

## COMPANY OF THE YEAR: Equal Opportunities 2009

### Company of the Year The winners of Equal Opportunities 2009 have been announced

The companies that support equal opportunities for women and men and life-work balance of their employees most effectively are **Česká Spořitelna (Czech Savings Bank), IBM CR, and Unicredit Bank CR**. In the 6th annual competition held by NGO Gender Studies, the winners placed on the following order: **Česká Spořitelna (Czech Savings Bank)** first, **IBM CR** second, and **Unicredit Bank CR** third. **OLHO-Technik Czech** won a special prize titled the Gender Studies Social Award for supporting life-work balance.

The results of the competition were announced at the conference *Cracks in the Glass Ceiling: Women in Management and Untraditional Occupations* held by Gender Studies on November 11, 2009.

### About the Company of the Year: Equal Opportunities Award

*Company of the Year: Equal Opportunities* is a prestigious award for companies that implement the idea of equal opportunities for women and men in practice. Any company in the Czech Republic that demonstrates that its equal opportunities policies and programs meet high standards of quality and effectiveness is eligible for the award. Gender studies gives feedback on every program participating companies submit for the competition, and each company is offered further consulting opportunities. *Company of the Year: Equal Opportunities* is thus more than a competition; it offers know-how in the areas of work-life balance and equal opportunities in the job market. And since effective work-life balance policies appear to be the best tools to provide equal opportunities to women and men, they have become central to our assessment.

An annual conference that offers workshops on life-work balance and on equal opportunities by Gender Studies experts is an essential part of the *Company of the Year: Equal Opportunities* competition, and it is here that the final awards are announced.

Experience from abroad shows that competitions and awards of this kind promote better equal opportunity policies and their image in the eyes of employees as well as employers. In the course of the competition, companies often encounter new terminology, tools and good practices for the first time and gain inspiration, knowledge and recommendations tailored to their specific needs. Finally, the award brings publicity to the participating companies and improves their image of good employers, and in this way it motivates them to implement good practices.

### Company of the Year: Rules

Applicant companies fill out an extensive form that is assessed using a pre-determined point system. The form covers areas such as work-life balance, the positions of women and men in the company, HR policy development and evaluation, social responsibility and marketing. Participants who are coming back need to demonstrate positive developments since their last entry. Award recipients are not allowed to run in the year immediately following the year in which they succeed.

In the interest of objectivity, all symbols or names that identify the company are removed for the purposes of assessment. The assessment process is two-fold: In the first round, Gender Studies experts evaluate entries and recommend companies for the next round. In the second round, a five-member-committee composed of independent professionals in fields of economics, human resources, public relations or sociology rate the submissions. A special award is also given to unusual or interesting initiatives or to companies 'for a good start.'

### 1. 1<sup>st</sup> place Česká Spořitelna, a.s.

Česká Spořitelna won this year's competition for its well conceived and systemic approach to equal opportunities and work-life balance. Last year,

A new Ombudsman office has been established at the company, where staff can seek impartial help with work-related problems.

Since 2008, the company has been running a program called **Diversitas** aimed at expanding equal opportunities not only for all genders but also for different age groups, etc.

The Company of the Year's work-life balance policies include **flexible work arrangements** such as flexible working hours, part-time work, and work-from-home arrangements and their mutual combinations. This year, Parents can take advantage of the **ČÁP program (Stork)** that offers assistance with the process of leaving on parental/maternity leave, with the leave itself and the employee's return back to work. Equal opportunities and successful integration of employees after parental leave now even constitute separate factors that are considered during performance evaluations of the company managers.

### 2. 2nd place IBM Czech Republic, Ltd.

Since equal opportunities for women and men count among the IBM's core values and they are integrated into most company activities including marketing, IBM Czech Republic has regularly placed among the winners of the Company of the Year in the last few years.

The company carefully **monitors numbers of women and men** in senior and middle management, in recruitment and in professional development programs aimed at expanding the talent pool on a monthly basis. IBM successfully works on **raising the numbers of women in the field of IT** (Information Technology). Since the last competition IBM participated in in 2007, the numbers of women in the company have increased both overall and in management positions. There is a **women's network formed around the Women's Leadership Council** at IBM. The Council provides women with a platform to discuss career growth. To particularly gifted employees the network offers individual professional development programs including mentoring. In cooperation with the Technical University in Brno (VUT), IBM holds a **summer school for young women**. This interactive seminar is designed to attract and motivate participants to enter the field of IT.

In the area of work-life balance, IBM offers so-called '**flexible office**' arrangements that allow employees to work from home and provides them the necessary computer equipment. Parents returning to work after parental/maternity leave typically appreciate **part-time work options** the most.. Employees on parental/maternity leave are offered **e-learning education programs** while they are at home, that help keep them abreast of new developments in their fields. In addition, IBM runs summer camps and programs for the children of its employees. Employees who look after children or other family members can share their experience via IBM communication networks. Finally, the company runs programs on work-life balance and on dealing with stress, and the company management is trained in diversity and inclusion issues once per year.

### 3. 3rd place Unicredit Bank, Czech Republic, a.s.

Unicredit Bank is new among the winners. Fighting discrimination and supporting diversity are important values at Unicredit Bank, Czech Republic. The current company values are outcomes of staff discussions and they always are open to change. Unicredit Bank takes regular surveys of the levels of staff satisfaction with equal opportunity policies.

The Bank operates **an international women's network called U-WIN Forum** that aims to support the professional growth of women employees through experience sharing, mentoring,

coaching and other activities. One of the goals of the Unicredit Bank's career development programs is to train equal numbers of women and men. The Bank boasts fairly equal numbers of women and men both in the company overall as well as in the management, which is quite unique in the banking industry.

Employees are offered **flexible working hours, part-time work arrangements, job-sharing and work-from-home options**. Unicredit Bank works actively with staff on parental/maternity leave and it stays in touch with them throughout the leave. Before their return to work, the company discusses re-integration into the team with the employee to ensure their smooth transition. It also runs a website with practical information for parents and offers benefits such as **swimming lessons for children and parents**.

Another benefit considerable, regular financial contribution to childcare expenses if an employee agrees to return to work earlier than in three years. The company also has an **outplacement program and social care packages** for employees in case they are laid off. Finally, Unicredit Bank employs a man and a woman in the office of the **Ombudsman**, who are independent mediators that mediate conflicts and assist staff with work-related problems.

#### **Gender Studies Special Award OLHO Technik Czech, Ltd.**

A special award for exemplary effort in the area of work-life balance was given to Olho Technik Czech.

OLHO Technik offers interesting activities to parents and children. The company takes great care to ensure its employees have a smooth transition to and back from parental/maternity leaves. In the course of the parental/maternity leave, employees stay in touch and have **temporary job assignments** if they are interested. In the summer, OLHO Technik operates a **summer school** for the children of its employees that is open daily and is located on the premises. It offers **summer camps for children** at low cost, and OLHO Technik cooperates with a local kindergarten by supplying it with materials for arts, crafts or for play.

**Programs to support employee health are commonplace in OLHO Technik:** The company holds Health Days or Fruit Day events, it offers wellness benefits and operates a stretching and relaxation lounge right in the manufacturing plant.

#### **For more information, contact:**

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