

Start with Family-friendly Employment Policies and Practices (FEPP)



Why are employers adopting FEPP smart employers?

FEPP employers are smart because by flexibly investing a small amount of resources, employees will find it easier to balance their work and family needs, which helps them concentrate better on their work. As a result, FEPP employers will benefit from improved employment relations and reduced staff wastage, as well as gaining a reputation as good employers.



Are FEPP applicable only to large companies and enterprises?

Surely not. While such measures are applicable to large companies and enterprises, they can also be easily implemented in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Here are some practices that could be adopted by the SMEs:

- **Five-day week:** Under the five-day week arrangement, employees enjoy two leisure days per week while their total weekly working hours remain the same.
- **Flexible work arrangements:** Employees can choose, within set limits, the times they start and finish work. Other examples of flexible work arrangements include job sharing, part-time employment and home-based work, etc.
- **Family leave benefits:** Special holidays are granted to employees with family needs, for example, paternity leave, marriage leave, family-care leave and compassionate leave, etc.
- **Employee and family member support schemes:** Daily-life support is provided for employees, such as provision of stress management hotline, counselling on emotional problems, and workshops for promoting work-life balance, etc.

Who will benefit from FEPP?

Members of all families and the society as a whole will benefit from FEPP:

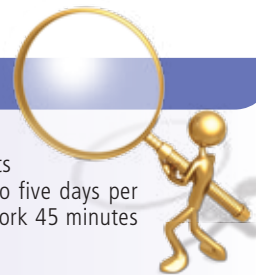
- **Women:** Encourage women's employment; improve the quality of family life for working women; and balance their roles between work and family.
- **Men:** Help men establish an image of good fathers, partners and family carers.
- **Children:** Enhanced family cohesiveness will create a favourable environment in which children can grow up healthily.
- **Society:** Harmonious and stable families set good examples in society and reduce the incidence of broken families. What is more, crime rate may also be lowered and social problems mitigated.

The Women's Commission (WoC) has been promoting wider implementation of FEPP across the territory. It is believed that flexible and inclusive working environments and arrangements can help employees nurture harmonious families. This will in turn contribute to building a harmonious society and creating more favourable conditions for women to join the employment market.

In late 2008, WoC collected commendable FEPP practices from a number of SMEs in Hong Kong. Some useful examples are listed below for reference:

Useful Examples:

- **Five-day week**
Example: A local publisher has cut its working days from five and a half days to five days per week and their staff is only required to work 45 minutes longer per day.
- **Family leave benefits**
Apart from paternity leave and marriage leave, we have also come across some special **examples:** In a local green group, the staff will be granted a 10-week leave upon the adoption of a child, an arrangement similar to maternity leave. The group has also put in place a mechanism for staff to donate their leave to colleagues with urgent needs (e.g. taking care of sick family members).
- **Flexible work arrangements**
Example: A local small insurance company allows its employees to choose their work time flexibly from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. It also hires part-time employees who need to take care of their families, enabling them to strike a balance between work and family needs.
- **Employee Support Schemes**
Example: A company has provided a 24-hour counselling and consultation hotline for its employees and their families. It has also set up a "critical incident support scheme" to help employees in need.
- **Other FEPP measures**
Examples: A local trading company encourages its employees to bring their families to Family Fun Days organised by the company. A financial institution also allows its employees to bring their children to work on specified days.



Sharing from SME employers/employees on the benefits of FEPP



I. Benefits to employers:

- Enhance staff efficiency and morale
- Enhance staff's sense of belonging to the company
- Enhance the company's image as a caring employer

An executive officer of a community education institute says, "After implementing five-day week, my colleagues have a greater sense of belonging to the institute and their efficiency has been improved. The policy has even reduced electricity costs substantially."

A human resources director of a real estate agency says, "After implementing FEPP, the company's image has greatly improved, which makes recruitment easier. The measures have also boosted staff morale and fostered better team spirit."

II. Benefits to employees:

- More time for family activities
- Proper work-life balance leading to better physical and mental well-being
- Improved quality of life

According to an executive assistant of an R&D institute of Chinese medicine, "Colleagues can juggle their work and family responsibilities with greater ease after the five-day week policy was adopted. They can have more time and energy for family activities during the weekend and thus a happier family life."

An assistant manager of a retail shop says, "Our company provides three days of paternity leave for male employees so that they can put aside their work temporarily to take care of their wives and newborn babies and fulfill their family commitments."

III. Benefits to clients:

- Better customer service
- Greater client satisfaction
- Lower risk of losing clients

A senior officer of a professional investment company says, "Thanks to the five-day week and a series of employee support schemes, our staff morale has been boosted. And now our staff serves with a spontaneous smile and gives our clients the best possible service. This is the basis for good client relations."

A human resources and administration manager of a medical equipment company says, "We believe that happy staff make for happy customers. So since day one of the company, we have been implementing the five-day week and providing our staff with benefits such as marriage leave, paternity leave and family-care leave. If they can balance the requirements of work and family life, they will be happier and more devoted to work."



Smart tips

To make your FEPP a success, here are a few suggestions:

- (1) Fully consult your employees to understand what they think before developing FEPP measures to address their needs.
- (2) Pay attention to the need for resource investment in strengthening the existing mechanism or system before implementing FEPP measures. Take the example of home-based work arrangement, the computer support systems may need to be upgraded first to guard against information theft. An assessment of the existing system by relevant professionals is recommended before inputting any supporting resources.
- (3) Explain to clients prior to adopting new work arrangements under FEPP to avoid causing any inconvenience to them.
- (4) Explain clearly to the employees the rationale behind and the concepts of FEPP before implementation so that they can support and coordinate with each other. A mechanism should be also set up to supervise the process and to prevent any abuse of the initiative.



Successful implementation of FEPP requires effort from the Government, the business sector and the society as a whole. We sincerely call on all SME employers to implement FEPP to enable your employees to work to their best while fulfilling at the same time their family responsibilities.

