



Doing the job right

CHALLENGING: As employers in Malaysia struggle to engage and retain suitable candidates in today's demanding job market, Suzanna Pillay examines whether increased work-life balance initiatives at the workplace could be the solution

LONG working hours, unreasonable deadlines and heavy workloads that deny them quality time with their families are among the main reasons behind Malaysian workers switching jobs.

The need for an improved work-life balance is becoming an important factor in the career decisions of Malaysians, according to a report by global recruitment specialist REED Malaysia.

REED Malaysia country manager Guru Mani says the need for an improved work-life balance is the second-highest reason behind Malaysians making their last job change. The top reason is career advancement.

The finding was reported in REED's Malaysia Salary Guide and Market Insights Report 2015.

Interestingly, Guru notes, although 44 per cent of respondents polled said they were satisfied with their current jobs, 50 per cent said they were looking for alternative employment.

The most important aspects of working life for them were job satisfaction/career prospects (25 per cent), while a positive company culture and good work-life balance were tied at 15 per cent.

The trend of an increased emphasis on the need for a work-life bal-

ance, says Guru, is reflected across the Asia-Pacific region, where 35 per cent of respondents ranked the need for a work-life balance at fourth place, after job satisfaction, job security, and compensation and benefits.

In light of these findings, how important a consideration will work-life balance initiatives become to recruit and retain employees in the future?

Chook Yuh Yng, country manager of JobStreet.com, says from JobStreet's Job Satisfaction Survey conducted in November last year, 10 per cent of 633 employees polled attributed the lack of a work-life balance as one of the main reasons for leaving their jobs.

"It was the fourth reason why people changed careers. This shows that a work-life balance is an important factor, and companies should look into ways to implement policies for employees, to maintain that balance."

"Long working hours, unreasonable deadlines and heavy workloads are taking a toll on Malaysian workers and preventing them from enjoying quality time with their families."

She says companies should improve their work-life balance strategy for staff, as it is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to keep them engaged, recharged and motivated.

"Without it, the 'red zone' of stress,

burnout and absenteeism can drain productivity and affect the performance of a company."

A work-life balance policy does not necessarily mean shorter working hours. Employers can, instead, provide flexible leave policies, which show that the management is being more understanding and supportive of employees.

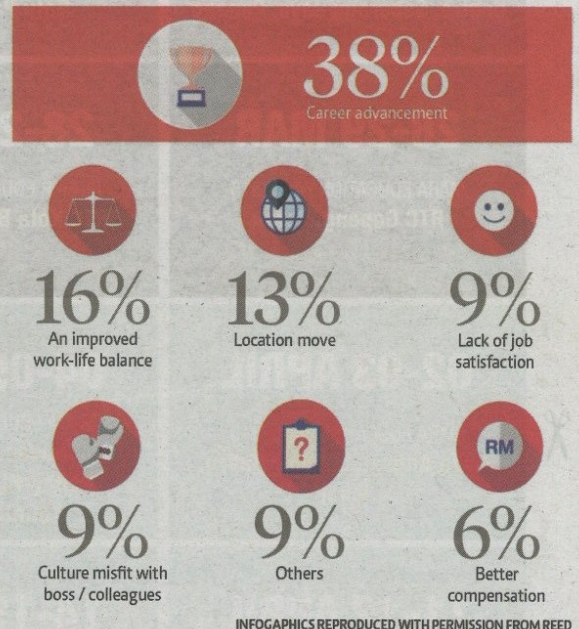
"A work-life balance is about effectively managing work and other activities that are important. For example, if employees sometimes have to arrive at work late, work from home or leave in the middle of the day to attend to home duties, employers should allow that flexibility without penalising employees."

"This way, employees can maintain their productivity during the other hours of the day. It's a win-win situation," says Chook.

In the JobStreet survey conducted in 2013, 63 per cent of Malaysian workers said they had not been spending enough time with their families because of long working hours, with 75 per cent revealing that they had to spend between two and five unpaid extra hours daily at their jobs.

The survey revealed that 60 per cent of employees found that their companies did not have work-life balance initiatives.

What was the main reason for making your last job change?



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They suggested the implementation of policies, such as flexible working hours and encouraging employees to work less than 40 hours a week.

So far, JobStreet has not received feedback from employers on these suggestions.

But, Chook advocates that employers implement good work-life balance policies and practices, as they are good for business.

"Some of the benefits include attracting and retaining the right staff,

getting the best from staff, being an employer of choice and improving productivity."

"A work-life balance is often dependent on efficiency and professionalism. When the management and employees are dedicated to their jobs and work hard during business hours, then, it gives them the flexibility to maintain a healthy personal life."

She says the management needs to set realistic expectations for employees, promote time-management