

# **FAIR & PROGRESSIVE PRACTICES AT WORK**

## Executive Summary

As Singapore strives toward higher productivity gains and higher value-added industries amidst a general shortage of skilled manpower and individuals with critical skill-sets, progressive organisations recognise that the key to long term success and sustainability lies in their human capital.

They know that in order to win the war for talent and thrive in today's economy, they must attract, develop, motivate and retain the right talent, and create a workplace where employees can put in their best effort for optimal business outcomes.

The Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) has commissioned a study to examine the employment practices of 20 leading organisations, highlight key trends, best practices and the success factors supporting the adoption and implementation of fair and progressive employment practices.

### Findings

Although the 20 leading employers in this study vary in size and come from various industries, they share a common underlying belief in the value of their employees – they recognise the people who spend a large part of their day working for the good of their organisations, and value them as individuals with diverse needs within and outside the workplace.

This recognition is embodied by the different employment policies, practices and programmes of the organisation; which vary by industry and employee demographic, and can take on a multitude of different forms, as the organisational case studies will illustrate. But the fundamental reason for these fair and progressive policies, practices and programmes remains the same – to address employees' needs holistically, fulfill their career aspirations, demonstrate appreciation and inspire them to achieve their best at work.

The creation of a fair and progressive culture in the workplace leads to an inclusive workplace that can attract, motivate and retain the best people. These organisations implement employment practices that take into account employees' needs and feedback, facilitate authentic communication, and recognise employees' contributions. When employees perceive that they have been treated fairly and feel a sense of belonging to the workplace, they are motivated to go beyond their job duties to serve with heart, to perform better, thereby enhancing business outcomes and employer branding.

Five **common values and attributes** underlying the organisations in this study may be summarised as follows:

- **Fairness.** Employees are treated fairly based on their ability, performance, contribution and experience. Employment policies, programmes and practices reflect this conviction.
- **Inclusion.** They create and maintain an inclusive workplace that values the strengths and contributions of each individual and leverages their abilities, skills, knowledge and experiences.
- **Agility.** They embrace change and ensure that their HR policies and practices stay relevant and effective in engaging the workforce.
- **Productivity.** They cultivate a work environment that encourages learning, innovation and a spirit of continuous improvement, to achieve optimal business results in a manpower-lean economy.
- **Sustainability.** They develop sustainable employment opportunities anchored in a strong Singaporean Core and a globally competitive, diverse workforce.

The **trending employment practices** adopted by the organisations include:

- Implementing competency-based management across their organisations to ensure fairness and non-discriminatory practices
- Facilitating talent mobility and supporting career aspirations and employee development
- Promoting purposeful face-to-face communication between management and employees
- Leveraging intrinsic motivation
- Supporting employees holistically

All the organisations demonstrated that having overarching corporate principles, commitment from management to building an inclusive culture, and being well-informed of developments internally and externally were the three **key success factors** supporting their fair and progressive employment journeys.

## **Insights**

### **1. Perception of fairness**

All employees seek fair treatment at work. And while organisations may conscientiously apply fair employment principles, some employees may nevertheless perceive that they have not been treated fairly. This is because the employees' perception of fairness is influenced by their 'psychological contract' expectations.

Every employment relationship includes a 'psychological contract' that is distinct from the formal written contract of employment. This refers to the unspoken beliefs, expectations and informal obligations between an employer (organisation, management, managers) and an employee. Due to the nature of the 'psychological contract', employee perceptions of unfair treatment could be borne out of expectations of goodwill or a sense of entitlement, which may not be completely reciprocated by the employer.

Where employees believe that employers have failed to deliver on what they perceive have been promised or are obligated to, they are likely to react negatively. The negative attitudinal responses could result in lower levels of job satisfaction, commitment and engagement, less propensity to display desired organisational behaviour, lower job performance and a greater intention to leave the organisation.

Perceptions of a breach in the 'psychological contract' could also occur if the organisation's HR policies and practices do not match its HR rhetoric. Therefore, organisations need to engage their employees and communicate purposefully when developing new policies and practices, to understand employees' perspectives before implementation.

Employees and employers may have markedly different perceptions regarding the content of the 'psychological contract' as it is implicit, intangible and dynamic. It is beneficial for employers to adopt a pro-active approach to reducing potential perceptions of a breach due to misalignment or misunderstanding.

This can be done through open and honest discussions between management and employees concerning their mutual expectations and perceptions of promises and obligations. Progressive organisations in the study understand the importance of honest two-way communication to build relationships and provide greater transparency. It also highlights the importance of having well-trained managers, comprehensive induction programmes, on-going performance coaching and development discussions, and employee feedback.

It is pertinent for organisations to note that employee engagement, level of trust, commitment and job satisfaction depend on a healthy 'psychological contract', with a perceived sense of equity of 'give and take' from both parties. Where the 'psychological contract' is deemed by employees to be right and fair, positive attitudes can thrive, failing which, these vital yet intangible components of good organisational performance can evaporate very quickly. Cultivating a healthy 'psychological contract' is thus an organisational strength and a competitive advantage.

## **2. Managing manpower challenges**

An inclusive workplace culture coupled with fair and progressive employment practices go a long way to help employers attract, motivate and retain the best people. However, an ageing population, underlying critical skill shortages, a growth in demand for new skills and progressive work practices, and international competition for skilled labour are challenges that organisations will continue to grapple with in the long term.

Organisations' approach to these challenges can include ascertaining the primary causes of its manpower issues and strategising accordingly. For example, recruitment difficulties due to a relatively low remuneration or organisation-specific skill requirements might be managed by improving their employee value proposition. This can be done through acquiring market intelligence, developing a market-based pay structure, and making sure potential candidates recognise them as 'employers-of-choice'. If a skills gap is the key issue, employees can be trained and re-trained, up-skilled and re-skilled with the right competencies to address current or anticipated future workplace needs. In cases of skills shortages, organisations could consider alternative recruitment methods, new business models or alternative approaches to operate their businesses.

Businesses can also collaborate with industry players and educational institutions to build a pool of skilled workers, sharing the costs and risks of establishing training programmes. They can also partner with tripartite agencies to develop career roadmaps and create interest for their industry among potential job seekers.

Organisations benefit when they embrace diversity, when they are open to staffing options such as hiring mature-age persons, persons with disabilities, homemakers, mid-career-change professionals, fresh graduates and unskilled young persons. In many cases, the best and most cost-effective way to recruit is to stop looking for the perfect match to a job description or for the best candidates with the highest skill set. Rather, seek out new hires who demonstrate a capacity to learn a specific role or skill, and who fit with the organisation culture. Then train and develop them; help them to acquire or strengthen the skills they need for the job. Organisations should continually invest in their employees' training to increase their skills and competencies – this holds true whether they are baby boomers in employment, millennial workers entering the workforce, or senior management.

## Our research methodology

This report is based on literature and document reviews and interactions with senior leaders and key HR personnel. Most of the 20 organisations participating in the study were winners and finalists of the TAFEP Exemplary Employer Award <sup>1</sup>.

They come from a wide range of industries, including banking, delivery services, education, food and beverage, healthcare, and retail. They include locally based public and private sector organisations, as well as Singaporean branches of multi-national corporations.

These organisations exemplify leading practices in people management and fair employment. They have dedicated significant effort and resources towards developing progressive employment practices, and have reported positive outcomes on their business performance and employer branding as a result.

The approach taken in this study is to review the organisations' employment practices to identify good employment practices and the success factors supporting these organisations' fair employment journeys.

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<sup>1</sup> Details of the award and information on the organisations' winning strategies can be found at [tafep.sg](http://tafep.sg)

## Introduction

The increasing pace of change in the nature of work and organisational structures, coupled with a general shortage of skilled manpower, reinforce the necessity for organisations to continue focusing strongly on employees and their well-being, and have workplace environments that can attract, motivate and retain the best people.

The nature of work today is dramatically different from the Industrial Age concept of 'work', which was mainly about working on specific tasks at specific locations. Employees were then valued as implementers of work, not generators of ideas; the management philosophy was managing by seeing (the persons at work); and employees expect the organisation to provide job security and steady advancement within the business.

### Changing nature of work

Most work today is more cognitively complex, more team-based and collaborative, more dependent on social skills and technological competence, with more emphasis on communication and information flow, and less dependent on geographical location and individual presence in the office. A significant enabler of these changes can be attributed to the breakthroughs in communications and technology, which permit work to be separated from time and physical space.

One is also more likely to be working for an organisation that is leaner and more agile, less hierarchical in structure and decision authority, more attuned to dynamic competitive strategies, and continually reorganising to maintain or gain competitive advantage.

These changes have made the general tempo of work more intense and rapid. The pressure to collaborate, innovate, continually upgrade, up-skill and be more productive is increasing. And as work and the organisation's demand on employees change, so do employees' expectations. They look for meaningful jobs, work-life harmony, good working relationships with colleagues and bosses, and they want to be appreciated. And no longer do employees expect lifelong employment in a single firm.

Thus in creating workplace environments that can attract, motivate and retain the best people, organisations must not only be sensitive to the overt needs of its workforce; but must also understand the underlying 'psychological contract' expectations that employees have of the organisation.

A 'psychological contract' is distinct from the formal written contract of employment, but is part of every employment relationship. It refers to the unspoken beliefs, expectations and informal obligations between an employer (organisation, management, managers) and an employee – obligations that an employee believes is 'owed' by the employer in return for his/her work and loyalty.

They are often informal and imprecise, and may be inferred from past actions, or from statements made during recruitment or in performance appraisals. Some obligations may be seen as 'promises' and others as 'expectations'. In some instances, employees' perceptions of these obligations may differ from the employer's perceptions. The important thing to note is that they are believed by the employee to be part of his/her relationship with the employer.

In other words, the perceived terms and conditions under which employees work are considerably more extensive, complex and subtle than suggested by the formal contract of employment. HR professionals, management and supervisors must be aware of these unspoken expectations and work

toward creating and maintaining healthy ‘psychological contracts’ with employees. A breach of the ‘psychological contract’ where employers are seen as not delivering on an ‘obligation’ can affect employees’ attitudes and behaviours<sup>2</sup>. In particular, it could result in lower levels of engagement, commitment and job satisfaction, less propensity to display desired organisational behaviour, lower job performance and a greater intention to leave the organisation. Precisely the issues of ‘retention’, ‘performance’ and ‘productivity’ that fair and progressive employment practices are intended to promote/improve on.

### **Manpower-lean economy**

Singapore has for the past few decades been in the privileged position of having a positive growth economy with an enviable low unemployment rate. Although there was an ever increasing demand for manpower to fuel the nation’s growth in premium and growth sectors such as medical technology, space technology, retail, hospitality, finance services, and the creative IT industry, organisations were generally able to meet their manpower needs with a diverse local and global workforce.

Over the last decade, however, it has become increasingly more challenging for organisations to meet manpower needs and take advantage of growth and new opportunities. One fundamental issue is the shrinking local workforce which will not be able to fully replace the workforce retiring over the next few years, even with a higher re-employment age<sup>3</sup>. As the push to develop a sustainable economy with a strong Singaporean Core intensifies, organisations across all industries will also need to ensure that their workforce planning policies and capability development programmes are able to support their business needs. They also need to adopt creative options to reach out to non-traditional pools of labour while retaining and harnessing the skills and experience of mature workers. Increasing productivity and continuing to develop the competencies of employees to address skills shortage are other imperatives.

### **A case for fair and progressive employment practices**

Organisations that adopt a progressive mindset are more likely to have a diverse workforce and understand the value of anticipating changes, identifying and addressing potential business and employee needs, and ensuring that HR policies and practices stay relevant and effective, to ensure a motivated workforce in a manpower-lean economy.

Fair and progressive organisations recognise the synergy derived from harmonising diverse elements in their workforce and are more attentive to the contextual environment in which they operate. Their holistic approach towards manpower management and engagement enables them to be future-ready and more agile in responding to changes in society and the business environment.

The participating organisations in this study acknowledge that there is a business case for implementing fair and progressive employment policies and practices. They recognise that when employees perceive that the ‘psychological contract’ is fulfilled, that they have been fairly treated, their feedback and needs are taken into account, and they are valued and included, they will inadvertently feel a sense of belonging to the workplace and a sense of camaraderie with colleagues.

