

CIRCULAR NO. 83 /2021

DATE : 26.10.2021

TO,
ALL MEMBERS

INTROSPECTION: WORKLIFE BALANCE

We reproduce hereunder the text of the **AISBOF Circular No. 83** dated 26.10.2021, the contents of which are self-explicit.

With warm greetings,

(Ajit Kumar Mishra)
GENERAL SECRETARY

OUR UNITY : ZINDABAD-ZINDABAD
S.B.I.O.A. : ZINDABAD-ZINDABAD

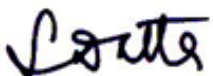
TEXT

INTROSPECTION: WORKLIFE BALANCE

We have sent a communication to the Dy. Managing Director (HR) & Corporate Development Officer, State Bank of India, on the captioned subject.

A copy is enclosed for information.

Yours comradely,



(Soumya Datta)
General Secretary

The Deputy Managing Director (HR) & CDO,
State Bank of India,
Corporate Centre,
Madame Cama Road,
Mumbai – 400 021.

Dear Sir,

INTROSPECTION: WORKLIFE BALANCE

May this communicate find you in best of spirits and good health. On behalf of the entire fraternity, we would like to take this opportunity to put on record our sincere appreciation for the avant-garde HR initiatives of the Bank as well as your good office during the testing times which speaks volume of bank’s micro-focusing on internal customers friendly policies.

2. Under the prevailing crisis situation, where the impact of the pandemic is severe and demoralizing, the officers are rendering their sincere services with utmost devotion and commitment. They are the ones, who have been providing uninterrupted banking services to our valued customers braving adversities and risking their lives during this catastrophe. Our officers have contributed immensely and stretched themselves beyond imaginable limits to ensure that the Bank grows in terms of business and achieves all the realizable targets even during the pandemic. In fact, it is because of the untiring efforts of our officers that the Bank has excelled in all parameters and the FY’21 results and the Q-1 results of FY’22 bears ample testimony that we have progressed as the premier financial institution of our country and justify our tagline “Banker to every Indian”.

3. We invite your attention to the landmark Corporate HR initiative ‘Nayi Disha’, which the Bank showcased to the entire industry as a path breaking HR initiative to bring about a greater degree of Work-Life Balance for its more than 2.40 lakh employees. The essence and spirit of eCircular no. CDO/P&HRD-IR/54/2017-18 dated 30.10.17 also drove home the point that working longer hours and working on holidays including festivals was not the right approach to achieve productivity. *Au contraire*, choosing a phase-wise ongoing employee engagement program to drive home the significance of being agile, inculcating the bank’s values through employee engagement ought to be the prime focus.

04. The afore-mentioned circular also incorporated the following:

A good and healthy work environment, mutual respect and empathy in work place, good work-life balance etc., are essential to achieve a healthy and happy workforce.
Working longer hours or working on holidays should not be the mode of achieving productivity. Employees should also have adequate time to devote to their personal and family needs to remain healthy.
Calling officers for doing routine work on Sundays or holidays should be avoided by better planning of work during the workweek.
A healthy and fit workforce will make a healthy and successful organization. All of us have a responsibility to keep this organization healthy and successful.

05. Four years down the line, we are constrained to take an overview of the prevailing ground realities and ask ourselves whether the bank is still committed to the directions laid down in the above mentioned circular. Working hours for our officers are extending to 10-12 hours on any average day and there is no sanctity to the private and personal time after the 'duty hours' as WhatsApp directives are coming in at midnight and in the wee hours of the morning in complete violation of largely propagated directions relating to official sunset of WhatsApp. While weekends are ideal hotspots for conducting P Reviews, Pre LCPC reconciliation, Account opening Camps, Teams meet, officers are expected to shoulder unrealistic budgetary targets with limited resources failing which routine public reprimanding, and mean harassment tactics like withdrawing of staff, denial of legitimate rights, humiliating, targeting, abusing etc. have become the norm of the day. We are pained to point out that there is an all-pervading atmosphere of fear and misery across the bandwidth of Branches /RBO's /Administrative offices with our officers mostly resigned to severe stress and minimal personal time.

06. Sir, it is imperative to introspect on the advisory contained in the eCircular under reference and its deep-rooted impact on the HR of our esteemed organisation. The encroachment on personal/family time is resulting in a conflict between personal and work commitments. There is wide-scale angst and frustration among the officers causing demotivation. Today almost 60% of the officers are the youth who look for a good salary, perquisites, healthy work environment and quality of life. The very fact that over 80% of eligible Assistants are shunning away from career progression across the country also unveils the fact that there is serious flaw in our HR approach as the eligible candidates are witnessing the plight of officers from very close proximity. Without ensuring work life balance, it will be impossible to retain good talent and a satisfied work force. Sir, we need to take a stock of happiness index of our officers and if a dynamic model of the Happiness Index can be implemented it would definitely reflect the present mindset of our officers.

