

Good Employer Charter Casebook



勞工處

Labour Department

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Work Together to Promote Good Employment Practices
Join Hands to Create a Win-win for Employers and Employees

Apothegm from Dr LAW Chi-kwong (English Translation)

Foreword

The Labour Department (LD) has all along been committed to fostering the culture of “employee-oriented” good human resource management (GHRM). With a view to encouraging employers of different trades and scale (including small and medium enterprises (SMEs)) to adopt employee-oriented and progressive GHRM, LD launched the first Good Employer Charter (the Charter) in December 2017. The theme of the inaugural Charter embraced four major areas, namely (i) introducing employee-caring employment practices; (ii) promoting work-family/work-life balance of employees; (iii) providing employment benefits more favourable than statutory requirements; and (iv) maintaining good communication with employees. Employers can implement strategies and GHRM practices with regard to their business characteristics, scale and affordability.

The result of the first Charter, with the support of major employers’ associations and SMEs organisations, is encouraging. More than 540 organisations from various sectors, including public bodies and private establishments from different industries, professional bodies, social enterprises and educational institutions, etc have been assessed and endorsed by the Panel of Judges as signatories of the Charter. To further promote the spirit of Charter, LD organised the Charter Ceremony in September 2018 and worked with a local newspaper for publishing a series of eight supplements on the Charter. Putting together these eight exemplary examples into this casebook for reference by organisations is particularly meaningful.

To continue fostering GHRM culture promoted by the first Charter, the coming Charter 2020 features a theme of ‘Family-Friendly Employer’ to encourage employers to implement family-friendly employment practices.

I sincerely hope that the Charter can inspire more employers of different trades to adopt GHRM. With the mutual trust and harmonious labour relations built on GHRM, employers and employees can achieve a win-win outcome under diverse business environments.

Carlson CHAN Ka-shun
Commissioner for Labour

Introduction

Good human resource management (GHRM) is the cornerstone of harmonious labour relations and human resource development. With the vast diversity of operating conditions among industries and enterprises, and also family situations and preferences of individual employees, the coverage of GHRM should preferably be extensive and flexible. The Labour Department has been, through various channels and at different levels, actively promoting GHRM culture and practices with a view to encouraging direct communication between employers and employees for them to jointly come up with employment practices most suitable for their particular situations. To assist employees in meeting responsibilities and needs in different stages of their life, employers are also encouraged to put in place appropriate and flexible work arrangements and support that could best serve the interests of both the establishments and their staff.

The Good Employer Charter (the Charter) is one of the major promotional activities launched by the Labour Department in recent years. More than 540 employer organisations from various sectors and of different sizes have joined the inaugural Charter as signatories. Over 90% of the signatories are private establishments and more than half among them are small and medium enterprises (SMEs), showing that the implementation of GHRM has been gaining popularity and wide recognition. To enhance public understanding of GHRM practices and facilitate employers in drawing reference from each other, the Labour Department worked with a local newspaper to conduct case interviews with two signatories from each of the four major areas of GHRM under the Charter (namely “Caring for Employees”, “Work-family/life Balance”, “Employee Benefits” and “Good Communication”). The two signatories shared how they had, according to their business characteristics, operating conditions, affordability and employees situations, implemented their GHRM practices.

On “Caring for Employees”, a large enterprise implemented 5-day work week, family-care leave and early release of staff on festive days, etc; whereas a relatively small scaled organisation flexibly worked out personalised caring measures for employees, such as liaising with the building management office and relevant government departments to improve the nearby environment so as to facilitate employees with mobility impairment to commute between work and home. Regarding “Work-family/life Balance, an organisation allowed employees who needed to take care of young kids to change from working full-time to half-time. Another organisation built a multi-function conference room for employees or their kids to take rest after school for easy caring. Concerning “Employee Benefits”, apart from basic provisions as stipulated by law, different organisations offered various additional benefits including marriage leave, family gathering leave, scholarships for employees, as well as internship for employees’ children receiving tertiary education. In a case of which an employee unfortunately met with an accident and had to take a prolonged leave for rehabilitation,

an SME thoughtfully extended the number of full-paid sickness days as well as provided assistance allowance for the employee to tide over the stringent situation. With a view to achieving good workplace communication, a large organisation set up different committees of specific functions to facilitate both management and staff to mingle and understand each other. The management of a small scaled organisation, apart from adopting a “Door Always Open” communication policy, convened lunch gatherings with a colleague invited every week from each section, to chat outside the workplace so as to enhance mutual understanding and improve relationship at work.

The various examples above demonstrate fully that GHRM practices are not exclusive for large enterprises. Instilling more care into employees and considering matters from their perspective, employers can always formulate employment practices that are creative and suit the needs of their employees. We hope these examples will help inspire employers and human resources professionals in various trades and industries and, having regard to their individual circumstances, build an enlightened enterprise culture in implementing GHRM practices. These will help employees strike a good balance between their work and family/personal life and establish good communication with employees or their organisations, hence achieving harmonious labour relations in the workplace.

Caring for Employees

Chan Kee Foods Limited

Understanding Employees' Needs and Implementing Family-friendly Practices

Harmonious labour relations is one of the key factors in sustaining the favourable business environment in Hong Kong. In order to foster harmonious employer-employee relations, the Labour Department is committed to promoting good human resource management practices. In this connection, the first Good Employer Charter was launched and Chan Kee Foods Limited ("Chan Kee Foods") is one of the participating small and medium enterprises. The management of Chan Kee Foods firmly believes that employee-caring practices are beneficial to both the company and employees, and therefore makes efforts to understand the employees' needs from a humanistic perspective and respond accordingly by implementing various family-friendly practices, such as flexible working hours, flexible rostering, and granting birthday leave and family-care leave. When the employees can work without worries, the employer will also benefit.

