Energising Work Culture
A Work-Life Strategy Handbook

Contents

Foreword

Work-Life Harmony has been generating a lot of buzz in Singapore and is gaining importance as a human resource tool.

Harmonising career with personal goals and responsibilities is a challenge that all employees face. Working individuals are looking for enlightened employers who will allow them to wholeheartedly pursue their careers and, at the same time, fulfill their personal needs and aspirations.

Today's employers can no longer afford to ignore the importance of Work-Life effectiveness. An effective Work-Life strategy is a key differentiating factor that enhances talent attraction and retention. Flexible work arrangements can support business continuity and allow employees to work autonomously and efficiently. A Work-Life culture builds commitment, engagement and team cohesion, creating a stronger organisation.

This handbook serves as a guide for HR practitioners to:
- Profile your employees and identify the different Work-Life needs at key life stages.
- Devise, implement and evaluate a Work-Life strategy.

We have included best practices from various organisations to serve as examples of how Work-Life strategy can positively impact the employee and employer alike.

We hope this handbook will inspire you as you develop a healthy Work-Life culture in your own organisation, and contribute to a vibrant Work-Life landscape in Singapore.

Work-Life Champion
The Role of Human Resource Practitioners

As a Human Resource (HR) practitioner, *you* play a crucial role in creating a positive Work-Life environment in the organisation. With direct access to top management, you are privy to the strategic goals of the organisation. At the same time, you are close enough to the ground to identify employee needs. From this vantage point, HR is in an ideal position to champion a Work-Life strategy that aligns organisational goals with the employee's personal Work-Life needs.

Educate

HR practitioners are usually the first to receive resources and updates on Work-Life practices. This wealth of information should be shared with your management to help them understand that employees who successfully manage their personal life are likely to be more productive at work. This will help you get buy-in from management and build a convincing business case for Work-Life initiatives in your organisation.

Equip

The best Work-Life policies and practices are redundant if employees do not take them up. The challenge for HR is to educate employees at every level of the organisational hierarchy on the benefits of Work-Life Harmony and how they can achieve it. You should also address any concerns and misconceptions about participating in Work-Life programmes, before implementing specific initiatives to meet employees' needs.

Evaluate

As employee and business needs evolve over time, HR will need to regularly assess the effectiveness of Work-Life initiatives, either through formal or informal methods. Employee feedback is vital in fine-tuning programmes and policies to ensure their usefulness and relevance.

Work-Life Basics

What is Work-Life Harmony?

It involves the complementary pursuit of work and personal goals, so that employees can be effective and engaged in both their work and personal life, and meet both personal and organisational objectives.

An employee with Work-Life Harmony…

- Feels empowered to exercise options and control over how and where one works

- Feels fulfilled and effective in one's personal life and career

- Feels whole – that one's personal life and career are well-aligned and integrated

- Is able to focus on different priorities at various life stages

- Is more likely to enjoy one's work, have better family relationships and a better quality of life

TIP! *Building a 'trust culture' based on transparency is a key factor for a successful Work-Life strategy. A good communication plan should be rolled out – one that ensures all employees receive information equitably and in a timely manner.*
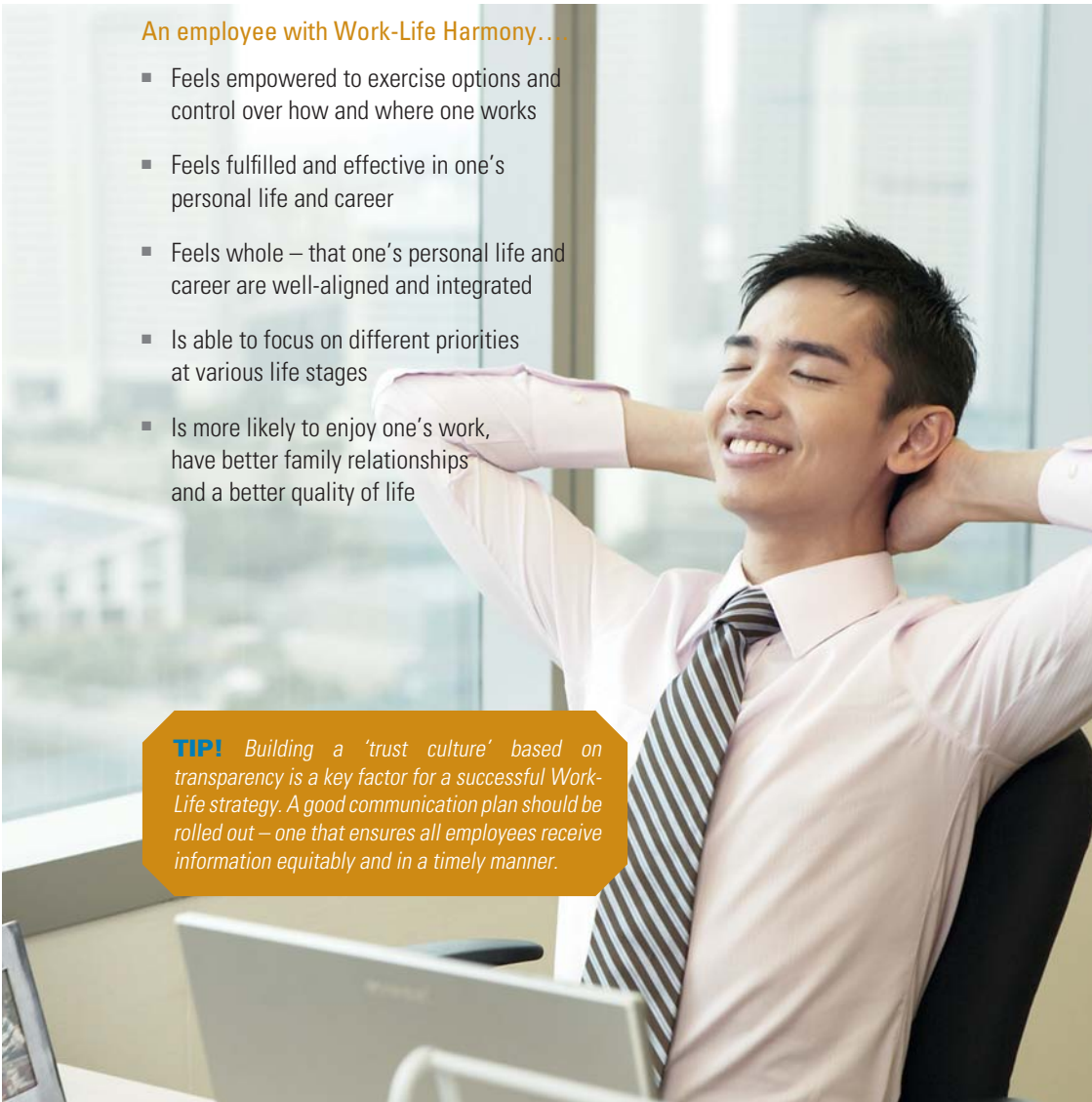
Work-Life Works
Making Work-Life Harmony a Reality

Success stories on Work-Life strategy repeatedly show that Work-Life Harmony is a shared responsibility between employer and employee. While the employer is responsible for fostering a positive Work-Life culture, employees need to take ownership of their personal Work-Life goals and identify win-win resolutions.

