

IBM: Work-Life Integration Programme

The IBM Corporation is today one of the world's largest and leading IT companies. Worldwide, IBM operates in some 170 countries and employs more than 390,000 people. In Malaysia, IBM was first established in June 1961 and since then, has played a major role in delivering solutions to all types of Malaysian businesses. The company's key strengths are its skilled and experienced IT personnel and its worldwide infrastructure of international offices and laboratories. IBM Malaysia is a wholly-owned onshore subsidiary of IBM World Trade Corporation.

"We're thinking less in terms of programmatic flexibility and more in terms of a very fluid work routine — focusing on results rather than activity and details of time and place. IBM recognises that flexibility is about culture change and uses its "Flexibility Principles" to define what that means for IBM."

- Patricia Lewis, vice president of Human Resources, Diversity and Employee Experience at IBM

Overview

IBM's long history of commitment to diversity began in the mid-20th century, grounded in Equal Opportunity legislation and compliance.

In the 1990's, the company moved forward with the implementation of Diversity 2.0, with a focus on eliminating barriers, and understanding regional constituencies and differences between the constituencies.

As demographics changed, IBM's workplace adapted to be more flexible, shifting its focus towards work-life balance.

Rapid technology and international trade changes, as well as evolving family and social structures, gave rise to a new work environment globally where the typical 9-to-5 fixed work schedule is fast disappearing.

Realising that it cannot change the continuous 24x7x365 on-demand nature of the global work environment today, IBM created flexibility in where and when its employees work (IBMers) work, which is Diversity 3.0.

This innovative new work environment is a transition from the notion of work-life balance to that of work-life integration. Given the technology advancement today, this flexibility enables employees to integrate both their work-related and other commitments.

This innovative flexible work option has won the company the prestigious Prime Minister CSR Award for "Family Friendly Workplaces" which recognises companies with outstanding practices that foster work-life balance and is beneficial to the bottom line of the organisation.

While IBM Malaysia's Work-Life Programmes benefit all employees, they are of critical importance to women who typically have a greater need for flexibility and responsibilities for dependent care. Therefore IBM's goal has been to create an environment and programme that will be able to continually attract, develop and retain employees.

Objectives

IBM's Work-Life Integration programmes form part of their Diversity & Inclusion policy to support their diverse talent which the company believes is fundamental to their competitive success. This philosophy is cascaded into their business activities such as hiring, promotion and compensation for all employees.

The primary objectives of the Work-Life Integration programme is to provide programmes and policies that help IBMers effectively manage their work and family responsibilities, which in turn increase customer satisfaction, improve employee productivity, generate significant cost savings, and improve attraction and retention of talent.

Initiatives

Currently IBM Malaysia's Diversity programme offers individually customised programmes to suit the diverse needs of their customers and employees:

Work Life Integration

Flexibility Principles

IBM has developed a set of "Flexibility Principles" that has become the framework by which managers and employees use to make decisions around flexible ways of working. They do so by looking at:

- **Balancing Needs**
Flexibility encompasses how, where, and when work gets done and it is a tool for getting work done in the New World of Work. It allows IBMers to balance between their work, personal and family commitment.
- **Trust and Personal Responsibility**
In all areas of work-life integration, a key component is the relationship between IBMers and their managers, which is based on mutual trust and personal responsibility towards IBM.
- **Range of Options**
Flexible work options are a vehicle for IBM to meet the needs of their global clients and these can be initiated by the IBMer or management and subject to management approval.
- **Focus on Results**
IBM looks at the output instead of when, where and how it is delivered. The company believes that work is something we do and not a place we go. They focus on results, setting goals and measuring performance.
- **Flexi-Hours**
IBMers are measured based on their productivity level and not the quantity of time taken in completing their tasks. Hence, they are given the flexibility to determine, with the concurrence of their managers, the start and the end of their working hours. This will also allow IBMers to juggle between their personal needs and commitment to IBM.

IBMers are allowed to start work between 8.00am and 9.00am and end them between 4.30pm and 5.30pm.

