

Good Human Resource Management Practices of the Property Management Industry



勞工處

Labour Department

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Foreword

The property management industry is closely related to the daily life of Hong Kong people. Practitioners in the industry such as property managers, caretakers, attendants, security guards, facility maintenance workers and cleaners are around us everywhere, including residential buildings, commercial buildings, industrial buildings, government buildings, car parks, shopping arcades or even parks, sports venues and museums. The property management industry is indeed a key industry in Hong Kong. Its labour-intensive mode of commercial operation offers abundant job vacancies in the labour market, with more than 220 000 employees¹ engaged in the real estate maintenance management, security and cleaning services, as well as more than 1 900 establishments² providing real estate maintenance management services.

Like other industries, the property management industry faces numerous challenges in human resource management, notably the manpower shortage problem. With Hong Kong almost reaching full employment in recent years, many industries are generally short of manpower, and the property management industry is of course no exception. On top of this, there is a misunderstanding among some people that the industry is professionally restricted and less favourable in terms of career development, job nature and remuneration package, which acts as a disincentive to join the industry.

In fact, the property management industry has already taken on a new look after years of development. It has become more diversified and professional, spanning across such areas as environmental protection, law, resource management, maintenance management, financial management and agreed mediation. The industry has also been presented with opportunities when the Government relaxed the upper age limit for the Category B Security Personnel Permit from 65 to 70³ and introduced a licensing regime under the Property

¹ 2016 Report on Annual Earnings and Hours Survey, Census and Statistics Department.

² Quarterly Report of Employment and Vacancies Statistics, December 2016, Census and Statistics Department.

³ The revised criteria under the Security and Guarding Services Ordinance came into effect at the end of 2015.

Management Services Ordinance⁴. The former measure can unleash the potential of the labour force and ease the manpower shortage in the industry through the extended retirement age. As for the latter measure, it can raise the professional standard of the industry as a whole, and in turn reinforce the public's recognition of the professional image of the industry and its practitioners. While the industry is becoming more professional and offering better career prospect, many enterprises have adopted a "people-oriented" approach in employment relations. Good human resource management practices are implemented to boost staff morale and enhance staff cohesiveness towards the enterprises while emphasising effective staff communication. At the same time, more new entrants are attracted to the industry, laying a solid foundation for its development.

⁴ Passed by the Legislative Council in mid-2016.

Acknowledgement

The Labour Department has set up industry-based tripartite committees to provide an effective forum for employers, employees and the Government to discuss issues of common concern. The aim is to promote tripartite dialogue and cooperation at the industry level with a view to fostering harmonious labour relations. The publication of this booklet owes much to the support of the members of the Tripartite Committee on Property Management Industry who have provided valuable information and advice. Special thanks are due to the following committee members (in alphabetical order):

Employees' Trade Unions

Building Supervisors and Caretakers Union
Hong Kong Buildings Management and Security Workers General Union
Hong Kong Housing Management Employees Union
Property Management Administrative and Clerical Staff Association
The Hong Kong General Union of Security & Property Management Industry Employees

Employers' Associations

The Federation of Hong Kong Property Management Industry Limited
The Hong Kong Association of Property Management Companies Limited

Employer Organisations

Goodwell Property Management Limited
Guardian Property Management Limited
Hang Lung Development Company Limited
Hang Yick Properties Management Limited
Hong Yip Services Company Limited
Hutchison Property Group Limited
ISS EastPoint Property Management Services Limited
Jones Lang LaSalle Management Services Limited
Kai Shing Management Services Limited
Savills Property Management Limited
Sino Administration Services Limited
Swire Properties Limited
Synergis Management Services Limited

Urban Property Management Limited
Well Born Real Estate Management Limited

Professional Body

The Hong Kong Institute of Housing

Challenges and Opportunities in Human Resource Management

Given the rapid development of Hong Kong's property management industry, it is essential for employers to formulate strategic plans and coordinate labour relations within their enterprises in order to ensure the alignment of human resources with the development of the industry to embrace future business opportunities. In response to the people-related challenges and opportunities, many enterprises in the industry have implemented a series of good human resource management practices.

