



## LEADING FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES HANDBOOK

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## INTRODUCTION

Implementing fair and merit based employment practices makes good business sense. It is also the right thing to do. Singapore employers increasingly operate in a global environment where there is competition across borders for resources and talent. Employers need to be competitive and put the right policies and practices in place to be able to attract, effectively engage as well as retain its people. This should be based on their skills, abilities, competencies and contributions. Singapore has a diverse population and workforce. The increasing proportion of older employees in Singapore's workforce represents a demographic shift that employers cannot afford to ignore if they want to succeed.

Employers that have implemented fair employment practices recognise the importance of having progressive HR practices and how a supportive work environment that actively engages its employees contributes to organisational excellence. In recruitment, these employers are able to look beyond the physical make-up of a potential candidate – whether the candidate is a male or female, young or old, or the colour of his or her skin. The employer instead, evaluates the candidate based on his or her skills, ability, talent as well as the right attitude for the job.

The practice of fair employment, coupled with other supportive programmes and activities will help to foster an inclusive workplace – one that is built on merit and based on progressive HR practices.

Progressive MNCs and SMEs alike have recognised that the adoption of fair employment practices contribute to organisational and business success.

The goal of fair employment practices does not stem from the need to fill quotas. As demonstrated by many organisations who have implemented fair employment practices as part of their diversity and inclusion initiatives, such practices allow organisations to leverage on a diverse workforce – one with variety in strengths, talents, experiences and perspectives. Everyone stands to benefit from an environment where all employees can realise their full potential and help the organisation achieve its objectives.

The experience in other countries shows that discrimination can't be eradicated by legislation alone. The tripartite and principle-based approach being pursued in Singapore is designed to be effective and practical. Given the wide range of jobs in Singapore, there is no one-size-fits-all solution that can meet the needs of all organisations. All organisations need to review their employment practices to ensure that they are appropriate to their situation and in line with the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices.

The key challenge here is to shape mindsets and behaviour so that fair employment becomes an integral part of corporate culture and practices. This will not be an overnight process and organisations are at different stages. In Singapore, we are fortunate to have a strong tradition of tripartite partnership involving employers, employees and the government that allows us to tackle these issues in a practical win-win manner.

# OBJECTIVES OF THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook shares the experiences of leading organisations in Singapore on their fair employment journey. It showcases how they have positively implemented fair employment practices in their workplace and the benefits to their business. Useful and practical tips on how to effectively introduce fair employment practices within an organisation are also provided.

Through detailing guidelines and best practices, the handbook seeks to encourage employers to get started in making their workplace fair and inclusive by showing how that can be achieved.





## THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

The Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices, formulated by the Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices (TAFEP), sets out fair employment practices for adoption by employers.

The five principles of fair employment practices are:

- a. Recruit and select employees on the basis of merit (such as skills, experience or ability to perform the job) and regardless of age, race, gender, religion, family status or disability.
- b. Treat employees fairly and with respect and implement progressive human resource management systems.
- c. Provide employees with equal opportunity to be considered for training and development based on their strengths and needs, to help them achieve their full potential.
- d. Reward employees fairly based on their ability, performance, contribution and experience.
- e. Abide by labour laws and adopt Tripartite Guidelines which promote fair employment practices.

### Featured organisations

Organisations featured in this handbook have proactively sought to implement fair and merit based employment practices in Singapore.

These organisations are:

- ABN AMRO Bank NV
- Alexandra Hospital
- Apex-Pal International Ltd
- British Council
- Cherie Hearts Group International Pte Ltd
- Credit Suisse
- GlaxoSmithKline
- Han's (F&B) Pte Ltd
- IBM Singapore Pte Ltd
- Jason Electronics (Pte) Ltd
- KH Security Agency Pte Ltd
- McDonald's Restaurants
- Merck Sharp & Dohme (Singapore) Ltd
- Merrill Lynch International Bank
- Network Express Courier Service Pte Ltd
- NTUC Club
- Shell Eastern Petroleum (Pte) Limited
- Singapore Technologies Electronics Limited
- Singapore Workforce Development Agency
- The Dow Chemical Company
- The GMP Group
- The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore
- UBS Singapore
- United Overseas Bank Group
- Wing Tai Holdings Limited

# THE BUSINESS CASE: WHY ORGANISATIONS SHOULD IMPLEMENT FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Singapore is a multiracial and cosmopolitan society and the workforce is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of age, gender, race and ethnicity, religion, marital status, and also in nationality and cultural mix.

We have one of the world's fastest ageing populations, with 53 percent of the economically active residents in Singapore aged 40 years and older, including 25 percent who are at least 50 years<sup>1</sup>. According to projections, by 2030, one in five Singapore residents will be aged 65 years and older<sup>2</sup>. By 2050, Singapore may be the fourth oldest population in the world.

Given this, the nation can expect a significant shift in its labour force participation demographics in the next 10 years as the number of older workers is likely to increase at a much faster rate compared to the rest of the labour population.

While the female participation rate in the workforce has also been increasing over the past years, there is still a fairly large number who leave the workforce due to child caring responsibilities. Many of these women do not return to the workforce and remain economically inactive. However, many of these women have indicated that they would be prepared to consider rejoining the workforce if they were provided access to more flexible work arrangements<sup>3</sup>.

The business implications of the increasing diversity of the workforce should be viewed as a priority for organisations. Furthermore, the re-employment legislation set to come into effect by 2012 will require employers to offer re-employment terms to their employees when they reach the statutory retirement age of 62. This is to allow more Singaporeans to continue working beyond the current statutory retirement age.

To remain competitive, employers need to have the practices and processes to ensure that the most suitable people are selected to do the job. Focusing on hiring the best candidate for the job will enable organisations to benefit from an environment where all employees can realise their full potential and this ultimately translates to business success. There is clearly a business case for adopting fair employment practices.

“Often the most original ideas and unusual connections are formed when people of varying origin work together, in teams. New ways of thinking lead to new ways of doing business and innovative products which is what drives business success and competitive advantage.”

(Source: The Conference Board No. 175 January 2006. Diversity and Profitability Making the Connections by Sandra Lester.)

<sup>1</sup>Report on Labour Force in Singapore 2007

<sup>2</sup>Report on the Ageing Population 2006

<sup>3</sup>Report on Labour Force in Singapore 2007



## 1. Access to a Wider Talent Pool

Singapore has a low birth rate with a significant proportion of women in their 30s and 40s who are economically inactive. This, coupled with an ageing workforce means that Singapore faces issues in the attraction and retention of talent. By focusing recruitment efforts on employee competencies (whether they can or have the potential to do the job), organisations are better placed to discover talent and retain them. Finding the right people with the right skills and aptitude is essential. It is even more critical for organisations to recruit talent based on their skills and abilities during times of an economic downturn.

By hiring on merit, employers ensure they have access to the widest pool of candidates.

It is in Han's corporate philosophy to hire based on the candidate's competency to do the job and to ensure that there is equal opportunity for all when it comes to recruitment.

Mr Han Choon Fook, Managing Director of Han's reiterated their company's philosophy, "Be they young, old, educated, uneducated, retrenched or inexperienced we hire them all, train them up and now we are proud to have a large group of such long serving loyal employees."

About 10 percent of its 366 employees across its 21 outlets in Singapore are aged 60 years and above. The company firmly believes that the ability to complete the job is the most important factor when it comes to making a decision on the candidate to hire. It also sees value in having a mix of young, old and middle-aged employees. For example, Han's perceives older employees to be loyal with the ability to positively influence their colleagues through sharing their past work experiences, even on the value of life!

"The most important thing is that our employees must be healthy enough to do the work they are hired to do. It doesn't matter to us if an employee needs to go off early for a dialysis treatment. For example, we have an 80-year old employee who only works in the evenings because she wants to spend the day with her grandchildren. Our flexible working hours will enable us to accommodate these workers while giving them the opportunity to realise their full potential at the workplace," Mr Han remarked when asked about the most important factor he looks for in a candidate.

Han's progressive human resource policies have allowed more older workers to be employed, with 56 percent of the staff above the age of 40. The company also hires people with disabilities.

## 2. Increased Productivity and Staff Retention

By implementing progressive human resource systems and practices, employers are in a better position to attract, retain and develop employees based on merit. Through ensuring that employees are hired based on their skills and abilities to perform the job, organisations maximise the abilities and potential of employees. This will help raise employee morale and commitment, contributing to higher productivity and reduced employee turnover. This also means that organisations minimise spending associated with re-hiring and retraining due to poor employee performance.

In May 2004, Wing Tai Retail launched Fox Fashion Apparel in Singapore. The fashion chain has a unique merchandising concept to display clothing items on shelves instead of display racks. As such, clothing items were frequently removed from the shelves by customers and had to be placed neatly back on the shelves.

Fox sales co-ordinators had to attend to and serve customers, and at the same time ensure that the clothing items were displayed properly on the shelves in a timely manner. This was particularly stressful during peak hours and weekends when customer traffic was highest. The sales co-ordinators also had to ensure that all clothing items were folded properly after the shop closed for the day.

To enable the sales co-ordinators to focus on customer service, Fox Fashion decided to hire older workers, like Mdm Tan Soo Noy, 59 (pictured), to assist with folding the clothing items and tidying the display. This initiative achieved a win-win outcome, leading to increased employee productivity and sales.



