

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

SEPTEMBER 2022

WEPS IN ACTION



PRINCIPLE 2

Treat all women and men fairly at work – Respect and support human rights and non-discrimination.

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CASE STUDY: Trip.com Group

BUILDING A FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

LESSONS LEARNED

- Organization-wide training among managers and other employees is key to ensuring buy-in for new policies, including those that are gender responsive.
- Monitored trials can help establish a business case to pave the way for new policies.

CONTEXT

Trip.com Group Limited is a one-stop travel service provider in China with about 33,732 employees, comprising the travel platforms Trip.com, Ctrip, Skyscanner, and Qunar. Across its platforms, the Group enables travelers around the world to make bookings for travel products and services by aggregating travel-related information and resources.

Family commitments have long been a challenge for working parents, particularly for women, who, according to the latest available data in 2018 from China National Bureau of Statistics, spend 2.5 times as much time on unpaid care work as men. The heavy and unequal responsibility of care and domestic work falling to women is one of the main causes of inequality in economic status. In line with the WEPS, Trip.com Group implemented a flexible working policy and hybrid work model to help improve family care burden and employee wellbeing.

ACTIONS

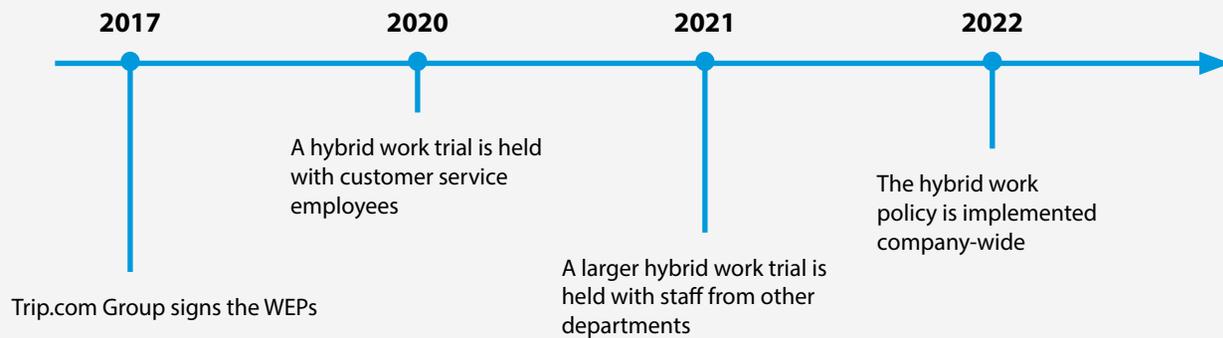
To help address the pressure on women whilst encouraging men to share family responsibilities, Trip.com Group implemented a hybrid work policy in March 2022. Work-from-home arrangements in many Chinese companies have been offered only to women, but Trip decided to pilot it to all employees as a way to show that both men and women have to balance work and family.

Before the full launch of the policy, the Group conducted several trials, across different departments, in which employees would work partly in the office and partly remotely. Before and after each trial, employees and managers were asked to provide feedback via a survey.

The latest trial was conducted by Trip.com Group between August 2021 and January 2022 and involved over 1,600 employees across a broad range of roles and departments. Among the data collected were the impact on employee performance, the impact on team project progress, the wellness and feelings of employees, and the impact it had on family and work life balance.

Following the survey result data from the trials, a hybrid work policy was implemented across the Group. All employees can now apply to work remotely on Wednesdays and Fridays. By giving the remote-working option to all employees including men, it signals to employees that both men and women have family responsibilities.

TIMELINE



CHALLENGES

Biased managerial decision-making:

As teams may be split between remote and in-office workers, managerial decision making might be unconsciously biased towards in-office workers, which can impact promotional opportunities.

Information technology was used to support equal opportunity for employee growth and career development, including training platforms and digital tools for performance evaluation and feedback. Tracking performance with a more transparent system aims to reduce the risk of subconscious bias across the company.

Managerial concerns:

When proposals for the 2022 hybrid work policy were made, there were varying concerns from managers, who were greatly apprehensive about work efficiency and impacts on departmental performance. This included issues of time management, work productivity and effective communication between teams.

The Human Resources (HR) department implemented a large-scale training to improve employees' understanding of flexible and hybrid work policies, including approaches to virtual relationship building, how to develop and maintain a remote-compatible culture, and how to motivate employees. HR also further advised all colleagues on setting personal hybrid work goals, optimizing work efficiency and improving communication.

After the hybrid work policy was implemented, a relatively flexible approach was allowed for managers so that each business unit and functional department could determine how to best implement it. For example, supervisors were allowed to adjust the application of the policy for those in their team according to the situation and employee performance.

Information security:

Taking corporate and customer information outside of the office intranet can be a risk to users and businesses.

Trip.com Group introduced internationally recognized information security technology to ensure data security and protect users' personal information, even when employees work remotely. The technology involves strict verification processes and minimizes the risk presented by any person, device, or system inside or outside the network.

CHALLENGE

SOLUTION

RESULTS

A preliminary hybrid work survey was conducted in March 2022, one week after implementing the policy, and found that hybrid working was popular among employees as they embrace a better balance between work and family: 75 per cent of applicants chose to work from home on a Friday to increase the time they spent with family. The data shows that female employees who applied in the first week accounted for about 48.8 per cent of the number of applicants, while males accounted for 52.2 per cent.

One male employee reported that the biggest advantage of the mixed office modality is that employees have “more opportunity to visit parents”. “On Friday, we can handle business related concerns outside of the office, and conduct conference calls on the go, giving us the whole weekend to spend with our parents.” Another female employee said, “In my last trimester of pregnancy, my managers found out I had back pain, and helped to arrange work from home. This was a big help – it eased my care burden and improved my well-being.”

Jennifer Cao, head of the hybrid office project and Head of the Group’s organization and talent development and corporate culture, said: “The hybrid office can effectively improve the happiness of employees and help working parents balance work and family, while male employees working from home can also help family members share parenting responsibilities.”

Evidence has also indicated that the hybrid work model is good for business at Trip.com Group. A randomized survey during an initial 2010 trial found that employees’ productivity increased by 22 per cent when working from home, with a 50 per cent reduction in employee turnover and greater reported job satisfaction. The Group’s most recent hybrid work trial in August 2021 showed no drop in productivity and a significant reduction in turnover. Participant survey data found that 93 per cent of employees felt that they used their time more efficiently and over 75 per cent reported feeling an improvement in their wellbeing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The success of a hybrid work model relies less on the type of industry it is employed in, and much more on having the right organizational culture and management approach.
- Hybrid working carries a risk of creating unconscious bias in relation to employee evaluation and promotion opportunities. To overcome this, companies should adopt a system that

equally monitors and responds to the performance of employees working in-office and remotely. Equal access to training should also be ensured for hybrid and non-hybrid working employees to allow for equal growth and career development opportunities.

THE ROLE OF WEPs

The WEPs helped to strengthen Trip.com Groups’ approach by providing guidance on promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment in the workplace. The Group has pledged to continue developing a family-friendly workplace in line with the WEPs.



- Principle 1  Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
- Principle 2  Treat all women and men fairly at work– respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.
- Principle 3  Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
- Principle 4  Promote education, training and professional development for women.
- Principle 5  Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
- Principle 6  Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
- Principle 7  Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

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