Improving Employee Benefits Be Considerate and Heart-warming

Currently, the company has about 100 employees. Many of them have five to more than ten years of service, while some have served the company for more than 20 years. This testifies to their sense of belonging to the company. As revealed by its Sales and Marketing Manager Mr Cyrus Chan, the company has been enhancing employee benefits over the years by, for example, implementing a five-day work week, taking public holidays instead of statutory holidays, and releasing the employees early on festive days. He further shares, "The company has introduced various family-caring measures for its employees, which include allowing those living far from the office to be half an hour late for work, closing office at scheduled times every day to encourage the employees to leave on time, and accepting no orders on Sundays." Moreover, to fully put the employee-caring concept into practice, Chan Kee Foods not only grants more days of paid annual leave than the statutory requirement, but also offers paid birthday leave and allows the employees to choose one day of family-care leave annually so that they can take leave according to their individual or family needs.

Putting Emphasis on Talent Development and Supporting Continuing Education

Mr Chan says, "Taking its staff as an important asset, the company has always put emphasis on talent development and supported colleagues to pursue continuing education. In addition to flexible working hours and paid examination leave, those who

have worked for one full year are subsidised by the company for continuing education.” Ms Meimei Cheong, Senior Marketing Officer at Chan Kee Foods, shares her experience. “I have to attend classes after work in the evening. I am thankful that the company allows me to leave the office earlier so that I don’t need to rush to school.” Knowing that the company puts emphasis on talent development and earnestly encourages them to seek self-enhancement, the employees are certainly more motivated at work.

Putting Employees First and Adopting Their Opinions

In enhancing the working environment, Chan Kee Foods took into account the employees’ needs when decorating the newly acquired office by widely adopted their opinion on interior design, acquisition of office furniture, equipment and lighting. “For instance, office desks were changed to bigger ones in response to their requests, and air dampers were installed for those seated under air-conditioning vents to avoid problems such as chilly feelings or headache.”

In fact, the office environment has been improved in many minute ways. For example, the air-conditioning system was enhanced to draw in fresh air from the outside, formaldehyde removal works are conducted regularly to improve air quality, the interior lighting system was adjusted according to the duties and needs of employees, and ergonomic chairs were purchased to relieve their back fatigue. Besides, the company organises various activities having regard to the employees’ opinions, such as setting up ball games, engaging massage therapists to give shoulder and neck massages in the office, engaging yoga instructors to offer yoga classes, and holding staff dinners. Employees’ family members are welcome to join and some bring along their domestic helpers as well.

Working in an open-minded, respectful, accommodating and caring team can boost the employees’ enthusiasm. This not only reduces the turnover rate but also enhances the productivity of the company, leading Chan Kee Foods to win numerous awards and become a signatory of the Good Employer Charter.

Employees' Voice

Mr Dick Siu has been working in Chan Kee Foods Limited for more than ten years. As the breadwinner of the family, he has experienced how the company’s care for its employees has greatly helped him take care of his loved ones. “The company has witnessed the growth of my two children. My daughter occasionally gets released from school earlier, and since my wife’s job is not very flexible, I was worried about how to pick up my children after school. Thanks to my considerate boss, I can flexibly arrange my working hours to take care of my children simply by giving oral notice. When my son was born, my boss’s wife bought him some new clothes as a gift. I also remember the time when I was suffering from low back pain. My boss made an appointment with the doctor right after checking my duty roster so that I could see the doctor before work.

All these show that the company trusts and cares for its employees. It strengthens our sense of belonging and enthusiasm at work.”

Mr Dick Siu
Customer Service Manager

Caring for Employees

The Wave (HK) Corporation Limited

Caring for Employees

Achieving a Win-win Situation

Both employers and employees alike can be benefited from harmonious labour relations built on employee-oriented good human resource management practices, which include making appropriate arrangements with regard to employees' potential and needs. The Wave (HK) Corporation Limited ("The Wave") is one such successful example. As a signatory to the Good Employer Charter launched by the Labour Department, The Wave regards "To build a diversified community with good motivations. To offer a dynamic space with great experiences." as its mission and acknowledges social inclusion and supports employment for persons with disabilities. The company makes efforts to nurture new recruits so that they can give full play to their strengths, which is in turn conducive to the development of the company for achieving a win-win situation.

Established three years ago, The Wave offers co-working space, event venues and serviced offices for start-up enterprises through the revitalisation of industrial buildings. Most of the some 20 employees in the company are youngsters. Enthusiastic and hard-working, they strive with the company for growth.

Treasuring the Development of Talents Through Observation and Communication

Ms Nicolette Tong, Executive Vice President of The Wave, says, "We understand that young employees treasure opportunities to learn and tackle challenges at work and dislike repetitive and monotonous jobs. They wish to try their hands at different types of work so as to enhance their skills and harness their talents. Therefore, we do our best to engage them to discuss and give their opinion on our business. The company also promotes a 'Coaching Culture' where section heads would coach the employees in their daily tasks and maintain good communication with them to achieve a smooth workflow. We get to better understand the needs of our employees and encourage them to express their ideas." She continues, "Young people are willing to try new things. We therefore assign different tasks to them according to their interests and strengths for unleashing their potential. Take Vivian, a colleague in our customer service section, as an example. We notice that she enjoys playing the role of master of ceremonies (MC), we thus assign her to be the MC in events held in the company. These arrangements enable our employees to gain more exposure and opportunities."