While Fox Fashion has since added hanging displays, this team remains a valuable asset, given their patience and experience with young children. Besides tidying the display, they also recommend suitable items from Fox Kids and Baby to new or young parents and help to watch over the children while their parents shop. They are important members of the Fox team.

## 3. Creativity, Innovation and Tapping into New Markets

Organisations that adopt fair employment practices are better able to attract talent from different backgrounds, leading to the formation of a diverse workforce. Experiences from organisations have shown that having a diverse workforce is beneficial to increasing innovation and creativity within the organisation, resulting in new ideas, new products and different ways of doing things.

## 4. Improved Customer Satisfaction

Having a diverse workforce brings tangible business benefits for organisations. This enables organisations to tailor their products and services in order to build trust and goodwill among their customers. As Singapore becomes part of a globalised world economy, enhanced customer satisfaction will give organisations an added competitive edge.

Fair employment initiatives are also known to improve customer satisfaction either directly through more motivated employees or indirectly through more customer-focused business processes. Highly motivated employees who are more engaged and loyal to the organisation will be able to provide value-added customer service, leading to satisfied customers.

Female employees at Shell have played a pivotal role in developing the business and increasing external customer satisfaction. This can be illustrated by an example from Shell's Retail Loyalty Programme in Singapore.

In its review of the company's local retail Loyalty Programme strategy in 2002, Shell formed a committee that included women of different ages, moving away from the original all-male team. The committee discovered that women are very important decision or influencers in the brand of petroleum men purchased, even though they may not be the ones that drive. Further research also revealed that their purchase decisions were often based on the attractiveness of the Loyalty Programmes' product catalogues.

These findings formed the new marketing and communications strategy for the Loyalty Programme which was revised with more appeal to female customers.

Shell's experience show that a diverse team can lead to fresh ideas and perspectives that better reflect market needs and customer behaviour. And this has as much to do with a diverse workforce, as it has fair employment practices.

Shell firmly believes that a diverse workforce can contribute to better teamwork and improved customer satisfaction. Jeroen van der Veer, Chief Executive of Shell, said, "Diversity and Inclusion are vital for winning in today's business environment. It is about people from different backgrounds, different geographies and different cultures working together in an inclusive style that results in better teamwork. By integrating D&I into the mainstream of the business, we can translate our core values of honesty, integrity and respect for people into action, and improve our global performance. I am convinced that a diverse team is best placed to understand our environment and our stakeholders. If we are successful in implementing diversity and inclusion, we are stronger than the competition."

Other benefits of building a diverse workforce include:

- Increasing employee efficiency through the formation of cross-functional teams.
- Having a wider range of resources, skills and ideas among employees that can be tapped into to understand and solve problems that customers may have, for example, language barriers.
- Understanding how customers with different cultures, religious beliefs or backgrounds might react to the company's business, products or services.
- Generating brand loyalty by building a positive reputation of being diverse and inclusive.

Alexandra Hospital (AH) is a good example of an employer that has made a concerted effort to employ and retain older job seekers as one of their corporate goals. AH has been called “the pin up for organisations” for re-employment in Singapore as they retain between 80 to 90 percent of their staff who turn 62.

Instead of shunning older workers, AH has implemented several initiatives to employ and retain older workers. Mr Liak Teng Lit, CEO of AH, explained that the decision to employ older workers stems from the hospital's experience working with older workers. They are more consistent and have a lower tendency to job hop, and are also more mature and experienced.

At AH, mature workers are viewed as assets. With their experience in the industry, they are not just well-versed in taking care of patients, but are also able to empathise with patients – an important aspect of in-patient care.

Mr Liak went further to state that the hospital values older workers because most of the hospital's patients are older people. He distils the reasons why AH actively employs older workers to the following:

- They have a wealth of experience and knowledge.
- They are more consistent in their work.
- They have a lower tendency to job hop.
- They are able to deal better with older patients.

“Being committed to hiring the right person for the job and then creating an environment that cares for them and values them to make them stay. We believe that happy employees will translate to happy patients and the key to our success is our people, so we have positive policies catered for our people – it’s a win-win situation.”

M K Fatimah  
Acting Director, Human Resources  
Alexandra Hospital



## 5. Deployment Flexibility

Having a diverse workforce has its advantages especially during festive and holiday periods, where organisations are able to minimise scheduling conflicts. By employing people from diverse ethnicities, organisations will have more flexibility in balancing team composition and maintaining the right staffing levels during public holidays celebrated by Singapore's different racial groups – for example, Chinese New Year, Hari Raya and Deepavali.

## 6. Be an “Employer of Choice” – Enhance the Ability to Attract and Recruit

Organisations that gain a reputation for embracing fair employment practices will find it easier to attract and recruit employees. In addition to the ability to attract new hires, organisations will also gain good public image and reputation, which will have a positive impact on the sales of their products and customer satisfaction levels.

**We position ourselves as the Employer of Choice because our Ladies and Gentlemen (affectionate term used by the Hotel to refer to its employees) are our most important resource in our service commitment to our guests. Through our Employee Promise, our Ladies and Gentlemen are promised that we are committed to them, that we will nurture and maximise talent to the benefit of each individual and the company and that we foster a work environment where individual aspirations are fulfilled.**

Mark Fletcher,  
Assistant Director for Human Resources  
The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore

## In Summary

Fair employment practices help employers to:

- Widen the talent pool.
- Recruit the best people for the job based on his or her skills and abilities.
- Improve customer satisfaction.
- Increase employee engagement.
- Raise productivity.
- Reduce cost related to absenteeism and employee turnover.
- Foster creativity and innovation.
- Enhance deployment flexibility.
- Create a positive image and positions the organisation as an Employer of Choice.

Fair Employment Practices is also the right thing to do. Discrimination makes it difficult for people to do their jobs properly. This not only affects employee morale but also wastes individual potential and has a negative impact on the business. Employees thrive when they are valued as individuals with different experiences and viewpoints.

# HOW TO IMPLEMENT FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES IN YOUR ORGANISATION

The implementation of fair employment practices cannot be a “one-size-fits-all” approach and strategy. Successful implementation of fair employment practices requires careful planning and the involvement of all stakeholders in the organisation, so that the result is a win-win outcome that benefits both the employer as well as employees.



The following are best practices adopted by leading organisations in the implementation of fair employment practices:

## 1. Linking Fair Employment Practices to the Business Strategy

The first step is to understand the importance and relevance of fair employment practices and how it fits your business needs. Some questions to consider are:

- Is your business faced with a problem of getting the right people to fill job vacancies? Have you looked towards employing talent from other sources?
- Is there high employee turnover?
- Do you face a manpower shortage during festive seasons like Chinese New Year or Hari Raya?
- Are you expanding into new market segments, either locally or regionally?
- Do you feel that there is a shortage of new and creative ideas within the organisation?
- Are your customers being treated well? Can this be improved?
- Are people valued in your organisation and do you want to raise employee engagement and morale?

Think about possible solutions that meet these problems:

- Are there additional recruitment sources, for example, matured workers, women or people with disabilities that your organisation can tap on?
- What changes can be made to current policies in order to attract, retain and motivate these workers?
- Are there community resources and agencies like National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) or Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) that can provide assistance or funding?
- What is the current composition of your workforce (in terms of gender, age, etc.)? Would you have a competitive advantage if you had a more balanced workforce?
- Does the organisation need fresh ideas in production or marketing? If your customers are of a different or diverse background, will it help if you get a more balanced workforce in terms of age, gender, race / language, family status etc?

## 2. Commitment from CEOs and Senior Management

CEOs play a pivotal role in the implementation of fair employment practices as they set the tone and pave the direction of the organisation. Hence, it is important for CEOs to lead by example and involve the senior management team in the implementation of fair employment practices. The support from the CEO and senior management team is one of the most vital and critical factors that contributes to the success of an organisation's fair employment initiatives.

What role can CEOs play?

- Show commitment by verbally supporting the initiatives through discussing the rationale and need for fair employment practices to employees. They can do so through emails to staff, company newsletters, speeches at company events, their company website or staff intranet and during fair employment training sessions, among others.
- Become a role model through being involved in the fair employment initiatives. One of the ways CEOs and senior management can show their involvement is through spearheading fair employment initiatives.
- Set goals for managers to adhere to and hold managers responsible and accountable for fair employment targets and outcomes. For example, the hiring of older workers.
- Allow feedback and open communications between employees and organisation.

One of the first and easiest steps that an organisation can take is to communicate the importance of fair employment and its initiatives to its staff.

Mr Douglas Foo, CEO of Apex-Pal International – a leading food and beverage group which comprises of well known home grown brands such as Sakae Sushi, Sakae Teppanyaki, Hei Sushi, Crepes & Cream, Hibiki and Kohiten – holds regular sharing sessions and informal talks with his employees and senior managers. During these monthly sharing sessions, employees are reminded to be fair to themselves, fair to their colleagues and fair to the company.

Upon signing the Employers' Pledge of Fair Employment Practices\*, Mr Foo held briefing sessions with all the managers to ensure that they understood the rationale of the Pledge and the benefits for Apex-Pal in being a fair and merit based employer.



