



PEOPLE MANAGERS IN SINGTEL ENSURE WORK-LIFE WORKS

Over 40 per cent of SingTel staff across the various levels of the organization are female. So it is not surprising to hear Group CEO Chua Sock Koong say in an article, "We want to make it as painless as possible for women to remain in the workforce." Notwithstanding the gender profile, we also understand the company's commitment to help all staff manage their work-life as we take a closer look at their work-life practices and policies.

Work-Life Strategy

With its 6000-strong SingTel staff in Singapore, SingTel boasts a multi-generational workforce, ranging from fast-learning Gen Y, through upwardly mobile Gen X, hardworking Baby Boomers to long-serving Pioneers. Study, learning, sports & CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) are important to Gen Y who are epitomized by the motto "Work Hard and Play Hard." At the same time, they have a more mature and older workforce, some of whom have been with the company for 35 years. The challenge for SingTel is to meet the different life needs of its diversified workforce.

In 2006/2007, SingTel introduced a corporate-wide initiative to promote a pro-worklife environment through a series of workshops and training sessions targeted to educate people managers on the purpose and benefits of work-life strategy which is related to talent retention. Today, to support its people in maintaining their work-life harmony, SingTel offers several family-friendly policies that include flexible work schedules, telecommuting and flexible family leave over and above statutory provisions. All employees and their immediate family members have access to Work-Life Coaching, an Employee Assistance Programme, that provides professional counseling on work-life issues run by external consultants to ensure confidentiality. They also have access to a myriad of online resources on their People Connect and Work-Life Harmony portals in their intranet, aptly named the "Redvine".

People Managers

SingTel wisely addresses the varied needs of its workforce through its about 900 people managers. These people managers are managers and supervisors with people management responsibilities. They are made up of Department Managers, First Line Supervisors and Team Leaders. Through the SingTel Management School, people managers develop their people skills and are also trained to be well-versed with the company's flexible work policies and practices to advise staff should they face work-life issues. Armed with knowledge of centralized work-life policies, people managers are empowered to manage and recommend flexible work arrangements according to the individual's needs and in line with team and department requirements. The people managers are the critical link in disseminating corporate policies and values and in helping to fashion appropriate work-life solutions for staff in need.

A notable strategy is that SingTel provides the right motivation by requiring that other than Business Key Performance Indicators (KPI), People KPIs are also included as an important performance measure for all people managers. People managers are also made aware that the various work-life programmes are put in place as part of SingTel's Talent Attraction and Retention strategy. This serves to enhance their management strength and team capability.

People managers are also publicly recognised for their contributions. Staff can nominate their managers for the annual 'People Manager Awards'. These nominations are submitted through an online portal. Winners are recognised at a prominent company event attended by more than 1000 staff. To-date, two rounds of People Manager Awards had already taken place.

Strong Support and Learning Culture

HR also plays a catalyst role in setting policies, promoting awareness and utilisation of programmes, helping managers understand the available schemes and how to leverage them for the purpose staff engagement and retention. All new employees attend an induction programme which includes the familiarisation of "The Redvine", the PeopleConnect and Work-Life Harmony portals and the various Work-Life programmes available.

There is also a strong support and learning culture. The Annual Learning Fiesta is a week-long programme packed with learning activities with topics ranging from Play Your Way to Work, Life and Success and Key to Wellness, etc. This year's fiesta, held in November, packed 50 talks into 4 exciting days at 5 different venues so that more staff could attend.

SingTel is very open to staff feedback and as a result, it has adjusted its flexi-family leave policy to allow a minimum of half day instead of one day leave. It also grants staff representing the nation in sporting events and Union Councillors attending Union events with unrecorded leave or time-off arrangements. In addition, staff is given 1 day a year to participate in any CSR activities e.g. Tree Planting, volunteering at charities/ organisations supported by SingTel.

With a strong and supportive work-life culture, it is not surprising to note that staff's rating on the flexibility to meet personal commitments has risen from 65% in 2007 to 69% in 2008. This is above both the local and global telco industry norms.

Success Stories

As a testament to SingTel's commitment to providing a flexible work environment to meet the needs of its people, let's hear and learn from the success stories of some of its staff:

1. A Marketing Executive, started working part-time since January 2009 to care for her young children, aged 7, 6 & 4 yrs old. She is very grateful that the arrangement has worked out very well for her and especially for her children. She works 4 hours daily and is provided with a laptop, broadband and mobile phone to work from home. She does follow-up support work with merchants and is contactable on her mobile phone. Her story is a win-win situation. Having worked with SingTel for 11 yrs, she was sad to tender her resignation at the end of last year in order to care for her young children. But with the help of her department manager, she was given the option to telecommute and work flexi-hour as and when needed. In the end, SingTel retained an experienced talent and the staff did not have to leave a work place she had grown attached to. She wished that all companies are able to

trust their staff and provide flexible work options so that they can care for their families and still continue to contribute in their work. She disclosed that with the flexibility, there is much give and take - sometimes she would work long hours just to rush out an urgent project.

2. Senior HR Manager gives credit to SingTel's flexi-work arrangements, which enabled her to go on no-pay leave during her husband's one-yr posting to Australia and subsequently work part-time for the last one and a half years. The part-time work arrangement has enabled her to care for her 3 young children and especially for her child with special needs, who is on track to attend main stream school because she is able to be with him when needed. While she works on Tuesday mornings, full day on Wednesdays and Thursday mornings, there is flexibility to adjust the days to suit both her work requirements and her children's needs. She gives credit to her understanding and flexible bosses who value her contributions and who make SingTel a conducive environment for working mothers who want very much to be part of the workforce, and to contribute positively to SingTel. She believes that at the end of the day, it is not about the number of hours one spends at work but the contributions made to the organization. As a result of the flexible work arrangement, she is able to stay relevant and in touch with the work place. The downside to this arrangement is probably a slower career progression, but the ability to mould and develop her children in their formative years more than makes up for it.
3. Senior male IT Analyst, married with children, telecommutes once a week to save time on travelling in order to spend more time with his family. Working from home also reduces distractions and enables him to be more productive. He is able to do whatever is done at the office with a laptop and security access. He is also able to catch up with household chores during breaks which allow him more time with the family on weekends. Having been on the flexible work arrangement for the last one and a half years, he is very happy with the arrangement and has no problem with his work performance assessment by his supervisor.