They consciously create inclusive and harmonious workplaces that engage and motivate their employees, who in turn, enjoy their work and go beyond their jobs to serve with heart. They perform

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<sup>2</sup> Not all breaches however result in adverse attitudinal or behavioural responses. It depends on the importance of the unmet promise or obligation, the extent to which the breach is actually attributed to the organisation, and the depth and strength of the existing relation between the employee and the organisation.

<sup>3</sup> From 1 July 2017, employers must offer re-employment up to the age of 67. The new re-employment age will apply to eligible employees who turn 65 on or after 1 Jul 2017.

better and more productively, and also tend to be more innovative and efficient, thereby enhancing business outcomes and employer branding.

## Trends in employment practices of progressive organisations

With the growth and rapid development of Singapore over the last few decades, job roles and employee demographics have changed; workers' motivations have also shifted from working to meet basic needs to fulfilling higher level needs and aspirations. The role of HR has also evolved in response to these changes – from automating standalone HR systems (1990s), to supporting the war for talent (2000s), and to using HR data to manage the workforce more effectively (2010s). At the national level, the Ministry of Labour was restructured into the Ministry of Manpower in 1998 to develop a globally competitive workforce in a sustainable manner. Likewise, awareness of the importance of fair and progressive employment practices has grown with the establishment of the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP); while a greater emphasis on jobs and ensuring enterprises can become manpower-lean while remaining competitive led to the reconstitution of the Singapore Workforce Development Agency as Workforce Singapore (WSG) in 2016.

In addition, structured platforms such as HR dialogues and roundtables, etc. have enabled HR issues to be discussed more openly and best practices to be shared within and across industries for wider adoption.

In 2016, this study finds that leading employers in Singapore have taken on broader and more holistic approaches to managing people, taking into account corporate culture, work environment, employee engagement, and empowerment.

This section describes five enhancements to employment practices that the participating organisations have undertaken in recent years.

### **1. Adopting competency-based management**

Well-defined behavioural competencies can effectively translate an organisation's strategic vision into desired behaviours that deliver business results, while correctly defined technical and functional competencies provide objective platforms to manage performance, training and career development.

Participating organisations use structured interview guides and train line managers in interviewing techniques, so as to ensure fairness and consistency in their hiring decisions and improved objectivity in their selection process.

Most of them also apply the competency framework across different HR functions such as learning and development, performance management, career development and succession planning; standardising and integrating major HR activities based on competencies.

### **2. Facilitating career development**

Participating organisations create a learning environment to help employees continuously learn and develop at work. They empower them to take responsibility for their own careers through development programmes; proactively create job rotation opportunities or the movement of employees across locations, roles or projects; and focus on employee development during performance appraisals, to motivate them and improve future performance.

These organisations establish career roadmaps for different job functions and levels. Those who use competency frameworks also integrate competencies into their career frameworks. They establish

standard procedures to support internal movements and provide information about internal job opportunities to encourage employees to proactively seek out new roles within the organisation. To support these movements, they build a culture of acceptance amongst supervisors and managers to facilitate the movement of employees to other roles.

The leading organisations in this study also recognise that an important part of development is to provide opportunities for employees to improve their performance over time. They increase the frequency of formal touch-points such as conversations and coaching to give developmental feedback and recognise accomplishments. To support this, supervisors are trained to hold career development conversations with employees, and employees are encouraged to proactively seek guidance from supervisors, mentors and/or senior leaders.

Such regular two-way communication offers a more agile form of performance management – to continually align expectations, performance and employee development with the organisations' strategic direction and culture.

### **3. Creating multiple touch-points**

Leading organisations recognise that effective communication occurs across all levels of the organisation, through a variety of different communication platforms. From top management to immediate supervisors and co-workers, leading organisations leverage a diverse range of channels to create multiple touch-points to engage employees and elicit their views. This fosters a work environment that facilitates collaboration, high performance, mutual respect and employee engagement.

In many organisations, senior leaders regularly interact with smaller groups of employees through formal or informal platforms to gather feedback, explain policies, and establish connection and trust. It has also become the practice to do the 'Gemba' Walk (Japanese term used to describe personal observation of work) or have management walk the ground to build relationships beyond their direct reports, and to understand employee concerns.

Increasingly, organisations also deploy HR personnel as business partners to better understand challenges of individual business units and strengthen HR's capability to provide strategic support and build relationships and trust with employees. Smaller organisations without dedicated HR business partners practice 'open door' by scheduling meetings and forums with smaller groups of employees to similarly gather feedback, explain policies/practices, understand employee challenges in the workplace, and build trust and relationships.

Middle managers and supervisors schedule regular team meetings to touch base with their staff and leverage formal touch-points (mentioned in point 2 above) to cultivate greater flow of two-way communication.

Participating organisations understand the significance of helping new employees build a personal connection with a co-worker and the organisation. Many have also extended the scope of newcomer-buddy interactions beyond social integration to engaging buddies as mentors, guiding and sharing with newcomers their experiences, the workings of the organisation, spoken and unspoken norms, and work-related information, knowledge and processes. Organisations select and train potential buddies and recognise them for their contributions; and ensure that there are clear role responsibilities and expectations for all parties (new employee, manager, buddy).

#### **4. Leveraging intrinsic motivation**

People often think of 'recognition' in terms of monetary and tangible recognition such as gift vouchers, cash awards, incentive trips, etc.; but it was highlighted in this study that organisations appreciate that non-monetary and social recognition can be just as powerful a tool to reward and motivate employees.

Organisations today are more deliberate in employing social recognition activities and transforming them into formal recognition programmes. Some examples include providing formal avenues for colleagues to recognise co-workers, organisation-wide events to celebrate and highlight individual and team achievements, and publication of accomplishments in organisation-wide communication channels. That is, the leading organisations in this study are challenged to make recognition deliberate and systematic, and not left to chance. Such peer recognition and showcasing of exemplary employees as representatives of the organisations' values and culture help to enhance employees' motivation and engagement. Organisations should also not underestimate the importance of ad-hoc practices such as thank you notes, verbal praise in front of peers, simple acknowledgement of a job well done and opportunities to attend industry conferences.

#### **5. Supporting employees holistically**

Leading organisations recognise and respect employees as individuals with responsibilities and needs outside the workplace. They understand that employees' needs change throughout their different career and life stages. They also know that employees with good work-life harmony tend to have higher job satisfaction and engagement levels, which results in better employer branding and greater ability to attract diverse talents and retain experienced staff.

One of the ways that these organisations have supported employees is through the provision of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) to allow employees greater control and choice over how they manage their work responsibilities alongside their personal and family needs. When employees experience greater control and choice, they also tend to have reduced workplace stress and a greater sense of empowerment and motivation. This often leads to a positive impact on productivity and timely job completion during work hours that best suit employees and customers.

Participating organisations offered a variety of FWAs to suit their employee demographics and life stage needs, without compromising business requirements. In addition to more common practices like staggered time, time-off schemes, part-time work and working from home, technology, social media and a millennial workforce have also led to greater acceptance of practices such as 'working from anywhere' and 'hot desking'.

## Success Factors supporting an organisation's fair employment journey

While it is important to regularly review and enhance employment policies and practices to ensure that they remain impactful and relevant, they will be less effective if the underlying factors described in this section are not present. These principles define an organisation's sense of purpose, philosophy and serve as building blocks for its fair and progressive journey.

### **Articulating clear corporate values and principles**

Participating organisations articulate clear people principles that focus on creating the best place to work, cultivating an inclusive environment and/or fostering innovation and collaboration.

These overarching beliefs set the stage for consistency in the organisations' people approach. They provide the foundation for the creation of a work environment that enables employees to thrive as individuals and contribute to business success.

Almost all participating organisations cited one or more of the following ideals as their cornerstone corporate value(s): respect, fairness, inclusiveness, well-being, meritocracy, trust, openness. These values guide how employees are treated, how employees treat each other, and form the basis for how fair, responsible and progressive policies and practices are designed.

### **Demonstrating management commitment**

Corporate leaders are pivotal in setting the vision, strategic direction and drive to create an inclusive environment in the organisation. They determine the strategic goals for the HR team, and their convictions influence and set the tone for fair and progressive employment practices.

They are the organisation's role models, and employees can tell very quickly whether corporate leaders and management only pay lip service to inclusion or truly believe it. Leaders must be seen treating people with respect, embracing a diverse workforce and committing resources to building an inclusive workplace.

For many of the leaders in this study, it means going beyond participation in recreational or community activities and organisational events. Many articulate a personal conviction to walk the talk. They regularly walk the ground to understand employees' challenges, engage them and ensure follow through on their feedback to build trust. They understand the importance of taking care of employees, considering their different needs and perspectives, and valuing their contributions.

### **Preparing the workforce for the future**

Organisations face many changes in the business environment that impact how they organise the workplace. In addition to keeping abreast of global and national developments in the political, economic and business arenas, organisations also need to watch for potential threats and opportunities, and prepare the business and workforce for the future.

Systematic scanning and analysis of the external environment afford organisations the opportunity to, among other things, pre-empt and future-proof their workforce policies and practices to support their business strategies.

At the same time, keeping a pulse on the workforce and scanning the workplace environment allow organisations to measure the health of their people strategy – analysing changes to the workplace environment, seeking employee feedback on policies and programmes, and tracking HR metrics that impact business priorities can help business leaders make better decisions.

All organisations in the study use diagnostic tools to understand their current state of HR maturity, with common performance indicators such as attrition, retention, and engagement data to measure the effectiveness of their people strategies. Most are also cognizant that using relevant indicators is critical to superior performance. They are aware, for example, that tracking attrition levels is adequate for replacement of generic roles, while tracking and developing a pipeline for succession of critical roles will ensure the success and sustainability of the organisation in the long-term.

## Employment practices – an enabler for business excellence

Leading organisations understand the importance of constantly learning and striving to improve their people practices in order to stay relevant and effective in engaging their workforce. However, ‘best employment practices’ cannot simply be transplanted. Neither is there one ideal approach to developing ‘best practices’. It is more realistic and sustainable for organisations to evaluate their existing practices and develop/enhance such practices to suit their individual contexts and ensure relevance to their businesses.

This section highlights how the organisations in this study have effectively designed policies and programmes to address specific employment issues and business needs, and how the success factors mentioned in the earlier section have enabled their sustainability over time. These employment practices have been grouped into three main sections: *Workforce Planning*, *Reward & Recognition*, and *Employee Relations*.

### **A. WORKFORCE PLANNING**

Workforce planning is an integral function of HR. It ensures that the medium-term and long-term manpower needs of the organisation are considered regularly and acted upon. This covers operational aspects of acquiring and developing the workforce, as well as strategic alignment towards the organisation’s future. Potential concerns include the types of skills that might be needed in the future and changes in the availability of manpower and skills.

#### **A.1. Manpower planning**

In Singapore’s tight labour situation, organisations are looking beyond traditional recruitment sources to identify and leverage a wider talent pool both internally and externally.

They also regularly review legislative policies and update their employment practices to reflect corresponding changes. Where policies are not mandated, they actively review tripartite recommendations and apply them where possible, such as re-employing employees beyond age 65<sup>4</sup>.

To expand the capacity of its internal pool of manpower, **The American Club** redesigned jobs, cross-trained employees, and made greater use of technology to lighten the manual intensity of jobs and improve the productivity of employees. **Maybank Singapore (Maybank)**, like other leading organisations, put in place policies and processes to encourage and facilitate employees moving to different job roles, recognising that it is advantageous to keep talent within the organisation rather than losing them to other organisations.

When reaching out to a bigger and more diverse talent pool externally, the organisations utilised a range of innovative ways to source for talent. The **Singapore General Hospital** introduced a Return-to-Nursing programme to encourage former trained nurses to return to the profession. It also collaborated with external partners to encourage mid-career switches to the healthcare industry. **McDonald’s Restaurants Pte Ltd (McDonald’s)** tapped on homemakers, retirees and students to meet their manpower needs with flexi-time/flexi-pay/flexi-location roles while the **National Environment Agency** pro-actively reached out to persons with disabilities and re-designed job processes and the physical work environment to facilitate their integration into the workforce.

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<sup>4</sup> From 1 July 2017, employers must offer re-employment up to the age of 67. The new re-employment age will apply to eligible employees who turn 65 on or after 1 Jul 2017.

