



✓ JAN LEE

Madam Rashidah Salamat, 44, used to get stressed out and distracted at her former workplace as her three children would call her often.

Her elderly mother also had to be ferried regularly to the clinic for check-ups and the lack of a flexible work arrangement made her full-time job — processing payrolls — difficult.

Her situation improved when she changed jobs, and her current employer allows her to come in later or work from home to care for her family.

More companies are adopting such flexi-work practices because they have realised it is one of the best ways to retain good employees.

Last year's Conditions of Employment report, released by the Ministry of Manpower, surveyed 3,800 establishments employing more than 1.3 million people.

It showed companies that provided unplanned time-off or ad hoc tele-working (working remotely) arrangements for their employees rose from 70 per cent in 2015 to 77 per cent last year.

More recently, the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices introduced the Tripartite Standard on Flexible Work Arrangements. More than 280 companies have adopted it in the one month since its launch.

Madam Rashidah, whose husband is a technical instructor, said: "Back then, I couldn't leave work easily. Even if my kids got sick at school, they had to wait for my husband to end his lessons before they could get picked up."

She now works as an assistant manager in human resources and corporate communications with Absolute Kinetics Consultancy, a safety and skills training provider.

She is much happier because the company allows her to take time off to care for her mother and children aged 19, 15 and 13.

Said Madam Rashidah: "If I need to take my mum to the clinic in the morning, I can tell my boss I am coming in later."

She can also choose to work from home during examination periods to monitor her children's studies.

During the month before her daughter Khadijah's Primary School Leaving Examination last year, she took two half-days to work from home every week to guide her.

Khadijah, now a Secondary 1 student at Meridian Second-

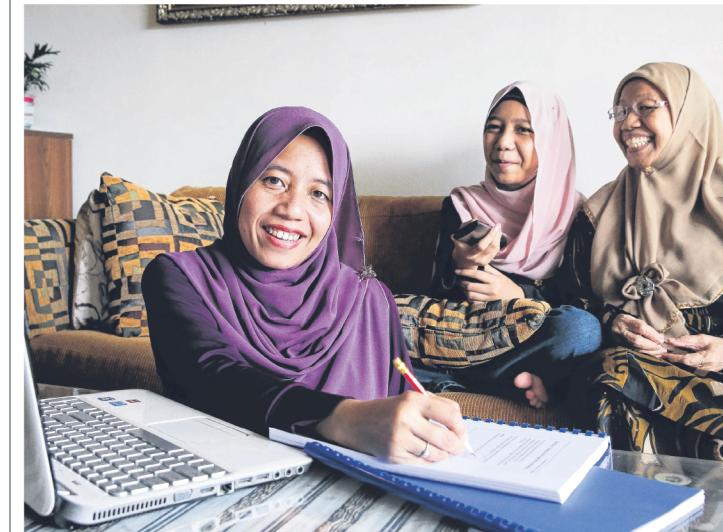
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Headline: Flexi-work is the way to go

More companies are offering flexible work arrangements to retain talent

Flexi-work is the way to go



Madam Rashidah Salamat (left), 44, sometimes works from home to keep an eye on her three children, including her daughter Khadijah (middle), and to care for her mother Sapiyah (right). TNP PHOTOS: PHYLLICIA WANG



Part-time auxiliary police officers Lorraine Kum and Oh Ming Hua.

"If I need to take three weeks off to concentrate on my exams, I can do it and still keep my job."

— University student Lorraine Kum, a part-time auxiliary police officers with Certis Cisco



Single mum Kaelyn Ng needed to spend more time with her baby daughter.

ary School, was happy that her mother was home with her.

She said: "She still gets to work, but we also get to bond and spend time together."

Absolute Kinetics Consultancy, which has adopted the standard, said it introduced flexi-work for its employees in 2009 to retain talent and woo young people looking for a better work-life balance.

Getting time to spend with her child is also a big concern for single mum Kaelyn Ng, 24.

The human resources associate works at Paktor — a local dating services start-up.

She enjoys flexible start and end times at work, and also gets to spend two days a week working from home to take care of and spend more time with her energetic 18-month-old daughter Calistia.

Miss Ng, who is separated from her husband, said: "My

daughter lacks a father figure so I want to give her more attention and be with her more."

Things were not always that smooth for Miss Ng, especially in her former company, where she worked full-time but was paid by the hour.

Leaving work earlier would mean less pay. Working from home was also not an option.

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As she needed the income, she resorted to calling home frequently to check with others on her baby.

And because Miss Ng was breastfeeding then, she also often had to pump milk at her office and store it in the office fridge before taking it home.

She was pleasantly surprised to find out that Paktor offered flexi-work benefits when she joined the company in June.

Paktor's chief operating of-

ficer Shn Juay said: "We do say we offer flexi-work but we do not play it up because we do not want people to join us for the wrong reasons."

Although such generous flexi-work benefits may be open to abuse by employees, Ms Juay is unfazed. "Ultimately, it will show through in the quality of their work," she said.

"If they are consistently turning in late or sloppy work, they will not last long in the company anyway."

University student Lorraine Kum, 22, and Mr Oh Ming Hua, 25, who runs an events management business, are both part-time auxiliary police officers with Certis Cisco.

They do not have a fixed schedule and have the luxury of choosing their own time slots.

That means Miss Kum has more freedom to plan her work around her studies.

The first-year aeronautical engineering student at the Singapore Institute of Technology said flexi-work has allowed her to focus on her studies.

She said: "If I need to take three weeks off to concentrate on my exams, I can do it and still keep my job."

Mr Oh, who used to work full-time Wednesday to Sunday in the same role, said he switched to part-time work for more flexibility, especially on weekends.

"I have been running an events management business for about three years and events are usually on weekends. So working part-time lets me balance my business with this job."

His parents also work regularly, and he said the switch allowed him to spend more time with them.

Certis Cisco employs about 19,000 people locally and has more than 4,000 of them on

flexible work arrangements. The company said it adopted the scheme five years ago when it saw an increase in employees who wanted to work while fulfilling other commitments.

Mr Daniel Low, vice-president and deputy head of group human resources at Certis Cisco, said: "We saw there was an 'untapped' resource in the market. There was an increase in demand for flexi schemes where employees can work while fulfilling other commitments at the same time."

"Through this arrangement, we help locals of all ages, students, mid-career, older workers, to stay employed."

Paktor's Miss Ng added: "At this stage in my life, with my daughter, flexi-work is my top priority when I look for a job."

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