Addressing the Needs of Employees

Building Mutual Trust

The company joined a six-month scheme on job skills training and on-the-job training for persons with disabilities in 2017. After completion of the scheme, the intern was hired as a full-time employee (known as “People of Differences” in the company). “In hiring People of Differences, our prime concern is their work safety. For example, we noticed that the wheelchairs of the People of Differences were blocked by a manhole cover on the street outside the building and the road surface was bumpy. I contacted the management office and relevant government departments for assistance. After their liaison work, the bumpy road was improved, making it convenient for wheelchair-bound employees to go to work,” Ms Tong says.

Apart from the external environment, the company also adjusted the indoor environment to accommodate the needs of the People of Differences. Ms Tong explains, “To help them adapt to the working environment, we procured desks of a suitable height, introduced accessible toilets, and added padding at places where they might easily bump against. As it would be difficult for them to go to work during typhoons or rainstorms, they are allowed to work from home in times of adverse weather. Other colleagues are willing to help them out and we get along harmoniously. We always have lunch together, share everything about our work and daily life. The People of Differences sometimes take us to eat out! We believe that every employee has his/her own potential and will give full play to his/her strength if given the opportunities.”

Emphasising Team Spirit

Enhancing Relationship among Employees

The company places much value on team spirit. It organises different activities such as meal gatherings and charitable activities for its employees to relax and have fun. Ms Tong adds, “The employees and their family members are invited to company dinners so that their family members can know more about their work. The employees may take the opportunity to strengthen their family ties. They also treat the company as a big family.”

“A table football machine, swings and other recreational facilities are provided in the office for the employees to relax. They are free to work anywhere in the office but not confined to their own desks.” Ms Tong notes that these work arrangements are welcomed by the employees.

The company strives to understand and cater for the employees’ needs at work. Ms Tong gives an example, “An employee was always late for work. When it was found that he could not arrive for work on time due to his health condition, the company worked out with him a suitable timetable. Consequently his punctuality improved and he was much more efficient at work! We believe that communication between employers and

employees to resolve problems on the basis of mutual understanding and compromise can improve employees' performance and prevent labour disputes. Employees will be more committed to their work if they are happy with the job."

"When Typhoon Mangkhut hit the city in 2018, some employees could not return to work due to traffic congestion. After they had explained their difficulties over the phone, I immediately granted consent for them to work from home. The management believes that if we understand the needs and difficulties of employees, flexibly deal with their problems and give them due assistance, they will appreciate the company's care about them and will be more devoted to work. This will benefit the company as well."

Employees' Voice

Vivian has been working in The Wave for two years. She says what she likes most about the company is its flexibility in work arrangements. "The company is flexible and caring with a human touch in arranging shifts. On one occasion I had a sudden toothache. Once my supervisor learnt of it, he quickly rescheduled my shift for releasing me to see the dentist immediately. Moreover, the company gives us opportunities to take up different roles according to our abilities and interests. I was given a chance to be the MC at an event through which I discovered my strengths. Also, I love the paid birthday leave on which we may celebrate with families and friends. Many of us go to Ocean Park on our birthdays!"

Vivian Community Associate

Work-family / life Balance

Dimas International Development Limited

Committed to Enhancing the Working Environment and Promoting Family-friendly Practices

The Good Employer Charter launched by the Labour Department aims to encourage employers of different trades and scale (including small and medium enterprises) to adopt employee-oriented and progressive good human resource management practices, including employment measures that promote care for employees and work-family / life balance. Dimas International Development Limited (“Dimas”) is one of the accredited signatories of the Good Employer Charter. Currently, the company has nine employees for the production of industrial cleaning products such as stain removers and detergents. According to its director Mr Kelvin Yau, the chemical industry is always regarded as an offensive trade because of its undesirable working environment, making it difficult to attract young people to join the industry. In a bid to retain talents, attract new blood and sharpen the company’s competitive edge, Mr Yau is determined to reform the company by heeding to employees’ suggestions and allocating resources to put their ideas into practice.

People-oriented and Innovative

Mr Yau believes that “understanding and appreciating employees’ needs from a humanistic perspective is of paramount importance for the implementation of good human resource management practices in the company.” He points out that all the industrial cleaning substances produced by the company are liquid products of certain weight. The employees who are always required to lift and convey the products are likely to have strains. Taking their occupational health into account, Mr Yau greatly reduced the amount of liquids to be filled into product containers by a quarter to make it easier to convey the products and lower the risk of strains. Moreover, the working environment in Dimas was undesirable with a slippery floor. Some employees also reflected that the low production rate of obsolete equipment had caused an intermittent production flow. In response, Mr Yau acquired a series of new equipment for the company, including liquid filling machines, pipes and containers, to improve the workflow of employees and speed up the work process. Mr Yau reveals that the decision to launch a series of enhancement measures was made after considering the employees’ opinions, and that the measures are worthwhile despite the rise in operating cost. The enhancement measures have not only improved the work process and increased productivity, but also enabled the employees to work more effectively. In addition to retaining talents and increasing the company’s business turnover, the measures also help promote professionalisation in the industry, thus encompassing multiple benefits.

Humanistic Management for the Benefit of Employees

Mr Yau firmly believes that employers' recognition of employees' family needs is crucial for stimulating a greater dedication to work. "We had an employee who decided to resign because nobody took care of the children after school. I think it was a great pity." To cater for the employees' needs, the company allows them to bring their children to work when necessary, and underwent special renovation to add a multi-purpose conference room which, apart from holding meetings, can be used by the employees for taking rest or settling their children after school. "Staff is a valuable asset to the company. It is a pleasure for the employer to provide arrangements for employees' convenience so that they can work without worries". Furthermore, to strike a balance between the company's productivity and the employees' family and personal needs, Mr Yau has introduced shift work and flexible working hours so that the employees can arrange their hours of work flexibly according to their individual needs. With the implementation of new measures, the employees have stronger sense of belonging to the company and greater enthusiasm to work.