These practices cover the following six aspects:

- 1. Communicating and improving staff benefits**
- 2. Promoting work-life balance of staff**
- 3. Strengthening occupational safety and health and enhancing work arrangements**
- 4. Enhancing staff's career development and promotion prospect**
- 5. Improving the professional image of the industry**
- 6. Friendly employment practices for mature persons**

Through these practices, enterprises can make their job vacancies more attractive and clear up outsiders' misunderstandings about the property management industry. With more people interested in joining the industry, the manpower shortage can be eased while its development is fostered.

This Part will set out various good employment practices while giving examples of how to apply and implement the practices.

Communicating and Improving Staff Benefits

Communicating and Improving Staff Benefits

(Common Good Human Resource Management Practices)

<u>Communication and consultation</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular communication and consultation with employees
<input type="checkbox"/> Establishment of partnership with employees
<u>Offer leave benefits which are more favourable than the following statutory requirements</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Paid annual leave
<input type="checkbox"/> Paid sick leave
<input type="checkbox"/> Paternity leave
<input type="checkbox"/> Maternity leave
<u>Offer benefits and support to employees or their family members</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Marriage leave
<input type="checkbox"/> Festival leave (e.g. leave or early release of staff on Winter Solstice and Christmas Eve)
<input type="checkbox"/> Compassionate leave
<input type="checkbox"/> Birthday leave or other celebration arrangements (e.g. little gifts and email greetings)
<input type="checkbox"/> Parental leave
<input type="checkbox"/> Employee counselling services
<input type="checkbox"/> Bonus awards (e.g. “new recruit entry bonus” and “referee bonus”)
<input type="checkbox"/> Employee facilities (e.g. lactation room, rest room, book corner and staff canteen)
<input type="checkbox"/> Activities for the participation of employees and their family members (e.g. workplace visits, family fun day and meal gatherings)
<input type="checkbox"/> Products and services for free or at concessionary prices
<input type="checkbox"/> Scholarships or education subsidies for children/grandchildren
<input type="checkbox"/> Insurance protection for employees’ family members
<input type="checkbox"/> Internship opportunities for employees’ family members

1. Communicating and Improving Staff Benefits

Communication and Consultation

- Most of the companies establish formal (such as committees) and/or informal (such as tea gatherings) staff communication and consultation mechanisms to regularly disseminate information to the staff, while the staff can express their own and clients' opinions. In addition, both parties can discuss and deliberate on issues of mutual concern, especially policies or changes that have an impact on the staff. When new policies or work arrangements are rolled out, the companies can have the staff's support more readily to facilitate the implementation. The good human resource management practices introduced by the companies can also better suit the needs of staff.

Partnership

- Upon the completion of management contracts with the clients, many companies communicate with the affected employees as soon as possible and continue to arrange, under their consent, other suitable positions for them according to their preferences. Moreover, during poor business, the companies will implement revenue-generating and cost-saving measures before resorting to wage reductions and retrenchments. All these are conducive to the establishment of partnerships and mutually trusting and long-term relationships with employees.

Leave Benefits

- Many enterprises treat their back-office and frontline staff alike in offering leave benefits which are more favourable than those stipulated in the Employment Ordinance. Examples include:
 - ✧ granting more leave days than those prescribed by the law, such as more than 7 days' paid annual leave in the first year of entry and 5 days' paternity leave;
 - ✧ offering non-statutory leave benefits, such as marriage leave, compassionate leave, birthday leave, parental leave and early release of staff during festive occasions; and
 - ✧ relaxing the requirements for obtaining benefits, such as granting sickness allowance and full-pay sick leave/maternity leave to those who do not meet the statutory requirements.

Counselling Services

- Many companies in the industry take the initiative to cater to the counselling needs of frontline employees. When their staff are emotionally distressed by incidents that happen in the properties under their management, the companies will activate the employee counselling mechanism where necessary so that professional social workers from non-profit-making organisations can provide psychological counselling for the distressed employees, along with the availability of counselling hotlines. Moreover, in collaboration with professional bodies, some employers also organise mental health first aid courses to train mental health first aiders in their companies, so that colleagues in need of assistance can receive preliminary counselling.

