

## CASE STUDY: PREMIER LAW LLC

In the current competitive hiring climate, organisations offering a healthy Work-Life environment certainly have an added edge. A positive working atmosphere where employees enjoy mutual respect, good communication and are able to meet their work and personal goals, is certain to attract and retain the best industry talent.

Premier Law is one such organisation. This boutique law firm with 12 employees prides itself on being a 'small firm with big firm quality'. Siraj Omar, Managing Director, shares that the organisation has an international client base, many of whom have a longstanding relationship with Premier Law. He divulges that the secret to the firm's success is its efficient, driven team of employees. Mr. Omar notes that employee satisfaction is a key priority as a happy employee is more motivated to give their best at work.

### ***Management Takes the Lead***

Mr. Omar identifies the organisation's positive trust culture as the backbone of the healthy work environment. The firm's management takes the lead in preserving this culture. Both managing directors maintain an Open Door Policy, allowing employees easy access should they need to discuss their Work-Life needs. Mr. Omar says this has also set the tone for constant, open dialogue between staff and management.

The management's genuine desire to meet employees' needs is evident as they exercise great flexibility in allowing staff to advance in their careers without sacrificing personal goals. Mr. Omar feels this is a mutually beneficial arrangement which allows the firm to retain quality employees while allowing them to achieve personal fulfillment. Indeed, Premier Law has all the hallmarks of an organisation with a positive trust culture, with transparency, high morale, strong friendships and good communication between employees.

Where some employers may view their small firm size as a constraint, Premier Law considers this an opportunity to exert greater flexibility in meeting employees' Work-Life needs. Mr. Omar shares that the firm has instituted an Open Door Policy and dispensed with the usual red tape and layers of bureaucracy, allowing employees an avenue to immediately flag their Work-Life needs and challenges, and work out feasible solutions with their bosses. This highly responsive attitude and commitment to offering sustainable Work-Life solutions has helped to foster an attitude of trust and openness in the firm.

The trust culture at Premier Law is borne out of mutual respect between management and employees. Mr. Omar mentions that the firm respects all staff as mature adults and thus, operates on an honour system where employees can informally tap on flexible working arrangements such as working from home, and unrecorded time-off, on a needs basis. He notes that various employees have successfully utilised these options to care for their sick children and handle other personal matters. The employees have appreciated the trust placed in them,

and have not abused the system. Instead, employees show a high level of loyalty towards the firm and Premier Law experiences a very low attrition rate.

### ***Team Support***

Rachel Tan is an Associate Lawyer who has benefitted from the positive culture of trust at Premier Law. As a mother of two school-going children, aged 6 and 16, Rachel works part-time, coming into the office on weekday mornings after dropping her children off at school and leaving in time to pick the younger child up. She attributes the success of this unusual working arrangement to the strong support she receives from her colleagues. She shares that the overall efficiency and proactive attitude of her team ensures that client requests are met in a timely manner, and urgent matters are brought to her immediate attention if needed.

### ***Transparency and Communication***

On her part, Rachel maintains regular communication with the team by remaining accessible via phone for the rest of the working day as well as going online each night to check emails and clear outstanding work matters. This ensures that urgent matters are dealt with promptly and client requests are met in a timely manner. She makes it a point to be transparent about her working schedule with management and colleagues, to avoid any miscommunication.

Rachel stresses that there has to be an attitude of 'give-and-take' when employees are on a flexible working arrangement such as hers. She recognises that the organisation goes through busy seasons and readily works overtime during this period. She also shares that she makes it a priority to have regular face-time in the office so that other members of the team can consult her on work matters. "Ultimately", Rachel says, "It is important to get the job done".

On a personal note, Rachel shares that the greatest benefit has been that she is "home when the kids are at home". She is able to regularly attend school functions and even volunteer as a teacher's aide for her son's class. With the family-like office culture she is also comfortable bringing her children in to work with her on school holidays, especially when she needs to work longer hours. She cites the example of when her son was a toddler and a space was set aside as a makeshift nursery for him in the office. This has made her all the more appreciative of the organisation's flexibility and willingness to adapt to her family's needs.

Premier Law's decision to intentionally foster a strong culture of trust and offering flexibility in implementing Work-Life options has clearly reaped rewards for the firm. Mr. Omar states simply, "It makes sense for us to be flexible". Creating a conducive environment for flexible working arrangements has allowed this law firm to retain experienced and capable employees like Rachel, and will no doubt attract similarly talented staff in the future.

### **3 Practical Steps to Fostering a Trust Culture**

#### **Senior Management can...**

Maintain an Open Door Policy. This will signal to employees that management is keen to receive feedback and suggestions to create a mutually beneficial working arrangement for the organisation and the staff.

#### **Line Managers can...**

Encourage transparency in communication, by consistently updating employees on work-related changes, to ensure that all members of the team are in the loop. Employees will learn from this example and also practice transparent communication amongst themselves.

#### **Employees can....**

Practice flexibility themselves, by putting in extra effort when the organisation is facing a crunch-time. This demonstrates a positive work attitude and loyalty, and the organisation is also likely to reciprocate by going the extra mile to meet employees' needs.