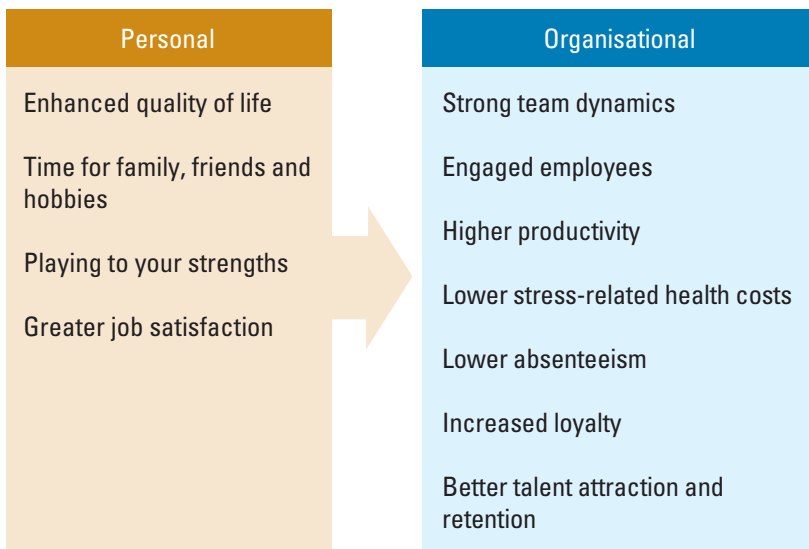| The Employer's Role	The Employee's Role
Factor Work-Life strategy into the larger business strategy at all levels of the hierarchy.	**Evaluate your personal Work-Life values and needs** regularly, especially when you enter a new life stage.
Ensure senior management supports Work-Life strategy.	**Take ownership** of your Work-Life goals. Engage your supervisor on your concerns and find out more about Work-Life programmes that are suitable for you. You could request to go on a pilot of a Work-Life programme to assess its suitability for both you and the organisation.
Provide a supportive environment, including infrastructural support.	
Develop a meaningful Work-Life strategy that addresses employee concerns.	**Provide regular feedback** on the policies/programmes that are working for or against you.
Be open to employees' suggestions. This may involve piloting a new Work-Life initiative for an employee upon request and evaluating the progress gradually.	**Be supportive.** Accept that change happens gradually and any new Work-Life programme may experience some initial setbacks. Exercise patience and offer help to refine the strategy.
Create open and transparent channels of communication for feedback on Work-Life programmes.	**Be flexible.** Accept that there are times when one must go the extra mile, which may include working longer hours.

TIP! *An effective Work-Life Strategy aligns the interests of the organisation, the managers (who have targets to meet), and the employees. Engage line managers and employees separately and informally to understand their pressures and Work-Life needs. This informal fact-finding will help identify gaps and highlight possible barriers to Work-Life initiatives.*

Work-Life Strategies Make Business Sense

"A flexible Work-Life balance is more important to Singaporeans than high pay"
— Survey by recruitment consultancy Robert Walters, Business Times 2007

There is a strong business case to be made for Work-Life Harmony in the workplace. Providing a Work-Life friendly environment can be a cost-effective way of meeting employee needs. When their personal goals are met, employees are more likely to go the extra mile to satisfy organisational objectives.

Personal	Organisational
Enhanced quality of life	Strong team dynamics
Time for family, friends and hobbies	Engaged employees
Playing to your strengths	Higher productivity
Greater job satisfaction	Lower stress-related health costs
	Lower absenteeism
	Increased loyalty
	Better talent attraction and retention

TIP! *When building the business case for Work-Life strategy, it is important to understand the business goals of the organisation. Consider the current and future vision of the organisation and explain how Work-Life practices can help the employer achieve these goals.*

Blueprint for Success
Creating and Implementing Work-Life Strategy

Identify Business Goals

- Interviews and focus groups with CEO and management teams (conducted by HR/ Work-Life Ambassador)

Identify Employee Work-Life Needs

- Conduct needs analysis
- Identify the employee profile
- Understand existing Work-Life attitudes and conditions
- Identify the opportunities/gaps for Work-Life
- Ascertain the barriers to Work-Life practices
- Consider engaging a Work-Life consultant to tailor the needs analysis for your organisation

Propose Work-Life Strategy to Management

- Invite management feedback
- Address management queries/concerns
- Ensure that Work-Life strategy is tied to organisational goals

Evaluate Effectiveness of Work-Life Strategy

- Obtain feedback from 3 key sources: Management, employees (all levels) and clients
- Use lead rather than lag measures
- Revise and refine Work-Life strategy (on-going)

Create & Implement Work-Life Strategy

- Work-Life culture/infrastructure
- Company vision and mission statement
- Support for Work-Life message from leadership, middle management and employees
- Work-Life programmes
  - Flexible work arrangements
  - Enhanced leave benefits
  - Employee support schemes

Implement Communication Strategy

Phase 1:
- Communicate new policies and practices through websites, publications, e-mails or sharing sessions
- Highlight feedback channels to employees

Phase 2:
- Provide regular reminders of policies, practices and feedback channels
- Provide updates on Work-Life programmes via email/intranet/company website, etc

Note: A lead indicator is often used to predict an outcome, and is usually measured at the individual or input level. A lag indicator is a measure of an outcome and is usually measured at the organisational level.

Getting Started
The Importance of Needs Analysis

Needs analysis is the first step in creating a useful and relevant Work-Life strategy that provides a win-win solution for employers and employees alike.

An effective needs-analysis tool will identify:

- The demographic profile of your employees
- Currrent Work-Life conditions and employees' Work-Life needs
- Attitudes to Work-Life practices
- Key business issues (eg. employee efficiency, team relations/dynamics, absenteeism, etc)
- Existing Work-Life culture and practices (formal and informal)
- Gaps in current Work-Life practices
- Barriers to Work-Life practices

There is a wide variety of tools available today, and most of these can be utilised for pre and post evaluation. Depending on the size and culture of your organisation, you may choose to use one or a combination of a few types of tools. However, do pick one that your audience is most comfortable with, and will make them more likely to open up to provide candid and accurate information.