In addition to the reform, the company also actively promotes the culture of team work by organising activities for the employees regularly and inviting their families to join, thereby fostering a team spirit.

Employees' Voice

Mr Lam, who just graduated from university, joined Dimas to work as Production Manager. "I really appreciate our boss for being so helpful in solving our problems. I am new to the industry and lack relevant working experience. I am grateful for many opportunities given by our boss. He never blames us when we make mistakes. Instead, he solves the problems and gives us guidance to prevent the same mistakes from happening again. He also acceded to our request to acquire new equipment. The functionalities of the new machines have greatly improved our workflow and increased the production rate. Our boss respects our opinions and is considerate of our needs. We are like a family and I love my job."

Mr Lam
Production Manager

Work-family / life Balance

BEL Supply Chain Solutions Limited

Stand in the Shoes of Employees

Help Them Achieve a Work-life Balance

Apart from work, employees also have to take care of their personal and family lives. If this is shared and supported by employers, employees will work with ease and perform better, resulting in a more harmonious labour relations. BEL Supply Chain Solutions Limited (“BELSCS”) is such a good employer. Mr Benny Chung, General Manager of BELSCS, says, “The company attaches great importance to communication with colleagues and cares about their personal and family needs. We have introduced flexible working hours, half-day posts, and a mechanism to deploy colleagues to suitable posts for them to give full play to their talents while maintaining a work-life balance.”

BELSCS is a subsidiary of BEL International Logistics Limited (“BEL”), a renowned freight forwarding company in Hong Kong. Being a provider of logistic and freight forwarding services, its business includes logistic services, warehousing and distribution. Having 17 employees at present, BELSCS is one of the small and medium enterprise signatories to the Good Employer Charter launched by the Labour Department.

Value Employees’ Opinions

Enhance Employee Benefits

Mr Benny Chung says, “It has been 11 years since I joined BEL, the parent company, in 2008 and helped it set up BELSCS in 2013. The company treasures its employees, and most of the colleagues, like me, have been working for the company since its establishment. From time to time, the company draws reference from the good human resource management practices of other companies for the betterment of employee benefits, such as introducing the paid paternity leave in 2013 and the paid birthday leave recently. In addition, the company has considered and accepted employees’ suggestions on improving the working environment and workflow.

Care for Employees’ Needs

Flexible Working Hours

In reconciling their work with personal and family responsibilities, employees may feel pressure, which sometimes can be overwhelming. Having different roles in both the family and workplace, Mr Chung appreciates this much. “Many colleagues joined

the company as soon as they graduated. We have worked and grown up together over the years, so we know very well that every one of us has different responsibilities and challenges at different stages of life.”

“Being an understanding employer, the company makes arrangements and provides assistance to address the difficulties of working parents. Let’s take Isabel, the Assistant Sales Manager who became a mother a few years ago, as an example. She had to work in the office for most of the daytime, leaving her little time to spend with her child. She once told me that she wanted to resign and devote herself to the family. After an in-depth discussion, I knew that she wanted to take care of her young child while keeping her job. The company then offered her a half-day post to work either in the morning or afternoon on the needs of her family. We have also bought some desks and toys for children, just in case colleagues need to bring their children to work. In addition, colleagues who work half-day are allowed to resume full-time work after their children have grown up.” Mr Chung believes that the measures are of help to colleagues who will feel the care of the company about them, and in return become more committed to their work. This benefits the development of the company’s business.

Tap Employees’ Strengths

Provide Opportunities for Development

“We deploy colleagues to different posts in light of their strengths. Let’s take a colleague now working in the accounting section as an example. He joined the parent company and worked in a non-accounting post after he graduated from university. When BELSCS was set up, he was arranged to take up the accounting post as we knew his background and strengths. With a variety of talents among our colleagues, the company needs to have good human resource management practices to help them give full play to their talents so as to broaden their scopes of development and facilitate staff retention. At the moment, we are working on a training scheme and planning to offer continuing education subsidies for colleagues who have worked for the company for five years or above,” Mr Chung says. He firmly believes that talents are the company’s asset and the key to its success. Therefore, colleagues are encouraged to pursue lifelong learning so as to promote the sustainable development of the company.

As the management of a signatory to the Good Employer Charter, Mr Chung says, “Employers should care about employees because a company can hardly operate without the support of its employees. I think if employers can provide more benefits and convenience for employees, they will be more committed to their work, and this will achieve a win-win situation for both parties. The Good Employer Charter is worthy of the participation and support of employers as it encourages employers to care about their employees, provide better benefits and working environment for them, help them strike a work-life balance and maintain good communication with them.”

Employees' Voice

Isabel, Assistant Sales Manager of BELSCS, gave birth to her first daughter in 2013. In 2015, she was offered a half-day post so that she could continue to work for the company. “After my daughter was born, I left her to the care of a nanny but the nanny did not take good care of her. On one occasion, my daughter almost choked on a cherry stone. Luckily, it was not life-threatening. Since then, the idea of being a full-time mother to look after the family came to my mind. I am grateful to the company for treating me like family and caring for my needs. On knowing about my situation, Mr Chung offered me a half-day post so that I could take better care of my family while I continued to work.”

