

For information on
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Legislative Council Panel on Manpower

Cultivating good people management and family-friendly culture in employment

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the efforts of the Labour Department (LD) in encouraging employers to adopt employee-oriented and enlightened human resources management measures as well as family-friendly employment practices.

Background

2. The economic success and social stability of Hong Kong are premised on our overall harmonious labour relations. Apart from the protection and benefits accorded to employees by labour legislation and LD's conciliation service to assist employers and employees in settling labour disputes, our efforts in promoting good people management practices are also important in fostering harmonious employer-employee relations in the non-government sector.

Promoting good people management practices

3. LD is committed to encouraging employers to adopt employee-oriented, enlightened and fair people management practices. Where cordial partnership is established with employees at the workplace, employers can build up a motivated and efficient workforce which in turn will enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the enterprises.

4. Direct and frank communication between employers and employees on employment conditions and work arrangements is accorded importance in our promotional efforts in nurturing good people management practices. LD has produced a variety of materials on effective communication and consultation for free distribution to the public. Seminars and talks are organised from time to time for employers, employees and human resources professionals to highlight the merits of enlightened attitude towards labour-management communication.

5. At the industry level, we encourage voluntary negotiations between employers and employees or their respective organisations through nine industry-based tripartite committees set up in the catering, retail, logistics, property management, hotel and tourism, construction, cement and concrete, theatre and printing industries. These tripartite committees meet regularly and provide useful forums for representatives of employers, employees and the Government to discuss industry-specific labour issues of common concern in an informal manner, thereby forging partnership between representatives of employers and employees towards workplace cooperation. Matters such as minimum wage, paternity leave, staff retention and manpower development were discussed in recent meetings. Industry-based publications are also produced to promote enlightened employment practices that suit the circumstances of individual industry.

6. At the enterprise level, employers are encouraged to maintain effective dialogue with their employees or workers' unions and to consult them on employment matters. Through the network of 18 Human Resources Managers Clubs (HRMCs) formed in various trades and industries¹, we foster bilateral communication in local enterprises through regular activities such as sharing sessions, meetings and briefings. We also solicit the assistance of the Support and Consultation Centre for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) of the Trade and Industry Department and a number of SMEs' associations to disseminate our good people management publications and feature articles to their members.

7. To inculcate employers and employees with the concept of enlightened management practices, leaflets and booklets covering different themes are distributed to the public free of charge via various branch offices of LD, Public Enquiry Service Centres of the Home Affairs Department, major employers' associations and trade unions and are uploaded to LD's homepage to facilitate public viewing. Guidelines to inspire employers and educate employees on the essence of formulating employee-oriented employment practices and handling employment-related matters fairly through labour-management communication, consultation and cooperation are also made available to help put the basic principles of good people management into practice.

¹ 18 HRMCs are formed in various industries and trades including banking, building service, catering, construction, electronics, garment, logistics, manufacturing, retail, services, trading, community & social services organisations, education institutes, health care & personal services, hotel & tourism, information technology, property management and security services as well as one set up for small and medium enterprises.

8. In the meantime, we have made use of posters to publicise a variety of messages such as reminding employers to keep proper employment records, using written employment contract and drawing up prior work arrangements for typhoons and rainstorms.

9. Roving exhibitions covering a wide range of subjects including good people management practices are also staged at weekends at shopping centres and housing estates over the territory. Publications and promotional materials relevant to the subject are distributed and educational video is screened on the spot. Between January 2012 and April 2013, nine roving exhibitions were organised attracting about 27 000 visitors.

10. To maximise the publicity effect, mass media is also employed to drive home our messages widely. Announcements in the Public Interest featuring the timely payment of wages, clear explanation of contract terms to employees before employment and making prior work arrangements in times of typhoons and rainstorms have been produced for broadcast in major television and radio channels. Besides, LD's homepage, newspaper articles and advertisements in public transport are also our usual channels to publicise good employment practices.