Changes were also made to the existing HR Manual and Employee Handbook. In addition, managers are trained to recruit and select candidates based on the value of the job, performance, experience, ability and competence.

**I am grateful to my CEO, Mr Douglas Foo and Sakae Sushi for giving mature workers like me the chance to work and taking good care of our welfare by making special arrangements to work schedule, work scope and pace of training.**

Robert Long  
Chef  
Sakae Sushi

\* For details on the Employers' Pledge of Fair Employment Practices, please refer to page 38.

### 3. Treating People Fairly as a Core Value

Organisations that adopt fair treatment of employees as a core value have employees who feel more valued and motivated to maximise their contributions at the workplace. The fair and equal treatment of employees in an inclusive work environment enhances work relationships and promotes workplace harmony, contributing to the success of the organisation. These are key components necessary for the successful implementation of fair employment practices.

Lim Shoon Yin, Senior Consultant Global Diversity and Inclusion Practice at Shell shared that "studies show that when employees feel respected, valued and engaged, they develop stronger relationships and become more involved and motivated in their work, leading to higher productivity and better performance. We truly believe in this and "Respect for People" is one of our clearly articulated core values. Our people policies and processes and ways of working reflect this core value. It has helped Shell Singapore foster more effective teamwork among the business units, enhanced decision making, and increased creativity and innovation. The rate of absenteeism and staff turnover has also been lowered, and that has a direct effect on reducing costs."

Many successful organisations also incorporate their commitment to fair employment in their mission and core values. In several leading organisations, managers and supervisors are also held accountable for their personal behaviour as well as meeting fair employment objectives such as developing and mentoring women leaders or employing older workers.

Credit Suisse demonstrates their commitment to fair employment practices in their Code of Conduct Policy, which is endorsed by the Board of Directors and Executive Board.

The policy states that Credit Suisse's reputation for integrity and fair dealing requires that all employees maintain the highest standards of ethics and professionalism at all times. The bank expects all their directors and employees to pursue that vision and to adhere to the principles and values set out in the code. The code spells out ethical values such as integrity, responsibility, respect, compliance and confidentiality.

Under the value of Respect, Credit Suisse highlights the need for respectful and fair treatment of all stakeholders, and in particular existing employees. They position themselves as an employer of choice and strive to ensure the following:

- Equal opportunities irrespective of ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age or disability.
- Employee mobility.
- A safe and healthy work environment free from discrimination, harassment or retaliation.
- An open door policy that gives every employee access to management.
- A culture based on individual performance, with a competitive reward system and fair and objective periodic evaluations.
- Continuous education and development.

Credit Suisse has a Global Diversity Advisory Board and a Global Diversity and Inclusion unit with a Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion, as well as respective Heads of Diversity and Inclusion in all four regions. They are dedicated to ensuring everyone understands the importance and the rationale for fair employment policies and practices, and to driving focus and commitment.

“Our employees observe non-discriminatory practices in line with UOB Bank’s Code of Conduct where we strive to maintain a working environment free from discriminatory harassment. Employees must refrain from discriminatory practices when dealing with customers, business associates and other employees. This also includes non-discrimination in the selection of prospective employees.”

Jenny Wong, Executive Vice President  
Group Human Resources,  
United Overseas Bank

The Ritz-Carlton's Employee Promise is a commitment by the organisation to its employees based on the principles of fairness and merit.

Through the Employee Promise, The Ritz-Carlton guarantees a work environment where everyone regardless of race, age, gender, marital status and educational levels are treated equally and provided with equal opportunities for growth and development. This ensures that all Ladies and Gentlemen stay committed and engaged. All Ladies and Gentlemen are assured of a work environment where they have the right to be involved in the planning of the work that affects them.

At The Ritz-Carlton, all Ladies and Gentlemen carry the Credo Card at work. The hotel's core values and principles, which are known as the Gold Standards, are captured in this card. This includes the hotel's Employee Promise and Service Values. It serves as a constant reminder for employees to incorporate these values and principles in their daily work.

### THE EMPLOYEE PROMISE

At The Ritz-Carlton, our Ladies and Gentlemen are the most important resource in our service commitment to our guests.

By applying the principles of trust, honesty, respect, integrity and commitment, we nurture and maximize talent to the benefit of each individual and the company.

The Ritz-Carlton fosters a work environment where diversity is valued, quality of life is enhanced, individual aspirations are fulfilled, and The Ritz-Carlton Mystique is strengthened.



During "Daily Line-ups" (i.e. daily briefings), these Gold Standards are discussed and each Lady or Gentleman is invited to give everyday examples of how they can practise and energise these values. This enables all Ladies and Gentlemen to internalise the company's values and principles. Examples of service excellence are also shared during the daily briefings and this creates a platform to motivate the Ladies and Gentlemen as they go about their daily work. One key element is the emphasis on fostering a work environment where diversity is valued.

Doreen Tan, an Executive Assistant who has worked at The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore for 13 years, shared that the hotel is truly committed to nurturing and maximising talents and that they constantly recognise their Ladies and Gentlemen through various means.

The hotel's emphasis on its people is evident and can clearly be seen and experienced in the exceptional service delivered by its Ladies and Gentlemen.

**We believe that employers who promote fair practices will ultimately enjoy greater success when employing people simply because you have a wider pool of talent to tap on. We define it as positively welcoming all types of candidates that walk through our doors. We select and hire our Ladies and Gentlemen based on talent and job fit and then we invest in them.**

Mark Fletcher  
Assistant Director of Human Resources  
The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore

## 4. The Role of Middle Managers

The successful implementation of fair employment practices also requires the positive involvement and support of middle managers and supervisors. Middle managers can either serve as a catalyst for change in the adoption of fair employment practices or may hinder the organisation's commitment to be fair.

Middle managers are the link between employees and senior management. Hence, it is important for organisations to ensure that they understand the rationale for merit based employment practices and their role in the implementation of these practices. In addition, middle managers need to be aware of the benefits of fair employment practices and how they will impact the performance of employees within the organisation. They are in the position to understand the concerns of employees and communicating these concerns to the senior management. Middle managers also play a vital role in explaining fair employment initiatives implemented by the organisation.

How can organisations involve middle managers in the implementation of fair employment practices?

1. Communicate to middle managers what fair employment practices are and the rationale (business case) for the implementation of such practices.
2. Show them in concrete terms, the benefits of fair employment practices.
3. Help them understand their own role in the implementation of such practices.
4. Provide the necessary expertise and competency (e.g. through training opportunities on how middle managers can hire on merit).
5. Provide the appropriate tools, recruitment guides on fair hiring and other HR policies.
6. Help them to be conscious of their own biases and stereotypes, and encourage them to be open and receptive to new ideas and ways of doing things.
7. Hold them accountable for and provide rewards for the successful implementation of fair employment measures and outcomes. Where possible, share and showcase successful case studies with employees.

## 5. Communications

### Internal communications

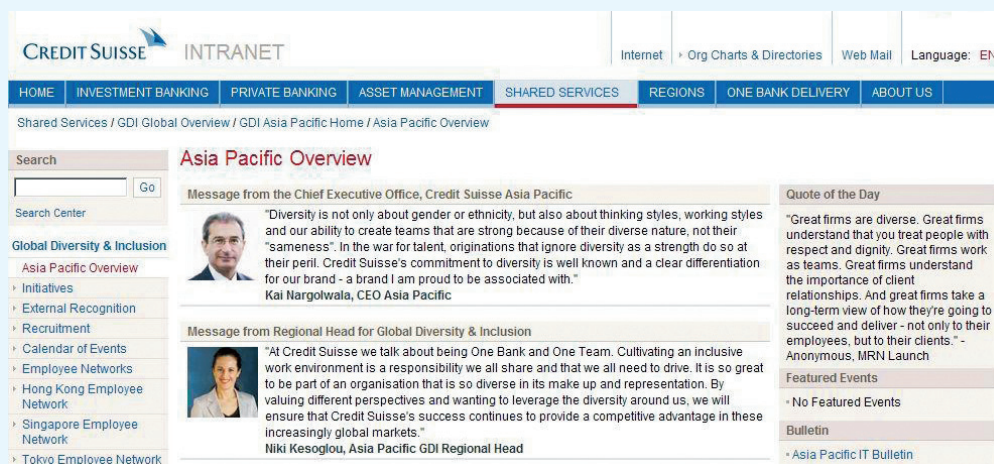
The effective implementation of fair employment practices requires all employees to not only know about these practices, but also fully understand what these practices are, their objectives and how these practices will benefit the organisation. Employees also need to recognise the vital role that they play in bringing these practices to life in their daily work. This will ensure that fair employment practices remain fair, sustainable and meet the needs of both the employees and employers.

Some recommended avenues for communicating fair employment practices internally include:

- CEO speeches and messages.
- Employee or HR handbook, HR circulars, staff newsletters as well as on the organisation's intranet.
- Information flyers, handouts or brochures announcing fair employment policies and to showcase success stories.
- Briefing sessions on the policies during staff meetings, company events or during regular in-house training workshops.
- Display of placards and posters of the fair employment values in visible locations within the organisation that will serve as a constant reminder to employees.