Ms Isabel Mok

Assistant Sales Manager

Employee Benefits

The Kowloon Tsai Home Owners Association

Understanding Employees' Situations and Adopting Flexible Human Resource Management

Good human resource management is crucial to fostering harmonious labour relations and human resource development. Dedicated employees will care more about the company that would impose a positive impact on business development. Established 61 years ago, the Kowloon Tsai Home Owners Association (“KTHOA”) is a private recreation club in Kowloon Tong which provides recreational facilities and organises activities for its members. At present, KTHOA has more than 50 employees. As a signatory of the Good Employer Charter of the Labour Department, KTHOA has won many human resource management awards, including awards under the Family-Friendly Employers Award Scheme and commendations under the Caring Company Scheme for five consecutive years. Over the years, KTHOA has not only maintained inclusive labour relations with its employees, but also implemented flexible human resource management practices such as flexible working hours, post-retirement employment of elderly employees, improving working environment, caring for employees, etc.

Flexible Working Hours and Further Employment of Elderly Employees

The employees of KTHOA have a wide age spectrum, ranging from fresh graduates in their 20s to elderly aged 70 and re-engaged after retirement. Some employees have five to ten years of service.

Mr Martin Y. M. Lam, General Manager, who has been working with KTHOA for more than ten years, says, “KTHOA is not a large-scale company. In order to attract more talents to join or stay in the job, emphasis is put on improving employee benefits and implementing employee-caring employment measures. The happier our colleagues are, the more devoted they are to their work.” The measures include implementing full-pay paternity leave, establishing a performance-based reward scheme, allowing the employees to work flexible hours so as to take care of their children and elderly family members, renovating the office to improve the working environment, running training courses for employees’ enhancement, organising recreational activities and interest classes for the employees as well as their family members, and giving mooncakes, rice dumplings and Chinese New Year puddings to the employees during festivals.

The company has also implemented friendly employment practices for the elderly. Martin says, “For example, there was an employee who had reached retirement age. She

was grateful for having the job for raising up three children. Having a strong attachment to the company, she wished to stay on the job. The company decided to offer her further employment after taking into account her situation. She is now in her third contract.” It is evident that KTHOA values the work experience and ability of the elderly employees, and accommodates their needs by making flexible arrangements.

Respecting Employees’ Opinion and Improving the Working Environment

The company always attaches great importance to its relationship with the employees, and gives serious consideration to the views gathered through different channels. Carol Kwok, Human Resources Officer, expresses her appreciation in this respect. She says, “The department heads hold meetings with colleagues every month to exchange views. The company often communicates with the employees through various channels such as written notices, chatting groups on smartphones, etc. and is receptive to our views. For instance, with very few male colleagues in the company, female colleagues have to move heavy items on their own, which is tough. In view of this, the company has arranged contractors to move heavy items. We are also allowed to use the lifting platforms, making our work safer and easier.”

Company Shows Care for an Employee Having an Accident

In 2016, Cheung Shu-yan (“Yan Gor”), who worked with Chef of The Cambridge for about half a year, was once knocked down by an uncontrolled vehicle crashing onto the pavement on his way back home after work and sustained serious leg injuries. After the doctor’s diagnosis, he was advised to take four months’ sick leave. Knowing that Yan Gor was the breadwinner of the family, the company decided to grant him benefits more favourable than the statutory requirements under the Employment Ordinance, notwithstanding that it was not a work injury case and he was only entitled to a few days of paid sick leave. Yan Gor’s full-pay sick leave entitlement was extended from 12 days to two months, plus an extra two-month allowance. The company also helped him seek assistance from the Social Welfare Department. The support rendered by the company in such a difficult time has demonstrated its cares about its employees. For other employees, they also bring up their problems with the supervisors to jointly work out solutions like a big family.

Employees' Voice

Yan Gor, an employee of Chef of The Cambridge, is still in panic when recalling the car accident happened two years ago. He says, “The accident was unexpected whilst I am the breadwinner of the family that I worried about not only my injury but also a fall in income. The living expenses of my family had also been risen considerably after the birth of my daughter. When General Manager Martin and the colleagues visited me in the hospital, I

was told that the company would extend my paid sick leave and grant me an allowance. Carol of the Human Resources Department also advised me how to apply for assistance from the Social Welfare Department. I felt deeply on their care for me. My boss had greatly helped me and my family. With the experience of the incident, my sense of commitment to the company has become greater than any of my previous jobs.”

Mr Cheung Shu-yan

An employee of Chef of The Cambridge

Employee Benefits

Vitaland Services Limited

Diverse Benefits and Rewards to Build a Team of Excellence

In addition to salaries and benefits, taking the initiative to understand and accommodate the needs of employees and providing suitable support to them are crucial factors for an employer to attract and retain talents. Established in 1991, Vitaland Services Limited (“Vitaland”) is one of the signatories to the Good Employer Charter launched by the Labour Department. Having some 1 500 employees at present, Vitaland specialises in the operation and management of tuck shops in over 300 primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong. The company has put in place various heartwarming human resource management practices, such as flexible working arrangements, full-rate subsidy for continuing education, and different awards and benefits for the employees and their families. In addition, the company has a mechanism for the employees to express their opinions freely and the company may make suitable arrangements or adjustments having regard to their suggestions. At present, the average length of service of the employees of Vitaland is five years or above, and many of them have even been in service for more than ten years. This reflects that the company’s human resource management practices are effective in talent retention.