Needs Analysis Tools can be broadly categorised as formal or informal:

I. Formal Needs Analysis Tools

Quantitative tools	When do I use this?
■ Online surveys ■ Paper surveys	■ When a large number of employees are to be surveyed ■ When an extensive range of information needs to be gathered. ■ When privacy is an issue

Qualitative tools	When do I use this?
■ Focus groups ■ In-depth interviews (usually targeting senior management)	Qualitative tools are especially useful when there is a need to probe further into sensitive issues such as: ■ Characteristics of the existing Work-Life culture ■ Perceived barriers to Work-Life ■ Reasons for low utilisation of current Work-Life programmes and policies ■ Concerns over implications of implementing new Work-Life practices

II. Informal Needs Analysis Tools

Informal needs-analysis tools work best for small organisations where the hierarchy is 'flat' and there is constant communication across all levels of employees.

Qualitative tools	When do I use this?
■ Employee performance reviews ■ Lunch-time/tea-break chats ■ Post-meeting employee updates	■ When the work culture is relaxed and informal ■ When clear and consistent communication channels have already been established in the organisation

TIP! *Consider using existing instruments as needs-analysis tools. Your organisation may already have an employee satisfaction survey in place that can be adapted with a few well-placed Work-Life related questions.*

Work-Life @ Work
Implementing Work-Life Strategy

A comprehensive Work-Life strategy is made up of two key components:

Work-Life infrastructure is the 'backbone' of the Work-Life strategy in an organisation, and provides a supportive framework for the implementation of Work-Life programmes.

It is characterised by:

- Inclusion of Work-Life values in the organisation's vision and mission
- Leadership and middle management buy-in to the Work-Life message
- Designated Work-Life team/ambassador within organisation
- Planning and implementation of Work-Life programmes in a systematic rather than ad-hoc manner
- Promotion of Work-Life practices through clear and consistent communication.
- Intentional employee engagement on Work-Life issues
- Results-based performance evaluation
- Continual refinement of Work-Life practices through employee feedback

Work-Life programmes are initiatives put in place by employers to meet the Work-Life needs of their employees. These may be informally implemented to test their viability, before being formalised in the HR policy and communicated to employees.

There is a wide spectrum of Work-Life programmes available and these can be classified into 3 broad groups:

1. Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)
   FWAs refer to any work arrangement that allows employees to work flexibly rather than the standard '9-to-5' schedule in the office, and yet be equally effective. This may take the form of working a different number of hours or days, or even working from different locations, amongst other flexible options.

2. Enhanced Leave Benefits
   These are leave benefits above the statutory norms that help employees to deal with personal and family exigencies.

3. Employee Support Schemes (ESS)
   ESS encompasses all other schemes that help employees better manage both career and personal demands so that they can perform better at work.

A comprehensive listing of the various Work-Life programmes by life stage can be found on page 37-39

- Work-Life Infrastructure
- Work-Life Programmes
  - Flexible work arrangements
  - Enhanced leave benefits
  - Employee support schemes

Integrated Work-Life Strategy
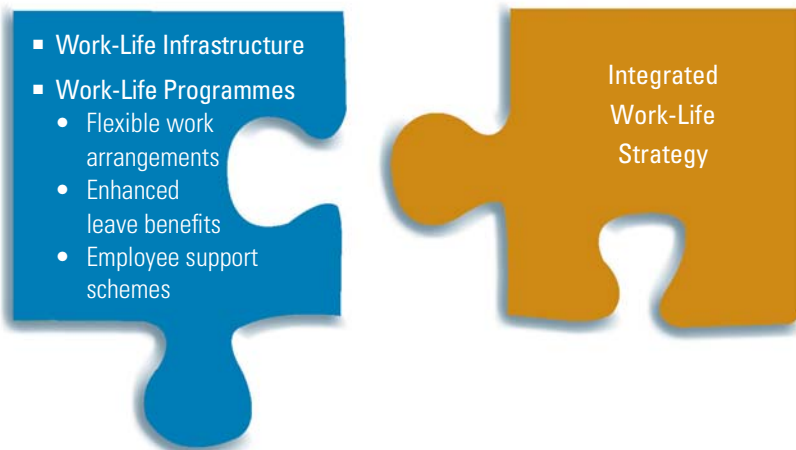
Work-Life Stages
The Evolution of Work-Life Needs

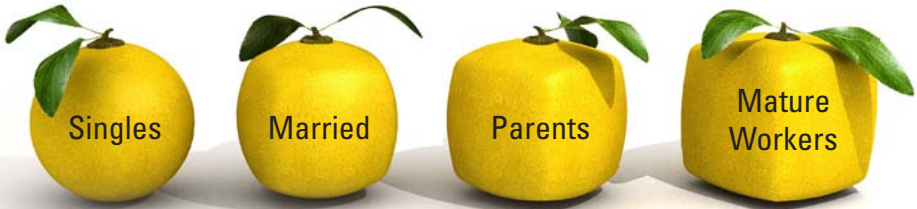Once implemented, Work-Life strategies need to be monitored and reviewed periodically to take into account the changing needs of employees. Work-Life needs evolve as employees experience different life stages:

Singles   Married   Parents   Mature Workers

Checklist for a sustainable Work-Life strategy

Does your Work-Life strategy…

- align with the business strategy of your organisation?
- address both employee needs and organisational goals?
- cater to all demographic groups in the organisation, rather than focus on dominant groups of employees?
- have measurable outcomes to gauge effectiveness?
- undergo periodic review to ensure it stays relevant?

Singles
Harmonising Career and Personal Interests

Employees may love their work, but don't want to live solely for it.

General profile:

- Appreciate organisational vision and mission
- Appreciate teamwork and collaboration
- Concerned with career progression
- Embrace job challenges readily
- Value equitable and fair treatment in the workplace
- Value meaningful work
- Mobile and flexible – likely to be more open to new and innovative ways of working
- Place importance on personal time for relationships and other interests

Key needs:

- A clearly articulated organisational vision and mission
- Career growth and advancement
- Meaningful work
- Recognition of personal value
- Time for personal relationships and interests/pursuits

Relevant Work-Life programmes include:

- Flexible hours (Flexi-time)
- Telecommuting (Flexi-place)
- Exercise programmes eg. aerobics, gym membership subsidies
- Social activities and networking opportunities
- Study leave
- Voluntary service leave

Refer to page 37-39 for a comprehensive listing of the various Work-Life programmes for singles

TIP! *A common refrain heard amongst single employees is that the usual Work-Life programmes are often targeted at their married counterparts or those who are parents. Ensure that Work-Life programmes are applicable to the singles by including initiatives that encourage personal pursuits and social networking.*

Singles
Harmonising Career and Personal Interests

Case Study | Lucky Joint Construction Pte Ltd

Lucky Joint Construction Private Limited is an independent company that specialises in designing, building & maintaining fibre networks. It began as a sub-contractor in 1976 with only 4 employees, and has grown to be a market leader in telecommunications networks and a Singapore Small and Medium Enterprise 500 firm.

