

## SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF **FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS** DIGISERVE BY TELKOM INDONESIA (PREVIOUSLY TELKOMTELSTRA)

Understanding that flexible working arrangements play a role in supporting women in Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) sectors, Indonesia Business Coalition for Women Empowerment (IBCWE) member Telkomtelstra has implemented flexible working arrangements as part of the company's focus on Workplace Gender Equality (WGE).

With commitment from leadership and comprehensive support from the Human Resources (HR) department, the flexible working arrangement policy provides a more supportive environment for women and has also increased employee engagement, productivity, and cost efficiency for the company.

### **1 CHALLENGE**

Telkomtelstra was established in 2014 as a joint venture between Australian telecommunications company Telstra and Indonesian state-owned telecommunications company Telkom. The telecommunications industry in Indonesia is male dominated, with women making up 36 percent<sup>1</sup> of Telkomtelstra's workforce.

Attracting and maintaining women employees in this sector is a key challenge. Members of the leadership and HR team were aware that flexible working arrangements are one of the ways to promote WGE.

However, the flexible working practices that were brought over by Telstra when the joint venture began were not formalised into Telkomtelstra's policies and as a result flexible working was implemented inconsistently across departments.

### **2 OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE**

Having observed the low numbers of women in STEM in Indonesia which was around 30 percent, in 2016 the senior leadership at Telkomtelstra decided to develop a commitment to supporting gender equality, called the Pledge for Parity. One of the main elements of the pledge was flexible working, a key initiative to support women in the workplace and also a way to formalise the practice so it would be implemented equally across the company.

In Indonesia, gendered social norms are such that women are expected to be responsible for the domestic sphere, regardless of whether they also have paid jobs. The flexible working arrangement policy is therefore intended to help female employees manage their domestic roles and have better work-life balance.

<sup>1</sup> Telkomtelstra Report, Q2 2020.

In addition, Telkomtelstra also intended to encourage their male employees to play a greater role in family life, in their extended family, as well as in their potential additional role as spouse or father.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Erik Meijer's comment sums up the gender approach to flexible working arrangements at Telkomtelstra<sup>2</sup>;

“What benefits women [employees] will benefit everyone else, too.”

Further, as a demonstration of its commitment to WGE, Telkomtelstra joined IBCWE as a member in 2019, and undertook Gender Equality Assessment, Results, and Strategies (GEARS)<sup>3</sup>, a WGE diagnostic tool offered as part of IBCWE's membership package.

### 3 ACTIONS TO PROMOTE FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS AT TELKOMTELSTRA

The flexible working arrangements at Telkomtelstra cover three aspects:

- **Flexible working hours:** Employees are allowed to work flexibly, as long as they work for a total of eight hours per day and 40 hours per week.

- **Remote working:** From time to time, employees may work from home (remotely) or from client offices.
- **Unpaid leave:** This form of flexibility aims to help employees who have specific needs that require their attention over a longer timeframe, for example family issues, or to focus on completing training or studies.

To support implementation of the policy and to support managers and employees to troubleshoot issues related to flexible working, the HR team have introduced the following:

1. **An education program for all employees and new recruits:** This covers the intention, parameters and expected outcomes of the policy.

The flexible working arrangement policy is intended to empower employees to take responsibility for managing their working arrangements (without relying on strict office hours and presence in the office) and ensuring that employees value the policies provided by the company by not misusing them.

2. **Collecting feedback from employees through an anonymous employee survey and HR clinics:** Enables HR to obtain the opinion of both managers and employees.

<sup>2</sup>Erik Meijer. (2020). Technology & diversity – How we are working towards an equal workplace environment [PowerPoint slides]. CEO, Telkomtelstra.

<sup>3</sup>GEARS or Gender Equality Assessment, Results, and Strategies is an initial diagnostic tool that allows companies to diagnose performance, set goals, and build a comprehensive gender equality strategy in the workplace. Find out more.

The HR clinic allows employees and managers to request a consultation and submit complaints, which may range from leaders complaining about a staff member that cannot be contacted, to a staff member feeling obligated to work fixed hours with no flexibility.