*“We are open to hiring people with disabilities because we recognise people as human beings and we look at what they can do, not what they cannot do.”*  
- CEO, National Environment Agency

Others like **Network Courier** deliberately built a diverse workforce into its manpower plan to support its business plan. The organisation developed the Train Rider scheme by leveraging a niche pool of mature workers. The new scheme expands the organisation’s delivery service package, which originally comprised only cyclists, and traditional motorcycle and van despatch riders.

As organisations grow and mature, they start to look beyond their short-term needs, putting in place structured processes for projecting future workforce needs in tandem with external evolving trends and developments in the manpower scene.

Understanding the value of anticipating changes, a number of organisations in the study actively conduct medium-term to long-term strategic manpower planning to ensure that they can address potential business and employee needs and achieve organisational objectives. To meet its strategic manpower needs, the **Singapore General Hospital** performs talent forecasting, undertakes an enterprise skills gap assessment to identify critical skills and roles, and regularly engages in scenario planning to prepare the organisation for the future.

## **A.2. Recruitment and selection**

As fair and responsible employers, leading organisations all abide by the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices, assessing short-listed candidates based on merit and giving them a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and experience.

Knowing the importance of hiring the right talent, participating organisations place a lot of emphasis on the selection process. Many anchor their selection process on the organisation’s competency framework to ensure objective selection of candidates.

Most leading organisations also enhance the validity of their selection with the use of psychometric and competency assessment tools. To ensure that their managers have the information and skills to effectively put together and conduct job-related, structured and competency-based interviews using a standard interview guide, **Federal Express (Singapore) Pte Ltd** managers are provided with the appropriate Selection Training.

The selection interview process can also take on another dimension with a ‘reality check’ and two-way communication. At **3E Accounting Pte Ltd**, hiring managers and HR personnel actively seek to understand potential new hires’ needs and aspirations. They communicate realistic representations of the jobs and the organisation’s ability to meet these needs and aspirations. This ensures that selected candidates have a deeper understanding of the organisation and would thereafter be more likely to stay for the longer-term.

*“The labour market is so tight. It is no longer just organisations evaluating candidates, candidates are also assessing us. We have to understand each other, and measure up to the promises that we make to each other.”*  
- Managing Director, 3E Accounting Pte Ltd

### A.3. Onboarding

Organisations generally aim to give new hires a positive onboarding experience. They induct new hires through structured orientation programmes over a day or a couple of weeks, and partner them with buddies for social integration. These programmes may include meeting management or senior leaders.

*“We have checklists of what each new employee needs to know to be successful in the organisation after one month, after two months, after three months. This helps to ensure that every employee can be confirmed into the job role.”*

*- Group HR Director, Asia, Robinsons & Company, An Al-Futtaim Group Company*

A number of the leading organisations in the study engage in more robust onboarding engagement practices, which include planned training in core courses and longer-period buddy arrangements with multiple check-ins over several months with supervisors, HR and sometimes management.

Some extend the scope of newcomer-buddy interactions beyond social integration to engaging buddies as mentors to share their experiences, and guide newcomers on the workings of the organisation, its spoken and unspoken norms, and work-related information, knowledge and processes.

For employees of **Admiralty Primary School**, the scope of its buddy-new hire interactions extends beyond social integration to include guidance pertaining to work-related information, and assimilating new hires into the organisation.

*“Under our onboarding programme, new joiners are invited for a lunch with the Management team, which sets the foundation to our open door policy.”*

*- People Director, Aviva Ltd*

### A.4. Learning and development

All participating organisations strongly believe in providing a learning environment to enable their employees to optimise their potential. They have structured learning and development frameworks that allow individual employees to identify their learning needs based on current and future job requirements.

*“An annual training plan and budget are drawn up. Planned and ad hoc training are implemented in the year for staff members. Employees are free to seek out opportunities on their own and discuss available training opportunities with their supervisors.”*

*- CEO, SSTC Institute*

To ensure that employees are primed to serve customers well, **Robinsons & Company, An Al-Futtaim Group Company (Robinsons & Company)** developed detailed learning roadmaps and deploys e-learning to make learning more productive and accessible to staff.

*“The SGH Grow My T.R.E.E.™ Competency Framework was launched as a guide for employees to identify their competency gaps, and map these to readily available learning opportunities. Information is easily accessible through the SGH Training Calendar and the staff’s online portal. Supervisors are also notified through email so that they can encourage and provide support to improve performance and develop employees to their potential.”*

*- HR Director, Singapore General Hospital*

The leading organisations in this study also have active discussions on what it means to have future-ready workforces. They are aware that particular skill-sets may become obsolete and new skill-sets need to be identified and nurtured. They look ahead at anticipated changes to the economy and their industries. They reflect on innovative, influencing and leading business trends, and actively incorporate such views into their strategic considerations.

In an increasingly competitive job market where a shortage of workers with the right training and skills are impeding business expansion, **The American Club** up-skills and re-skills employees to better equip them to meet future challenges. It created cross-training programmes, offering employees opportunities to develop in new areas of work. It is an efficient solution for the organisation too as employees can move to other functional areas when there is less demand for their primary skills, or when there is a peak demand in other areas.

*“Development of our people is how we future-proof our employees for the changing business landscape. This is an area we will focus on in the coming years. As Singapore moves towards being more technology and innovation-driven, we will provide up-skilling and re-skilling for employees so they remain relevant and competitive.”*

*- People Director, Aviva Ltd*

## **A.5. Career development**

Beyond closing competency gaps and developing employees to perform their jobs well, these organisations also place great emphasis on providing them with the opportunities to fulfil their career aspirations. **Aviva Ltd (Aviva)** regularly holds career development workshops for employees to learn how to plan and progress in their careers within the organisation. Employees are encouraged to work cross-functionally on projects as part of their career development, giving them exposure to different parts of the business.

Most of the leading organisations in the study have developed learning and career development roadmaps in line with the needs of the organisation and its goals. Such roadmaps are mainly drawn up along key functional and behavioural competency frameworks and provide clear directions to help employees at different levels reach their potential. For example, **Maybank’s** Learning Roadmap’s Career Navigator allows employees to look at their current role and see where they develop in the future. With such an understanding of the possibilities, employees are able to hold meaningful conversations with their supervisors on their short- to medium-term career plans. At **The American Club**, the Progressive Wage Model gives employees a clear understanding of the skill-sets and critical experiences they need to have in order to progress up the career ladder. This enables employees to take ownership of their own job progression.

*“OCBC’s Holistic Development Programmes were made available for employees to sign up via My Learning Portal, our internal online portal for*

*learning. The programmes will provide a holistic development experience that supports not just employees' career development, but also inspires their general well-being and personal growth."*  
*Head of Group HR, OCBC Bank*

## **A.6. Performance management**

The fundamental goal of performance management is to promote and improve employee effectiveness. Fair and responsible employers ensure that they have an objective system to identify, measure, manage and develop their employees' performance.

*"Our strong performance culture is underpinned by a robust and transparent performance management process that instills accountability. This ensures that the efforts and achievements of management and employees are aligned with our scorecards and values."*  
*Managing Director, Head of HR, DBS Bank*

Across the 20 organisations in the study, the practice of performance appraisals has evolved beyond 'ratings' and supervisor-directed work targets. The focus has shifted to supervisors working in partnership with employees on goals, targets and performance expectations.

In these organisations, a performance appraisal is no longer just about 'measuring' performance. Emphasis is now placed on employee development to improve performance and effectiveness, and to help employees fulfil their potential.

In addition, once or twice-a-year performance discussions have progressed to ongoing, developmental conversations throughout the year, where supervisors and employees work together to monitor, review and align performance, goals and development. For **Heraeus Asia Pacific Holding Pte Ltd**, the objective of its performance appraisal is to ensure regular dialogue between line managers and their direct reports. It provides a platform for employee feedback and an opportunity to discuss individual work situations as well as career ambitions and personal development.

*"Our performance management development appraisals (MDAs) take place globally across our business as a key element of our People Development. Appraisals are absolutely critical to developing our talent across Heraeus worldwide."*  
*- Managing Director, Heraeus Asia Pacific Holding Pte Ltd*

Line managers play a crucial role in the successful implementation of performance appraisals and other HR policies and practices. The **National Environment Agency** actively explores ways to strengthen the middle management's people-management skills so that they can manage and engage their teams more effectively. Their **SuperMan (Supervisors and Managers)** Forum programme provides middle managers support and information to do so, and they also benefit from a diversity of thought and perspectives, increased peer interaction and collaborative teamwork.

## **A.7. Talent management**

Succession planning increases the availability of capable employees and supports organisational

stability by ensuring that transitions occur smoothly with little disruption to the organisation.

The participating organisations shared that they manage their senior leadership renewal through a deliberate and purposeful process of identifying critical positions and building a talent pipeline. Some of the organisations also consider the implications when key employees or those in critical roles leave the organisation, and ensure that there is a steady pipeline for these positions.

As part of the succession planning process, opportunities are identified for job rotation, cross-functional projects, overseas postings, etc. For example, promising administrators at the **Singapore General Hospital** work with different teams to gain exposure. They collaborate with clinicians in areas such as operations improvement, infrastructure development and emergency planning. Such inclusive collaborations allow for greater appreciation of the challenges faced in different work areas, while forging working networks and bringing together diverse expertise. Working together provides a platform for these employees to 'grow together' in their careers and build camaraderie to facilitate future collaboration as they rise into leadership positions at the hospital.

**Maybank** has a systematic process in place to identify and develop talent to be potential successors to the organisation's leadership team. **Courts (S) Pte Ltd** categorises internal talent based on performance over time and leadership potential/learning ability in a nine-box matrix, and develops a personalised career development plan designed to achieve specific career development goals and keep track of progress.

In addition to the continuous development of leaders through on-going coaching, job rotation and developmental assignments, the participating organisations recognise that there is a need to ensure diversity in the pipeline in order to build an effective leadership team. This will reduce the risk of group-think, increase the range of perspectives and enhance decision making. Looking ahead, organisations can do more to create greater diversity in their leadership teams – to foster a sense of accountability, they can also track this metric as a management key performance indicator.

#### **A.8. Employer branding**

The study found that beyond succession planning and leadership development, it is also imperative for organisations to focus on employer branding. In a talent-scarce market situation, organisations need to proactively develop their organisation persona as a means to differentiate themselves in order to attract and retain talent.

*“Positioning NEA as a fair, responsible and progressive employer has helped to enhance our employer branding as a choice employer in the public service. We have maintained a solid reputation as one of the most popular graduate recruiters in Singapore and have been featured in the Singapore 100<sup>th</sup> Leading Graduates Employers for five consecutive years from 2011 to 2015.”*  
- HR Director, National Environment Agency

Being recognised as fair and progressive employers adds to building employer branding, giving them a competitive edge in attracting job seekers. For the **Singapore General Hospital**, embracing fair employment and being an employer of choice are strategic imperatives and an intrinsic value proposition to its 10,000-strong workforce.

Leading organisations also demonstrate their commitment to upholding their employer branding by actively participating in benchmarking exercises and including 'employer branding' as a performance

indicator for the organisation. **OCBC Bank** was featured within the top 5 spots in the Bloomberg Market World's Strongest Banks ranking since the ranking's inception in 2011, and acknowledged as Singapore's most attractive employer (Banking & Financial Services Sector) in the Randstad Award 2016. **Mandarin Oriental, Singapore** was recognised for two consecutive years by HR Asia as the Best Companies to Work For in Asia in 2014 and 2015, while **McDonald's** was consistently acknowledged as Best Employer by Aon Hewitt in 2007, 2009 and 2011 and conferred the Aon Hewitt Best of the Best Employer Award in 2015.

## **B. REWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

Compensation, benefits, recognition, skills development, career opportunities – they are all part of the total rewards that an employee receives as recompense for good performance. When properly designed, delivered and communicated, they serve to attract, retain and engage talent.

### **B.1. Compensation**

Fair and responsible employers ensure that employees' salaries are quantified fairly and paid in a timely fashion based on what has been stipulated in their employment contracts. While the bigger organisations' salary structures are pegged to industry norms, smaller organisations and those with unionised staff take the National Wages Council (NWC) guidelines into consideration, and work in partnership with their unions.

**Federal Express** proactively reviews and benchmarks its compensation and benefits programmes to meet changes in the job market and in alignment with business goals.

Looking ahead, more organisations may wish to adopt a proactive stance and share with employees their approach towards salaries and benefits benchmarking, whether it takes reference from NWC guidelines or through industry benchmarking. Increased transparency in matters relating to compensation and benefits can have a positive impact in motivating employees and reinforcing desired behaviours.