Lucky Joint firmly believes that "a happy employee is a productive employee". Through informal chats and feedback, the management realised that the key concerns of staff were the needs of their children and time spent with family. Thus, Lucky Joint actively ensures that its employees have ample time to spend with their families, even as they work hard for the company.

Lucky Joint has been awarded the Work-Life Excellence Award in 2008 for its efforts in building a positive organisational Work-Life culture.

> "Helping employees meet both work and home commitments will boost their morale and, in turn, increase efficiency and productivity. Ultimately, it is a win-win situation as both the employees and the company benefit."
>
> Mr Yeow Kian Seng, *Managing Director*

The organisation takes a subtle approach to Work-Life practices targeted at its single employees by creating opportunities for networking and meeting new people through its regular staff gatherings. Managing Director, Mr Yeow Kian Seng, also takes an active role in dishing out advice to single employees and encouraging them to start their own families, using his own family as a good example to follow.

Business driver for Work-Life strategy:
A differentiating factor in attracting and retaining quality employees in the competitive telecommunications sector.

Work-Life practices:

Employee Support Schemes
- Annual 'Gathering Harmony' event for employees, their families and clients
- Family Day
- Festival celebrations (eg. Staff Christmas Party)
- Informal employee gatherings
- Company-sponsored training
- Meal subsidies
- Free transport from work to home
- General financial assistance (advance pay/loans)
- Bursaries/education assistance fund
- Gifts for birth and marriage
- Medical and insurance coverage
- Recreation room (equipped with gym, karaoke)
- Transport scheme that allows employee to utilise company vehicles for personal use
- Loan of company-owned pleasure craft for employee's personal use

Enhanced Leave Benefits
- ❖ Examination leave
- ❖ Study leave
- ❖ Paternity leave

Measures of success (KPIs):
Positive qualitative feedback from recreation room users as well as employees who attend staff gatherings

"We felt great each time an employee gave positive feedback and compliments for a good job done. It is worth organising!"

Ms Joanne Lee, *Work-Life Ambassador*

Singles
Harmonising Career and Personal Interests

Case Study | ## Purple Sage Pte Ltd

Purple Sage is a boutique caterer with an employee base of 46 people. Since its inception in 2002, the organisation has dedicated itself to providing a 'total solutions' experience for its clients, including decorations and gifts, venue-sourcing, equipment rental, photography and entertainment to suit every occasion.

In its mission to be the leading boutique caterer, Purple Sage recognises that employees are vital to the organisation's success. The company is aware that family ties are important to its employees, and firmly believes that having Work-Life Harmony allows employees to stay focused at work and give their very best to customers.

In recognition of its Work-Life efforts, Purple Sage was awarded the Work-Life Achiever Award in 2008.

Business driver for Work-Life strategy:
A good Work-Life strategy allows employees to be focused at work, ensuring a high quality of customer service.

Work-Life practices:
Purple Sage offers a comprehensive range of Work-Life practices that promote career development as well as offer networking and socialising opportunities for its single employees.

Flexible Work Arrangement	✓ Telecommuting
Employee Support Schemes	• Company events (eg. anniversary retreat at Johor Bahru, movie nights, bowling, Laser Quest and Paintball games, chalet stays, annual Christmas parties)
	• Education financial assistance
	• Health and wellness programmes (eg. health talks by medical consultants, complimentary health screenings)
	• In-house massage sessions

- Manicure and pedicure services
- Training and development (eg. media training, sales training, culinary courses, wine appreciation courses, Chinese lessons)

Enhanced
Leave
Benefits

- ❖ Child adoption leave
- ❖ Childcare leave
- ❖ Compassionate leave
- ❖ Emergency leave
- ❖ Extended maternity leave
- ❖ Marriage leave
- ❖ Paternity leave
- ❖ Sabbatical leave (up to 10 days for full-time staff)
- ❖ Study leave (offered to full-time employees who are under an education support scheme)

Measures of success (KPIs):

- ◾ Attraction of high quality employees, specifically through conversion of part-timers to full-time staff
- ◾ Better team dynamics
- ◾ High staff-retention rate (employees typically stay at Purple Sage for 3 or more years)
- ◾ High levels of satisfaction reflected in event feedback forms
- ◾ High participation rate at company-organised events (95%-100%)

The Sailing Generation
Anchored and Settled

"Marital problems are almost inevitable when couples over-commit themselves. The bonding that should occur… requires time together – time that cannot be given if it is absorbed elsewhere."

Dr James Dobson *in Parenting isn't for Cowards*

General profile:

- Concerned with wealth accumulation and career progression
- Value financial security
- Value meaningful work
- Value workplace relationships
- Value time with spouse
- May be caregivers for elderly parents/in-laws
- Taking steps to maintain health and wellness

Key needs:

- Career growth and stability
- Family life resources and programmes to enhance marriage
- Flexible work arrangements
- Meaningful work
- Recognition of personal value
- Time for personal relationships and interests/pursuits
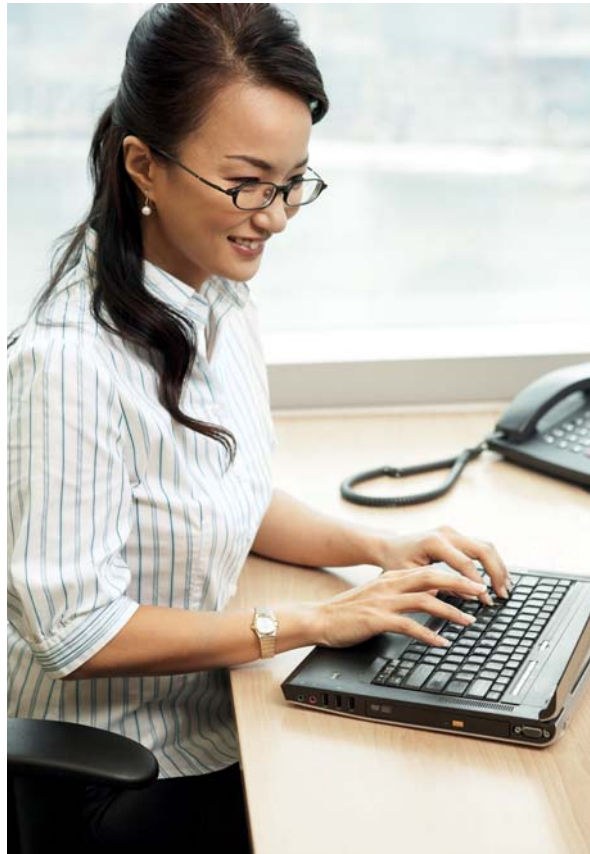
Relevant Work-Life programmes include:

- Health and Wellness programmes
- Concierge services (eg. laundry pick-up, internal postal/banking service)
- Marriage talks and resources
- Sabbatical leave
- Family care leave

Refer to pages 37-39 for a comprehensive listing of the various Work-Life programmes for married employees.