Other Benefits

- Apart from leave benefits, some companies also offer employees or their family members other benefits, such as establishing “new recruit entry bonus” and “referee bonus” schemes, giving out little gifts and bonuses during celebrations and festive occasions, and granting gratuities to the critically ill employees or on the death of the employees’ immediate family members. Some of them may also make use of the convenience of the company or related companies to offer employees insurance plans which are less expensive than those available on the market and give priority for their employees’ family members to enjoy paid internship opportunities.
- Some companies offer award schemes for their employees’ children by granting scholarships to outstanding students in recognition of their excellent academic performance. In addition, overseas exchange scholarships are available to subsidise their children’s study abroad.

Promoting Work-life Balance of Staff

Promoting Work-life Balance of Staff

(Common Good Human Resource Management Practices)

- Organising interest classes
- Setting up sports teams
- Organising recreational activities such as excursions and meal gatherings
- Participating in charitable activities
- Encouraging employees to organise social gatherings
- Promoting happiness at work

2. Promoting Work-life Balance of Staff

Work-life Balance

- Employers can ease the work pressure of staff and increase their job satisfaction by promoting work-life balance through the following practices:
 - ✧ Organising interest classes and sports activities such as cookery classes, photography classes, basketball teams, football teams, etc. for the staff. Some companies even hire professional coaches to train their sports teams and actively take part in industry-wide sports competitions.
 - ✧ Organising excursions or overseas tours for the staff and their children. Some companies even offer travel allowance to outstanding staff to promote the enjoyment of life during leisure time.
 - ✧ Setting up staff volunteer teams to regularly take part in different community activities including elderly visit, charity sale, flag sale, used clothes/books donation and charity marathon so as to encourage staff to make contribution to the community during their leisure time. Some companies attach much importance to the training of volunteers and arrange for their staff to enrol on courses on wheelchair operation so as to equip them with non-work-related knowledge and enhance the quality of voluntary work.

Happiness at Work

- To create a happy working environment, many enterprises proactively adopt practices such as hiring professional masseurs to provide massage services in the office to relieve staff fatigue. Some employers show their thoughtfulness and care for frontline security guards and cleaners who work in rosters by regularly treating them to desserts and drinks, as well as holding the annual meal gathering both in the daytime and night-time so that they can participate without feeling neglected.

Strengthening Occupational Safety and Health and Enhancing Work Arrangements

Strengthening Occupational Safety and Health and Enhancing Work Arrangements

(Common Good Human Resource Management Practices)

<u>Occupational safety and health</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Setting up ad hoc committees/departments
<input type="checkbox"/> Formulating occupational safety and health policies
<u>Enhancement of work arrangements</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Compressed working days
<input type="checkbox"/> Five-day work week
<input type="checkbox"/> Flexible working hours
<input type="checkbox"/> Flexible rostering
<input type="checkbox"/> Job sharing
<input type="checkbox"/> Part-time work pattern
<input type="checkbox"/> More rest time for frontline employees
<input type="checkbox"/> Job nature or workflow modification/re-engineering
<input type="checkbox"/> Improvement of employees' workplace environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Intra-district redeployment

3. Strengthening Occupational Safety and Health and Enhancing Work Arrangements

Occupational Safety

- Many enterprises attach much importance to occupational safety and health and set up associated ad hoc committees and departments to formulate policies for implementing relevant measures and promoting the occupational safety and health culture. Internally, the enterprises provide safety guidelines and training for their staff and organise award schemes such as occupational safety and health slogan/video/quiz competitions. Externally, the enterprises participate in various occupational safety and health competitions so as to enhance staff's understanding of the issue.
- Some enterprises also establish a monitoring mechanism and a monitoring team to conduct regular assessments on staff equipment and workplace facilities to ensure compliance with the statutory requirements on occupational safety so that frontline staff can work in a safe environment.
- Many enterprises have established an emergency response mechanism where emergency drills on accidents, dangerous occurrences, etc. are conducted regularly to enhance staff response capabilities in the event of an emergency and reduce the risks of accidents.