### **B.2. Benefits**

Fair and responsible employers ensure that their employees enjoy all statutory benefits. As progressive employers, these organisations offer additional benefits beyond what has been legislated – such as additional leave schemes and programmes to support work-life harmony and employees' health and well-being. Many also offered benefits, such as paternity leave, long before they were legislated as statutory benefits.

*"I know what it is like to be so busy handling deliveries and to miss meals. We make sure that every employee gets a full meal at work every day through our Hearty Meals where we provide lunch for all our Networkers."*  
- VS Kumar - Managing Director, Network Courier

Appreciating that employees' needs change throughout their life stages, leading organisations in the study recognise that flexible benefits can better address the needs of a diverse workforce. Some organisations offer flexi-credit or flexi-dollars for employees to use on their choice expenditures, be it for the purchase of a laptop or enrichment classes for their children.

Organised programmes that cater to employees' health, opportunities to pursue their recreational interests, and attending company functions or community activities together, contribute significantly to the forging of positive relationships and to employee engagement. Participating organisations understand this, and ensure that their employees' welfare and well-being is managed holistically, by customising activities and programmes to meet a diverse workforce's different life stage needs.

*“One of the principles guiding our policies and programmes is the ‘meeting of life stage needs’. Thus whether it is formulating training programmes, flexi-work arrangements, or well-being and social activities, we strive to understand the physiological and emotional needs of the different demographic groups and work to develop appropriate policies and programmes so that every group can benefit.”*

*- HR Director, National Environment Agency*

Increasingly, organisations are turning the running of employee welfare and well-being programmes to employees. The personal engagement from employees who champion programmes that they are passionate about ensures their sustainability while giving employees a sense of empowerment. These programmes provide an excellent platform for greater interaction between colleagues, and help strengthen employee camaraderie and teamwork.

With a definite shift away from presenteeism and clocking of hours towards behaviour competency and performance output, leading organisations also offer employees greater flexibility and control over when and how they do their work. They recognise that employees who enjoy work-life harmony are generally happier, more productive and loyal to the organisation. **Philips Singapore** built and designed their APAC Center with Workplace Innovation in mind, giving employees the flexibility to work when and where they can be most productive, and at the same time facilitate better work-life harmony.

Based on employee feedback, the organisations continue to provide flexibility in work arrangements for employees to better manage their work responsibilities alongside their personal needs.

*“Flexible work arrangements have allowed us to tap on mothers returning to the workforce.”*

*- Managing Director, 3E Accounting Pte Ltd*

Recognising that an individual's work-life fit varies across career and life stages and may change over time, the participating organisations offer an array of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs), including flexible work hours, time-off schemes and telecommuting. These arrangements are formalised into policies, guidelines and processes, and communicated to employees. Organisations also ensure that their line managers are educated and equipped with adequate knowledge to administer the FWA policies effectively and consistently.

Besides encouraging employees to maintain good work-life harmony and providing various FWAs suited to its business operations, **Aviva** employees have the flexibility to utilise these arrangements on an ad hoc basis. They are not required to apply beforehand or to submit any forms to HR for approval. Employees simply need to seek approval from their managers before utilising these arrangements.

### **B.3. Recognition**

The leading organisations in this publication know that recognition makes a difference to employee motivation and use both monetary and non-monetary recognition schemes to show employees that they are valued. **Philips Singapore** has a recognition programme which awards recognition points that employees can use to redeem a range of products based on their preferences.

*“We reward employees and teams for extraordinary performance or contribution to the company. The highest award, the Gold Award, translates to 10% of the employee’s annual base salary.”*  
- Managing Director, Heraeus Asia Pacific Holding Pte Ltd

The organisations use holistic and equitable recognition programmes to show appreciation, acknowledge achievement and foster or reinforce desired employee behaviours such as teamwork, thoughtfulness, or excellent customer service. Recognising employees for doing the right thing encourages them to do those things again and contributes to building an employee’s self-esteem, confidence and motivation.

*“We recognise exemplary service in our organisation.”*  
- Director of HR, Mandarin Oriental, Singapore

*“We recognise employees that display our corporate values.”*  
- Head of Group HR, OCBC Bank

Peer-to-peer recognition programmes have also become a common practice in many organisations. This is because they know that social recognition is, in some cases, a more powerful motivator than monetary recognition as it appeals to an employee’s intrinsic motivation.

**MatchMove Pay Pte Ltd (MatchMove Pay)** has established procedures and avenues for employees to thank colleagues publicly, or nominate and vote for exemplary colleagues. Physical tokens, public display of employee pictures or names, and public recognition at organisational events are used to showcase the value or behaviour being recognised. Employees appreciate the acknowledgement by their peers and the organisation – it serves as the age-old ‘pat on the back’ that people seek.

*“We have a strong culture of recognition and a programme called ‘Caught in the Act’ to thank colleagues who have done a great job by going above and beyond their duty. Anyone can nominate a colleague or a team and the number of nominations in the last year increased by 113% year-on-year.”*  
- People Director, Aviva Limited

### **C. EMPLOYEE RELATIONS**

Research has shown that engaged employees display higher capability and potential<sup>5</sup> than disengaged employees. Organisations that focus on building good relations between management and employees, among employees, and instil a sense of pride in the work that they do, can expect to reap

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<sup>5</sup> Source: Retrieved February, 2016, from <http://engageforsuccess.org/what-is-employee-engagement>

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benefits associated with high employee engagement. These include higher productivity, lower turnover and increased innovation.

How can organisations engage employees' heads, hearts and hands?

In today's work environment comprising individuals from different backgrounds and age groups, organisations consciously create a positive work environment where differences in work styles, perspectives and strengths are respected and valued. Great workplaces are built through the day-to-day relationships that employees experience – not just a checklist of programmes and benefits.

Good relationships are built in an inclusive workplace environment that fosters trust and collaboration, where one has a 'voice' and feels valued and cared for by colleagues and management.

### **C.1. Commitment to building an Inclusive Workplace**

Organisations in the study recognise that there are tangible business benefits to be reaped from the talents of a diverse workforce, and have consciously facilitated its creation and leveraged the strengths that such diversity offers.

In the words of **Admiralty Primary School** management, "Having a diverse workforce will increase the quality of the manpower in the organisation. The different individuals bring with them fresh ideas and unique perspectives due to diverse backgrounds and interests. When these differences in perspectives are respected, appreciated and harnessed, they will be drivers of creativity and innovation."

But these organisations also know that diversity in itself is not the end goal, inclusiveness is.

*"People are the most important part of our business. Take care of them, and they will take care of the business."  
- CEO, Courts (S) Pte Ltd*

They do not just rhetorically embrace the values, perspectives and culture of their diverse workforce, but take active steps to understand the needs, perspectives and contributions of the different groups of employees.

They commit resources to build an inclusive workplace for all employee groups by ensuring that their people policies and practices, and their methods of listening, communicating and celebrating, signal a respect and appreciation of the needs and perspectives of diverse communities. They work towards embedding diversity and inclusion into the full HR value stream – from recruitment and selection processes, performance management to talent management, and learning and development programmes.

All these require commitment from the highest level – corporate leaders are pivotal in driving the vision and strategic direction to creating a sustainable inclusive environment. They are the organisations' role models; their words and actions serve as a powerful signal of their convictions – whether they treat their employees with respect and truly embrace diversity and inclusion will determine the perceptions and corresponding behaviours of middle management and staff.

*"The way management say and do things, our attitude and views, they set the tone and that will be cascaded down. Our responsibility as leaders and*

*managers to those who join us is to deal with them fairly. We must operate fairly and have the right values and culture. It may sound like a cliché, but it is not – our people are our assets. We have to treat them well, motivate them, and ensure there is good interaction and relationships.”*  
- CEO, National Environment Agency

*“Our management champions key initiatives and fully support practices that build a fair and inclusive culture. Because of the strong support of management, we are able to act immediately on employee feedback and implement policies and programmes that support fair and responsible practices.”*  
- People Director, Aviva Ltd

Leaders and line managers must also share the responsibility of embracing diversity and inclusion in their actions. To help them manage a diverse workforce with differing needs, **DBS Bank** organises a variety of training programmes to equip them with the relevant skills-sets.

Looking ahead, participating organisations may wish to demonstrate their commitment to maintaining an inclusive workplace, by ascribing accountability to management for the success of the organisation’s diversity and inclusion programmes. Leaders in the organisation can be evaluated on the demonstration of inclusive behaviours through appraisals, comprehensive feedback systems or the annual engagement surveys.

*“When we honour our relationships with our employees, we inevitably strengthen the connections they have with our customers, and in the communities where we do business.”*  
- Head of Partner Resources, Starbucks Singapore

## **C.2. Two-way communication**

People are more likely to feel included if they know what is going on in the organisation and can share their opinions on matters impacting them. Thus, a strong culture of two-way communication where employees can safely and readily air their views is a demonstration of management’s commitment to creating an inclusive workplace.

*“We make effort to keep employees informed on policy changes or NEA news to be released to the public. Giving employees a heads-up strengthens the trust between NEA and the employees.”*  
- HR Director, National Environment Agency

Participating organisations in the study recognise the importance of this and generally adopt an open door policy to encourage employees to speak freely with management, managers and HR personnel. They have structured mechanisms to encourage two-way communication on a regular basis, using a mix of channels to reach out to employees in a targeted manner, allowing for sharing in either an open or confidential setting.

Examples of such platforms include site visits, All-Hands Meeting, e-newsletters, Townhall sessions, Chat-with-CEO sessions and employee-led taskforces. Increasingly, participating organisations are enhancing these platforms to encourage greater communication and interaction:

Town Hall sessions at **Aviva** take on a more informal setting with quizzes and inspiring stories to encourage questions and feedback from employees. The organisation's monthly 'Walk with CEO' from the Aviva office to Gardens by the Bay not only promotes a healthy lifestyle, but also provides employees direct access to the CEO and allows them to give feedback in an informal setting. This activity provides the CEO with an opportunity to engage with employees at a more personal level, and cultivates a culture where honest conversations can take place, helps break down hierarchy and promotes inclusion.

*"Our culture is built on open communication and respect, with our senior leadership team role-modeling these behaviours. Our CEO leads by example and sets aside time to engage with employees through regular programmes."*  
- People Director, Aviva Ltd

Management and HR personnel regularly walk the ground to make themselves more visible and accessible to employees. **Robinsons & Company** introduced the HR Business Partner role seven years ago to enable them to be more responsive to employee needs.

Leaders adopt a more consultative management style to encourage feedback. Through the Managing Director Advisory Board programme, **Federal Express** employees are not only 'heard' but also participate in the creation of solutions, producing a strong sense of engagement and ownership among the employees.

Progressive employers consciously leverage the strength of a diverse workforce. **MatchMove Pay** serves customers across diverse markets, hence, understanding customer requirements is critical in tailoring and deploying its technology effectively.

*"Our diverse workforce has enabled us to develop better and more culturally attuned solutions."*  
- CEO, MatchMove Pay Pte Ltd

### **C.3. Grievance Procedure and Whistle Blowing policies**

It is unavoidable that disagreements and miscommunication occur in the workplace and employees may occasionally feel that they have been unfairly treated. To maintain workplace harmony, participating organisations in the study have in place a grievance handling procedure to manage employee complaints arising from discontent pertaining to work, or perceptions of unfairness in the workplace.

For example, employees of **Federal Express** can use its Guaranteed Fair Treatment process (GFTP) to make complaints of any allegation of discriminatory employment practices. They are familiar with the GFTP, which outlines the various stakeholders' responsibilities and describes the systematic review by progressively higher levels of management to fairly and equitably handle employee complaints, problems, concerns and allegations regarding fair treatment.

*"An employee's right to participate within the guidelines of the GFTP is guaranteed, although the outcome may not necessarily be in the employee's favour. We look at the GFTP as more than a grievance handling process. We use it as a learning opportunity where the organisation can improve on our policies or the way we handle issues."*

A specific and transparent grievance handling process communicates an organisation's commitment to creating a safe environment for aggrieved employees to speak up. Going a step further, some organisations have provided an avenue for employees to surface ethical or legal breaches of law or wrongdoing within the organisation through their whistle-blowing policy and/or ethics hotline. They believe that without a formalised process in place, employees may not surface such issues out of fear of being identified, although the organisation has articulated an open-door policy.

