

主旨: Community Business' Response to HK Population Policy Consultation
附件: Community Business Response to HK Population Policy Consultation (21 Feb 2014).pdf

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of Community Business, a non-profit organisation focusing on corporate responsibility, I would like to submit the attached document to share our views on the Hong Kong Population Policy.

Should you have any question or would like to have a further discussion, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,
Joy

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21 February 2014

Hong Kong Population Policy Consultation – Community Business' Response

According to the consultation document, the key focus and objectives of the population policy for Hong Kong are to strive to:

- (a) increase the quantity of the labour force by drawing more people into the labour market. We need to remove the barriers to work for our people.
- (b) enhance the quality of the labour force by improving education and training and minimising skills mismatch. We should equip our people with skills that can support our future economic development.
- (c) build up our human capital with a more proactive policy and targeted approach to attract more talent from overseas and the Mainland. We should also consider a more effective importation of labour system without jeopardising the interests of local workers.
- (d) focus the community discussion on effective measures in the Hong Kong context to remove barriers to childbearing and how the care-giving responsibility of families can be assisted by government and community efforts.
- (e) tap the valuable pool of elderly resources to create new impetus to the economic and social development of our community through building an age-friendly environment, promoting active ageing and the development of silver hair market.

The following responses from Community Business are mostly relevant to (a), (d) and (e) above.

Tapping a pool of under-utilised talent in Hong Kong is the key to increasing the quantity of the labour force in the short to medium term. In this respect, Community Business believes that it is critical to create inclusive workplaces for women, employees of different ages, and people with disabilities.

One important aspect of creating inclusive workplaces is to promote wider understanding of the business case for flexible working arrangements. Community Business has been driving progress by focusing the community discussion on effective measures in the Hong Kong context, in particular as it relates to improving productivity and work-life balance, and creating a family-friendly workplace.

1. EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES WITH FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Since 2006, Community Business has conducted an annual survey on the state of work-life balance (WLB) in Hong Kong.

In 2012, the survey explored the work-life culture in Hong Kong and provided a better understanding of the business case for WLB. In particular, we identified a mismatch in the work-life initiatives provided by employers compared to what employees expressed were effective measures. To refer to the full series of the survey, [click here](#).

The State of Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong 2012 Survey found that, according to employees, the most effective work-life initiatives are:

- Flexible working time (36.0%)
- Extra paid leave (34.1%)
- Career breaks/unpaid personal leave/part-paid/personal leave/sabbaticals (25.8%)
- Job-sharing/sharing workload among colleagues on an ad-hoc basis (20.8%)
- Work-support services (20.5%)
- Option to work remotely or at home (16.8%)

The survey also identified the business case for employers to promote work-life balance and find ways to empower their employees with flexible working options so that they could fulfill the obligations of both of their career and personal lives:

- 71.8% of employees see work-life balance as a critical factor affecting productivity, engagement, attraction and retention of talent
- 25.8% of employees say work-life balance is among the top 3 factors affecting their motivation and productivity at work
- 24.1% of employees think that work-life balance is more important than money when they choose to join, stay with or leave a company
- 21.9% of employees think that work-life balance is among the top 3 factors they consider when they choose to join, stay with or leave a company

Community Business urges companies in Hong Kong to take a proactive approach towards adopting effective work-life initiatives to create a flexible culture. This will create workplaces that more accessible to people with different needs.

In line with international trends in places such as the UK and Australia, we also urge the government to consider implementing official policies on flexible working, increase investment in educating the public, changing mindsets and promoting a flexible culture.

See for reference:

- <https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working/overview> (UK)
- <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employment/flexible-working-arrangements/pages/default.aspx> (Australia)

2. CREATING FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKING ENVIRONMENTS

Community Business' 2013 research titled ***The State of Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong 2013 Survey*** explored how family responsibilities affect career development of employees in Hong Kong, and establishes the business case for companies to create family-friendly working environment. The results outline the top initiatives identified by employees as most effective for creating truly supportive workplaces.