Organisations where senior management maintain frequent communications with middle managers, employees, and also its external customers, are more likely to create a positive view of the organisation's fair employment initiatives among key stakeholders. An organisation that demonstrates senior management support for fair employment practices will motivate employees to support and adopt these initiatives.

Credit Suisse has a dedicated Global Diversity Intranet (GDI) site that outlines all the policies and practices for employees. This site is linked to the HR site and all references to information relating to working at the bank.



This is an example taken from Credit Suisse's Global Diversity intranet site where the Asia Pacific CEO talks about the importance of diversity in the workplace.

In addition, Credit Suisse's Employee Handbook contains a summary of its employment policies that highlight elements of their work environment, recruitment, employee conduct, compensation, benefits and employee development.

McDonald's recognises that constant and timely internal communication is critical in engaging with its employees.

For example, feedback is sought at each point of implementation for its People Development Programme to ensure that the company offers programmes that are effectively tailored for professional and personal growth.

To align its managers and crew with key business priorities, regular communication sessions are planned ahead and conducted in a fun and engaging manner. This is part of McDonald's "from boardroom to crew room" communication focus.

McDonald's also employs an open door policy which allows staff the opportunity to discuss their concerns with their managers or to give feedback. Employees who may not be satisfied with the results of this discussion can go to the next level and request that the matter be brought up to the attention of the head of department.

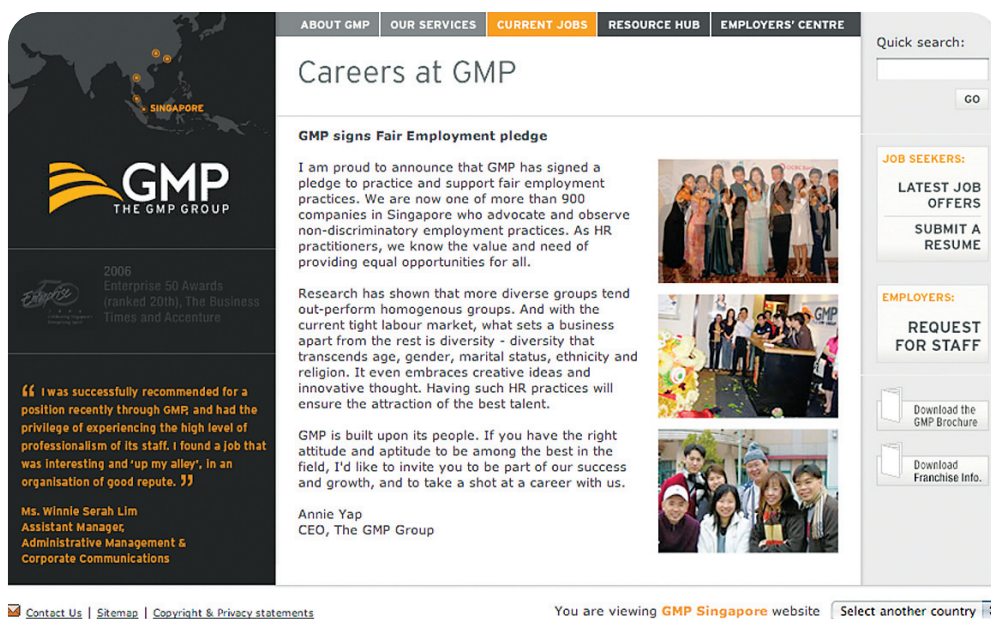
McDonald's has also introduced PAL or Personal Action Letter which is a confidential means for employee questions and concerns to be resolved. Pre-addressed PALs are available at all Restaurants and strict confidentiality is assured. In addition, opinion surveys are held at least once a year and Communication or RAP Sessions are held regularly in all restaurants. RAP sessions are informal discussions between small groups of crew and management where suggestions can be given openly.

Details of the various communication channels at McDonald's are clearly spelt out in the Employee Handbook, hard copies of which are given to every staff.

## External communications

Frequent communication of the organisation's fair employment practices to its external stakeholders will help the organisation to position itself as an employer of choice. Prospective hires and job seekers, in particular, "Generation Y" talent, value and look for organisations that have a positive public image and reputation in terms of valuing its employees and being responsible corporate citizens.

Many leading organisations share their commitment to and strategies on fair employment practices on their corporate websites. Local staffing and HR consultancy, The GMP Group has demonstrated that local companies also value the benefits of communicating their commitment to fair employment practices to external audiences.



**Careers at GMP**

**GMP signs Fair Employment pledge**

I am proud to announce that GMP has signed a pledge to practice and support fair employment practices. We are now one of more than 900 companies in Singapore who advocate and observe non-discriminatory employment practices. As HR practitioners, we know the value and need of providing equal opportunities for all.

Research has shown that more diverse groups tend out-perform homogenous groups. And with the current tight labour market, what sets a business apart from the rest is diversity - diversity that transcends age, gender, marital status, ethnicity and religion. It even embraces creative ideas and innovative thought. Having such HR practices will ensure the attraction of the best talent.

GMP is built upon its people. If you have the right attitude and aptitude to be among the best in the field, I'd like to invite you to be part of our success and growth, and to take a shot at a career with us.

Annie Yap  
CEO, The GMP Group

**Ms. Winnie Serah Lim**  
Assistant Manager,  
Administrative Management &  
Corporate Communications

2006  
Enterprise 50 Awards  
(ranked 20th), The Business  
Times and Accenture

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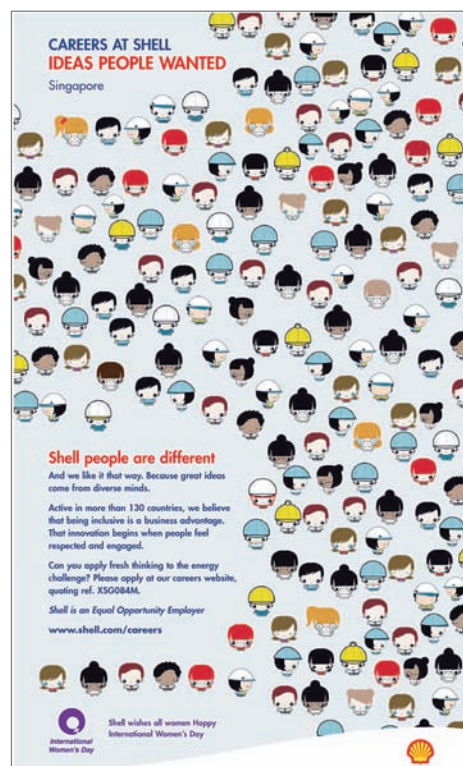
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Organisations such as Shell share its fair employment practices, and the importance of diversity and inclusion with both internal and external stakeholders. This is also reflected in its recruitment advertisements.



**CAREERS AT SHELL**  
**IDEAS PEOPLE WANTED**  
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**Shell people are different**  
And we like it that way. Because great ideas come from diverse minds.

Active in more than 130 countries, we believe that being inclusive is a business advantage. That innovation begins when people feel respected and engaged.

Can you apply fresh thinking to the energy challenge? Please apply at our careers website, quoting ref. XSG084M.

Shell is an Equal Opportunity Employer  
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Shell wishes all women Happy International Women's Day



## 6. Fair Recruitment and Hiring

Personal values, attitudes and beliefs may affect a hiring manager's decisions about the suitability of a candidate. We should not let personal prejudices or stereotypes affect who we select for a job. New hires should be recruited on relevant skills, knowledge and experience for the job, regardless of their age, race, gender, religion or family status.

Hiring the right person for the job is important because fair employers recognise that the right person on the job will:

- Be more productive.
- Learn faster.
- Require less supervision and training.
- Be more satisfied with his / her job and stay longer.
- Free up the manager / supervisor's time to manage.

Objective selection criteria should therefore be established through close analysis of the job and having job descriptions appropriately developed and written. Careful consideration has to be made to avoid setting criteria that may not be relevant to the job. For example, employers should not stipulate age as a requirement for employment and marital status is generally an irrelevant criterion in employment as jobs can be performed equally well by either married persons or by singles. Selecting employees based on objective written criteria also helps to reduce job to skills mismatch and ensures that the most suitable candidate is selected for the job.

Organisations using a pre-selection job application form should also ensure that the questions asked are directly relevant to the job requirements. In addition, job advertisements should provide sufficient information about the job vacancy and only state selection criteria that is non-discriminatory and relevant to the job. For more information, refer to the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices. An e-learning version of the Guide is also available from the Tripartite Centre for Fair Employment. Please visit [www.fairemployment.sg](http://www.fairemployment.sg) for more information.

Staff involved in hiring and recruitment should also be provided with training or guidance on how to hire on merit. Alternatively, organisations can also provide guides, checklists and other written materials to prepare hiring managers for the selection process. If the organisation engages a third party, for example a recruiting or search firm, to help the organisation recruit staff (both temporary and permanent), it will be beneficial that guidelines are established with the agency. This ensures that the agency recommends candidates based on merit, and that the terms of engagement are in compliance with the Employment Act.

In addition, new employees should undergo some form of orientation. Where necessary, a buddy or colleague should be appointed to help guide the new hire.

The Dow Chemical Company is successful at hiring the right people for the job because they have a vigorous hiring framework which includes a detailed 16-step Interview Guide for hiring line managers.