#### **C.4. Feedback from employees**

As with other leading organisations in the study, **Federal Express** uses diagnostic tools to systematically gather feedback from employees, to ensure that the company is providing a good working environment and working conditions. Its Survey-Feedback-Action programme includes a feedback session with the workgroup's management for employees to have the opportunity to elaborate on concerns expressed in the survey.

The most common tools used by the organisations to gather feedback are annual or biennial organisational climate and employee engagement surveys. The surveys are comprehensive, with performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of the organisations' people strategies, policies and programmes, mainly through the level of employee engagement. The most common indicators measured are retention, pride in the organisation, satisfaction, and willingness to recommend their organisations to potential employees.

*“In terms of engagement, our approach is based on respect, valuing differences and inclusion. Employee well-being is important to us. Through regular feedback, we continuously review our initiatives to ensure they are relevant and impactful, with the aim of promoting, engaging and supporting our employees' diverse needs and interests at the workplace.”*

*- People Director, Aviva Ltd*

Over time however, there is a risk that such structured and regular surveys may become a routine. It is hence vital that there is adequate follow-up to address employee feedback, as insufficient action may result in cynical and less inspired employees.

**OCBC Bank** is transparent about its survey results as well as the follow-through actions taken in response. It appreciates honest feedback – both positive and negative – and engages employees to better understand the issues and to develop possible solutions. Follow-up actions are taken and employees acknowledge the improvements made with higher satisfaction scores.

The leading organisations in the study recognise the value of conducting regular employee surveys to check on the health of the organisation and the engagement level of employees, but they also ensure that this does not replace actual conversations and face-to-face meetings with employees. They understand that a good work environment is ultimately about relationships, and that employees must be able to sit down with their supervisors or management to talk about issues and concerns; otherwise, no matter how many anonymous surveys the organisations conduct, problems will continue to persist.

*“We have to hear from our employees formally and informally. Top management hold quarterly ‘skip level’ dialogues to interact with employees they do not regularly interact with so as to hear firsthand the issues they face.”*

*- Group HR Director, Asia, Robinsons & Company,  
An Al-Futtaim Group Company*

### **C.5. Measuring effectiveness of employment practices**

As with all organisational initiatives, performance indicators have to be identified to measure the effectiveness of its people strategies, policies and programmes. These indicators should measure the impact of the employment practices on business results and employee engagement.

This would help the organisation to evaluate the effectiveness of existing practices so that it can make refinements to strategies or policies as necessary. It is useful to track these indicators over time to assess the impact of these practices and identify trends.

For the leading organisations in the study who measure the effectiveness of their employment practices, the HR Balanced Scorecard appears to be the preferred tool used to articulate the alignment between the organisations’ HR plans and strategies with their strategic business thrusts. The HR Balanced Scorecard is an effective tool which connects the different streams of HR activities – from recruitment and selection to employee engagement, talent management to tripartite relations – into a strategic framework, providing an objective structure for evaluation.

## Conclusion

Fair and progressive employment practices are integral to the long-term success and sustainability of organisations in Singapore. While their journeys and experiences in implementing fair and progressive employment practices have been different, all the business leaders in this study have seen how these practices serve as a definitive competitive advantage for their organisations.

These leading employers do not deploy fair and progressive employment practices as a matter of compliance or just to keep up with trends in HR practices; they proactively cultivate and embed organisational values that support and facilitate a fair and progressive culture within the workplace, and continually enhance, innovate and synergise their employment practices to ensure relevance.

While the insights detailed in this report serve as good examples to guide and encourage other organisations on their fair employment journeys, every organisation must take its own context and business environment into account. It cannot simply adopt another organisation's 'best practices'. Neither is there a single perfect approach to developing 'best practices'. It is more realistic and practical for organisations to reflect on their own practices in relation to their employee needs and business environments, then identify and develop/enhance fair and progressive employment practices in line with the shared values of progressive organisations.

When developing/enhancing their fair and progressive employment practices, organisations should leverage support and resources from within and outside their organisations. Employees are a source of good ideas and can be co-creators of practical solutions that meet the needs of their organisations and employees. Where available, additional information and resources from global headquarters and parent organisations can also be tapped. Tripartite agencies, industry associations and government bodies also offer support and resources in varied and numerous ways.

Needs and circumstances change all the time. The journey of a fair and progressive employer is taken one step at a time and evolves constantly. Organisations do not 'arrive' at a fair and progressive 'state' – rather they continually move forward to embed their culture, values and principles, develop and enhance their practices, champion diversity of perspectives and embrace inclusiveness to forge ahead as a team.

For more information and resources on  
fair and progressive employment  
practices, visit [tafep.sg](http://tafep.sg)

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## **3E Accounting Pte Ltd**

### **Introduction – An up and coming corporate advisory firm**

As a young Singapore-based firm (incorporated in 2011), 3E Accounting Pte Ltd (3E Accounting) provides corporate advisory and professional services for start-ups and small and medium enterprises (SMEs). From a husband and wife team, it has expanded to a group of over 20 employees. 3E Accounting ranks among the top 30 accounting firms in Singapore (The Singapore Business Review), and in 2014 received the Promising SME 500 Award in recognition of its success.

As its name suggests, 3E Accounting is guided by 3 'E's – Empowerment, Enthusiasm, and Enhancement.

- Empowerment involves listening and communication – the management team shares information, and rewards and empowers its employees so that they can take the initiative, make decisions to solve problems and improve service and performance.
- Enthusiasm reflects how 3E Accounting's employees embed personal enthusiasm into working with integrity, trust, transparency and professionalism in all its dealings.
- Enhancement is about raising the skill levels of employees through upgrading and staying abreast of the latest regulations, financial and international developments, so that they are able to provide quality advice in every business transaction.

### **Business case – The right people are needed**

3E Accounting's leaders are not content to merely operate a profitable business. They seek to provide a sustainable business with a reputation that rests on their steadfast pursuit of exceeding customer expectations. 3E Accounting has cultivated a sustainable ecosystem of quality service with predictable revenues and decent margins, in a workplace culture that satisfies employees' work-life needs and aspirations. This has enabled them to recruit employees who want career advancement and also value work-life harmony.

### **Best practices – HR practices for flexibility and effectiveness**

From the start of its operations, 3E Accounting focused on training and developing its employees. Its approach paid off with ACCA recognising it as an Approved Employer within one year of its founding, and obtaining the status of Accredited Training Organisation for the Singapore Qualification Programme candidates in 2013. Prospective employees are assured that the level and quality of teaching and developmental support meets or exceeds global standards.

When offering opportunities to prospective employees, 3E Accounting holds an enlightened view of modern employment. 3E Accounting envisions modern careers as associated with ongoing learning, relevance and individual productivity, rather than climbing the ranks of the corporate ladder. Prospective employees and the company seek to understand each other in the interview process, a fundamental step crucial to mutually choosing to work together. With this approach, 3E Accounting has been able to reach out to diverse groups including mature workers and working mothers (including expectant women), with the assurance that work contributions are valued and that employees are able to balance professional and personal growth. 3E Accounting cross-trains suitable employees into multiple roles – this allows them to widen their industry knowledge, increase their professional expertise and facilitate operational flexibility.

Work within the organisation is subject to a holistic performance appraisal framework. Employees self-appraise their own progress and performance, and provide feedback on whether they have received sufficient support to perform their work duties. The two directors review every appraisal and conduct a one-to-one discussion directly with each employee. With an expectation that everyone handles constructive criticism with maturity and is willing to improve, leaders have nurtured a positive work atmosphere where employees' views are heard so management can directly address any perceived or real discrimination and unfair treatment.

Ultimately, 3E Accounting's business performance relies on providing quality service to its clients. Since its inception, it has progressively expanded its suite of services with value-added services and enhanced its operational model to be responsive to client needs and enquiries. 3E Accounting responds rapidly to client enquiries, which enables quicker decision-making by its clients, and moves actively to reduce service errors through training each member of the team.

Quality service has been achieved with operational ingenuity. 3E Accounting deliberately focuses on operational productivity. Speed in moving assigned work to its team and completed work back to its clients is concurrently supported by a high-performance culture. Competent managers also project team capacity accurately and deploy team resources productively. This operating approach seeks to eliminate slack office time, replacing it with efficiency, facilitating a five-day workweek with limited overtime, thereby supporting the life goals of staff and the operational goals of the business.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

The combination of business revenues, employee productivity and work-life harmony has created a virtuous cycle that underpins 3E Accounting's performance. With its low employee turnover, the organisation is able to provide consistent and high quality client service, resulting in significant revenue growth (S\$450,000 in 2012 to S\$3 million in 2015).

### **The path to success**

3E Accounting's progress is reflected in the drive that its directors have in ensuring that the business is successful and sustainable in the long-term. While always concerned about business sustainability, they have productively channelled their energies to a future grounded on building an organisation that provides meaningful livelihoods for employees and relevant services to clients.

## **Admiralty Primary School**

### **Introduction – A dynamic educational hub**

Admiralty Primary School (Admiralty) was established in 1997 and aims to be a vibrant and dynamic educational hub. It strives to develop children through creative and innovative educational methods and help them grow into confident persons and critical thinkers. To achieve this, it partners with employees to live up to the vision of the teaching service – to lead, care and inspire.

This school in the northern part of Singapore has a vibrant workplace environment. It embraces the diversity and richness of backgrounds and perspectives of its employees, and leverages their diverse talents for organisational excellence. Employees work together harmoniously and everyone is part of a big happy family.

### **Business case – A clan culture**

In 2011, the new principal noted that the school's strong family culture could impede its goal to be a vibrant and dynamic educational hub, if it led to leaders and employees withholding necessary performance feedback in order to maintain positive relationships.

### **Best practices – Enhancing the performance management system**

Whilst ensuring that the school maintains its open and collaborative clan culture, and school leaders continue to assume a mentoring role toward employees, the leaders also sought to edge its organisational culture towards being more results-oriented, with a focus on competition, achievement and getting the job done.

One area that the school leaders focused on to edge it towards a market-oriented culture was its performance management system. School leaders communicated and explained the rationale for the school's directions and expectations, and Key Result Areas were made clearer to employees. Strategic goals and expectations were cascaded to Heads of Department (HODs), who shared the department goals and targets with department members.

The existing performance management process was refined to allow for more communication to help employees continue to develop and improve on their performance. These include the use of pairwise performance comparisons, and half-yearly conversations with employees based on a tiered performance structure.

Although apprehensive and concerned about their performance ratings, employees were eventually won over when they recognised that the intent of the enhanced performance management process was not punitive, but was structured to help them develop and improve. Today, employees view the performance management process as fair and transparent, and the outcome is that they become more self-directed in bridging their developmental gaps, are more resilient and more proactive in taking on new initiatives and projects.

Additionally, HODs were trained to evaluate performance objectively and to share feedback candidly. At the 'Management and Leadership in Schools' programme, they were also trained to coach, mentor and inspire team members with differing profiles.

Another area that the school leaders focused on to bring about a market-oriented culture was to ascribe accountability. The school 'de-centralised' its structure and empowered HODs to make decisions on how to run their departments and manage their resources to achieve desired results. Thus, decisions are made more quickly and there is greater scope and level of innovation, thereby improving productivity, increasing employee satisfaction and getting the job done.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

Admiralty's enhanced performance management system helped it towards achieving a market-oriented culture focused on achievement of goals, results and productivity, while anchored to a family-like environment that facilitates collaborative efforts and uses quality relationships to produce results and quality outcomes. Collegiality amongst goal-focussed colleagues drives productivity and staff engagement, and ultimately leads to organisational excellence.

The enhancement to the performance management system benefitted the school as employees became more goal oriented and focused on achieving results.

- In 2010, eight of 24 PSLE indicators identified by the school surpassed the national average. By 2015, 23 of 24 PSLE indicators surpassed the national average.

It helped the school achieve its vision to be a vibrant and dynamic educational hub.

- Beyond the PSLE, the school also made significant achievements in the aesthetic and physical domains of education and in environment education and community partnership.

As teachers become more purposeful in providing quality education, they also became more engaged and involved in the school.

- In 2015, 94% of employees said that they felt a 'sense of achievement' in their work, with overall employee engagement at 74%, a significant improvement from 64% in the 2013 School Climate Survey.

