

The new nine-to-five

You don't have to be your own boss to have flexi-hours. These women and experts shed insight on a new arrangement that is changing the landscape of work.

By Julie Yim



Have you dreamed of a world where you can pick your kid up from school in the afternoon and return home to start working while your dinner is cooking in the oven? In an ideal women's world, this is flexible working; your answer to balancing between family and career.

However, according to the Malaysian Economic Monitor November 2012 report, the labour force participation rate among women remains low at 46 per cent compared to other Asean countries. Lack of support from Malaysian companies is also a cause for the discouraging numbers as women are forced

to make a choice between family or career. "In many organisations, there is still a strong sentiment that managers are only able to holistically evaluate their teams when they are present in the office.

"COMPANIES OFFERING FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES ARE THE KEY TO LURING PROFESSIONAL WOMEN BACK INTO THE WORKFORCE."

-Datuk Rohani Abdul Karim, Minister of Women, Family and Community Development

Cost justification and return on the company's investment in the flexible work arrangement are also another constraint," says Chua Chai Ping, Country Human Resources Director of Accenture Malaysia.

"Women are an untapped source of talent as we have over 60 per cent of female Malaysian university

graduates yet only 46 per cent participate in the workforce," says Chai Ping, who is also Diversity Advocate for TalentCorp.

VERSATILITY IS KEY

Sashikala Devi Gopallan, Senior Marketing Manager of Kelly Services, talks more about this arrangement.

1 Define flexi-work

"It is a term used to describe an employment provision that allows employees a certain degree of freedom in deciding how work will and can be done (from the office and remotely)."

2 Can women with flexi-work progress further?

"Women can progress equally as well as their male counterparts if the government and relevant institutions aggressively champion fairer appointment processes, promotion of talent based on meritocracy while supporting gender diversity quotas."

3 Where do you start?

"A TalentCorp Malaysia survey showed that the private sector were more likely to implement this arrangement. Kelly Services will continue to initiate job opportunities for women looking for flexible work assignments and championing improved legal protection for flexible work and better maternity leave arrangements."

THE EMPLOYEES - MAKING FLEXIBILITY WORK

Ruth Ling

Director, Global Sales, FX & Transaction Banking, Corporate Banking, Treasury & Markets, CIMB Investment Bank



"My husband and I were blessed with a baby boy, Ryan, in 2009. I returned to work immediately after my maternity leave and Ryan was primarily cared for by my in-laws. This year, we decided that it was time to give my in-laws' a break and this was also an opportunity for me to spend more time with Ryan and work out options for his daily routines when I return to work. I applied for CIMB Group's SRP (Staff Rejuvenation Programme) in May 2013 and began the programme in July 2013 until the end of 2013. The SRP has allowed me to address certain priorities in life – in this case, it was to focus on raising my son and caring for my family without worrying about the security and availability of my job when I return. I feel happier, and energised – knowing that being a professional career woman has not deterred me from fulfilling my responsibilities as a mother and wife."

Johanna Ramili

Senior Manager, Assurance, PwC Malaysia



"I started on PwC's flexi-work arrangement in April 2013. As a mother, balancing family time with work, especially with a young baby, was a challenge for me. Hence, the programme is ideal for my circumstances. Kids grow up in the blink of an eye, and I'm now happy to be around to witness my daughter achieve her developmental milestones. At the same time, working three days a week allows me to interact with other adults and keeps me updated with the happenings of the world. This is useful as when my daughter is older, it will be easier for me to transition back to working full time. Most people have to choose between being a stay-at-home mum and a full-time working mum. I can now get the best of both worlds! I don't think the programme will decrease my chances of a future promotion because the firm is fair in recognising the efforts of its employees and will reward our contributions accordingly."

DID YOU KNOW?

A company that **hires Malaysian women who have been on a career break** of at least two years and provides them with a **training programme that is endorsed by TalentCorp** is eligible for **double tax deduction incentive** for the training cost incurred within 12 months from the commencement date of employment of these women.

Get started!

Log on to www.flexworklife.my to find potential job opportunities that offer flexible working arrangements.

THE EMPLOYERS - WIN-WIN SITUATION

Hamidah Nziadin

Head of Group Corporate Resources

• Company's benefit

"We find that our various benefits and the SRP have helped retain our talent. It is flexibility that our staff treasures the most. Most of our staff members who take up the SRP return to work rejuvenated and more enthusiastic, grateful that they were given the opportunity to fulfil what is important to them."

• Successful implementation

"The SRP that was launched in 2009 has benefitted many employees who love their jobs but need time off to attend to urgent matters such as being more present for their children during exam period."

Chan Chong Kong

PwC Malaysia Human Capital Leader

• Company's benefit

"We have seen an increase in staff engagement over the past year from 65 per cent to 70 per cent."

• Successful implementation

"Progression and opportunities for development and exposure don't stop just because a staff is on Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA). It's all based on merit and potential. It has worked for us because we regularly reinforce values like trust, empowerment, and personal responsibility through leader-sharing sessions, town halls and e-newsletters. The tone at the top is vital for the successful implementation of FWA."