11. LD organises seminars regularly for different target groups to broaden their horizon on enlightened management culture. Thematic seminars have been rolled out in recent years to foster employer-employee communication and dialogue, labour-management collaboration and exemplary employment practices. Meanwhile, tailor-made seminars for government service contractors and procuring departments on labour legislation and good human resource management practices have been held regularly to encourage relevant parties to put in place good people management measures.

Cultivating family-friendly workplace

12. Making the workplace family-friendly is a shared responsibility of the entire society. LD has been a facilitator promoting family-friendly employment practices (FFEP) through different publicity channels and diversified activities in collaboration with relevant government departments and organisations over the years.

13. FFEP are measures voluntarily adopted by employers to help employees fulfil their work and family responsibilities simultaneously, thereby balancing their work and family lives. While the Employment Ordinance (EO) already provides for various kinds of leaves so that employees can cater for their

personal and family needs, we encourage employers to grant their employees benefits that exceed the statutory requirements. By offering flexible and varied work arrangements and support, employers can facilitate employees to cope with needs at different stages of life. As an employee who can effectively manage work and family commitments will be more productive and committed at work, we trust that a family-friendly workplace can create a win-win situation by achieving both organisational effectiveness and employee well-being.

14. We encourage employers to adopt different types of FFEP to serve the best interests of their employees and enterprises, having regard to their size, resources and culture. Generally speaking, FFEP may comprise the following measures:

- (i) special leave to meet employees' family needs, such as marriage leave, paternity leave, parental leave, filial leave and compassionate leave;
- (ii) flexible work arrangements, such as five-day work week, flexible working hours and home office; and
- (iii) support for employees and their families, such as provision of medical protection, child care services, counselling services for handling stress or emotions, dedicated room for breastfeeding and organising recreational activities for families.

15. We have since 2006 promoted FFEP through various media, including booklets, thematic leaflets, large-scale seminars, thematic exhibitions, educational DVDs, newspaper supplements and feature articles, as well as regular meetings and exchanges with business executives and human resources practitioners.

16. We collect feedback from relevant parties from time to time to assess the effectiveness of our promotional efforts. We notice that an increasing number of employers have recognised the importance of FFEP and implemented various kinds of family-friendly measures.

17. The increasing recognition of FFEP by the community could also be observed from a total of 1 112 companies participating in the "Family-Friendly Employers Award Scheme" organised by the Family Council in 2011. Moreover, in the "Caring Company Scheme" organised by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, some 1 200 awardees had been adopting family-friendly measures in 2007-08. In 2011-12, the number of companies providing employees with paid leave above the EO requirements and subsidising supporting services for staff and their family members reached 2 181 and 1 908 respectively.

18. In 2013, LD will continue to promote wider adoption of FFEP by means of publications, advertisements in public transport and a large-scale seminar for employers and employees with a view to cultivating a family-friendly culture in employment.

19. The EO has already provided female employees with maternity leave. With the community attaching increasing importance to the involvement of a father in providing support to his spouse around childbirth and the newborn, LD completed a study on legislating for the provision of paternity leave last year. Having consulted the Labour Advisory Board and this Panel, the Government has decided to legislate for three days' paternity leave with pay and is pressing ahead with the preparatory work for the legislation.

Working Hours

20. Acknowledging concerns of the community about the working hours situation, the Government completed a policy study on standard working hours (SWH) and released the study report in November 2012. To follow up on the report and the subject of working hours, the Chief Executive in April 2013 appointed the SWH Committee comprising representatives of labour unions and employers' associations, academics, community leaders and Government officials.

21. At its first meeting held on 7 May 2013, members of the Committee exchanged views on the way forward and agreed to conduct wide consultation on working hours, collect relevant information and contemplate further statistical surveys for the Committee's reference and discussion on the way forward.

22. The issue of working hours policy involves complicated work culture, economic and legal issues affecting a wide spectrum of employees. There are different concerns of employers and employees in various trades. Through the platform of the Committee, various sectors of the community can actively give their views and, through objective and thorough discussions, jointly explore the option that best suits the circumstances of Hong Kong.