According to ***The State of Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong 2013 Survey***:

- More women (42%) than men (37%) say that their career development has been negatively affected by their family responsibilities.
- The age group most affected by present (44%) and future (58%) family responsibilities on their career development is those aged between 31 – 40.
- More parents with childcare responsibilities (44%) say that their career development has been negatively affected by family responsibilities, compared with those who do not have childcare responsibilities (34%).
- 82% say that companies in Hong Kong need to take active steps to create a more family-friendly working environment.
- The top 10 measures companies can take to create a more family-friendly working environment are:

1.	Flexible working time	28%
2.	Shorter working hours	19%
3.	Compressed work week / 5 day work week	11%
4.	Paternity Leave	8%
5.	Family care leave	6%
6.	Working remotely / working from home	6%
7.	Childcare arrangements (onsite or offsite)	6%
8.	More annual leave	4%
9.	Medical insurance coverage for family members	3%
10.	Extended maternity leave (beyond legal minimum)	3%

- For women in particular, the top 5 measures are:

1.	Flexible working time	31%
2.	Shorter working hours	19%
3.	Five day week/Compressed work week	11%
4.	Childcare arrangement (onsite or offsite)	9%
5.	Working remotely / working from home	8%

Other programmes that leading companies have implemented include on-ramping and off-ramping programmes for working mothers, and a “return to work” programme for women who are returning to work after having left the workplace for a significant period.

Community Business urges companies to create family-friendly working environment as there is a strong business case to do so:

- 35% said they have considered leaving or have left a job in order to spend more time on their family life.
- 56% said they are willing to leave their current job if the new job allows them to spend more time on their family life.
- 63% say that whether a company can offer a family-friendly working environment is one of the top considerations when they choose to join, stay with or leave a company.
- 82% say that companies in Hong Kong need to take active steps to create a more family-friendly working environment.

We strongly believe that more education is needed to raise awareness of this strong business case among employers in Hong Kong.

3. HELPING MATURE WORKERS TO STAY IN THE LABOR FORCE LONGER

Other ways of increasing the quantity of the work force is by helping mature workers to stay in the labour force longer. To tap the valuable pool of elderly resources to create new impetus to the economic and social development of our community, we need to create an age-friendly environment, promoting active ageing and the development of the silver hair market.

From Community Business' 2010 publication, [*Ageing: Impact on Companies in Asia*](#), we found that the most effective steps companies can take to create inclusive workplaces for older employees are:

- Conduct an age profile analysis
- Review policies and processes to ensure they are ‘age-neutral’
- Implement a targeted recruitment effort
- Promote an age-friendly culture
- Ensure a favourable working environment
- Consider job redesign
- Offer appropriate benefits and incentives
- Encourage employees to take charge of health and wellbeing
- Provide alternative working arrangements
- Help to remain on the job through skills development
- Facilitate the productive coexistence of a multigenerational workforce
- Engage older workers and give a voice to them
- Manage the retirement process proactively
- Find ways to retain or transfer critical knowledge within the organization

4. ENHANCING THE INTEGRATION & UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

As for people with disabilities, students are a great example of a hidden talent pool. According to latest figures in the Financial Secretary's 2013-14 budget speech, there are nearly 500 students with special education needs enrolled in local full-time accredited sub-degree and degree programmes in Hong Kong. Community Business has come into contact with some of these students from various disciplines, such as medicine, actuarial science, education, biotechnology, engineering, business, linguistics, social sciences, etc. They comprise a small but significant well-educated talent pool and are determined and intelligent individuals with strong family support and nearly 100% course completion rate. Not only are they no different than other students who work hard to achieve success for themselves, these students with disabilities are ambitious and committed to contributing meaningfully to society.