The 16-step guide provides hands-on details for hiring managers, starting from when a decision was first made to hire to identifying the job required competencies, designing the screening and evaluation criteria to preparing and conducting the interview, as well as evaluating interviewed candidates. The guide also provides hiring managers with questions that can be used during the interview to elicit and obtain information necessary to determine the suitability of candidates. In addition, hiring managers are also trained on how to conduct interviews so that the focus is on the applicant's competencies and ability to do the job rather than irrelevant factors and criteria.

Organisations can refer to the Recruitment and Selection Guide provided by the Tripartite Centre for Fair Employment and also register for the Recruitment and Selection Workshop that the Centre conducts. These may be useful to your organisation in developing your own guide and checklist on hiring. Refer to website: [www.fairemployment.sg](http://www.fairemployment.sg) for details of the workshop and the Guide.

Singapore Technologies Electronics Limited (ST Electronics), a leading electronics, information, communication, technologies (ICT) and systems integrator, has implemented a very robust recruitment process where a comprehensive set of interview questions has been developed and reviewed regularly to match against the company's core set of values – compassion, integrity, commitment, courage and diversity.

ST Electronics' hiring managers undergo a training programme on interview techniques and skills that focuses on a competency-based approach. They are trained on the right questions to ask during the interview which centres on the requirements of the job.

Potentially sensitive areas, such as information on age, national origin, race, religion, marital status to pregnancy and medical history are also highlighted to managers. Written guides are distributed to supplement the hirer's understanding of the types of questions that are considered appropriate (or inappropriate) to ask during the interview process. The topics posed to potential candidates cover job-related questions such as the candidate's ability to travel or work long hours to handling of heavy equipment.

Each recruitment advertisement also goes through a stringent vetting process to ensure that it is written in a non-discriminatory fashion. Recruitment documents such as the job application forms and interview assessment forms have been revised to exclude criteria that are not required in the hiring process.

ST Electronics' attention to their merit based recruitment process allows hiring managers to find the right person for the role.

Another leading employer that focuses on talent and ability in recruitment is GlaxoSmithKline:

Forward-looking organisations like GlaxoSmithKline do not exclude suitable candidates from employment on medical grounds which are unrelated to their fitness for the job. This means that prospective employees are hired purely on merit and their ability to perform the job. Their medical history is not a deciding factor for selection unless it affects their ability to perform the job safely. Employees in jobs which are not factory related are only required to go for a medical check-up after the offer of employment has been made.

Organisations are also encouraged to adopt the Singapore Employability Skills System (ESS), a training initiative by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) to prepare all levels of the Singapore workforce to remain employable and competitive.

The ESS comprises a set of generic employability skills, made up of workplace literacy and numeracy as well as workplace skills to raise a worker's effectiveness and improve his / her work abilities. One of the common requirements for pre-employment is 'O' and 'N' level qualifications. For workers who do not possess these qualifications, the ESS credentials function as alternate proxies for job placements as well as for training placement.

This alternative pathway opens doors that could lead to better job placements and helps organisations better identify suitable candidates who have undergone training.

More than 300 employers recognise ESS credentials. More information about ESS can be obtained at <http://wsq.wda.gov.sg/> or email: [wda\\_ess\\_enquiry@wda.gov.sg](mailto:wda_ess_enquiry@wda.gov.sg)

## **7. Progressive HR Practices**

The practice of fair employment is not confined to recruitment. It also spans across the various human resource management areas such as performance management and career progression, training and development, and grievance handling.

### **Performance management**

Performance management is a systematic approach that promotes organisational effectiveness by involving employees to meet its mission and goals. This usually involves ensuring that work is planned and expectations are set through clearly defined corporate and individual goals and targets. Performance is monitored and measured using tools within the performance management system and good performance by employees will be rewarded. At the same time, performance management also involves the provision of training and development to ensure that staff can perform to the best of their ability, meeting and perhaps exceeding targets and standards.

Effective performance management involves establishing measurable and quantifiable standards to ensure that employees are recognised and rewarded (or promoted) based on their merits and contribution. Clearly defined performance assessment criteria should be shared with employees to solicit feedback.

Some suggestions with regard to performance assessment criteria and performance appraisal include:

- Set clear, visible and measurable performance goals for each employee to achieve. These should be mutually agreed with the immediate supervisor or manager at the beginning of the performance review cycle.
- Link individual goals to the organisational goals.
- Decide on the performance standards by specifying desired behavioural outcomes.
- Ensure that managers and supervisors hold regular progress discussions with the employee.
- Provide training to supervisors / managers to carry out fair appraisal or assessment of employees' work.
- Review past performance in relation with the goals for the next period in the annual performance feedback process.
- Conduct two-way appraisal review that allows employees to provide feedback to their immediate supervisors.
- Provide opportunities for under performers to improve.

A performance appraisal should encourage the following:

- Greater employee participation.
- Provide a basis for personnel decisions such as salary increment, bonus quantum, promotions, transfers, termination and retention.
- Identify employee potential for career development.
- Establish a relevant training and development plan.
- Assist management in business planning by providing well-documented information on the organisation's workforce.

Training and development opportunities should be open and available to all employees. Selection criteria should be based on the requirements of the job and the business needs.

McDonald's sets clear strategic objectives to provide its employees with improvement opportunities at all levels.

One group that the company reaches out to are employees who wish to convert their time with McDonald's into a long-term career. For this group, development programmes were specially developed with opportunities for career growth. This is captured in the vision statement and slogan: "Every crew can be a Manager".





Another group are employees who choose to work at McDonald's as their "first job" or on a part-time basis. To add value to their stay with the company, portable service skills training are provided – skills that will continue to help them as they continue with their careers within, or outside of the company.

The guiding principle at McDonald's is to treat all staff with fairness, dignity and respect and to create a work environment that supports both employee needs and enhances customer service.

McDonald's also has established learning and development paths for all employees to ensure that they are provided with the necessary training and tools based on their ability and the requirements of the job for career development and growth.

McDonald's employees are encouraged to expand their skills and experience levels. Of the seven CEOs who have been with McDonald's Corporation, three of them started as a crew member. In Singapore, more than half of the managers started as crew members.

Jeffrey Tan joined McDonald's in 1979 at age 20 as a part-time crew at the first McDonald's restaurant at Liat Towers, and quickly rose through the ranks with his dedication and passion for the business. Jeffrey left McDonald's Singapore as Senior Director of Operations in 2007 and is currently tasked with heading operations in McDonald's Malaysia. The ketchup in his veins continues to flow strong and steady.

Leading organisations also tie merit-based performance management and the provision of training and development opportunities to leadership development and succession planning. Another good practice adopted by organisations in the area of grooming their future leaders is mentor programmes. Several organisations have implemented programmes targeted specifically at developing potential of future leaders within the organisation.

## Grievance handling

Employers should set up mechanisms to deal with employee grievances and for complaints of discrimination. All complaints should be handled seriously, with proper investigations carried out. Confidentiality should also be observed at all times.

A formal grievance handling process should be established and the procedures should be documented in the employee handbook and / or staff intranet and made known to all employees. When the grievance procedure is activated and the grievance handled expeditiously, employees should look forward to resolving the aggrieved matter swiftly and carry on with work. When dispute or dismissals are being carried out, where possible, a neutral third party may also be involved (e.g. a supervisor from another department or the HR officer).

An important aspect of grievance handling is to train line managers and supervisors.

“An effective grievance process can help organisations to learn and improve. Staff need to have the knowledge and skills to deal with grievances and staff complaints.”

Eunice Crook  
Director  
British Council in Singapore

Managers must be educated about the importance of the grievance process and their role in maintaining harmony in the workplace amongst all employees. Effective grievance handling is an essential part of cultivating good employee relations and running a fair, successful, and productive workplace.

A recommended grievance procedure would have the following features:

- Time frame for resolution.
- Matter to be resolved at the lowest possible level of the organisation.
- Avenue to bring up the grievance to the next level of management if the employee is not satisfied with the settlement.
- Assurance of the organisation's commitment to resolve any grievance raised and the employee will not be penalised.
- The superior and employee must work in good faith to reach a settlement.

The British Council has established formal grievance procedures within their organisation. Country directors and managers must ensure that all staff have access to the policy and must provide translation services where requested.

Staff and managers must first attempt to resolve concerns informally and, wherever possible, directly with the individual concerned. There are three opportunities for resolution – informal, first stage formal and appeal against the outcome of the grievance.

Any grievance raised is regarded as confidential and all those involved in the grievance process must maintain this confidentiality. Written records of the grievance process are also kept.

## 8. Creating an Inclusive Workplace Culture

In addition to fair recruitment practices and progressive human resource systems, organisations should also create a supportive and engaging work environment where employees feel valued, safe and are given the opportunity to contribute towards the success of the organisation and achieve its business goals.

A fair and inclusive workplace recognises that differences exist and that these differences are often a source of new ideas and creativity that contributes to an organisation's competitive advantage. Employers must recognise that they have an important role to play in fostering a sense of belonging so that every employee will be able to work effectively, to his or her optimum and contribute to the best of his or her ability.