This information also helps to inform the education program described above.

### 3. Providing coaching to managers:

To support them to manage their teams in a way that is aligned with the flexible working arrangement policy.

The support provided by HR includes guiding managers on how to manage people better to increase results and talking to particular managers on how to ensure they promote work-life balance.

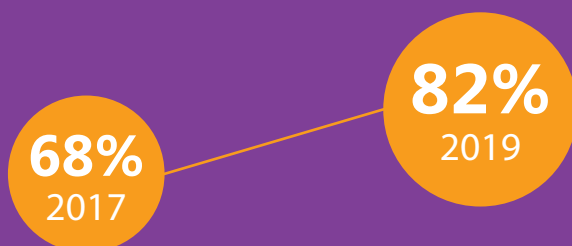
This also involves encouraging managers to occasionally use flexible working arrangements themselves, to set an example and to ensure that employees receive the message that the managers are supportive of this type of work model.

## 4 OUTCOMES

The company considers flexible working arrangements to be highly successful, as indicated by the metrics below, and has identified four key benefits to the policy.

### 01. Employee Engagement

Since implementing flexible working in 2017, the percentage of employees who agree that work-life balance at Telkomtelstra is favourable has **increased**.



Based on employee responses, it appears that flexible working is meeting the original aims of the policy.

The top three reasons for enjoying flexible working hours are: Employees are able to choose optimal working hours (the top reason for both men and women), they are able to manage time for family (the second most popular reason for women and the third for men) and time efficiency (the third most popular reason for women and the second for men).

One female employee with children stated that, with flexible working;

“I could organise my time for work so that I can still teach my child for their online learning.”

Similarly, one male employee, said;

“[I] can arrange my time for my work and other activities at home; as my child has school from home, as a parent I can assist them.”

## 02. Increased Productivity

According to 98 percent of questionnaire respondents, they are more or equally productive when using flexible working arrangements. This is supported by

**96%** of managers who perceive that their teams are more or equally productive when using flexible working hours.

**97%** of managers who believe that their teams are more or equally productive when remote working.

Other managers illustrate that working from home saves time, enables employees to feel close to their family, and provides safety for employees themselves by not having to work overtime at the office or travel at night.

However, some employees also highlighted some negative aspects of flexible working, including the blurring of home and work life and working long hours.

## 03. Cost efficiency

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, all Telkomtelstra staff have been majority remote working since April 2020. Employees have adapted well and enjoy this style of work, so the company decided to release 50 percent of the office space that is no longer required, saving on operational costs. Employees have also reduced their outgoings related to travel costs.

## 04. Increased credibility

Utilising the products that Telkomtelstra sells to support their own flexible working increases the company's credibility in the eyes of its customers and also gives them experience that other firms can draw from.

## 5 MOVING FORWARD

Although the implementation of flexible working arrangements at Telkomtelstra has been generally successful, there are ways to continue improving in the future. This is particularly important in response to increased remote work post-pandemic. Suggested improvements include:

- **Providing support to employees to purchase equipment** to create a conducive environment for remote working. This would enable employees to feel more comfortable remote working, which may be of increasing importance in the future if regular remote working becomes standard practice.

- **Developing training on time management and wellbeing** to provide employees with advice and support if they feel like they are working long hours, as well as guidance to managers on how to create boundaries with their team regarding expectations about responding to emails and requests sent during evenings and weekends.
- **Following up on two recommendations from the GEARS diagnostic report**, including to develop re-entry programs or integration measures for employees returning from long-term leave and to develop a personal development program for parents returning to work from parental leave and parenting workshops.

It is also important to ensure proper tracking and monitoring of recommended actions under GEARS assessment, thus the company has better documentation of its efforts towards workplace gender equality.

- **Sharing good practice** related to Telkomtelstra's experience of successfully implementing a flexible working arrangement policy both internally and externally, to:
  - (a) Highlight the benefits that the policy has on challenging social norms related to gendered domestic roles.
  - (b) Encourage other companies interested in adopting similar systems.