TIP! *Affirm married employees by offering family life education programmes such as personal work-life effectiveness and marriage enrichment workshops/ talks.*

The Sailing Generation
Anchored and Settled

Case Study | NCS Pte Ltd

NCS Group is a leading information technology (IT) and communications engineering service provider. Headquartered in Singapore, NCS is a wholly-owned subsidary of the SingTel Group.

NCS strongly believes that people are its most important assets. It believes that employees with fewer worries in their personal lives are more likely to be engaged at the workplace and will work towards creating satisfied customers, thus enhancing overall business performance. NCS is committed to enriching the lives of its employees and providing the necessary support to ensure employees have time for themselves, their spouses and children.

NCS has been a recipient of the Work-Life Achiever Award since 2006 and Singapore H.E.A.L.T.H Gold Award since 2005.

Business drivers for Work-Life strategy:
- A holistic Work-Life strategy is key to attracting and retaining the best talent.
- Work-Life practices are pivotal in engaging employees and motivating them to give their best at work.

Work-Life practices:

Flexible Work Arrangements	✓ Flexi-time (Flexi-hours) ✓ Part-time employment scheme
Leave Benefits	❖ Family care leave (additional 6 days of leave which can be used for marriage, paternity and compassionate reasons, or nursing of sick family members) ❖ No-pay leave ❖ Volunteer leave scheme (allows employees to pursue community work)

Employee Support Schemes	• Family support programmes (gifts for newborns and marriages, Mothercare room for lactating mothers, online information on home and infant-care services, onsite childcare services available at subsidised rates)
	• Health and well-being programmes focusing on different health themes each quarter (eg. healthy cooking demonstration; health freebies eg. fruits/milk/stress ball; lunchtime talks on Work-Life effectiveness and other topics; onsite gymnasium and recreation facilities; regular exercise classes)
	• Time-saving services (free shuttle bus service, onsite ATM and AXS stations, onsite retail services)

Measures of success (KPIs):

■ Improved employee engagement index —2007 and 2008 overall staff engagement index improved by 2 points and 8 points respectively as compared to previous years, which are higher than the national and industry averages

■ Increased employee participation rates for Work-Life programmes

■ Low attrition rate – decreased by 5.8% in 2008 as compared to the previous year

■ Positive qualitative feedback from employees who have participated in the various Work-Life initiatives

"I am glad that I am able to spend quality time bonding with my baby during the 3 months' maternity leave. The childcare and family care leave benefits certainly come in handy when I need time-off to take care of my little one. It's a good thing that we have quite a well-equipped lactation room that offers some privacy for nursing mothers."

Dawn Kong, *Process Quality Management*

"Glad to hear our CEO's insights and poignant anecdotes from his very own personal experiences, especially on harmonising the demands of work and life, at the lunchtime talk."

Francis Chin, *Portal City*

The Serving Generation
The Never-ending Story of Parenthood

"Children just don't fit into a 'to-do' list very well. It takes time to be an effective parent when children are small."

Dr James Dobson *in Hide or Seek*

General profile:

- Typically a nuclear household with two working parents
- Experiencing shift in life focus, with an increased emphasis on parenting duties
- Value quality time with children
- Have limited one-on-one time with spouse
- May be caregivers for elderly parents/in-laws
- Taking steps to maintain health and wellness
- Value financial security and stability
- Value teamwork and quality relationships with colleagues

Key needs:
- Autonomy and flexibility over job scope and schedule
- Career stability
- Family life resources and programmes to enrich married life under the stress of parenting duties and to strengthen parenting abilities
- Good team dynamics and supportive work colleagues
- Recognition of personal value
- Time for personal relationships and interests/pursuits
- Time for self-renewal/rejuvenation

Relevant Work-Life programmes include:
- Childcare/Student care services (on/off-site) and subsidies
- Extended maternity leave
- Paternity leave
- Extended childcare leave
- Family care leave
- First Day of School leave
- Flexible hours
- Part-time work
- Telecommuting
- Marriage/Parenting talks and resources

Refer to pages 37-39 for a comprehensive listing of the various Work-Life programmes for working parents.

TIP! *It is important to be sensitive to the changing Work-Life needs of parents at their different parenting stages. An employee with a young infant or toddler would be concerned about infant/childcare facilities and subsidies, while a parent of a teenager may need tuition subsidies or counselling support on parent-teen issues.*

The Serving Generation
The Never-ending Story of Parenthood

Case Study City Developments Ltd

City Developments Limited (CDL) is a listed international property and hotel conglomerate involved in real estate development and investment, hotel ownership and management, facilities management, as well as the provision of hospitality solutions. A property pioneer since 1963, CDL employs over 350 staff.

CDL is committed to creating a healthy Work-Life culture for employees as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts. The company recognises that employees are more productive and can contribute more effectively to the organisation when they are able to harmonise family commitments with work responsibilities.

In recognition of its Work-Life initiatives, CDL has attained the Work-Life Excellence Award 2008 as well as the H.E.A.L.T.H Platinum Award in 2008.

Business drivers for Work-Life strategy:

- A well-developed Work-Life policy is a valuable recruitment strategy to attract talent.
- A good Work-Life strategy in the company assures investors of the wellness and sustainability of the employees, who directly contribute to the organisation's financial success.

Work-Life practices:

Flexible Work Arrangements	✓ Flexi-hours ✓ Permanent part-time employment
Employee Support Schemes	• CDL Family Month (eg. company-wide outing to the MacRitchie Treetop Walk; Eat with Your Family Day; family-themed lunchtime talks) • 'Little Ones @ Work' Programme where employees bring their children to the office to promote a better understanding of their workplace • Lactation room for female employees returning from maternity leave • Wider insurance coverage for employees (includes critical illness and major medical riders)

- Workplace health programmes (corporate membership rates with fitness centres, free annual health screenings, health talks/workshops on weight management, lunchtime line-dancing and body-sculpting sessions)

Measures of success (KPIs):

- High retention rate – A CDL employee is with the company for 8.1 years on average and 50% of employees have been with the company for more than 5 years

- High utilisation rates of lactation room (increased from 2 female employees in 2006 to 9 in 2009) and flexible start-and-end working hours (over 30% of CDL employees)

- Positive feedback from employees on Work-Life culture (90% of employees felt that there was strong support and positive feedback from supervisors or management)

- Positive feedback from employees on Work-Life talks and workshops, lactation room and other employee support schemes

"As a first-time mother returning from maternity leave, the lactation room (known as the Mummy's Room) allows me to express milk and store it in the fridge conveniently. As a working mother at CDL, this is just one of the many welfare benefits extended to us."