Our research conducted in 2013, [*Tapping into a Pool of Disabled Talent – Insights and Recommendations for Employers Based on Perspectives of Students with Disabilities in Hong Kong*](#), engaged disabled students from across all eight public universities in Hong Kong as well as other tertiary educational institutions. The study provides valuable insights and practical recommendations for companies looking to be an employer of choice for disabled talent in Hong Kong. According to the survey it is important to bear in mind the following:

- Despite the common perception that disabled individuals are not ambitious and only consider opportunities in the public or NGO sector, the findings from Community Business' survey show that students with disabilities (over 70%) are interested in pursuing a career in the corporate world.
- When it comes to selecting an employer, the most important factor for students with disabilities is the nature of the work (8.38 out of 10 score). They need a clear understanding of what the role involves so they know whether and how they can fulfill the requirements. However, they are also looking for meaningful work with long-term career opportunities (7.92) to learn and grow (7.67). In this sense they are no different from other ambitious graduates. Noticeably, salary and benefits are ranked as less important by these students (7.26).
- In terms of what would impress them about an employer and encourage them to apply, it is clear that students with disabilities are looking for prospective employers to have a clear statement of commitment to diversity and inclusion and/or being an equal opportunity employer (73%). However this goes beyond superficial statements. Accessibility of information - particularly on websites (42%) and use of inclusive imagery in recruitment advertising (27%) whilst obviously important, are not deemed to be a significant differentiator. This group is looking for a demonstrated commitment as evidenced by a dedicated point of contact for their queries (62%), active participation of companies in events and programmes targeted at the disabled community (60%) and public recognition for the work they have done to remove barriers to inclusion for people with disabilities (60%).

Suggestions proposed by students with disabilities to overcome the challenges they have experienced around communication:

- Provide workshops for students with disabilities and focus on giving soft skills such as communication, helping them to understand their strengths and how to positively market themselves.
- Have specially trained university counsellors play a role in providing career advice to students with disabilities and support them in the process - helping them understand their strengths, which roles they may be suited to and how to communicate that to potential employers.
- Advise companies to provide a hotline for candidates with disabilities to handle enquiries during the recruitment process.
- Offer interview training for disabled students and teach them how to perceive questions.

Suggestions proposed by students with disabilities to overcome the challenges around skills and confidence over their own abilities:

- Companies should offer internships or training programmes for students and graduates with disabilities.
- Companies should provide job orientation for job applicants.
- Educational institutions can play a role in identifying more opportunities for apprenticeship for students with disabilities.

Suggestions proposed by students with disabilities to overcome the challenges around lack of information:

- Employers should make clear in their recruitment advertisements that they welcome candidates with disabilities and are willing to implement reasonable adjustments for them.
- Companies should provide very clear job descriptions and lists of duties so that a candidate can fully assess whether they meet the job expectations.
- Companies should participate in recruitment events targeted at people with disabilities (such as Community Business' Inclusive Recruitment Event) to provide direct contact between employers and candidates.
- Develop a job-searching website dedicated for people with disabilities. This would reduce any concern a candidate might have about disclosing their disability as the employers would know they are promoting their roles to this audience via this platform.

Suggestions proposed by students with disabilities to overcome the challenges around attitudes and adaptability:

- People who are responsible for recruitment should be given special training for dealing with candidates with disabilities – especially those who are involved in the interview process. This should include asking more and better questions so they can understand the individual needs.
- Before candidates come on board, companies should provide sufficient training to fellow colleagues to ensure they understand the communication and accommodations that are appropriate for people with disabilities, as well as the special work-load and work arrangements.

Suggestions proposed by students with disabilities to overcome the challenges around accessibility:

- Employers should ask what kind of equipment and support candidates with disabilities need – both for the interview process and once they are taken on as an intern or employee. Ongoing monitoring should ensure that needs are met on a continual basis as a roles evolve and responsibilities change.
- Companies should seek advice from NGOs and disability experts on how to conduct an accessibility audit of the work environment and how to minimise some of the barriers.

5. REMOVING OTHER BARRIERS THAT DETER TALENTED PEOPLE FROM WORKING IN HONG KONG

5.1. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Employees

Through our [Creating Inclusive Workplaces for LGBT Employees Campaign](#), we know that one barrier for companies to bring the best talent to Hong Kong is the lack of recognition for same sex marriage or civil unions. If Hong Kong recognizes same sex marriage and allows LGBT employees to bring their same sex partners to Hong Kong on dependent visas, this would help remove this barrier.

