



Engagement

Baker & McKenzie

Employee engagement within a firm is certainly substantial CSR consideration that has strong links to human resource issues like retention, absenteeism and recruitment. However, engaging others from outside the firm is an increasingly important issue too.

For the last three years Baker & McKenzie, for example, has worked with Phoenix Clubhouse, a community adult psychiatric rehabilitation service under the auspices of the Department of Psychiatry of the University of Hong Kong and Queen Mary Hospital. Established in 1998, Phoenix Clubhouse is accredited and recognised by the International Centre for Clubhouse Development.

The firm supports the Transitional Employment Scheme (TE) which involves the work placement of individual Phoenix Clubhouse members with employers in the community. "This enables Clubhouse Members to get back to work in a supportive environment following mental illness," David Fleming, managing partner says.

The importance of work in rehabilitation is well documented and has proved highly successful for Clubhouse members. "The TE scheme has also helped Baker & McKenzie fulfill a need for additional office resources and meet our corporate social responsibilities," he says.

Baker & McKenzie's first TE placement commenced in February 2004 for a fixed period of six months. "Our first member joined us as a coordinator within the Business Development and Marketing Unit on a

part time basis, working five afternoons a week. She undertook various administrative tasks and, over her time with us, increased the scope of her role to include involvement in the preparation and presentation of client seminars and other marketing activities. This involved working as part of a team within our office and also included interaction with our clients at external events. Upon successful completion of the initial placement, we extended this arrangement for a further six months," Fleming says.

Subsequent placements have been in the firm's Professional Development team and Information Technology Department. "Our TE employees are paid a basic part-time salary for the work undertaken. We identified areas of need within our organisation - rather than creating roles specifically for this purpose. Salaries were determined by reference to our existing part-time pay scales and market considerations. Our TE places work Monday to Friday generally for 3.5 to 4 hours each day. Overtime is worked only occasionally," Fleming says.

The firm also makes a 5 percent monthly employer MPF contribution and provides seven days statutory annual holiday.

"One of the reasons that the TE scheme has worked so well for Baker & McKenzie is the active involvement of senior staff from Phoenix Clubhouse who take full responsibility for training and support for TE employees at the outset and during their employment. They also guarantee 'cover' if the member is absent from work

for any reason. On the rare occasions where we have needed 'cover' it has been arranged promptly and resulted in a continuation of the relevant office functions without disruption."

Baker & McKenzie intends to continue to develop its relationship in Hong Kong with Phoenix Clubhouse and expand the number of TE placements we have at any one time. They currently have five TE placements within the firm, one in marketing, one in professional development, one in accounts and two in IT.

Phoenix Clubhouse is also very particular in its selection of candidates for corporate participants. Considerable care is taken to ensure that the TE placee has the necessary skills and is ready to take on a role within a business environment - taking account of potential stress, requirements of the job and language capabilities. This process for 'matching' works very well.

"The performance of our TE staff has been exceptionally good. We are fully supportive of the program and would like to work with other large employers in Hong Kong who may be able to offer similar opportunities through the TE scheme," Fleming says. "Baker & McKenzie's experience has served to create within our firm a better understanding of the problems that individuals may face in recovering from mental illness and in rebuilding self-confidence and independence. It has also been very well received by our employees who have appreciated the opportunity to support this important community program in their day to day work."

Other firms involved in the TE scheme are Paul, Hastings, Janofsky and Walker and Shearman & Sterling.