

HUMAN CAPITAL

January-March 2015 Issue

Driving business success and excellence

Women – can't live without them in the workplace

Case studies from Japan and Singapore

Time to strengthen hiring processes

Importance of background checks to avoid mistakes in recruitment



Tactics used to increase productivity

Innovative technology and much more

The HR Perspective: Get the processes right

Employee engagement and finding the right balance between technology and people are two key ways to improve productivity in Singapore, said veteran human resource expert Jaclyn Lee, Senior HR Director at Singapore University of Technology & Design.

Having spent five years at a large security company which employed about 10,000 staff, Lee observes: "One appreciates the challenge in raising productivity in such a labour intensive environment."

"It was hard to recruit people to join the company. The shortfall (in staff) was very bad and basically, we had to cope with the people we had. We knew we were never going to be able to hire the number of people we wanted. We had no choice but to incorporate technology into our work," she said.

Empowering employees

Lee said that instead of having 20 staff to manage security at a customer's location, there were only 15. "So we turned to technology to help bridge the gap," said Lee, who is also a member of the SHRI Executive Council.

In finding technology as a solution, there were also other challenges. "We had to ensure that people were trained and this is an important factor - training is very crucial," she said.

In training, it is important to



Jaclyn Lee,
Senior HR Director,
Singapore University of
Technology & Design

impart all the necessary technical, on-the-job skills to the staff so that they can do the job well. In addition, "during training, you have to show the staff that they are an important part of the company and you are ready to empower them," she said.

"Only when they feel empowered will they do what is good for the company."

Right business processes

Beyond this, achieving higher productivity in an organisation lies in the company getting its business processes right, she added. Technology alongside sound business practices will enable an organisation to raise its productivity levels.

As a case in point, she described her work as an HR executive in a US automobile manufacturer in Singapore several years ago.

"We had close to 2,000 staff delivering a certain amount of revenue. Today, that same company hires only 600 to 700 staff and delivers several multiples of this revenue. Much of this (higher productivity) is a result of improving business processes and embedding technology in areas where it can take over the human person," she said.

"Technology has become key and it is important to train people to manage this," she said.

Turning the focus to smaller businesses, Lee said that these businesses can undertake more strategic thinking in terms of developing a better framework to deliver on performance.


In this regard, "they can re-think their business processes and analyse how to invest and incorporate technology into their businesses with regard to improving productivity," she recommended. **HC**

“It was hard to recruit people to join the company. We knew we were never going to be able to hire the number of people we wanted. We had no choice but to incorporate technology into our work.”

- Jaclyn Lee, Senior HR Director, Singapore University of Technology & Design



SINGAPORE: Ways to attract and retain working mothers

 The marketplace for working women in Singapore has improved over the years but more can be done to help make the working environment more family-friendly, said Jaclyn Lee, Senior HR Director, Singapore University of Technology & Design and SHRI Executive Council Member.

Speaking to **Human Capital**, she commented: "There are a lot of working mothers out there and of course, it is challenging for them to cope with the demands of the workplace as well as tend to the needs of their family," she said, adding that she herself has raised three children.

"The workplace is becoming more receptive to flexible working arrangements now and a lot of MNCs are leading the way," she added. "Part of the reason why small and medium-sized enterprises have less of a choice is because they don't have a lot of people to begin with."

Revealing her past experiences, Lee said she was fortunate to have had "a supportive boss, especially one who was supportive of the family environment."

With such support, Lee was able to work with flexible time arrangements in order to nurture her children who are now adults.

With that positive experience, Lee has helped implement flexible work arrangement policies at her current workplace at the Singapore University of Technology & Design.

"Here, we have implemented three flexible start times - one that starts at 7.30 am, another at 8 am and yet another

at 8.30 am," she said, adding that working mothers have the choice to choose any of the staggered working hours, subject to working nine-and-a-half hours per day.

Another recent first at the university was the move to allow working mothers to work a four-day week depending on necessity.

"Some working mothers may have challenges in their families or lives, and we allow them to have a four-day working week," she said.

Lee also emphasised that the approval processes for such requests are not stringent as long as there are sufficient grounds to offer such an arrangement.

As a case in point, Lee said that she currently has a promising staff member who is a very talented lawyer.

"She made a request for a permanent part-time position so that she can set up her family," explained Lee. "We recognised her talent. We were very supportive of the arrangement because it would benefit her and we can continue to seize on her experience."

So what more can be done to improve today's work environment?

Lee said that businesses and companies need to find a judicious balance between running their organisations with the profits they desire, and nurturing and retaining good people.

This is part of a new mindset in today's human capital environment. **HC**