Ms Angelene, *Assistant Administrative Executive*

"The part-time arrangement is really great for me and my family! Right now, I have the best of both worlds – a job I enjoy which keeps me challenged, while giving me time to fulfil my roles as a wife and a mum. My family has benefited so much from it. I'm very thankful to our Management for their trust, understanding, progressive approach and support in giving working parents like me the opportunity to balance these two very important priorities in life."

Ms Jacqueline, *Assistant General Manager*

The Serving Generation
The Never-ending Story of Parenthood

Case Study Straits Construction Singapore Pte Ltd

Straits Construction Singapore Pte Ltd is a local building construction company with 1,000 employees, with expertise in building public housing for HDB and local developers. It has won several work-safety and HDB quality awards, and was also a winner of the Family Friendly Employer Award 2004.

Straits Construction believes that a Work-Life strategy can align corporate and individual goals to attain a win-win scenario for all, addressing the business needs of the organisation and the individual needs of the employees. The company realises that employees with fewer worries in their personal lives are more likely to be committed and engaged at the workplace. In particular, flexible work arrangements ensure that employees who are parents can spend quality time with their families.

Business drivers for Work-Life strategy:

Work-Life strategy has been implemented to enhance employees' productivity and meet the following organisational goals:

- Attraction and retention of talent
- Reduction in absenteeism
- Increased job satisfaction of employees, and hence their co-operation at the workplace

Work-Life practices:

Flexible Work	✓ Compressed work week
Arrangements	✓ Flexible start- and end-times
	✓ Permanent part-time

Measures of success (KPIs):

- Qualitative measures – positive employee feedback about support schemes
- Quantitative measures – lower rates of absenteeism and sick leave, and decreased healthcare costs and incidences of coming to work late

The Sandwiched Generation
The Young, Old and the Restless

A 2001 survey by the National University of Singapore identified that 25% of Singaporeans are part of a 'Sandwiched Generation' — caring for children as well as elderly parents.

General profile:
- At risk of high-stress levels and burnout
- Caregivers for elderly parents/in-laws (live-in or otherwise)
- Caregivers for school-going children
- Likely to have limited one-on-one time with spouse
- May face financial constraints due to caretaking duties
- May have compromised personal health and wellness
- Value financial security and stability

Key needs:
- Autonomy and flexibility over job scope and schedule
- Career stability
- Recognition of personal value
- Good team dynamics and supportive work colleagues
- Caregiving support (financial, practical or emotional)
- Family life resources to enhance married life and strengthen parenting abilities
- Time for personal relationships and interests/pursuits
- Time for self-renewal/rejuvenation

Relevant Work-Life programmes include:
- Eldercare services (daycare/nursing home) and subsidies
- Time-saving services/facilities
- Marriage/Parenting talks and resources
- Eldercare sick leave
- Family care leave
- Support for caregivers
- Flexible hours
- Part-time work
- Telecommuting

TIP! *In addition to the usual Work-Life programmes for working parents, eldercare is a key offering for this segment of employees.*

The Silver Generation
Mature Workers

Older workers are a treasure trove of company knowledge and know-how.

General profile:
- Above 50 years of age
- Appreciate affirmation at the workplace
- Likely to have served out a substantial number of years in the organisation
- Likely to have a vast store of historical knowledge about the organisation and its clients
- Moving towards retirement or semi-retirement
- May face some uncertainty/apprehension about what to do when retired
- Experiencing shift in life focus, with an increased emphasis on personal interests (eg. hobbies and spiritual pursuits)
- Value quality time with family
- Facing health and wellness issues
- May have grandparenting duties
- Value financial security and stability

> **TIP!** *Mature Workers have increasingly complex roles, with grandparenting duties taking a prominent place in their lives. Existing childcare/student care programmes can be tweaked to include grandchildren as well.*

Key needs:
- Access to affordable healthcare and other health and wellness support services
- Autonomy and flexibility over job scope and schedule
- Job retraining and/or skills upgrading
- Recognition of personal value
- Financial security
- Time for grandparenting duties
- Time for personal relationships and interests/pursuits

Relevant Work-Life programmes include:
- Bring Your Child/Grandchild to Work Day
- Eat with Your Family Day
- Health screening programmes
- Part-time work
- Flexible work hours

Refer to pages 37-39 for a comprehensive listing of the various Work-Life programmes for mature workers.

Case Study McDonald's Singapore

The McDonald's Corporation is the world's largest quick-service restaurant chain. McDonald's employs more than 7,000 employees in Singapore and serves more than 1.2 million customers every week.

McDonald's aims to continually provide excellent customer service and satisfy employee needs at the same time. The organisation has received several accolades for its commitment to Work-Life Harmony. These include Hewitt's Best Employer of the Year Awards in 2007 and 2009, and the inaugural Corporate HR Champion Award conferred by the Singapore Human Resource Institute in 2009.

McDonald's believes that the advantages of employing mature workers extend beyond bottom-line considerations. Their mature workers are fondly called "Aunties and Uncles" as they complete the McDonald's family and help create a warm and fuzzy atmosphere in the restaurants. They often offer valuable advice and guide the younger crew in their work and outside activities. They also tend to stay with the organisation for a long time, contributing to a lower staff turnover rate.

McDonald's has made key infrastructural investments to facilitate the employment of mature workers. These include:

- Greater use of visuals and graphics in training aids
- Touch-screen cash registers
- Audio-visual based orientation programme

Business drivers for Work-Life strategy:

McDonald's primary goal is to be an Employer of Choice. It uses Work-Life strategy to offer flexibility and allow employees to pursue their own lifestyles, aspirations and commitments outside of work.

