

CASE STUDY: GOLDMAN SACHS

1. Introduction

The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. is a leading global investment banking, securities and investment management firm that provides a wide range of financial services to a substantial and diversified client base that includes corporations, financial institutions, governments and high-net-worth individuals. Founded in 1869, the firm is headquartered in New York and maintains offices in all major financial centers around the world.

2. Banking Environment

The highly intense working environment presents both opportunities and challenges to the banking sector. As compared to other industries, the banking sector in Singapore tends to offer a more diverse and unique brand of work-life programs such as the following initiatives that were introduced by Goldman Sachs.

3. Work-life Strategies as a Competitive Advantage

In the war for global talent, Goldman Sachs has firmly established itself as an employer of choice by focusing on work-life strategies that give it a competitive advantage. The company's work-life strategies revolve around human capital management and have a strong focus on talent attraction and retention. Most of the work-life programs in Goldman Sachs are available to both genders while some target the women, who comprise half their workforce.

According to the Report on Labour Force in Singapore 2010, while the labour force participation rate (LFPR) of women has increased over the years, their LFPR is still lower than that of prime-working age men due to the withdrawal of some women from the labour force after marriage and childbirth. Like many employers within the financial services industry, Goldman Sachs faces the challenge of women leaving at a higher rate than men at the mid-point in their career, which results in a vacuum at senior levels.

3.1 Returnship

Goldman Sachs recognizes that there are unique challenges faced by women at work and these issues should be addressed at various levels. For their general female population, support is rendered through the Women's Network and the Working Parent Forum. Based on research (the published report was titled "Off Ramps and On-Ramps") that was co-sponsored by Goldman Sachs and carried out by the Center for Work Life Policy in the United States, the company organized a half-day conference called "New Directions" to assist females who took a career break and now looking to return to work.



Launched in May 2006, this conference was held in a few countries, including Singapore, to encourage and prepare those who have spent time away from the workforce to return to the workplace. While it is open to both men and women, the majority of the participants have been women who took time off for family reasons.

“The Returnship program is a unique program in the industry, which fortunately came my way. For a change, I was competing only on my professional experience and expertise, with my ‘career break’ playing NO part in the final decision making. While I may not be officially working flexible hours, Goldman Sachs has given me the flexibility whenever needed, which helps me to achieve a work-life balance.”

- Preetie Agarwal, Associate, Technology Division



To up their ante, Goldman Sachs introduced a more intensive program which is a paid ten-week preparatory initiative called the “Returnship” in 2008. The Returnship program was introduced in Singapore early 2011 to attract and aid talented individuals of both genders back into the workforce. This initiative prepares individuals who wish to re-start their career after an extended absence from the workforce by equipping them with the necessary skills and confidence to transition comfortably back into the industry.

3.2 Great Expectations

The Goldman Sachs Wellness team provides pregnant employees with “Parental Toolkit” that includes a maternity leave checklist and information relating to maternity and childcare benefits, policies and procedures. All employees at the level of Vice President and above undergo the “Great Expectations” training on how to manage their female staff throughout the maternity cycle. In addition, a Maternity Mentoring Program connects expectant or new mothers with other female employees who have been through pregnancy or adoption, and nursing rooms are available to support new mothers as they return to work.

Aside from the statutory benefits that are available to all personnel in the Singapore office, employees may also request for up to three months of unpaid leave and five days of paid family emergency leave per annum. To encourage the men to play a bigger and more supportive role in fatherhood, two weeks of paid paternity leave is given to all male employees to care for their newborn and spouse.

4. Success Factors

Goldman Sachs is one of only 13 companies to have earned a spot on the list *Fortune's 100 Best Companies to Work For* list every year since it debuted in 1998. The following factors have been attributed to the company's continuous success in its work-life programs:

a. Top Management Support

Goldman Sachs enjoys strong support for their work-life initiatives from senior management, who believes that such initiatives contribute to employee commitment, retention and engagement levels. Management provides a supportive environment to encourage all employees to utilize the company's work-life programs, including flexi-work options, to address their work-life needs. By recognizing that the needs of employees differ throughout the duration of their careers, Goldman Sachs strives to create an inclusive environment that enables flexibility through the support of management and engendering a culture to minimize work-family conflict and assist with staff retention.

b. Workplace Culture

Goldman Sachs has the reputation of a firm which recruits only the best and the brightest. The value proposition that is associated with its brand as an employer of choice is deeply rooted in its strong culture, which relies on a shared passion for teamwork, integrity and excellence. This culture is ingrained in employees from the point of the interview, and through the orientation program and training process. Employees exhibit a passion for their work and have a strong sense of ownership and accountability through its open and cohesive culture. Equal opportunities are available to all employees and discrimination against employees who work on a flexi-work arrangement is non-existent as it does not hinder their mobility and career opportunities. It is this unique brand of culture that provides an overarching framework for Goldman Sachs's work-life programs.

c. Investment in Human Capital

With constant reference to "our people are our number one asset", Goldman Sachs focuses very much on career growth and opportunities and is therefore open to different work proposals to attract and retain talent. This philosophy is reflected in the company's Business Principles which are core to Goldman Sachs's philosophy. The importance of the firm's people and teamwork is referred to in seven of these 14 Business Principles. In order to be regarded as an employer of choice and as an advisor and financier of choice, Goldman Sachs needs to attract and retain the best talent. Investment in the human capital begins right at the start – from identifying and

recruiting the best talent, to training their employees and developing strong client relationships.

d. Diversity Management

Workplace diversity is ingrained in every facet of the company's operations, and the business case for diversity can be summarized as "For the Firm, For Our People, and For Our Clients". Due to its global operations, there is high labour mobility that brings employees together from diverse backgrounds. As part of the company's global effort, Goldman Sachs has an active Asia Pacific Diversity Committee to help set the diversity strategy for the firm, which is made up of Managing Directors representative of divisions and countries in the region. As part of the organization's diversity management efforts, all employees are expected to take at least two hours of diversity training each year to cope with a range of challenges such as working with colleagues or team members from a different background.

e. Open Communication and Flexibility

Goldman Sachs encourages flexibility for all employees and they assist their staff to achieve work-life integration through the implementation of various flexi-work options. This is made possible by maintaining open communication between management and employees to promote trust and understanding, which in return allows the management to customize or structure the work arrangements to the employee's needs. While flexi-work arrangement may not be suitable for certain jobs, Goldman Sachs encourages a constant dialogue between managers and all other parties concerned to work together in order to provide, where possible, different options to the employee concerned.

f. Localized Programs

In general, the programs offered at the head office are similar to those offered on a global basis. To address the diverse needs of employees across the company's global operations, the Asia Pacific Diversity Committee will review policies and programs on a regular basis to ensure that they remain relevant within the local context. Programs such as the Women's Career Strategies Initiative, which is a six-month development program for high performing female associates, has been customized to reflect the unique needs and expectations of employees. This ensures that the content and structure used for the programs in various offices remain consistent, whilst customization has been made to ensure its relevance.

“Our work-life programs are somewhat similar across our regional offices. However, we recognize that what works in the US may not necessarily work in Asia and vice versa. Accordingly, we review each policy and program to make sure it makes sense in Asia, and we do create programs specific to the needs of our Singapore staff.

- Lysette F. Randall, Executive Director, Human Capital Management Division

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