An inclusive work environment can take many forms and includes a more flexible work environment, setting up of employee networks as well as having supportive programmes and activities.

### Flexible work arrangements

Flexible work arrangements (FWA) may include mobility or telecommuting, part-time work or flexible hours. FWAs are important for those with young children, those who seek a more balanced work-life as well as for the many others, including mature and older workers and the younger Generation Y, sometimes referred to as the Net Generation who may prefer more flexibility. Systematically and properly implemented, FWAs result in increased productivity, staff commitment and loyalty to the organisation.



Organisations like ABN Amro, IBM, Merck Sharp and Dohme, and UBS Singapore have incorporated various work-life and flexible work options for their employees.

These include part-time work, variable working hours, non-standard working hours and telecommuting. These options are systematically implemented, taking into careful consideration the varying needs of their employees and for the purpose of enhancing the work effectiveness of employees.

More often than not, such policies are identified through surveys and employee feedback and are constantly reviewed so as to adequately address the needs of both employees and the organisation.

Smaller local organisations such as Cherie Hearts Group and KH Security Agency have also implemented FWAs.

KH Security Agency, a security company with less than 200 employees provides telecommuting to its administrative and office based staff, as well as flexible work hours and part-time work for its security officers.

These flexible work options are available to all staff but customised according to individual needs. While this requires some planning by the admin and management staff, the move reflects the company's commitment in addressing the work-life needs of its employees as well as attracting and retaining employees from all sectors of the population, including older workers and mothers.

Specific examples include introducing a two-day work week for an employee who wants more flexibility to spend time with his grandchildren. Another example is an employee who needs to send his child to school in the morning. He is allowed to leave earlier from work at 6am (even though his shift is from 7pm to 7am) in order to send his child to school.

## Employee Networks

Employee networks are informal groups of like-minded employees who come together for a common cause, serving as an important avenue for sharing information, experiences and ideas in a friendly non-threatening environment.

Employee networks and interest groups provide the following benefits:

- They bring like-minded people together and create a sense of belonging among employees, particularly Generation Y and young professionals.
- They provide employee support, for example to those from a minority group within the organisation or help in the advancement of a particular segment of the workforce, such as women leaders.
- Employers obtain feedback for the business, useful for exploring new markets and how to improve customer service in a non-threatening and informal setting.
- They provide a platform for the sharing of ideas and opinions.
- They enhance two-way communication, strengthening employee engagement.

At Merrill Lynch, employee networks are led by various employees and supported by executive sponsors across the region. The networks provide opportunities for senior management to reiterate the importance of treating people fairly and with respect.

Such forums help employees better integrate work and personal responsibilities, promoting career development through networking, informal mentoring, education and access to senior management.

They also focus on the health and wellbeing of employees with initiatives designed to help those with caring responsibilities, as well as family conflicts and challenges faced by parents.

Employee networks are a longstanding component of the Merrill Lynch culture. These are employee-driven, organised regionally, and involve all business groups within the organisation.

Network objectives include nurturing professional development, providing coaching and mentoring for its members, organising education platforms to drive awareness on related topics, creating opportunities to work with management on identifying diversified business development and helping to host recruitment events, retention strategies, and cultivate community leadership.

The networks create an innovative and collaborative environment where people and their differences are valued. By providing exceptional resources and an inclusive, high-performance work environment, this has increased employee engagement and retention rates among its staff.

Similar organisations that have also seen the value and benefits of setting up employee networks as an effective means of creating an inclusive work environment include IBM, Shell, UBS and Credit Suisse.

### **Supportive programmes and activities**

Organisations also see value in organising informal activities such as lunch talks, regular office celebrations and sharing sessions as opportunities to drive awareness on the topic of workplace diversity. Informal and simple to organise, many of these activities often serve as a good way to foster better understanding of the different cultures and traditions among employees.

IBM Singapore, with more than 32 nationalities, celebrates diversity in their workplace in a simple yet innovative and impactful manner.

As part of its many activities in Diversity Month 2008, the company's employees were invited to share aspects of their own culture through emails and chat forums.

Titled "Let's Celebrate Diversity – A Nationality a Day", staff from over 20 different nationalities (including France, Norway, Philippines, Russia, Thailand, Turkey and Venezuela) shared information about their cultures, countries and people via emails. Such exchanges heightened cross-cultural awareness and understanding among employees.



## 9. Fair Employment / Diversity Training

Singapore is increasingly becoming an integral part of a globalised and highly networked economy. This will result in a diversified workforce, making it crucial for organisations to remain fair in the management of their human resources. The task in managing human resources will become more complex and challenging.

By providing training opportunities, managers will be better equipped with the skills to manage fair employment issues. This will allow them to pick up skills that will aid them in adopting fair employment practices during the hiring process, in the management of a diverse work team and how to develop the potential of team members while harnessing the differences that each team member brings.

Training programmes will help change the way managers and staff perceive differences, encouraging them to see diversity as a source of corporate strength.

Managing employees of different age groups has its complexities and challenges, especially if the employees are more mature. United Overseas Bank (UOB) sends supervisors with subordinates who are aged 57 and above to attend the Senior Employment Guidance (SEG) programme. This training is aimed at helping supervisors understand the needs, issues and concerns of more mature employees and the impact of socio-economic environment on them. This helps UOB facilitate the re-employment transition of such employees.

At UBS Singapore, several diversity programmes are available for employees to promote an inclusive work culture. For example, creative and interactive sessions, carried out through role-play, leverage the experiential to challenge workplace stereotypes, and are a great way to encourage lively discussions.

The firm believes that an inclusive workforce that recognises and appreciates each other's differences will accelerate creativity, innovation and business growth. For 2009, the firm plans to include generational training and will continue to cultivate and combine the many talents of diverse individuals within it and build awareness and understanding of the differences that define each employee.

Annually, Credit Suisse employees are required to complete an e-learning module featuring CEO Kai Nargolwala on doing the right thing as part of the "Dignity at Work" programme. The programme discusses the importance of treating all employees with dignity and respect and complying with Credit Suisse's employment policies.

In addition, all senior leaders complete a facilitated workshop under the Creating One Franchise Through Inclusion (COFTI) interactive development initiative. This initiative provides leaders with the resources to better manage and work with diverse teams. It focuses on bringing all employees into the learning cycle and raises awareness of leadership issues. The course addresses a variety of issues facing managers via a series of case studies, role plays and discussion groups to reinforce the importance of fair treatment.

**Fair Employment Practices are a win-win arrangement for all parties concerned....It makes social, economic and business sense to embark and embrace it.**

Molly Yeo  
Head of Human Resources  
ABN AMRO

## 10. Appointing a Fair Employment Advocate

Organisations can communicate the organisation's commitment to fair employment practices through the appointment of a dedicated staff or advocate to oversee the implementation of fair employment practices. The advocate plays an important role in engaging with employees to create awareness on the importance of fair employment practices and more importantly to facilitate change. For some organisations, this may be the human resources manager or executive, while others (such as the larger firms) may create a position to oversee diversity initiatives.

The advocate has to:

- Understand the rationale for fair employment practices and how it contributes to business and organisational effectiveness.
- Be conscious of how fair employment practices fits into the various HR areas and how fairness can be implemented practically.
- Listen and be mindful of individual difference and concerns (at all levels, including managers and employees).
- Work hand in hand with line managers and assist in the implementation of fair employment practices.
- Create a positive and inclusive work environment.

Leona Tan is Community Affairs and Diversity Adviser at UBS Singapore. Besides identifying appropriate programmes that would enhance the implementation of fair employment and diversity initiatives (such as flexible work arrangements, training, employee networks and supportive programmes and activities), Leona also actively engages employees on a one-to-one basis and maintains direct communications with all employees in the firm.

Under the “UBS Work-Life Align” programme, which was launched in 2007, employees are encouraged to contact Leona for a face-to-face discussion on any work-life, diversity or personal issue that impacts their work.

In addition to providing a listening ear and to help resolve employee issues, Leona also works very closely with line managers, HR as well as senior management to ensure a win-win outcome for employees and the business.

## 11. Engaging Women and Older Workers

As Singapore's population rapidly ages, it makes sense for organisations to hire older or mature workers and women. This will help organisations meet their manpower needs as well as stay competitive. Organisations need to implement supportive HR policies and work processes in order to maximise employee potential and the contributions that staff can make. Flexible work arrangements and job re-design initiatives are valuable tools that organisations can adopt to attract and effectively engage and retain older workers and women.





NTUC Club, the leisure and entertainment arm of NTUC, has found that simple changes made to the workplace can mean significant benefits for employees as well as the organisation. For example, by lowering the height of the TV rack in each chalet, older employees working in the housekeeping department are able to clean the rooms safely and effectively.

NTUC Club also purchased specialised equipment that help to minimise the need for its older employees to bend their backs and lift heavy loads when cleaning. This initiative has resulted in older employees working in a safer work environment, with increased work productivity.

Charlie Goh, Director of HR for the NTUC Club, shared the benefits of engaging older workers, "We found that older workers, with their rich experience, tend to adapt quickly in their new jobs. They are also mature, reliable and patient. With their people-orientated attitude, they work well especially in front-line customer service and housekeeping positions. Those with technical experience are also a great asset in engineering duties such as repairs and maintenance for electrical fixtures and plumbing, where experience makes a great difference. Older workers also tend to be more loyal and do not job hop."