### **The path to success**

The School Leaders were open and transparent about the performance management practices that were to be introduced; and they had the courage and commitment to make changes to a culture that employees were comfortable with. They communicated the rationale for changes, acknowledged the concerns, practised the process consistently, listened to feedback and refined the processes appropriately. School leaders set the tone, walked the talk and took responsibility for the results.

## Aviva Ltd

### **Introduction – An inclusive employer**

Aviva Ltd (Aviva) is a subsidiary of a global company employing over 29,000 people in 16 markets worldwide. The Aviva Group provides life insurance, health insurance, general insurance and asset management to over 34 million customers globally. In Singapore, the British insurer has more than 650 employees comprising 14 nationalities, of whom Singaporeans and permanent residents make up 92% of the staff strength.

Aviva believes in being a fair and inclusive employer because it benefits the business, the employees and the wider community. Management and the People Function actively work to remove 'hierarchy', and employees are encouraged to challenge assumptions without fear of reprisal. The result is a fun and vibrant workplace that embraces diversity, engages employees and develops them to perform to their full potential.

In Aviva, employees are encouraged to meet the needs of customers and create a sustainable future for them. The organisation's corporate values of 'care more', 'kill complexity', 'never rest', and 'create legacy' provide a guide for employees' interaction with one another and with customers.

### **Business case – Creating an inclusive environment**

The organisation believes that to have engaged employees and a vibrant workplace, there must be an inclusive environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and where differences are valued. Aviva wants to create a culture that is built on trust, and open, honest and timely communication.

### **Best practices – Approach to building trust and engagement**

The organisation uses a host of communication platforms and channels to facilitate two-way conversations and feedback. Adopting an open door policy with a strong focus on face-to-face conversations, employees are encouraged to approach their managers or the senior leadership team. At Aviva, various programmes and practices incorporate this policy, starting from the top with the CEO.

Several programmes are structured such that employees have direct access to the CEO and regular conversations are conducted in informal settings to allow for engagement at a more personal level. More importantly, these programmes aim to cultivate a culture where honest conversations can be held despite hierarchy, to promote diversity of thought and inclusiveness.

Examples of such platforms include Town Hall sessions in informal settings with fun activities and quizzes, floor visits, skip-level sessions with individual departments, the popular monthly walks from Aviva's office to Gardens by the Bay, and community work, with the CEO and senior leaders taking the lead in these events.

Through these regular communication sessions, Aviva is able to continuously review initiatives and practices to ensure that they are relevant and impactful. Because of the strong support from management, the People Function is also able to act immediately on employees' feedback and implement policies and programmes that support fair and responsible practices. This was demonstrated when an employee's proposal to do away with the submission of medical certificates was approved by the management team within days of receiving the suggestion. This new practice allows employees to rest at home for minor ailments without the need to visit a doctor to get a medical certificate. It heightens employees' well-being and contributes to greater engagement because of the trust placed in them.

To build trust and engage employees, the organisation also ensures that employees are involved in the business. For example, when it unveiled a new strategy at the end of 2013, all employees regardless of grade were invited to attend immersive experience workshops led by the CEO and senior management. This ensured that every employee was given the opportunity to explore, better understand, and internalise what the new strategy would mean for them and their work. As part of this strategy workshop, employees participated in a session to suggest how they could make the company more progressive and inclusive. Many of the suggestions are part of the organisation's practices today.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

Results from the organisation's annual employee surveys support the importance of communication and building a culture of trust. In 2015,

- 89% of employees said that they are proud to work for Aviva (89% in 2014 and 67% in 2013),
- 80% are motivated to contribute more than required (74% in 2014 and 55% in 2013),
- 90% said they trust what their senior leaders say (90% in 2014, 71% in 2013),
- 87% said that senior leaders do what they say they will (88% in 2014 and 66% in 2013) and
- 85% said that there is open, honest communication at Aviva (84% in 2014 and 63% in 2013).

### **The path to success**

Aviva's focus on building trust and good relations between management and employees, and amongst employees helped create an inclusive environment in the organisation. Management champions its corporate values by living the values and walking the walk. The CEO and management members' personal and authentic engagement with employees make them feel valued; as they know that their opinions are respected and that all feedback is seriously considered.

## **Courts (S) Pte Ltd**

### **Introduction – An Established Retailer**

Founded in 1974 and headquartered in Singapore, Courts (S) Pte Ltd (Courts) is the largest electrical, IT and furniture retailer in Southeast Asia. Its mission is to make aspirational home products easily affordable. It has differentiated itself from its competitors by providing in-store credit, and developing capabilities in credit assessment and credit management.

With more than 700 employees in Singapore, Courts operates 16 stores with a retail space of 470,000 square feet. These encompass store formats of the megastore, the superstore, the department store and the small-format store. Its regional footprint includes 64 stores in Malaysia and 5 stores in Indonesia. Courts aims to be the clear #1 player in select Asian markets, be the retailer of choice in core and select categories and achieve high staff engagement in a performance-oriented culture.

### **Business case – Responding to challenges in a soft retail market**

Courts operates in a fast-evolving retail landscape where traditional boundaries between physical and digital shopping are increasingly disappearing. Economic growth in the group's markets in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia was slow in 2015. In Singapore, Courts' turnover remained stable at S\$505.6 million on the back of economic growth of 2.0% in 2015. Projected economic growth for 2016 in Singapore was expected at 1%-3%.

While economic growth is expected to be muted, Courts lives its core values of 'Employee First', 'Customer Focus', and 'Innovate to Grow'. Courts aims to improve its productivity, raise its margins, and invest in the future, with integrity. Store reinvention continues to be a key emphasis with refurbishment of existing stores as well as the creation of a new store look planned to complement product ranges and an omni-channel experience.

### **Best practices – Living its core values: 'Innovate to Grow', 'Employee First'**

The management at Courts are guided deeply by its core values. As part of ongoing innovation, Courts launched its next-generation store in April 2016. Designed with more modular and flexible retail floor and advertising displays, the store offers sales optimisation through changes in store layout to suit different product seasonality, such as laptops and digital products during back-to-school periods targeted at tertiary students. Such ongoing innovation increases productivity with efficient use of retail space and fixed assets.

In its core value 'Employee First', Courts showcases its people, its most important asset. It conducts training programmes to develop the product knowledge and selling capabilities of its sales force. The senior management actively champion workplace diversity and inclusion, and demonstrate their commitment to employees by actively engaging them in the business on an ongoing basis. Employees at all levels are required to develop organisational goals annually, and there are strategies to help them achieve the goals through various engagement platforms.

For instance, by making store-based metrics (such as Net Promoter Score) available, employees gain a sense of shared purpose, team identity and unity. Employees communicate directly with management through regular management visits at each store. Team building activities are also made part of employee wellness initiatives. In a season of cyclically lower financial performance where employees might traditionally look for other opportunities, Courts has taught employees to understand the relationship between the business performance and the business cycle, and

tempered expectations towards remuneration such that many employees choose to stay to contribute to the business.

Courts makes developing its talent its priority, to handle the changes in the retail landscape. It uses a professional framework – the robust Lominger-Nine-Box matrix, to identify talented candidates and to assess employees' current and potential contributions in a meaningful manner. It has put in place a number of tailored development plans to retain and develop the potential of these high performing employees. These include training programmes, job rotations, regional job postings, mentoring opportunities and coaching as part of the structured programmes, and serve to groom the next generation of leaders at Courts.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

Courts' investment in its people has deepened loyalty between employees and management. The attrition rate of 1.9% at Courts is significantly lower than the 3.4% industry benchmark according to 2015 data by the Ministry of Manpower.

Employees know that leaders are committed to nurturing the business, taking care of employees and likewise commit to their performance goals. Courts has maintained its People Developer and Service Quality Class awards since 2003, and attained the Singapore HEALTH Award 2012 – Silver Award.

### **The path to success**

Courts makes its core values central to its business. With data-based decision making, and steady execution of its strategies, leaders at Courts engage employees and make them part of the success of the business. Employees stay with Courts through the up-and-downs of business cycles because their leaders have engaged them actively to understand the business. Employees know that their contributions matter, and that they have the opportunity for a long-term career with Courts.

## **DBS Bank**

### **Introduction – Building a future-ready and inclusive workforce**

DBS Bank (DBS) is a leading financial services group in Asia, headquartered in Singapore. Providing a full range of services in consumer banking, wealth management and institutional banking, it has more than 22,000 employees across 18 markets. It is at the forefront of leveraging digital technology to shape the future of banking, and has been named “World’s Best Digital Bank” by Euromoney. The bank has also been recognised for its leadership in the region, having been conferred “Asia’s Best Bank” by The Banker and Euromoney, and “Asian Bank of the Year” by IFR Asia. The bank has also been named “Safest Bank in Asia” by Global Finance for eight consecutive years from 2009 to 2016.

DBS brings together a diverse workforce with a broad spectrum of skills and perspectives that enables an innovative and dynamic work culture that is about “Making Banking Joyful”. It is committed to creating a collaborative work environment and equipping employees with the latest tools and technology, leading to highly engaged employees who feel valued and take pride in the growth of the business.

At DBS, employees are expected to demonstrate professionalism and respect. HR aligns its policies with the bank’s core PRIDE! values – Purpose-driven, Relationship-led, Innovative, Decisive and ‘Everything fun’. This creates a positive culture of greater collaboration and respect for one another, embedding values and reinforcing desired behaviours into daily life.

### **Business case – Diversified workforce with varying employee demographics**

The banking industry is being profoundly impacted by new technologies and changing customer expectations. Fintech start-ups are beginning to affect various parts of the financial services value chain. DBS sees its future success as dependent on its ability to harness the digital revolution and completely re-imagine the banking experience. This means enabling employees to excel in the future and building a work environment that engages the large and diversified workforce.

### **Best practices – An inclusive and future-ready workplace**

Sustained effort within a defined journey enabled DBS to achieve progress. In its journey to build an inclusive workplace, it conducted numerous focus groups, workshops and surveys. Over an 18-month journey, it redefined the values important to the bank that would guide employee behaviours. The bank’s CEO and senior management actively engaged employees across the year through various platforms including staff briefings, interactive blogs, and webcasts. More than 4,000 employees participated in a week-long exchange in 730 topics around digital, customer experience, and innovation.

To address the increasing impact of fintechs, DBS seeks to “future-proof” employees and inculcate a digital mindset. This means building awareness and understanding of new areas of knowledge in social intelligence, computational thinking, and new media literacy. Customised learning roadmaps were developed for different learning needs of employees. In 2015, employees underwent an average of 6.4 days of training. DBS also gave 2,000 employees exposure to digital culture, agile methodology, and digital working concepts through DBS Hackathons where employees worked with start-ups to develop solutions to business challenges.

With a large and diversified workforce, a one-size-fits-all working environment does not meet employee needs. DBS recognises the need to give employees more choices and greater flexibility at

work to help them grow professionally and personally. It designs initiatives to suit employees at different career and life stages.

For young professionals, growth and development are priorities, and DBS has put in its in-house learning centre, DBS Academy, a talent development programme for the full spectrum of employees from entry-level graduates to senior leaders. With its Internal Mobility Programme, employees can take on different roles across businesses and geographies.

DBS also has a Flexi-Work Arrangement programme which caters to parents with young children, or those who need to look after older family members.

To embed work-life practices in the bank, stakeholder engagement took place at multiple levels. Senior management endorsement provided staff with the confidence that the bank was supportive of flexible work arrangements. Training enabled line managers to facilitate conversations and employees also had access to information and toolkits on the company intranet. With the development of good practices and supportive supervisors, DBS has been able to encourage employees to utilise the various initiatives and enable greater inclusion of the diverse workforce.

DBS also offers mature workers (aged 62 years and above) re-employment terms that are better than tripartite guidelines and industry norms, and remuneration based on performance without any age bias.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

Over the past decade, DBS made progress in its employee engagement to world-class standards.

- Gallup awarded DBS the Great Workplace Award from 2013 to 2015
- In 2016, Aon Hewitt recognised DBS as the Regional Best Employer.

These engagement results are complemented with low attrition rates.

- In 2014, the bank's retention rates were better than the banking industry's attrition numbers

DBS has good workforce gender statistics.

- DBS's workforce consists of 57% women, with one-third of management positions held by women, ahead of peer commercial banks.

### **The path to success**

One of DBS's goal is building an inclusive workplace. Senior leaders are responsive to 360-degree feedback and business heads actively address employee feedback, leveraging HR business partners to help them develop action plans to improve overall employee engagement. DBS' progress in gender diversity with women in leadership provides evidence that DBS has opportunities for all its employees.