The Silver Generation
Mature Workers

Work-Life practices:

Flexible Work Arrangements	✓ Part-time work (part-time employees are also entitled to the full-time benefits package including medical and annual leave, etc). ✓ Permanent part-time employment
Enhanced Leave Benefit	❖ Sabbatical leave (8 weeks of leave for every 10 years served)
Employee Support Schemes	• Crew Rally (biennial 2-day event held to celebrate the achievements and recognise the contributions of employees) • Eat & Exercise with Your Family Day (annual event organised to spread the balanced lifestyle message to employees and family members) • Family Nights (casual half-yearly event where employees' family members are invited) • Founder's Day (office-bound staff assume front-line roles for the day to be reminded of the value of the roles) • i-stories (an inspirational series covering the success stories of employees, including some mature workers) • McHappy Day (annual event where McDonald's employees give back to the community in various ways) • Movie Day (movie screening and snacks for all employees) • Restaurant Enthusiasm Programmes to promote the aspect of 'having fun at work', including the annual year-end party for all employees, company outings and sports competitions (soccer and bowling)

Measures of success (KPIs):

- Better employee health – slight decrease in number of employees with high glucose and cholesterol levels
- Increased participation rate in health-related activities (over 80% of employees)
- Increased employee engagement and satisfaction rates – 96% of employees felt "Proud and valued to be working in McDonald's" in 2008
- Lower turnover of crew (dropped from 74% in 2007 to 60% in 2008) and managers (at a low of 22% in 2008)

New Work-Life Initiatives
Innovate, Innovate, Innovate!

Most Work-Life initiatives are borne out of employee needs and suggestions. Management and HR should get creative, think 'out of the box' and formulate solutions unique to your own organisation! Here are some ideas to get you started.

Singles

- Partnerships with established local dating agencies to provide discounted services and preferential rates
- Vouchers for hobbies
- Monthly inter-department sporting activities (eg. ultimate frisbee/handball/volleyball) as networking opportunities
- Create work groups across departments (eg. organising company events comprising singles of both genders)
- Relationship talks and workshops

Married Couples

- Weekend 'Stay-cation' vouchers for local hotels
- Couple-spa vouchers
- Subsidised external marriage retreats
- Include spouses at staff retreats
- Marriage enrichment talks/workshops

Parents

- After-hours babysitting services to facilitate couple time
- Subsidised holiday enrichment classes for children
- Include the whole family at staff events
- Parent-child bonding workshops and activities

Mature Workers

- Talks and workshops on grandparenting
- Educational talks on post-retirement issues

TIP! *Enlist the help of an external professional to conduct customised programmes for your staff, so that you can focus on strategic planning and evaluation.*

Work-Life Evaluation
Measuring the Success of Work-Life Strategy

When determining the effectiveness of a Work-Life strategy, management and HR teams should ensure that the measures:

- Are aligned to the organisational/business goals
- Are appropriate for the company culture
- Encompasses feedback from 3 key groups: Management, Employees and Customers
- Are simple and concise
- Are well-communicated to all employees
- Are well-utilised by employees

> **TIP!** *Conducting a survey to understand employee Work-Life attitudes and satisfaction at the pre-implementation stage will provide a valuable benchmark when evaluating the effectiveness of Work-Life initiatives.*

Quantitative vs. Qualitative Measures

Both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used to collect data at the evaluation stage. Quantitative measures include employee satisfaction surveys, needs assessment surveys, employee turnover rates/costs, amongst others. Qualitative measures include informal feedback from employees about Work-Life initiatives, focus group discussions, management-staff meetings and exit interviews.

Lead vs. Lag Indicators

Increasingly, Employers of Choice are opting to use 'lead' rather than 'lag' indicators/measures to gauge the effectiveness of Work-Life initiatives.

Lag Indicators	Lead Indicators
⬇	⬇
Measure the impact/outcomes of Work-Life strategy (after the fact) *Eg. Revenue turnover, profit margin, customer satisfaction*	**Predict** the potential outcomes of Work-Life strategy (forecast) *Eg. absenteeism rate, staff morale & engagement*

Suggested Measures:

Management-related	Employee-related	Client-related
Turnover rate	Employee satisfaction and engagement levels	Overall customer satisfaction
Turnover costs	Employee stress and resilience levels	Customer retention rate
Absenteeism rate	Employee perception of quality of life	Customer referral rate
Costs from stress-related illnesses/ absence	Programme utilisation levels	
Rate of return from maternity leave	Resignation intention rate	
Productivity rates		
Attraction of quality talent		
Retention of quality talent		
Time required to fill open positions		
Job rejection reasons offered by interviewees at recruitment stage		
Profitability		

Work-Life Programme Listing

Legend | Relevant | Not as Relevant

	Singles	Married	Parents	Mature Workers
Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)				
Compressed Work Week				
Cross-Training (in different roles/tasks for greater flexibility)				
Days-Off (employee's choice)				
Flexible Hours (Flexi-time)				
Telecommuting (Flexi-place)				
Job Sharing	▓			
Part-Time Work Options				
Phased Retirement	▓	▓	▓	
Phasing In or Out	▓	▓		
Seasonal Work	▓	▓		
Shift-Swapping				
Enhanced Leave Benefits				
Bereavement Leave				
Block Leave				
Career Break Leave				
Childcare Leave	▓	▓		
Eldercare Leave				
Emergency Leave				
Extended Maternity Leave	▓	▓		▓
First Day of School Leave	▓	▓		
Marriage Leave	▓		▓	▓
Paternity Leave	▓	▓		▓
Personal Day Leave				
Sabbatical Leave				▓
Study Leave				▓
Unrecorded Time-Off				
Voluntary Service Leave				

	Singles	Married	Parents	Mature Workers
Employee Support Schemes (ESS)				
Childcare Support				
Childcare Facilities (On/Off-site)	▓	▓		
Childcare Subsidies	▓	▓		
Community Integration Support Programmes for Infants and Children with Disabilities	▓	▓		
Integrated Childcare Centre Programmes	▓	▓		
Student Care Services (On/Off-site)	▓	▓		
Student Care Subsidies	▓	▓		
Eldercare Support				
Eldercare Facilities (Daycare/Nursing Home)				▓
Eldercare Subsidies				▓
Support for Caregivers				▓
Financial Support				
Bursaries	▓	▓		
Education Loans				
Financial Assistance				
Scholarships				
Health and Wellness				
Fruits Day				
Gym Membership Subsidies				
Health and Wellness Programmes				
Health Screening				
Time-Saving Services				
Concierge Services (eg. laundry pick-up, internal postal/banking service)				
Dry-cleaning Services				

	Singles	Married	Parents	Mature Workers
Takeaway Food Services				
Work-Life Education/Training				
Work-Life Summits for Senior Management				
Personal Work-Life Effectiveness Training for Employees				
Work-Life Implementation Training for Supervisors				
Other Family-Related Support				
Bring Your Child/Grandchild to Work Day	■	■		
Eat with Your Family Day				
Family Day				
Family Life Education Programmes (eg. talks/workshops on life skills, parenting, marriage preparation and enrichment)				
Family Information and Referral Services				
Family Relocation Programme	■			
Family Room	■	■		
Gifts for Marriage/Newborn Baby	■			■
Lactation Room	■	■		■
Medical and Insurance Coverage for Family				
Other Support Schemes				
Counselling Services				
Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)				
Flexible Benefits				
Gifts during Hospitalisation				
Social Activities and Networking Opportunities		■	■	