07. While the Bank has devised guidelines for calling of officers on Sundays/ Holidays restricting the number of days in a month or in a quarter for not more than 4 or 8 days respectively and imposing an authority for approval by not below the rank of DGM. But in reality, the HRMS portal for requisitioning officers is yet to be implemented and protocol is being flagrantly diluted. The officers are being summoned to work by the regional offices telephonically or through WhatsApp messages without prior approval of concerned DGM for working on Sundays/ Holidays. It would not be out of place to point out that **opening of branches without the permission/instruction of Competent Authority is also a serious security lapse.**

08. Sir, it is also pertinent to mention that in terms of extant norms contained in HR Handbook Vol.-1 and Corporate Centre Circular No. CDP/PM/06/CIR/29 dt.11.09.2000, **Bank officers who are summoned to work on Sunday/Holiday are also eligible to avail compensatory off during the week following the Sunday/ Holiday on which they were required to work.** But the controllers are reluctant to grant compensatory off to the officers who are summoned to work on Sunday/ Holiday. Any amount of reimbursement of incidental expenditure cannot be in lieu of a legitimate compensatory off.

09. Recently, it has come to light that P-Review meeting after office hours are being convened by few controllers in many Circles which continues till late night even after 11:00 pm where the Branch Managers including lady officers are compelled to attend from different branches of the

region after completion of day's work. These controllers do not bother about safety and discomfort of the officers as well as the covid protocols in place. They are so focused on targets, personal goals, incentives or the rat race for being number one that they behave in an inhumane manner, ignoring the genuine requirements and oblivious to the sufferings of juniors. The comparative charts and instructions on WhatsApp from controllers and executives of joint ventures is putting avoidable unsustainable workload and mental pressure on officers.

10. We have reports of webinars being conducted on Sundays/ Holidays, which infringes the fundamental personal liberty of not only of officers but also of their families. We are witnessing serious disturbance in social and family life of our officers. The need of the hour is to actively discourage the culture of sitting late barring exigencies. This culture fosters a misconception of productivity, creates false impressions of duties discharged, not to mention, is acutely discriminatory and judgmental towards our lady officers who have to devote their limited time towards their equally critical obligations of children and family welfare. There is an urgent need to step into the shoes of such officers who are deprived of any social life by understanding their problems and come up with a permanent solution for this issue.

11. Sir, the continuous violation of Circular instructions by the Controllers is percolating a message down the line that Bank's instructions are just for showcasing and are not meant for implementation which is leading to germination and cultivation of a working culture where flouting of laid down instructions is becoming a normal routine function at the whims and fancies of Controllers. Such type of **undisciplined and retrograde working culture** will be inimical to the interests of our great organisation and needs to be properly addressed urgently.

12. Sir, you are aware that a great place to work refers to those working conditions and experiences which create trust, culture, commitment, perceived value, employer brand, and attracts and retain talents. This working condition is based on mutual respect and consideration between employer-employee relationships. Here, the employer does not treat employees as mere resources. Rather, they make them feel like valuable resources and provide competitive compensation and benefits. These conditions create high employee perceived value, and employees feel obligated and reciprocate with favourable actions. Point to ponder is whether we are having such culture presently in our institution? A paradigm shift in our approach witnessed at top most level but unfortunately missing at grass-root level needs to be inculcated down the line meticulously as it would be a morale-booster and would definitely have a positive catalytic effect in the overall performance of the institution and make us soar further heights.

10. Sir, you will surely agree that human resources are the main driving forces and priceless assets of our esteemed institution. We are of the considered view that some urgent corrective measures need to be taken immediately against the controllers, who are displaying a tyrannical streak and who are totally unconcerned about the wellbeing of the team members and are least bothered to ensure work life balance. In this context, we like to propose to adopt the undernoted steps as a remedial measure in this regard:

i) Introduce adequate weightage in CDS for work life Balance for CMC members, DGM (B&O)s and RMs and the quality of work life Balance in the Circles be made as one of the parameters for these functionaries.
--

ii) Restricting the opening of Branches on Sundays/Holidays in System without prior written approval of the authority not below the rank of DGM by disabling the login access of all the
--

employees and officers in the system after the EOD of the preceding day and to be reactivated on the morning of next working day. This can be aligned with EOD/SOD.

iii) A portal to be linked to the attendance menu/leave menu in HRMS and the compensatory off to be updated automatically within the next 7 days and the deferred holiday marked by the system. The system should automatically disable the login access on the day of compensatory off marked by system so that the officer is unable to access the system.

iv) Negative scoring to be introduced depending upon the number of days the branches remain open on Sundays/ Holidays in a month may be introduced in MD ranking parameter for the Circles/ Modules / Regions and appropriate action in monthly report may be proposed to be obtained from the circles violating work life balance.

v) Proper weightage to be given to "Internal Customer Service": Negative scoring should be introduced for controllers for violating circular instructions regarding Work Life Balance, opening of branches, internal customer service etc.

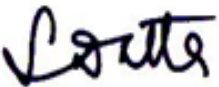
vi) Exemplary action against controllers who are rampantly misbehaving with subordinates, and resorts to public humiliation in various forums including social media, causing severe damage to the psyche of officers.

We, therefore, urge upon your kind intervention in the matter and request you to take suitable remedial step to address the issues for the sake of our esteemed institution at the earliest.

'Stay Safe, Stay Healthy'

With regards,

Yours sincerely,



(Soumya Datta)
General Secretary