Subsidies and Rewards for Continuing Education

More Professional Service from Employees

Mr Kenny Lee, Senior Operations Manager of Vitaland, says the company has always placed emphasis on service quality and striven to enhance the professional standard of its employees in food production. Vitaland is the first food retailer in Hong Kong to receive the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) certification. “We regularly conduct experience sharing sessions for the employees to exchange the latest information on food hygiene with a view to raising their awareness on food safety. The company has a subsidy scheme for continuing education to encourage colleagues to better equip themselves with work-related knowledge and skills. Colleagues may apply for the subsidies for taking job-related courses, which will be granted after internal approval and completion of the courses. In general, applicants can get full-rate subsidies. In the past, there were some colleagues who obtained their bachelor degrees with the subsidies for continuing education” he says.

In addition, the company provides different awards to commend front-line staff with outstanding performance, such as the Best Sales Award, the Best Shop Manager Award and the Appreciation of Service Award. Mr Kenny Lee notes that these awards aim to encourage the employees to strive for excellence, and ultimately the company stands to

benefit in terms of sales volume and business development.

Leaves and Benefits More Favourable Than the Statutory Requirements

Flexible Working Arrangements

Vitaland provides various benefits and flexible working arrangements to cater for the employees' practical needs. To allow the employees to enjoy more family time, the company provides leaves that are more favourable than the statutory requirements, such as compassionate leave for the passing away of immediate family members, marriage leave and family leave. Unlike other food and beverage institutions, Vitaland allows front-line staff to take leave on public holidays. "If it happens that our front-line staff have to work on public holidays, they will have compensatory leave. Moreover, the employees who mainly provide services in schools may apply for half-day leave in the afternoons of Saturdays or school examination days when there are fewer teachers and students in schools. In times of adverse weather like typhoons and rainstorms, if the employees cannot return to work on time due to traffic conditions or family needs, they simply notify the supervisors of their difficulties and need not rush to work. Their supervisors will arrange other employees to stand in for them as far as possible," says Mr Kenny Lee.

Mr Kenny Lee says that all along, the management cares about the needs of employees. For instance, a well-received benefit is offered by the company that the employees can buy at a low price a lunch consisting of a main course, soup, and fruit or dessert. Vending machines are also installed in the company to sell snacks at cost. He says the company treasures the employees' opinions on benefits. A staff survey is thus carried out every two years in the form of a questionnaire to collect their views. "The company has been providing its employees with free coach service to workplaces. In response to the views collected recently, we have increased the number of coach routes to nine. In addition, a common area and a fitness room have been provided in the company's headquarters for use by all employees," he says.

Establishing a Staff Welfare Centre

Achieving Work-family Balance

Vitaland has established a Staff Welfare Centre to seek shopping discounts for its employees from outside organisations, and organise various interest groups and activities, e.g. trips to local and Mainland's theme parks as well as movie shows for the employees and their families. In addition, complimentary product packs are given to the employees on their birthdays and the first day they joined the company. Gift packs are given to the employees who cannot join the company's Christmas party because of work. Other than six days of marriage leave, newly-wed employees are also given wedding gift money. The company offers two days' family leave to the employees so that they can have additional holidays for children's company. A number of awards for academic achievements, in the

form of scholarships and reference books, are provided for the employees' children. There is no cap on the number of recipients for the awards. Their children are also invited to visit the company's headquarters. Those who are receiving post-secondary education are provided with opportunities as interns. There have been quite a number of beneficiaries over the years. This greatly enhances the employees' sense of belonging to the company

Employees' Voice

Wendy has been working in Vitaland for 19 years. In her opinion, the company has provided full and sufficient support to the employees. "On one occasion, a stove broke down and I worried very much that 600 sets of lunch could not be supplied to the students on time. The company immediately sought assistance from colleagues in the food factory and the problem was satisfactorily resolved." Wendy also appreciates the care of the management towards the front-line staff. "When I first joined the company, I didn't know how to communicate with the school management and parents. Thanks to the regional manager who gave me advice and assistance, I gradually mastered the communication skills and became more mature in the process." Wendy appreciates the arrangement of family fun days, interest groups and small gifts by the company. She opines the company is successful in caring for and communicating with its employees and is a typical example of good and kind employers.

Ms Wendy Kwok

Shop Manager

Good Communication

Popway Hotel

Maintain Open Communication with Employees Treat Them with Heart

Good communication helps promote understanding and build mutual trust between employers and employees for establishing a positive and efficient work team. This is particularly true for the service sector as its core business is serving people. If employers want to train up their employees to treat customers with heart, the employers should first treat the employees with heart. If employers put themselves into the positions of employees and care about their needs, they would influence employees to care for customers too. Popway Hotel is one of the Signatories of the Good Employer Charter of the Labour Department. Understanding the importance of maintaining good communication with employees, the management of the hotel has established various channels for communication. It also provides a variety of employee benefits like massage service, paid birthday leave and subsidies for continuing education. The management cultivates an accommodating and harmonious working environment by a liberal mind.

Established in 2015, Popway Hotel employs some 20 employees serving mainly young visitors and business travellers. Mr David Lau, General Manager of the hotel, says, “The name of the hotel ‘Popway’ stands for ‘Passion of Poppets Will Amaze You’, where the word ‘Poppets’ refers to persons we like or love. All colleagues of the hotel are poppets.” He believes that calling colleagues as ”poppets” is better than calling them “employees” or “subordinates” so as to show that they are part of the company family.

Encourage Employees to Speak Out Regardless of Ranks

In order to facilitate communication between employees and management, David adopts a “Door Always Open” principle. Employees may discuss work with him. A “Suggestion Box to General Manager” has been installed for employees to give their suggestions directly. He also takes the initiative to communicate with the employees. David says, “A weekly Poppet Chat is arranged to which one colleague from each section is invited. To prevent colleagues from having a feeling of being ‘summoned’, we leave the workplace and go to a nearby restaurant. During the meals, we chat any topics not confining to work like personal hobbies, travels and even lifestyle trends, etc. Colleagues did have reservations on Poppet Chat at the beginning. However, when they realised that it is chatting in nature for communication, they started to chat freely. Poppet Chat helps us know each other better and enhance the rapport. It also helps future cooperation at work.