In McDonald's Singapore, a series of operational and training changes were incorporated to cater to the needs of mature workers. These included changes to the orientation program and redesigning of training materials for their staff.

Currently, about 50 percent of McDonald's workforce in Singapore comprise of housewives and older workers, fondly known to the other employees as 'aunties' and 'uncles'.

McDonald's sees the advantages of employing mature workers. Older workers offer valuable advice and guide younger crew in their work and other activities. They also tend to stay for a longer period of time, contributing to a lower staff turnover rate.

Most of the mature workers serve as mentors for the younger ones. Together with other employees, these 'aunties' and 'uncles' form a vital part of the workforce and help create a warm and 'family' atmosphere in the restaurants.

Two key adjustments were made to ensure an operations-friendly environment for mature workers at McDonald's.

1. Visuals and graphics to kitchen's food station

Previous training aids were text-heavy, and mostly in English. These training aids were revised to include more visuals and graphics to aid training of mature workers.

2. Cash Registers / Hand Held Order taker (PDA)

Existing cash registers were upgraded to touch-screen models, where each menu item is represented visually. This eliminated the need for mature employees to squint to read the tiny text on the registers. It also made it easier for employees to enter a customer's orders, ensuring faster service to the customers.

In order to cater to the needs of its female employees, McDonald's also made available flexible work options such as part-time work, and ensuring that employees are able to work in a restaurant close to their homes.

The quick service industry leader also embarked on a "women referring women" programme. This programme accounted for 40 percent of total new hires in 2007, a strong testament that employees are proud and feel valued working at McDonald's.

McDonald's also works with NTUC and Community Development Councils to encourage more women back into the workforce.



**I was a housewife with young children and little experience when McDonald's hired me as a part-timer. In 6 months, I converted to full-time and was promoted to Shift Leader. Because of the flexible working hours here, I work the night shift regularly so I can spend time with my children. My family is enjoying a more comfortable life now with my second income. I feel like I've been given a second chance in life – by McDonald's!**

Tan Chiew Yen  
Shift Leader  
McDonald's

Alexandra Hospital (AH) was recognised with the International Innovative Employer Awards given by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), a United States based non-profit organisation representing 40 million members aged 50 and over. AH has a positive workplace policy such as employee benefits and opportunities for career development for their older workers, and retain between 80 to 90 percent of their staff who turn 62.

Programmes such as HOP@Work enable older workers to manage their health and lifestyle better. HOP@Work serves to empower mature workers with the skills, knowledge and attitude to take charge of their health and lifestyle practices.

Besides health education, older workers receive individual health assessments and health intervention programmes, including weight management, hypertension management and fall prevention, to help them manage their health and lifestyle practices. Upon graduating from the programme, employees receive a personalised Health Report Card.

Other initiatives to enhance the employability of older workers include job redesign, and improving work processes and environment for older workers.

Examples of the current pro-mature projects by AH:

#### **1. The Older Workers' Safety Care System (Equipment Re-engineering Programme)**

The human resource department works with the rehabilitation department to explore and develop Ergonomics Work Training System through the re-engineering of equipment. Examples of Job Redesign through Equipment Re-engineering include customised Mortuary Transfer Trolley, the motorisation of MRO (Medical Record Office) Trolley and, the re-engineering of a Motorised Cart with steering and braking system.

#### **2. Job Redesign of Patient Care Associates (PCAs)**

AH embarked on the Job Redesign Programme to reorganise and redesign work processes. This has resulted in the creation of new job positions known as Patient Care Associates (PCAs), in order to enhance the employability of mature workers as well as streamline care delivery services to patients.

Older workers are now able to upgrade their skills set and enjoy a more attractive remuneration package. In fact, AH was awarded the May Day Commendation Award 2008 for their contributions in enhancing the employability of older workers in the Singapore workforce.

#### **3. Flexible Work Arrangements**

These are available to all employees including older workers who may need flexibility to manage personal or family responsibilities. Some of the flexible work arrangements offered include:

- (a) Compressed work schedule (for nursing staff) – mature nurses benefit from being able to better manage work alongside family responsibilities and also provide sufficient rest days. It has also enhanced patient care.
- (b) Part-time work and job-sharing – mature workers who do not want to work the full schedule of hours can continue to work and contribute. The hospital has benefited as valued staff are retained and helped the departments to handle peak workload.



United Overseas Bank (UOB), whose mature employees make up 32 percent of its total, has implemented a Buddy Development Scheme where more mature employees are appointed as buddies for its existing staff and new hires. Such employees are able to share their valuable work experiences with younger employees, thus boosting employee engagement and morale within the bank.

## 12. Working with Disabilities

Organisations have also taken the initiative to make modifications to the workplace environment and work processes in order to provide people with disabilities opportunities to work. In line with principle of hiring candidates based on their ability to do the job (rather than their disability), progressive organisations find that there are win-win ways to be socially responsible while also benefiting their business.



Han's has implemented the following for their disabled employees:

- Enlarging the entrance and slight modification to ovens so that it will be more user-friendly. Also adding on muffin counters as it is simple to operate.
- Improvement in display racks has reduced the physical burden of employees with disabilities.
- Additional revision sessions on kitchen processes are provided to disabled employees to ensure that they fully understand the process.
- Employees with disabilities are provided “buddies” by the outlet manager and one extra month to familiarise themselves with day-to-day operations of the fresh muffin counter.

Han's has also established close working relationships with Delta Senior School, Metta School and Blue Cross Thong Kheng Home to ensure that the needs of disabled employees are met.



As a part of IBM's commitment to diversity and equal opportunity, IBM Singapore introduced a central 'Reasonable Accommodation or Adjustment Budget' Policy that ensures individuals with disability are enabled to perform to their fullest capability and deliver valuable outcomes for the business.

Under this initiative, support and reasonable accommodations are provided to employees with disabilities to take into account their specific needs to perform the essential functions of their job. This can take the form of a modification or adjustment to the job, the work environment, or the manner in which duties are accomplished. Examples of reasonable accommodations may include job restructuring, interpreters, readers and equipment / facility modifications.

A qualified individual who has a disability can thus be provided equal employment opportunity. This means that he or she can attain the same level of performance or to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment that are available to other employees. The cost of accommodations is borne at the organisation level, removing the financial element from the individual's department level.

### 13. Measuring and Benchmarking

Organisations can also benefit from learning through best practices, especially from organisations in similar industries. Through sharing, networking and benchmarking, organisations can adopt and adapt practices to stay competitive.

Employer associations and human resource groups organise regular networking and sharing sessions on key areas related to fair employment. This includes topics such as recruitment, managing the Gen Y workforce, building diverse teams and engaging older workers.

Organisations just starting out should also consider contacting the Tripartite Centre for Fair Employment for assistance and to sign the Employers' Pledge of Fair Employment Practices. The Centre provides resources, organises workshops and provides networking opportunities where participants can learn best practices.



The British Council has developed a systematic approach and framework for evaluating and monitoring the implementation of equal opportunity and diversity programmes for its council's offices world-wide, including Singapore.

This evaluation model is based on five progressive levels and involves a comprehensive list of 55 questions at different levels:

- Level 1  
Embarking – there is basic evidence of equal opportunity and diversity performance.
- Level 2  
Progressing – there is adequate evidence of equal opportunity and diversity performance.
- Level 3  
Performing – there is strong evidence of equal opportunity and diversity performance.
- Level 4  
Mainstreaming – there is substantial evidence of equal opportunity and diversity performance.
- Level 5  
Leading – there is comprehensive evidence of equal opportunity and diversity performance.

Each question is scored (from 0 to 3 points) and documentary evidence demonstrating that actual practice is carried out is required. The annual assessment also involves neutral or external involvement in each of the countries where the council is located.

The model not only provides each office a benchmark to measure against other global offices, it is also a means of self-monitoring for individual offices and facilitates target-setting and identification of areas of improvements.

One example of the 55 questions (at level 3):

	Indicator	List of evidence documents	Explanatory Comments	Points Allocated			
3.5	Flexible work arrangements are available to different groups of staff	Possible evidence that be provided: Memo and HR policies related to flexible work arrangements	Names / Examples of staff who are on flexible work arrangements, like part-time work; positive feedback on the arrangements; reduction in staff turnover or ability to recruit new staff because of the arrangements	0	1	2	3

Organisations can start by setting up simple mechanisms to evaluate and benchmark their initiatives to inspire improvement. The first step is to be clear about the objectives of the policies and the framework that will be used to evaluate if these objectives were met. For example, if the organisation has problems retaining staff, new initiatives such as recruiting from new sources or supportive programmes like flexible work arrangements will help reduce employee turnover and absenteeism. Pre and post implementation employee turnover figures, staff feedback through surveys or more informal feedback through focus groups or discussions with employees can also be included.

## 14. Fair Employment Practices for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

SMEs are faced with similar challenges as large organisations. The ability to attract, motivate, engage and retain talent is a concern faced by all organisations regardless of their size. Adopting fair employment practices is thus equally important to SMEs.