Work Arrangements

- Many companies are proactively implementing compressed working days. For example, many supporting staff are enjoying a 5-day work week while property management clerical staff are having the 5.5-day (alternate Saturday-off) system. There are also companies which adopt, on a pilot basis, the three 8-hour shift system in some of the properties under their management when circumstances permit. This allows employees to have more rest time, and in turn enhances the attractiveness of the industry.
- Many companies also increase the flexibility of their work arrangements by, for example, setting up a "manpower reserve pool" to supply reserve part-time and temporary staff for clients. This flexible work arrangement facilitates the recruitment of new entrants such as homemakers for the industry. There are also individual companies that provide subsidies for the clerical staff to apply for security personnel permits and engage them as part-time security guards in their respective district as far as possible so that they can gain relevant experience in their spare time. This

arrangement not only allows staff to earn extra income but also helps enlarge the manpower reserve and facilitates the implementation of job sharing and flexible rostering.

- Many employers strive to enhance and optimise the work processes by encouraging their staff to suggest how to improve the companies' services and workflows. For example, some professional technicians in the industry will re-design the operating tools for better daily operation. At the suggestion of employees, some enterprises handle visitor registration by using electronic products such as tablets to shorten the waiting time, which brings convenience to frontline staff, clients and visitors.

Working Environment

- Some companies strive to improve the workplace environment for frontline employees, including:
 - ✧ Agreeing with clients on the provision of proper workrooms and equipment, such as more spacious workstations and comfortable work chairs for their clerical staff and security guards respectively.
 - ✧ Offering security guards seasonal gadgets, such as providing small portable fans in summer, and giving out thermal clothes and heat packs and providing fan heaters in winter.

Enhancing Staff's Career Development and Promotion Prospect

Enhancing Staff's Career Development and Promotion Prospect

(Common Good Human Resource Management Practices)

- Providing on-the-job training
- Devising training plans for employees' personal development
- Providing recognised training for employees
- Subsidising employees to further their studies
- Co-organising courses with educational/training institutions
- Establishing a sound internal promotion mechanism
- Conducting regular performance assessments on employees and offering assistance and training based on the analysis of the assessments
- Giving job seekers and in-service employees an understanding of the career ladders and paths of the posts

4. Enhancing Staff's Career Development and Promotion Prospect

Classroom Training

- Most of the companies attach importance to staff training and the formulation of training policies. Some employers devise personal training plans for their employees and subsidise them to take recognised job-related training courses such as assisting frontline staff in completing courses on confined space, Green Card and first aid. Not only does this enrich their job skills and know-how, it also improves the service quality of the companies.
- Some employers collaborate with tertiary institutions, the Employees Retraining Board, etc. to organise property management courses focussing on the various skills required of security guards and club house assistants such as building maintenance, management services for owners and tenants and organisation of recreational activities, thereby enhancing the staff's prospect of promotion to the rank of supervisors or persons-in-charge.

On-the-job Training

- Some enterprises assign management staff to serve as mentors to give guidance and advice on the performance and attitude of employees on a regular basis; and provide opportunities for employees to learn from each other through job attachment in cross-team projects to enrich their work experience and on-the-job training, so that they are aware of their strengths and room for improvement.

Promotion Prospect

- A vast majority of employers conduct regular performance assessments. When promotion opportunities arise, priority will be accorded to the outstanding staff to fill the vacancies internally. This mechanism allows staff more room for career development.
- Many companies are devoted to grooming staff with potential to enhance their skills and core competencies and deploy them to different managerial posts so as to enrich their management experience and exposure, pave the way for succession and provide a career ladder.
- Many companies make known in the staff handbooks and intranet the promotion policies, academic qualifications and training requirements, and arrangements for promotion interviews and examinations for all posts at or above the supervisory rank. This enables the staff to make career development plans for the future.