5.2. “Face Time” Culture

With a declining workforce, another way to ensure competitiveness of Hong Kong is to improve productivity. According to Community Business' eight years of work-life balance research, employees who feel satisfied about their work-life balance are more productive. To read the full series of survey reports, [click here](#).

Many companies in Hong Kong fear that addressing work-life issues will damage their competitiveness because it means that people will work less. They fail to realise that work-life balance is in fact a tool for enhancing productivity and reputation for the business.

- 30.7% of employees say work-life balance is not talked about in their company.
- 18% feel that they cannot raise concerns about work-life balance if they want to get ahead in their company.

The culture of “face time” continues to plague the Hong Kong workplace.

- 21.4% of employees see that most people do not leave work before their bosses/supervisors do
- 11.9% feel that the longer they stay in the office the more committed they are perceived to be

Providing flexible working options is the most important way of promoting work-life balance in Hong Kong. However, there is a mismatch of work-life initiatives provided by employers in Hong Kong and those desired by employees in Hong Kong:

- Employees say the most effective work-life initiative is flexible working time (36%).
- However the most commonly available work-life initiative provided by employers is career breaks/unpaid or part-paid leave (35.5%).
- Only 25% of employees say their organisations offer flexible working time.
- Around 24% of employees say their employers are not offering any work-life initiatives at all.

There is an obvious need for companies to examine the needs of their workforce and identify what work-life initiatives will provide the best results. Flexibility in when, where and how employees work will be a solution for increasing competitiveness, productivity and ability to attract the best talent.

6. LOCAL TALENT SHOULD NOT BE OVERLOOKED

Companies in Hong Kong should not be overlooking local talent, and foster a workplace environment in which local talent can realise their potential. Companies should identify areas where outside, in particular Western, talent is brought into Hong Kong, and to see if there are local talent who can fill those roles, or can be developed to take up the roles. Community Business' research from 2011, [Bringing Out the Best in Asian Talent](#), and from 2012, [Adopting an Asian Lens to Talent Development](#), show that respect for local talent, especially by multinational or global companies, is important in Asia given the following cultural concerns:

- Hong Kong executives perceive there is a 'glass ceiling' in the workplace if they do not spend time at corporate headquarters or if their English is not good enough.
- Hong Kong employees feel Western management is less comfortable with local staff and favours Western executives for promotional opportunities.
- The ways of assessing and developing talent in multinational companies are primarily based on a western perspective - recognising and rewarding individuals who display certain competences and characteristics that are associated with western leadership styles.

- Representation of Hong Kong Chinese at senior levels is very low in multinational companies. In addition, there may be a disproportionate representation of non-Asian leaders

There is not only the risk that bringing in talent from overseas disadvantages local talent from being successful, but many companies may be failing to understand and appreciate the unique strengths that local talent can bring to organisational success. Companies are potentially overlooking key local talent in the pipeline and ultimately denying their organisations of exactly the skills and competences they need to grow in Asia. There is a need for companies to adopt an Asian lens as they seek to develop their talent in this part of the world.

While importing overseas talent may be a logical short-term solution for multinationals to drive their global strategies or for companies addressing the challenges of a declining workforce, it is important to ensure that we are providing ample opportunities for local Hong Kong talent to develop their potential. A long term strategy should be formulated by companies to develop high calibre local leaders.

For more information or further discussion, please contact:

Joy Tsang

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ABOUT COMMUNITY BUSINESS

Community Business is a non-profit organisation whose mission is to lead, inspire and support businesses to improve their positive impact on people and communities. As an established thought leader in corporate responsibility, particularly the field of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in Asia, Community Business is dedicated to progressing discussion on D&I in the workplace, understanding the challenges and issues faced by the companies operating in the region and making the link between D&I and enhanced business performance. With a reputation for raising awareness of issues – often ones that are rarely addressed, Community Business conducts research, leads campaigns, looks to facilitate discussion via events and networks, provides consultancy and training, and bring about change.

For more information, visit www.communitybusiness.org