- **Work-Life Leave Programme**
This provides IBMers with unpaid time away from work for a variety of personal needs such as care for family members, personal rejuvenation, etc. in order to balance work and life demands. The programme provides IBMers with the opportunity to work a reduced schedule in lieu of taking a full leave of absence.
- **Mobility**
All IBMers are given the necessary support and tools to allow them to work from the comfort of their home. The term “work from home” is synonymous with the IBM work culture/arrangement and its coverage is wider than its name. IBMers in fact are allowed to work from any location (not only home) so long as they are connected to IBM’s internal system.
- **Part-time Programme**
This offers regular employment with a less than full-time schedule. It is attractive to employees who want to work a reduced schedule to better manage work/life demands. Salary and benefits are based on the reduced work schedule. These opportunities are based on business needs.
- **Job-Rotation**
This offers employees with the flexibility to take on different challenges within the organisation to suit their personal needs/commitments.
- **Leave of Absence**
This is a type of leave which may authorise absence for personal reason up to two years.
- **Global Work Life Fund**
This is a multi-year, US\$50 million fund designed to address strategic work life challenges for IBM employees worldwide, focusing on child and elder care. Parents can also access our global child care centre listings which indicate where IBM has priority placement as well as our global lactation directory.
- **Resource and Referral Programmes**
Through the Work Life Essentialsportal, IBM provides employees around the world access to work-life resources that provide you with information and support on a variety of topics including managing stress, balancing work and life, personal well-being, child care, school-age care, elder care, parenting issues, relationships and more.

Women

- **Building Relationships & Influencing (BRI)**
This is a nomination-only programme that targets high potential women leaders, two to four years away from promotion to an executive role. Using experiential and action-centred learning, participants develop skills in building, developing and maintaining

business relationship and influencing skills, raising both internal confidence and inner competence and allowing a personal shift in how they see themselves.

- **Technical Women's Pipeline Programme**
This Programme aims at building a strong pipeline of talented women in technology moving towards senior positions, as well as actively encourage young women to follow technical careers.
- **Taking the Stage™**
A successful programme for IBM women around the world that shows them how to achieve a strong leadership presence when they speak in all situations — board rooms, meeting rooms, conference halls, and phone calls.
- **Succeeding on the Stage™**
A five-module programme that gives women insight into the “unwritten rules” that govern corporate culture.

People with Disability

- **Accessible Workplace Connections**
This helps people who need accessibility assistance, and their managers, acquire and effectively use accommodations that enable them to be competitively productive while safeguarding the privacy of information about their personal situation and needs. Accommodations will be considered for all permanent and temporary disabilities, as well as age-related impairments.
- **Cross-Generational Mentoring and Reversed Mentoring Programmes**
With demographics changing around the world, the challenges and benefits of generational diversity have become an increasingly important factor in the workplace. Mentoring and reverse mentoring are the most efficient tools to ensure optimal knowledge transfer.

Outcome

IBM began its mobility programme in the early 1990's and now supports over 160,000 employees or 40% of the workforce worldwide. With offices around the world, IBM has been successful in providing employees with increased flexibility in the way they manage their work and the location in which they deliver their work. IBM remains as one of the leading companies to provide flexible work opportunities and aims to continue seeking opportunities to support employees achieve work-life integration.

Success Factors

- Top Management Influence
- Holistic Approach & Cross-Functional Programme
- Robust Policies & Procedures
- Technological Infrastructure

Awards

- 2013 IBM listed in Top 10 of the 2013 NAFE Working Mothers Top 50 Companies for Executive Women
- 2012 IBM China is first runner-up as Employer of Choice for Women in the Women In Leadership Forum, Shanghai
- 2012 IBM Korea won Prime Minister Award for Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace
- 2012 IBM listed in Top 10 of the 2012 NAFE Working Mothers Top 50 Companies for Executive Women
- 2012 IBM named one of the 25 “Best Companies for Multicultural Women” by Working Mother
- 2012 Working Mother named IBM to Working Mother’s Top 100 Best Companies list
- 2012 IBM received the Employer of Choice for Women Citation from the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA)
- 2011 PM CSR Award Malaysia for “Family Friendly Workplaces”
- 2011 Working Mother Magazine: IBM is in 2011 Working Mother 100 Best Companies
- 2011 National Association of Female Executives (NAFE) Top companies list
- 2011 IBM Australia awarded Employer of Choice for Women Citation from the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency
- 2011 IBM Japan ranked Top in Nikkei Woman’s “Top 100 Companies that promote women’s roles in the workplace”
- 2011 IBM received the 2011 Anita Borg Top Company for Technical Women Award
- 2011 Dr. Chieko Asakawa, IBM Research, Japan, recognised with a prestigious Women of Vision Award

Website

www.ibm.com/my