Improving the Professional Image of the Industry

Improving the Professional Image of the Industry

(Common Good Human Resource Management Practices)

<u>Professional Image</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Renaming post titles<input type="checkbox"/> Providing proper uniform and equipment for employees<input type="checkbox"/> Assisting staff in obtaining professional licences<input type="checkbox"/> Launching internship programmes for tertiary institution graduates<input type="checkbox"/> Actively participating in competitions related to business management/manpower development<input type="checkbox"/> Promoting good human resource management practices

5. Improving the Professional Image of the Industry

Renaming Post Titles

- Many employers in the industry rename post titles such as
 1. Property Management Officer → Property Asset Officer
 2. Security Guard, commonly known as “Watchman” → Resident Service Ambassador/Guest Service Attendant
 3. Lifeguard → Assistant Swimming Pool Manager

The scope of work of the staff becomes more clear-cut and specialised as a result of the renaming of post titles. It not only changes the public’s impression of property management practitioners and enhances the image of the industry, but also enables employees to appreciate the importance of their posts and boosts their sense of responsibility and satisfaction for their job.

Professional Licences

- According to the licensing requirements stipulated in the Property Management Services Ordinance, practitioners who assume a supervisory or managerial role must possess specific academic qualifications and certain years of relevant working experience. Many companies therefore provide training allowance to encourage and help their employees with potential to complete the courses and obtain relevant qualifications. There are also companies that provide employees with information about further studies, offer advice on study plans and arrange timely on-the-job training to suit their study pace.
- Under the Ordinance, a “registered professional property manager” must also be a member of property management-related professional bodies specified by the Property Management Services Authority, or a member of other equivalent professional bodies as assessed and recognised by the Property Management Services Authority. Many companies are willing to pay the membership fees of the institutes for their employees and actively encourage them to become members and continue to fulfil the requirements for obtaining a licence.

Internship Programmes for Graduates

- Practitioners are required to possess professional qualifications⁵ under the requirements of the licensing regime of the new ordinance, and therefore some employers organise recruitment talks at tertiary institutions and launch internship programmes for graduates. Apart from recruiting new entrants, this can also help promote the professionalism and development of the property management industry. Some companies train new recruits in three main professional areas: club house management, customer service and works, so that they can grasp the professional skills to nurture professionals for the industry.

Promotion of Good Human Resource Management Practices

- Many property management companies actively participate in competitions related to business management and manpower development. It enables them to not only draw on each other's good human resource management practices and implementation experience, but also publicise the policies implemented and enhance their competitiveness and reputation.

⁵ Under the Property Management Services Ordinance, all property management practitioners who undertake supervisory or managerial duties must obtain a licence. The licensing regime for property management practitioners consists of two tiers: (Tier 1) – “registered professional property manager” and (Tier 2) – “licensed property management officer”.

Friendly Employment Practices for Mature Persons

Friendly Employment Practices for Mature Persons

(Common Good Human Resource Management Practices)

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Flexibly arranging suitable positions for mature persons<input type="checkbox"/> Providing suitable modes of employment<input type="checkbox"/> Providing continuing training<input type="checkbox"/> Actively assisting mature persons in joining the industry<input type="checkbox"/> Providing appropriate support as far as possible |
|---|

6. Friendly Employment Practices for Mature Persons

Flexible Deployment

- Many companies know how to get the right person for the right job by arranging for mature employees to work in the customer service or related departments. The companies can then capitalise on their extensive work-related experience and good interpersonal communication skills to efficiently handle unexpected situations, settle customer complaints, etc.
- According to some companies, they will re-employ retired practitioners as examiners or auditors to visit different properties from time to time to re-evaluate and review the work procedures. This practice not only helps the companies further enhance service efficiency and level, but also brings to the workplace certain friendly employment practices for mature persons. More posts suitable for mature persons can then be provided to attract them to take up employment.
- Many employers assign employees to properties of different sizes and adjust their patrolling time according to their physical conditions. For example, employees who are older or physically weaker will be deployed to stationary posts that do not require patrolling.

Flexible Arrangements

- Although many mature persons are still suitable for staying in employment and postponing their retirement, some of them may prefer to work part-time due to various reasons. In view of this, some companies have set up a “Part-time Manpower Reserve Pool”. With flexible working and roster arrangements, they can regularly and effectively support the daily work or help meet the need of urgent manpower deployment. Job sharing among employees can also be achieved.

