaborate with colleagues and clients

The management also provides employees with guidelines on flexible working, offering pertinent tips such as the IT setup needed to work from home and how to maintain an online presence while working remotely.

Performance Management Strategies

In order to efficiently harness a fully mobile workforce, Polycom has designed its performance management framework to ensure that employees are held accountable for their work and can be accurately assessed. Some key aspects of this framework include:

- Setting concrete goals for employees. Every team member is clearly briefed on the description of their role and project timelines.
- Conducting regular reviews to ensure that employees are meeting objectives. Managers consistently check-in with their team members for progress updates on projects. Two annual reviews are also held to assess employees' overall performance, suggest areas for improvement and reward quality work.
- Equipping employees with web and phone applications to effectively maintain an online presence. Managers can intermittently check whether team members are online and use this as one potential indicator of workload and performance issues.

Outcomes and Conclusion

Over time, Polycom Singapore's flexibility initiatives have proven to draw and retain high-performing employees who appreciate having better Work-Life integration, and reciprocate by giving their best at work. The company was a recipient of the 'Best Companies for Mums 2013' award by NTUC, WDS and TAFEP. Polycom Singapore has also seen a rise in productivity – as employees know they will be assessed on their ability to deliver specific outcomes rather than the number of hours clocked in the office; motivating them to perform efficiently at work. This strong culture of flexibility ultimately benefits both Polycom Singapore and its employees.

Working from Home to Meet Work and Personal Responsibilities.

Ms. Joyce Wong has been a Talent Acquisition Operations Specialist with Polycom Singapore since April 2012. As she lives with her elderly parents, brother, sister-in-law and their 2 children, she appreciates the flexibility initiatives Polycom offers, which allow her to care for family members when needed. With the flexibility of working from home, she has been able to complete her work tasks and still send her family members for medical checkups, without using up her annual leave. She shares, “my maternal grandmother is bed-ridden and frequently in and out of hospital. By working from home, I can ferry my grandmother and mum to and from hospital. This also saves us the ambulance costs which can amount to at least \$50 per trip.” With the autonomy to schedule her meetings and work activities and work remotely and flexibly beyond her regular working hours, Ms. Wong is able to meet her work objectives and deadlines while fulfilling her role as care-giver.