After colleagues have got used to meeting with management, they are more willing to raise their suggestions.”

Communication on an equal basis is the corporate culture of Popway Hotel. It is applicable to the handling of complaints as well. “For example, a customer once lodged a complaint on the provision of a place for her to change diaper for her baby. She felt being not respected as the place arranged by the employees was inappropriate. Upon receipt of the complaint we talked with the colleagues to better understand the matter. We found that it was not the fault of the colleagues, but was because there was no nursery room in the hotel. In fact, the colleagues had made the best of offering viable assistance in the matter. In the end, not only we did not reprimand the colleagues but accepted a proposal of adding a nursery room in the hotel.” David adds, “Maintaining equal and open communication with colleagues not only helps solve problems at work, but also drives the hotel to improve service.”

Employee Benefits Fitting Their Needs

The management of Popway Hotel is fully aware that ‘people’ is the core concern of the service industry. Hence, it has always been attentive to improving employee benefits in the hope of reinforcing the sense of belonging of employees. David says, “Knowing that colleagues have to stand long time at work, the management hires a sports masseur to provide them with massage services and teach them stretching skills for relaxation at work. Besides, we have regular staff meal gatherings, birthday and Christmas parties. We grant them paid birthday leave, give them fruits and festive treats like mooncakes, discount for staying at the hotel. Subsidies for continuing education are also provided to encourage self-enhancement. We want to show our encouragement and care for them through the provision of these benefits.” David adds, “We also offer monetary incentive by paying monthly bonus in addition to annual bonus. If any colleagues are commended on social networks or online platforms and are voted by colleagues as the quarterly ‘Star of Popway’, they would receive cash bonus and be praised in the company’s electronic bulletin as well as the notice board.”

The benefits of the hotel are not only beneficial to the employees but also to the society, achieving a win-win situation. “We have to regularly replace our supplies like cutlery and utensils for operational reasons. As some old stocks are usable, we hold internal charity bazaars to dispose of them. Firstly, they will be re-used by new owners for environmental protection. Secondly, colleagues and the families can buy the utensils appealing to them at big discounts. Thirdly, the income generated from bazaars is donated to charitable organisations to help the needy. It is beneficial to multiple parties.”

Shoulder to Shoulder As Teachers, As Friends

Why does Popway Hotel spend much efforts and resources on employees? “We understand that attitude is the most important element in the service industry. If we want our colleagues to treat customers with care, we first need to treat our colleagues with the same care.” David says, “I always treat my colleagues as teachers and friends. I understand that we may not be best friends but are at least friends working in the same company, aiming to build a harmonious workplace.”

Employees' Voice

Connie is young and has joined the hotel for two years. With her enthusiasm and excellent performance in work, she has been promoted from Captain to the supervisor of the restaurant. She acknowledges the huge opportunity given to her by the management. “At first, I was hesitant for worry that I didn’t have enough experience to take up the post. It was David who encouraged me, provided guidance to me in face of problems for coming up with solutions.” She says what she appreciates most is the harmonious working environment. The management, middle level supervisors and all other employees have equal opportunities to voice their opinions. The Poppet Chat is particularly useful for colleagues to know the boss and the employees better, and draw them closer. Consequently, they are more willing to work hard for the company.

Ms Connie Cheng

Supervisor of the restaurant

Good Communication

Well Born Real Estate Management Limited

(A Member of Henderson Land Group)

Tapping into Different Communication Platforms to Develop Good Labour Relations Together

Harmonious labour relations is one of the key factors in sustaining a favourable business environment. Direct and candid communication enables a company to appreciate the needs and demands of its employees that helps build up relations and mutual trust. Well Born Real Estate Management Limited (“Well Born”) is one of the signatories of the Good Employer Charter launched by the Labour Department. Fully recognising the importance of manpower quality, the management of the company listens to the needs of its employees in order to implement suitable employment practices. “To enhance the skills and sense of belonging of our employees and build an outstanding and united team, we are committed to tapping their potential, encouraging continuing education, listening to their needs, catering for their work-life balance and granting them benefits that are more favourable than the statutory requirements,” says Mr Ip Wai-kit, William, Senior Assistant General Manager of the company.

Establishing Dedicated Committees to Promote Communication and Exchange

Established 22 years ago, Well Born employs about 1 400 employees to provide management services for the Group’s luxury properties and large housing estates. In pursuing business development, the company is also concerned about the physical and mental health of employees as well as their personal development by setting up eight committees with different functions, namely Corporate Social Responsibility Committee, Green Committee, Volunteer Committee, Occupational, Health & Safety Committee, Information Technology and Knowledge Management Committee, Sports and Recreation Committee, Innovation and Process Improvement Committee and Human Resource Development Committee. Introducing the Committees, Mr Wong Chi-leung, Jacky, Senior Assistant General Manager of the company says, “Each committee is steered by a member of management and the employees are invited to join. Supervisors of respective housing estates and department heads are led by the committees to devise various activities and training programmes. It also provides a platform for the exchange of views to facilitate harmonious labour relations and mutual trust.”

Training Talents and Providing Study Allowances

In order to enhance the expertise and skills of its employees, the company is

committed to providing comprehensive study and training opportunities. Internal training programmes cover a wide range of topics, including customer service, fire safety and estate maintenance. “The company also provides generous study allowances to encourage and support its employees to take training courses of their own choice. These policies have improved their service quality and strengthened their sense of belonging to the company, thereby conducive to staff retention and business development.”