Continuing Training

- Many new properties are installed with different types of new facilities whose daily operations tend to be automatic and computerised. Consequently, some companies regularly provide training on computer use and new skills for the mature employees. Both the training contents and progress are tailored to the mature trainees so as to make it easier for them to grasp the necessary work skills.

- Some companies select employees who are familiar with new facilities to partner and work with the mature ones in order to conduct on-the-job training flexibly in terms of time and venue. This arrangement not only allows the latter to pick up the work more quickly, but also improves cooperation and teamwork among colleagues.
- In order to attract mature persons to join the property management industry and increase their knowledge of the industry, some employers provide QAS Basic Security Guard Training Program for free.

Thoughtful Support Measures

- Taking into consideration the eyesight of mature employees, some companies are thoughtful enough to provide font enlargement software and tools like magnifying glasses to make it easier for them to read documents.
- Although some insurance companies will adjust the premium of medical insurance schemes for employees aged 65 or above, many employers are still willing to continue to offer health care protection and free medical examination to the mature employees.

References

1. Relevant Training Information

Providers of Property Management Training Courses and Relevant Information (in alphabetical order)

Chartered Institute of Housing Asian Pacific Branch	Telephone: 2356 8680 Website : http://www.cih.org.hk/
Employees Retraining Board	Telephone: 182 182 Website : https://www.erb.org/
Housing Managers Registration Board	Telephone: 2544 3002 Website : http://www.hmregistration.org.hk/
Office of the Continuing Education Fund	Telephone: 3142 2277 Website : http://www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/
Qualifications Framework Secretariat	Telephone: 3793 3955 Website : http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors	Telephone: 2537 7117 Website : http://www.rics.org/hk/
The Hong Kong Institute of Facility Management	Telephone: 2537 0456 Website : http://www.hkifm.org.hk/
The Hong Kong Institute of Housing	Telephone: 2544 3111 Website : http://www.housing.org.hk/
The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors	Telephone: 2526 3679 Website : http://www.hkis.org.hk/
Vocational Training Council	Telephone: 2836 1000 Website : http://www.vtc.edu.hk

Providers of Occupational Safety and Health Training Courses

Occupational Safety and Health Council	Telephone: 2739 9377 Website : http://www.oshc.org.hk
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2. Related Legislation

Some of the legislation related to the property management industry:

- Employment Ordinance (Chapter 57)
- Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance (Chapter 59)
- Prevention of Bribery Ordinance (Chapter 201)
- Employees' Compensation Ordinance (Chapter 282)
- Security and Guarding Services Ordinance (Chapter 460)
- Builders' Lifts and Tower Working Platforms (Safety) Ordinance (Chapter 470)
- Sex Discrimination Ordinance (Chapter 480)
- Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance (Chapter 485)
- Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Chapter 486)
- Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Chapter 487)
- Fire Safety (Commercial Premises) Ordinance (Chapter 502)
- Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Chapter 509)
- Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (Chapter 527)
- Housing Managers Registration Ordinance (Chapter 550)
- Race Discrimination Ordinance (Chapter 602)
- Minimum Wage Ordinance (Chapter 608)
- Competition Ordinance (Chapter 619)
- Property Management Services Ordinance (Chapter 626)

(It should be noted that the Ordinances themselves remain the sole authority for the provisions of the law explained. For details, please visit the Hong Kong e-Legislation of the Department of Justice website at <http://www.elegislation.gov.hk>.)

3. Useful Contacts

Labour Department

Labour legislation

Enquiry Hotline: 2717 1771 (handled by “1823”)

Website: <http://www.labour.gov.hk>

Other Organisations

(in alphabetical order)

Equal Opportunities Commission	Telephone: 2511 8211 Fax : 2511 8142
Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority	Telephone: 2918 0102 Fax : 2259 8806
Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data	Telephone: 2827 2827 Fax : 2877 7026
Security Personnel Permit Section, Police Licensing Office of the Hong Kong Police Force	Telephone: 2860 6543 2860 6546 Fax : 2200 4324
Security and Guarding Services Industry Authority	Telephone: 2801 6181 Fax : 2537 5118