Work-Life Resources

Work-Life Funding

ADVANTAGE! Scheme by Workforce Development Agency (WDA) provides a financial grant to support companies' initiatives in implementing HR systems, changes to working environment and business and operational processes that directly boost the recruitment, retention and re-employment of mature workers. www.wda.gov.sg

Family Life Ambassador (FLA) Programme by Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) supports the fostering of stronger and more stable families in Singapore through the provision of funded family life education programmes at the workplace for working adults. The FLA Programme offers a wide spectrum of family life topics, such as personal work-life effectiveness, marriage preparation/enrichment and parenting. www.familylifeambassador.org.sg

Flexi-Works! by NTUC and WDA offers a grant to support a company's efforts in the recruitment of new workers on part-time or flexible work arrangements. www.ntuc.org.sg/flexiworks

Work-Life Works! (WoW!) Fund is a government grant given to businesses to encourage employers to introduce Work-Life measures, including flexible work arrangements at the workplace. www.mom.gov.sg/work-life

Workplace Health and Sports Promotion Grant (WHSP) by Health Promotion Board provides financial support to help organisations start and sustain their workplace health programmes. www.hpb.gov.sg

EnterpriseOne comprehensively lists various government grants, loans and other assistance across industries. www.business.gov.sg/EN/Government/GovernmentAssistance

Work-Life Related Websites

Child Care Link	www.childcarelink.gov.sg
Education, Learning & Employment @ eCitizen	www.ele.ecitizen.gov.sg
Employer Alliance	www.employeralliance.sg
Family & Community Development @ eCitizen	www.fcd.ecitizen.gov.sg
Ministry of Community Development Youth and Sports	www.mcys.gov.sg
Ministry of Manpower	www.mom.gov.sg

Work-Life Harmony Self-Assessment Tool for Employers

This self-assessment tool can serve as a guide to determine gaps in your organisation's Work-Life Strategy. B, C and D below are lists of typically useful Work-Life programmes. Please note that not all the Work-Life programmes listed may be suitable for your organisation.

S/N	PROGRAMMES	YES	NO
A.	**WORK-LIFE INFRASTRUCTURE IN ORGANISATION**		
1.	Has your company initiated or developed a strategic plan to help employees harmonise work and family/personal life commitments?	○	○
2.	Has your company incorporated the importance of harmonising work and family/personal life issues as a core value?	○	○
3.	Has your company created a Work-Life task force or committee?	○	○
4.	Has your company offered training to managers on how to help employees harmonise work and family/personal life commitments?	○	○
5.	Has your company conducted an employee needs assessment on work and family/personal life needs?	○	○
6.	Has your company partnered other organisations in Work-Life initiatives, eg. tied up with healthcare institution to offer lower health-screening rate for staff?	○	○
B.	**FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS**		
1.	Flexi-hours	○	○
2.	Alternative work schedules, eg. compressed work week	○	○
3.	Permanent part-time	○	○
4.	Flexi-place, eg. homeworking and telecommuting	○	○
5.	Job sharing	○	○

S/N	PROGRAMMES	YES	NO
C. LEAVE BENEFITS			
1.	Marriage leave	◯	◯
2.	Paternity leave	◯	◯
3.	Family care leave (childcare/eldercare sick leave)	◯	◯
4.	Bereavement leave	◯	◯
5.	Emergency leave/Unrecorded time off for family/ personal matters	◯	◯
6.	Study/Exam leave	◯	◯
7.	Renewal/Career Break/Sabbatical leave	◯	◯
D. EMPLOYEE SUPPORT SCHEMES/SERVICES			
1.	Care arrangements/subsidies, eg. on-site child care centre, family/lactation room	◯	◯
2.	Family information and referral service	◯	◯
3.	Family life education programmes	◯	◯
4.	Social activities for singles	◯	◯
5.	Social activities that include family members, eg. Family Day	◯	◯
6.	Health & wellness programme	◯	◯
7.	Family relocation/orientation programme	◯	◯
8.	Medical and insurance coverage for family members	◯	◯
9.	Financial assistance scheme (scholarship/bursaries)	◯	◯
10.	Time-saving services	◯	◯

SCORING (for each 'Yes')

	No. of 'Yes'	Total score
Section A: 5 points		
Section B: 4 points		
Section C: 3 points		
Section D: 3 points		

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Work-Life Self-Assessment Tool for Employees

Please take 5 minutes to assess the state of your work-life. This quick self-check is just a guide and is by no means exhaustive.

Never **1**   Seldom **2**   Sometimes **3**   Often **4**   Always **5**

S/N	Questions		Please circle your answers			
1	I feel well physically.	1	2	3	4	5
2	While I am at work I am free of worry about my day-to-day personal matters (e.g. family).	1	2	3	4	5
3	While I am at home I am free of worry about work matters.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am satisfied with my job.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I have enough flexibility at my job to achieve harmony between my work and personal/family life.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I have the external support I need (e.g. friends, family etc.) when I need help.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am satisfied with my life outside of work.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I have enough time to pursue my own interests and hobbies.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I spend sufficient time with the important people in my life (e.g. my family, friends etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
10	I am fully present and enjoy the time spent when I am with the important people in my life (e.g. family outings, gatherings with friends).	1	2	3	4	5
11	All in all, I am satisfied with the relationships I have with the important people in my life (e.g., family, friends, etc).	1	2	3	4	5
12	I have an area of focus outside of myself that brings me peace (e.g. spiritual practice, contribution to community etc).	1	2	3	4	5
13	I am able to extend my help to people around me when they need it.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I have a sense of control over the important things in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I can effectively manage both my work responsibilities and personal aspirations (e.g. personal life goals, family planning).	1	2	3	4	5

If your score is 55-75
Congratulations! You are probably enjoying a harmonious work-life. Do continue with this harmony and share your tips with those around you.

If your score is 40-54
You are somewhat in control of your life but may feel that things can be improved. You are probably trying your best to manage your commitments. You may want to re- examine your priorities in life and align your daily actions to these priorities. All the best!

If your score is less than 40
You are probably dissatisfied with how you are managing the various aspects of your life. If you are keen to improve your work-life harmony, take time to reflect on the questions for which you scored low. Refer to the strategies and tips shared in this booklet. You may also wish to talk to a trusted friend, your spouse, family members or even your mentor at work. Alternatively, you can get professional help from the community resources listed in the following pages.

This self-check is designed in consultation with Dr Graeme Russell (Associate Professor, Macquarie University, Australia) and Dr Jeff Hill (Associate Professor, Brigham Young University, United States).

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TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE
ON WORK-LIFE STRATEGY

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