Enhancement of Employee Benefits

In upholding the “employee-oriented” concept, the company provides its employees with benefits that are more favourable than the statutory requirements. Mr Ip says, “Examples include extension of maternity leave to 14 weeks, money gifts to the employees having newborn babies, baby formula allowances, five days’ full-pay paternity leave, long service travel allowances, birthday leave, birthday cards and birthday cake coupons. What’s more, the employees are released earlier on festive days to enjoy family life.” Employers’ care about employees’ work-family / life balance is instrumental to building a positive and efficient work team.

Multi-faceted Communication to Foster Development

With a strong belief in the importance of employer-employee communication, the company appoints colleagues of the Human Resources Department as Caring Ambassadors to visit various housing estates regularly for exchanging views with the employees who are free to express their opinions. The company also takes the initiative to contact new recruits to understand more about their work situation and render guidance. Human Resources Department officer will meet with the employees leaving employment for knowing their reasons for quitting the job. “There was once a colleague who resigned due to the remote location of the workplace. After looking into the case, colleagues of the Human Resources Department arranged for him to work near his home. He then decided to stay in the job and the company stood to benefit,” Mr Wong recounted.

Moreover, for the past ten years, the company has been commissioning a university to conduct anonymous and independent employee surveys through which colleagues could express their opinions freely on issues like working environment, management policies and measures. The management also reviewed the effectiveness of its policies and systems by making reference to the reports. In the Employee Survey of 2017, the scores for such items as “overall satisfaction” and “mutual understanding between staff” rose significantly, while the score for “work-life balance” remained high every year. The company not only lays emphasis on employer-employee communication, but also formulates various incentive schemes to encourage its employees to actively offer advice and make proposals. Under this year’s theme of “Year of Reforms”, the employees

giving advice on issues such as workflow and company operation will be granted cash award. There is no cap on the number of recipients for the award.

Employees' Voice

“I am over 50 and have worked for different companies. Well Born is the best employer I have ever come across, particularly in terms of employee benefits and dissemination of information. Though I have only worked for Well Born for one year, the company has given me plenty of learning opportunities. For example, I just completed the Elderly Mini-U Programme organised by the Group and the Institute of Active Ageing of Hong Kong Polytechnic University in January this year. The company not only encourages its employees to devote their leisure time to lifelong learning, but also subsidises the tuition fees so that I can wear a mortar board and fulfil my dream of becoming a university graduate and a role model to motivate my children to study hard. In addition, the birthday leave, birthday card, birthday cake coupons, etc. given by the company are very heart-warming.”

Ms Cheng Ah-yuk
Property assistant

Good Employer Charter 2020

An employee-oriented approach is the cornerstone of good human resource management practices. These include:

- developing an enlightened corporate culture;
- introducing employee-caring employment measures and promoting work-family/work-life balance; and
- maintaining good communication with employees or their associations for a harmonious labour relationship.

In the current trend that people cherish work-family balance, adopting family-friendly employment practices is of crucial importance in good human resource management. To continue cultivating the good human resource management culture promoted by the first Good Employer Charter and promoting good human resource management among enterprises, the Good Employer Charter 2020 features the theme of “Family-friendly Good Employer”. Employers are encouraged to empathically consider the family roles of their employees and adopt family-friendly employment practices which can help the employees to balance the responsibilities of their work and family. The adoption of family-friendly employment practices allows the employees to work wholeheartedly, enhances their productivity and work performance. In addition, it can foster a sense of belonging of the employees and help build a positive image of the enterprise, leading to a win-win situation for employers and employees.

Objective

The objective of the Good Employer Charter 2020 is to continuously encourage employers of different trades and scale (including small and medium enterprises) to adopt employee-oriented and progressive good human resource management practices. Employers should also formulate family-friendly employment policies by assessing different family responsibilities borne by their employees and help them fulfil their work and family needs simultaneously to create a family-friendly harmonious workplace.

Eligibility

All private organisations, public bodies (excluding government bureaux and departments), employers’ associations/trade unions/professional bodies, and non-governmental organisations/social enterprises/educational institutions in Hong Kong are eligible to participate. Participating organisations are required to provide copy of relevant documents for authentication (e.g. Business Registration Certificate, Certificate of Incorporation or other documents).

To be the signatories of the Good Employer Charter 2020, participating

organisations are required to provide all the required information, actively implement good human resource management practices, strive to maintain good employer-employee relationship, and comply with relevant labour legislation (e.g. the Employment Ordinance and the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance, etc.). Also, if participating organisations intend to use the newly added “Family-friendly Good Employer” logo, they should submit relevant information on the details and effectiveness of the adopted family-friendly employment practices.

The Organiser reserves the right to determine the eligibility of all participants.

Workplace Consultation Human Resources Managers' Clubs

The objective of setting up Human Resources Managers' Clubs (HRMCs) by the Workplace Consultation Promotion Division of the Labour Department is to promote good human resource management practices and enhance the human resources practitioners' understanding of the Employment Ordinance through various activities, seminars and briefings, etc. Membership is free. There are 18 HRMCs and the participants will be assigned to the respective club according to the business nature of his/her organisation, namely Banking, Hotel & Tourism, Retail, Catering, Services, Health Care and Personal Services, Construction, Building Services, Property Management and Security Services, Small & Medium Enterprises (employment size below 100), Community & Social Services, Education Institutes, Logistics, Trading, Electronics, Information Technology, Manufacturing, and Garment. Human resources practitioner who is interested to become a member of our HRMCs please contact us at 3165 1604.

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