## **Federal Express (Singapore) Pte Ltd**

### **Introduction – A global courier company**

Federal Express (Singapore) Pte Ltd (Federal Express) is an international shipping company providing express delivery and airfreight services. It has a reputation for service excellence, proven by its topping the 'Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore for the Courier Service Sector' in 2014 and 2015.

This global courier delivery service company believes that its employees are the foundation of its success, the key to its future, and must be valued. This belief is embedded in its 'People-Service-Profit' corporate philosophy, which states that employees are the organisation's first priority. When employees are well taken care of, they will be motivated to deliver impeccable service, which ultimately raises the profitability of the organisation. As such, all Federal Express policies synchronise with this philosophy, and all programmes and practices are built on this 'people first' foundation.

### **Business case – Retaining operational staff**

A few years back, it was not unusual for Federal Express to experience high turnover in the Operations department, which also saw high absenteeism from couriers and ground staff. Although this was in large part due to a growing economy and a tight labour market, it was nevertheless a perplexing issue as Federal Express had always provided well for its employees, and through employee schemes, recognised employees for their contributions. Its total rewards package was highly competitive, employees enjoyed excellent learning and development opportunities, and there were several avenues for management-employee communication and structured processes to systematically gather feedback.

### **Best practices – Getting employees to co-create solutions**

Whilst reviewing its employment practices and exploring ways to improve its retention numbers, Federal Express discovered that despite its open-door policy and the availability of numerous two-way communication channels, there were employees who were not comfortable with speaking up and shied away from interactions with management.

An initiative to further reach out to employees was created. The idea was to connect employees more with the organisation – by being more transparent about the business, sharing business challenges to make them feel more involved in the running of the business and by allowing ground-up ideas to get noticed.

A Managing Director Advisory Board was formed, comprising a group of select frontline employees and management members. The Advisory Board served as a structural link between management and frontline employees. Employee Board members gathered feedback and reviewed suggestions from their peers on initiatives that might impact the organisation and the employees. These were subsequently escalated to the Managing Director for a collective and collaborative evaluation of the solutions and best implementation plan.

As a result of the work done by the Advisory Board, the current courier turnover rate is less than half of that of three years ago, while absenteeism has been reduced as peers better understand the impact and consequences of absenteeism on colleagues, customers and the organisation.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

This channel of communication, collaboration, and co-creation of solutions generated by the Advisory Board helped address many issues impacting employees. Over the years, ideas, initiatives and solutions conceived from this Advisory Board have led to many win-win outcomes that make Federal Express a better workplace for all.

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These outcomes show that when employees are not only 'heard' but also given high-level participation in the creation of solutions, they produce in employees a strong sense of engagement and ownership of the issues and their solutions.

**The path to success**

Federal Express management kept an open mind and was willing to explore innovative practices to meet organisational goals. The Advisory Board was a success because it allows diversity of thought and perspectives, leading to innovation and sustainable solutions in many areas to benefit both the organisation and its employees.

## **Heraeus Asia Pacific Holdings Pte Ltd**

### **Introduction – An innovative organisation**

Heraeus Asia Pacific Holdings Pte Ltd (Heraeus), established in 1985, is an international family-owned business founded in 1851 and headquartered in Germany. It is one of the leading companies worldwide for customer-specific development and manufacturer of sophisticated solutions for high-tech products based on precious and platinum group metals and their alloys.

Its portfolio ranges from components to coordinated material systems that are used in a wide variety of industries, including the steel, electronics, chemical, automotive, health and telecommunications industries. Innovation has always been key to the organisation's success, and the Heraeus Group is not only respected and admired for its long-lasting success and fair business practices, but also for its unceasing efforts to contribute to building a sustainable and better world.

### **Business case – Unconnected systems and practices**

Over the past 7 - 8 years, Heraeus progressively acquired four businesses as part of its overall growth strategy. While consolidating the entities, the organisation faced some challenges typical of mergers and acquisitions, including the need to align workplace culture, integrate and align HR practices, and retain and attract the best talents.

### **Best practices – Structure, transparency and simplicity**

Heraeus is built on strong family-friendly values, and maintaining a diverse workforce and respectful workplace has always been a priority for the organisation, as articulated in its corporate guiding principles. But as it grew in employment size and number of locations after acquiring four businesses, it became pertinent for the organisation to formally structure its various principles, guidelines and values into a simple framework.

An inclusive workplace culture allowed Heraeus to set the stage for consistency in its people approach, and provide the framework to establish policies and practices that encapsulate the values the organisation believes in: collaboration, mutual respect, diversity of thought and perspectives, innovation, and service excellence.

Heraeus set about entrenching an inclusive culture through its employee development programmes. This included coaching employees to appreciate the value of diversity and motivating them to play their part in creating an inclusive work culture; at the same time, management and leaders were tasked to be role models, and to collaborate across teams, boundaries, locations and business units.

Believing strongly that being transparent is a powerful way to build trust with employees, Heraeus utilised a 360-degree communication model to connect and reach out to employees of all generations, professions and locations. An innovative tool that was introduced was the visual-based management system, where information and knowledge are distilled into simple one-page charts/summaries/graphics to help employees of all levels understand and use information effectively. This was, in Heraeus' words, making 'common sense common knowledge'.

The post-acquisition period of aligning HR practices also gave Heraeus the push to review and formally structure its various HR functions holistically. When aligning HR practices, it ensured that all pertinent practices were in compliance with employment regulations and adhered to the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices as well as the Fair Consideration Framework. It also undertook an employee survey to identify areas for improvements and potential for enhancement of its policies and programmes.

Post-acquisition, there was a certain amount of anxiety amongst employees, and retaining talent and

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attracting highly qualified employees was a concern for Heraeus. The organisation worked to strengthen and reinforce its employer brand of an inclusive workplace that values diversity, and created a leadership brand through its well-received Leadership Model programme to retain and grow existing talents, and to attract the best candidates.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

A structured and standard approach underpinned by an inclusive workplace culture helped to create an identity for all five of Heraeus' factories. It proffered economies of scale, simplicity of operations, and facilitated job mobility between factories, providing a framework for shared success.

It contributes to Heraeus attaining its goal to attract highly qualified and ambitious employees who are committed to high standards of behaviour. Between 2013 and 2014, Heraeus' highly successful employee referral programme facilitated a recruitment cost reduction of more than US\$300,000 because employees were willing to recommend their friends to an organisation that practices fair and inclusive employment.

### **The path to success**

Under management's people-centric leadership, Heraeus enhanced its communication processes to promote transparency. Management believes that this is a core tenet to building trust and inclusiveness. It also believes that the value of 'transparency' is reduced if employees do not understand the messages. Thus, it was imperative for Heraeus to have not only an overarching principle as a guide while it systematically structured and improved on policies and processes, but also to make it simple so that all employees could understand.

## **Mandarin Oriental, Singapore**

### **Introduction – A five-star luxury hotel in Singapore**

Mandarin Oriental, Singapore (Mandarin Oriental) is a five-star luxury hotel in Singapore. Located in the heart of Marina Bay, Singapore's dining and entertainment district, and near Singapore's central business district, Mandarin Oriental is situated for business and leisure. The hotel offers accommodation that combines subtle Oriental touches with luxurious contemporary comforts to exude a sense of understated style.

Mandarin Oriental aims to provide a motivating and rewarding workplace that enables its nearly 500-strong workforce to thrive. Its commitment to providing outstanding personalised service has earned it industry awards for exceptional quality.

### **Business case – Tight labour conditions in the luxury hotel market**

Facing direct competition from the nearby integrated resorts, Mandarin Oriental has the challenge of operating within a tight labour market in Singapore. As the hospitality industry is manpower-intensive, it has to ensure that its workplace is attractive to employees and conducive for them to contribute and grow.

### **Best practices – An operationally-ready diverse and quality workforce**

To operate at the highest possible standards, Mandarin Oriental has seven guiding principles that underpin its daily operations. These principles include 'Delighting our guests', 'Working together as colleagues', and 'Promoting a climate of enthusiasm'. These guide employee behaviour, such as the ability to anticipate and fulfil the wishes of hotel guests, and contribute to overall success as teamwork brings about higher productivity. Mandarin Oriental also aims to bring out the best in employees through effective training and meaningful career and personal development, and by encouraging individuality and initiative.

Mandarin Oriental starts with behavioural-based interviewing techniques to handpick candidates with the right competencies, attitudes and core values. It then guides employees through a 90-day Orientation on the company's culture and philosophy, and sets workplace standards of conduct to foster mutual respect, and one that is free from discrimination or harassment. These enable new colleagues to grow and mature in a safe workplace.

Mandarin Oriental listens to employees through an annual confidential employee engagement survey. The survey covers a wide range of topics to benchmark itself with other hotels in the group, and with best companies in Singapore and Asia. Action plans are formulated with the involvement of employees to improve, meet and exceed employee expectations. One initiative demonstrating management's commitment to an inclusive work environment was to convert the Colleagues' Dining Restaurant to a fully Halal certified outlet.

Working together as colleagues is very important to Mandarin Oriental. It navigates the hospitality business' seasonal peaks and troughs with a lean workforce that works closely together. One aspect of teamwork is the sharing of responsibility and accountability, and Mandarin Oriental cross-trains its employees to fill multiple roles. During peak periods, Mandarin Oriental utilises its 'Fire Brigade' – a lateral service programme in which administrative colleagues assist operational colleagues. Such programmes deepen trust across different employee groups resulting in a strong culture of service excellence within the workforce.

Mandarin Oriental nurtures its employees to enhance workforce quality. With almost 70% of employees above 40 years old (close to 30 employees are aged 62 and above, with the oldest at 79+), Mandarin Oriental taps on the valuable experience and skills of mature workers.

The hotel also serves the community actively. MINDSET, a registered charity, has been established to make difference in the area of mental health. Led by the Jardine Ambassadors, the MINDSET programme aims to raise awareness and understanding of mental health issues and to change attitudes, while at the same time providing practical support and help for individuals, families and charitable initiatives in the mental health sector. Apart from being part of the MINDSET programme, Mandarin Oriental is also working with MINDS (Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore) and ASPN (Association for Persons with Special Needs) to provide training and placement for their clients.

#### **Impact on business outcomes**

- Within its regional business group, Mandarin Oriental has maintained a high staffing efficiency with the lowest staff-to-room ratio, while maintaining a reputation for quality service.
- It attained an employee engagement score of 83% in 2015, exceeding its goal of 82%.
- Mandarin Oriental has been recognised by HR Asia as a 'Best Companies to Work for in Asia' in both 2014 and 2015, with a 93% positive response rate.
- Mandarin Oriental was given the Quality and Productivity Award by Spring Singapore in 2014.
- Mandarin Oriental was the only hotel in Singapore that achieved the Five Star distinction in both the hotel and spa categories in the Forbes Travel Guide Five & Four Star Awards since 2012.

#### **The path to success**

Mandarin Oriental has the enviable challenge of maintaining its delivery of a Legendary Quality Experience. It has leveraged its leaders as role models, with a focus on attaining high engagement scores. The hotel engages employees in a wider range of activities – decision making, problem solving, sustainability efforts, productivity improvement projects, work-life harmony, innovation, new systems and technology, automation, RFID and processes – to good effect. The hotel moves forward with continuous improvements in areas such as housekeeping, room inventory management, and uniform and linen issue. Manpower-lean technologies such as mobile newspapers and facial recognition technologies are also being studied. With such plans and underlying practices, Mandarin Oriental confidently strides into the future as a leading hotel in its group and in Singapore

## **MatchMove Pay Pte Ltd**

### **Introduction – Financial technology services**

MatchMove Pay Pte Ltd (MatchMove) is a financial technology company that provides innovative, end-to-end enterprise payment solutions to help startups and large enterprises increase revenue and boost user engagement through its patented technologies. Its proprietary cloud-based MatchMove Wallet OS™ enables any company to easily offer their customers a fully branded, secure mobile wallet solution that includes P2P transfer, Remittance, Top Up channels, Virtual Payment Cards, Loyalty Points & Rewards, Promotions & Offers, amongst many other features.