Due to their size, SMEs have additional advantages over larger organisations as they have greater flexibility to address individual employee needs. They can also bring about change more quickly and effectively. Furthermore, the lines and channels for communication are much shorter and this encourages greater openness between employer and employees.

Regardless of size, the basic principles of how fair employment practices can be effectively implemented remain the same.

For SMEs, this would also start with the hiring process. The first step that SMEs can take is to ensure that fair selection criteria are in place and managers make hiring decisions on objective criteria that are based on competencies and skills set out in written job descriptions. It is also important to ensure that hiring managers are trained or provided with guides on how they can carry out hiring based on merit.

Organisations such as Cherie Hearts Group, Jason Electronics, KH Security Agency, Network Express Courier and The GMP Group have shown that it is possible to adopt progressive and fair employment practices. SMEs and local companies that require assistance can contact the Tripartite Centre for Fair Employment. More information about the Centre including contact details are on page 38.

“With the aging population and shrinking birth rate, employers can no longer rely on its old practices. The sooner employers embrace fair employment practices and diversity, the better equipped they will be to handle the new set of business challenges. Ultimately, the reward is a more competitive workforce hired based on talent, which in today's business environment, allows a company to differentiate itself from competitors.”

Mr Josh Goh  
Senior Corporate Services Manager  
The GMP Group



## 15. Where to Get Help

### Tripartite Centre for Fair Employment

The Tripartite Centre for Fair Employment promotes fair and merit based employment practices so that employees can realise their full potential and employers can achieve organisational excellence. Leveraging its unique tripartite identity, the Centre works in partnership with employer organisations, unions and the government to create awareness and facilitate the adoption of fair employment practices. The Centre provides a range of services, tools and resources to help organisations implement fair employment practices, including training workshops, advisory services, and educational materials. The Centre also welcomes feedback on advancing fair employment in Singapore.

Organisations are encouraged to sign the Employers' Pledge of Fair Employment Practices and join other progressive employers in fulfilling a shared responsibility of making Singapore a fair and inclusive workplace.

More information about the Tripartite Centre for Fair Employment, the Employers' Pledge of Fair Employment Practices as well as resources available can be found at [www.fairemployment.sg](http://www.fairemployment.sg). You can also send your enquiries to the Centre at the following email address: [query@fairemployment.sg](mailto:query@fairemployment.sg)

### Re-employment of older workers

The Tripartite Implementation Workgroup (TIWG) has launched a new Internet portal and guide to help employers and employees get started on re-employment before legislation is enacted by 2012. The portal [www.re-employment.sg](http://www.re-employment.sg) serves as a one-stop information and resource centre for employers and employees on re-employment.

The web portal, a joint effort by the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF), the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), provides practical information and guidance on how employers and employees can adopt re-employment. It features case studies of companies that have successfully implemented re-employment; seminars and workshops on re-employment; and provides information on assistance programmes for companies that may require additional resources to implement re-employment. Employees can also find out how to upgrade their skills and prepare themselves for re-employment.

For assistance and more information, contact SNEF at [tag@snef.org.sg](mailto:tag@snef.org.sg)

For enquiries relating to the re-employment advisory, please contact the Tripartite Promotion Unit at [mom\\_lrd@mom.gov.sg](mailto:mom_lrd@mom.gov.sg)

### ADVANTAGE! Scheme

The ADVANTAGE! Scheme is a programme developed by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA), in partnership with the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF). The ADVANTAGE! Scheme offers a grant of up to \$400,000 to support an organisation's initiatives and efforts 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.

For application enquiries relating to the ADVANTAGE! Scheme, please contact WDA at 6833 5885 or email: [wda\\_advantage@wda.gov.sg](mailto:wda_advantage@wda.gov.sg)

In addition, WDA also works with the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) and the Association of Small & Medium Enterprises (ASME) to conduct training programmes to assist companies in making adjustments to their HR policies for re-employment.

For more details relating to the Programme for Re-Employment Practices: A Roadmap for Employers (PREPARE) by ASME, please visit: [www.asme.org.sg](http://www.asme.org.sg). SNEF will also be offering the "HRM Training for Re-employment" programme. For more details relating to this programme, please visit: [www.sgemployers.com](http://www.sgemployers.com)

## **Centre for Seniors**

The Centre for Seniors (CFS) is a non-profit voluntary welfare organisation set up by NTUC Eldercare. It is committed to promoting the total well-being of seniors in the community by advocating positive attitudes towards ageing, as well as fostering an inclusive and active ageing culture in Singapore. CFS specialises in the training of older workers. It also works with organisations on strategies to optimise the abilities and experiences of older workers.

For more information about CFS, visit: [www.centreforseniors.org.sg](http://www.centreforseniors.org.sg). For more details on its training programmes, contact Jim Then at 6478 5019 (email: [jim.then@centreforseniors.org.sg](mailto:jim.then@centreforseniors.org.sg)) or Alicia Chua at 6478 5011 ([alicia.chua@centreforseniors.org.sg](mailto:alicia.chua@centreforseniors.org.sg)).

## **Work-Life Works! Fund**

The Work-Life Works! (WoW!) Fund is an initiative of the Ministry of Manpower and facilitates the development and implementation of work-life strategy at the workplace.

The WoW! Fund will subsidise up to 70 percent of the costs of approved projects, with a cap of \$10,000 per application.

More information and assistance can be obtained at [www.employeralliance.sg/grants\\_wowfundform.php](http://www.employeralliance.sg/grants_wowfundform.php)

## **Employer Alliance**

Employer Alliance is a network of corporations committed to create an enabling work environment and to enhance work-life integration. Their mission is to bring awareness and adoption of work-life strategies among corporations and to make work-life strategy an integral part of a company's business strategy.

For more information, please visit: [www.employeralliance.sg](http://www.employeralliance.sg) or call 6827 6953.

## **Flexi-Works!**

Companies looking to recruit local part-time workers or workers on a flexible work arrangement can tap on grants offered under the Flexi-Works! programme. The programme is an initiative of the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) and is administered through the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC). Flexi-Works! aims to encourage people who have not been working, or who are economically inactive, to rejoin the workforce, with the goal of increasing the employment rate of women and mature workers.

Companies interested to apply for the Flexi-Works! grant may contact NTUC at 6213 8427 or email [wds@ntuc.org.sg](mailto:wds@ntuc.org.sg) or [flexiworks@snf.org.sg](mailto:flexiworks@snf.org.sg). More information can also be obtained at: [www.ntuc.org.sg/flexiworks](http://www.ntuc.org.sg/flexiworks) or at [www.sgemployersprojects.com](http://www.sgemployersprojects.com)

## **Women Back to Work**

For programmes and initiatives targeted at bringing women back to the workplace, please contact the NTUC Women's Development Secretariat (WDS) at: 6213 8270 / 6213 8591 or email [wds@ntuc.org.sg](mailto:wds@ntuc.org.sg)

## **The Open Door Fund**

The Open Door Fund provides a comprehensive package of incentives to support companies' initiatives to implement job redesign, workplace modification, training and integration programmes for persons with disabilities. The Open Door Fund is set up by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS); supported by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA); and administered by the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF).

For more information, email: [opendoor@snf.org.sg](mailto:opendoor@snf.org.sg) or call 6827 6944.

### **The Accessibility Fund**

The Accessibility Fund administered by the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) offers a capital incentive to encourage private commercial and institutional building owners to upgrade their existing buildings and to retrofit them with basic accessibility features. The Government will co-pay up to 80 percent of the Barrier Free Access (BFA) upgrading works built according to the criteria for funding and subject to a cap of \$300,000 per building.

For more information, please visit: [www.bca.gov.sg](http://www.bca.gov.sg) or email: [bca\\_bfa\\_upgrading@bca.gov.sg](mailto:bca_bfa_upgrading@bca.gov.sg)

### **HR Capability Package & SMEHR@SNEF**

To help SMEs meet their HR capability needs, SPRING Singapore and the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) jointly developed a HR Capability Package.

More information is available via [www.sgemployers.com/public/industry/hrcp.jsp](http://www.sgemployers.com/public/industry/hrcp.jsp). Enquiries can be made via email: [smehr@snf.org.sg](mailto:smehr@snf.org.sg), or hotline: 6221 2334.

# The Way Forward

Every organisation regardless of its size, wants to succeed. Having the best available people to perform the job is a vital element that will contribute to business success. Implementing fair employment practices will provide employees equal opportunities for employment, where they are rewarded according to merit, treated fairly and with respect, and can optimise their abilities and talent.

Appropriately developed, these practices will also help organisations create a supportive environment where highly motivated employees contribute their best to the success of the organisation.

These are universal principles that apply regardless of the economic climate, both in boom as well as more challenging times.

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This Leading Fair Employment Practices handbook was compiled by the Tripartite Centre for Fair Employment. The Centre wishes to extend its appreciation to the various organisations and the many dedicated individuals who have been generous in contributing their time and sharing their experience and insights. The handbook serves as a set of considerations and best practices for organisations on the implementation of fair employment practices. It is not meant to be a comprehensive instruction set and it is not intended to replace any legal advice. The Tripartite Centre for Fair Employment will not be responsible for any loss or damage arising from reliance on any information and / or comments provided or expressed in this handbook.

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Fair Employment

[www.fairemployment.sg](http://www.fairemployment.sg)