MatchMove has consistently been recognised internationally for its outstanding innovation. In 2013, MatchMove was ranked as Singapore's fastest growing technology company in Southeast Asia in the Deloitte Technology Fast 500 Asia Pacific. In 2014, MatchMove emerged as the "Top Global Innovator" in the Global fintech competition, the SWIFT Innotribe Innovator Challenge in Boston. In 2016, MatchMove was recognised as Most Promising Solution Provider – Banking and Software by APAC CIO Outlook and Most Innovative Financial Technology Provider in Singapore by Global Business Awards.

MatchMove is headquartered in Singapore with offices in Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, India and the Philippines.

### **Business case – Diverse markets**

Operating in a highly competitive landscape, MatchMove helps its enterprise customers to increase their revenue, user engagement and loyalty through the deployment of its innovative and highly scalable Wallet OS that is compatible on any network or devices. It serves customers across diverse markets, hence, understanding customer requirements is critical in tailoring and deploying its technology effectively.

### **Best practices – Diversity and a high performance culture**

As a small company, MatchMove competes with MNCs for candidates that are able to develop and deploy innovative technical solutions. It screens candidates for technical abilities and offers them a compensation plan with equity components, like Silicon Valley start-ups. Candidates also have the opportunity for professional recognition, as co-authors of patents that are written and produced. This facilitates the selection of energetic and ambitious contributors in a performance-oriented culture.

MatchMove operates on three core values – Collaboration, Innovation, and Dedication. Connecting its people is critical to MatchMove's goal of encouraging employees to innovate and contribute to the organisation. MatchMove adopts an open office concept to encourage optimal collaboration among its employees. Through a cross-department Buddy System, new hires gain insights to the work, company culture and the teams across the different markets. They also get to know each other through regular activities like breakfast sessions, lunches, and even beer sessions. At the start of each day, employees gather and share their daily goals. This reinforces the company's performance culture and drive collaboration among employees to help each other achieve their goals.

To ensure regular communication across different offices in the various countries, MatchMove uses a bi-monthly All-hands session to connect regional and local staff via a video conferencing tool and inculcate a sense of belonging. Presenters share work-related knowledge to improve employees' knowledge and keep abreast of the latest technology. The CEO gives out awards to recognise employees who have been nominated by their colleagues and who have contributed to innovation, collaboration and exhibited dedication in their work.

As innovation is an integral part of MatchMove’s business, employees are encouraged to try out new technologies and new ways of doing things. Having a test-and-learn culture is valuable for the company and the staff. This aspect of the corporate culture excites and encourages staff’s creativity and performance, and contributes to staff retention.

**Impact on business outcome**

MatchMove has developed an open and strong collaborative workplace culture across its offices. Its diverse workforce brings valuable insights, with tremendous potential for deploying regional/global strategies rapidly and effectively. Sales teams are able to tap on to employees from the respective local markets to better understand cultural nuances and speed up the sales and deployment process. Native language speakers (e.g. Vietnamese) from a different function can step up to initiate communication and bypass challenges faced by another team.

**The path to success**

MatchMove believes in developing a culture based on common and mutual understanding among its employees regarding its business goals and emphasis on high performance, will help the company to stay on course and drive growth for all – employees’ achievements and company’s growth.

## **Maybank Singapore**

### **Introduction – A family-oriented organisation**

Maybank Singapore (Maybank) started operations in Singapore in 1960. Today, it has 22 branches island-wide to meet the banking and financial needs of businesses and individuals. It is a qualifying full bank and one of Maybank Group's largest overseas operations.

Its pursuit of business excellence standards since 2009 has seen Maybank becoming the first bank in Singapore to achieve all four certifications by SPRING Singapore – the Singapore Quality Class Star, Singapore Service Class, People Developer, and Singapore Innovation Class at an enterprise level.

Maybank recognises that its employees are its best assets and strongly embraces a 'People First' philosophy, which means adopting a 'family-like' culture. This encapsulates the core of the bank's inclusive workplace culture and underpins all aspects of its HR policies, programmes and practices.

### **Business case – Meeting aspirations of employees**

Employees of Maybank seek opportunities to learn and grow, and to develop their careers. They look for jobs that are well-suited for their talents and interests, and they want great managers.

When organisations can provide such opportunities, there is a greater likelihood that employees choose to stay.

### **Best practices – Talent mobility**

Maybank believes in giving equal opportunities for employees to grow their career and gain new skills and knowledge. Employees are encouraged to use the organisation's Learning Roadmap's Career Navigator and Competency Framework to determine how they can develop and grow – laterally, vertically, linearly or in a lattice. With such an understanding, employees can hold meaningful conversations with their supervisors on their short to medium term career plans.

To ensure that employees have the opportunity to develop and advance within the organisation, the bank's Transfer and Mobility policy provides a framework for employees to take ownership of their career and development. Employees can pro-actively seek opportunities within the organisation to take on a new role, assignment or relocate to another location or country.

Employees are given first priority for any vacancy in the Maybank Group, and if found suitable, their current resident unit must release them within a 2-month time frame. The structuring of a 'release' into the internal transfer procedure ensures that supervisors who may not be willing to 'lose' a team member do not hold employees back. Management actively supports the movement of employees to other roles through public assurance, and by negotiation or facilitation to ensure a smooth transition.

Over and above providing employees with first priority for internal vacancies and preparing them for advancement with clear career roadmaps, Maybank also structured an avenue for employees to discuss their career aspirations with management.

Under the Senior Management mentorship programme, each Senior Management member is responsible for a cluster of bank branches or units, where he/she assumes the role of career mentor, organisation advisor, trusted friend and facilitator to the employees under his/her charge. In the career mentor role, the Senior Management member provides career advice and guidance, and helps employees with their personal career goal-setting.

**Impact on business outcomes**

This multi-pronged retention strategy gives Maybank a competitive edge as it helps the organisation retain talent within the Group, in another branch or country, instead of losing them to competitors.

The Bank's retention rate is consistently better than industry and national statistics. In FY14, its monthly attrition rate was 0.63%, against the financial service industry's rate of 1.6% and the national rate of 2.0%. This was an improvement over FY13's monthly turnover rate of 0.72%, against the industry's rate of 1.38% and the national rate of 2.14%.

Within the Group, there were a number of career transfers to new roles or locations. It also recently posted talents to Vietnam, Cambodia, Hong Kong and New York. This opportunity to apply to work in overseas branches is a boon for employees wanting to gain overseas exposure.

**The path to success**

A well-designed framework with well-defined programmes and processes help ensure that employees have the opportunity to develop and advance within the organisation. The bank adopts a holistic approach towards talent retention. It regularly communicates the different programmes to employees, demonstrates management commitment by having career mentors, and ensures accountability for talent retention by encapsulating it as a Key Performance Indicator in each senior leader's balanced scorecard.

## **McDonald's Restaurants Pte Ltd**

### **Introduction – Fun and dynamic workplace**

McDonald's Restaurants Pte Ltd (McDonald's) has a network of more than 130 restaurants island-wide, 36 dessert kiosks, 51 McCafé outlets and in excess of 15 drive-through restaurants. It was the first in the industry to offer breakfast from 4 o'clock in the morning.

The organisation believes that the success of the restaurants and the company is achieved through the people it employs. The company aims to recruit the best people, and retain them by offering ongoing training relevant to their position and promoting them when they are ready.

With customers and employees from all ages, races and walks of life, McDonald's views a highly diverse workforce as a competitive advantage, and also as an opportunity to create a fun and dynamic workplace environment.

### **Business case – Attraction and retention of employees**

To serve its six million customers in Singapore each month, McDonald's has a workforce of over 9,000 employees. As with many organisations, attraction and retention of employees is a challenge for McDonald's. This became more acute in recent years when competition for labour in the Food & Beverage industry became more intense.

### **Best practices – Flexible work arrangements**

Faced with fierce competition in the labour market, McDonald's explored how it could continue to attract candidates from its traditional sources, and to determine what would interest candidates from other employee sources to work at McDonald's.

Two of McDonald's traditional manpower resources are mature workers and students. It is a pioneer in the hiring of mature workers in Singapore, and has been hiring part-time employees, particularly students, for many years. As many of McDonald's new hires come from employee referrals, the organisation also researched its employee sources to further understand what would attract potential candidates to McDonald's.

Understanding the needs of potential employees led the organisation to introduce even more 'flexibility' to its employment practices.

'Any time of the day' turned out to be a huge selling point in McDonald's recruitment drive. It recognises that every individual, be it a student, mature worker, or housewife, etc., has his/her own lifestyle, aspirations and commitments, hence McDonald's designed 'Flexi Hours', with flexible work schedules for employees to work during different times of the day.

'Flexi Location' allow employees to choose their workplace location whilst 'Flexi Pay' is an opportunity for employees to earn extra incentives when they work during peak periods, weekends and public holidays.

As part of its retention strategy, McDonald's starts early on during the interview and selection process in considering a candidate's potential to be developed into a future leader in the organisation. For all employees, it offers a suite of training and development programmes that include opportunities to pursue an education up to tertiary level, and opportunities to be seconded overseas for short periods.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

Beyond diverse employment practices to attract and retain talent, McDonald's actively participates in benchmarking exercises to showcase its employee value propositions and utilise its employer brand to attract potential employees.

It has been the recipient of various awards over the years, highlighting the success of its attraction and retention practices.

- The organisation won the HR Asia Recruitment Best Employer Brand Development Silver Award and Human Resources Online Best Recruitment Advertising Strategy Gold Award in 2016.
- In 2015, it clinched the "Best of the Best" award in the Aon Hewitt Best Employers Singapore Awards, and was the recipient of the ST Jobs Award for Best Employer Branding at the HRM Awards.
- It also won the awards for Best Mature and Re-employment Practices and Best Recruitment Strategies at the HRM Awards in 2015 and 2014.

The organisation also scored significantly higher than the Singapore average across all four factors in the Aon Hewitt Best Employers Award 2014: Employee engagement 98% (Singapore average 60%), Employer brand 100% (68%), Leadership effectiveness 99% (64%) and, Performance and culture 99% (59%).

#### **The path to success**

McDonald's has been able to meet its manpower goals and remain an attractive employer by anticipating changes, identifying and addressing potential business and employee needs, and being agile and willing to constantly evolve to ensure that its HR policies and practices stay relevant and effective.

## National Environment Agency

### **Introduction – Guardian of the environment**

As the leading public organisation responsible for improving and sustaining a clean and green environment in Singapore, the National Environment Agency's (NEA) portfolio is wide-ranging and its work touches the lives of every resident in Singapore. It develops and spearheads environmental initiatives and programmes through partnership with the People, Public and Private sectors.

NEA is committed to motivating every individual to take up environmental ownership and to care for the environment as a way of life. By protecting Singapore's resources from pollution, maintaining a high level of public health and providing timely meteorological information, it endeavours to ensure sustainable development and a quality living environment for present and future generations.

### **Business case – Significance of daily interaction**

To handle its wide spectrum of work, NEA employs a diverse workforce to engage and meet the needs of the public. However, with almost 4,000 employees working at more than 20 locations across the island, it can be a challenge to sustain confidence, trust and morale among employees and engage them so that they can meet business objectives.

To reach out to them, NEA utilises a myriad of communication channels, and partners with its two unions to jointly communicate initiatives to employees. Management frequently walks the ground to meet with groups of employees to explain the rationale for policies, discuss their concerns, and listen to their views and suggestions.

NEA recognises that it is the ongoing interaction, and regular direct contact with supervisors and managers that have a critical impact on an employee's engagement.

### **Best practices – A platform for professional development**

In addition to supervisory, management and leadership skills training courses, NEA actively explores ways to strengthen the middle management's people-management skills so that they can manage and engage their teams more effectively.

In November 2011, NEA initiated the SuperMan Forum. The Forum was first mooted with the intent to mobilise Senior Management to build and strengthen the quality of the middle management to lead, guide and motivate their employees. The term *SuperMan* is an affectionate term NEA uses to address their *Supervisors* and *Managers* and to demonstrate the important role they play in NEA.

This quarterly forum is a half-day programme hosted by a Divisional Director or Director-General of NEA. Senior leaders of NEA, as well as invited speakers from public and private sectors, are invited to share their knowledge and experiences.

In 2013, NEA revamped its SuperMan Forum to align with the launch of its refreshed 'Leadership Roles and Competencies' programme. The theme of each forum became more targeted, focusing on the five key leadership roles that are essential to becoming an effective leader and manager in NEA – Dynamic Leader, Transformation Driver, Excellence Achiever, People Developer & Role Model. Since the revamp, 10 sessions have been organised and attended by 1,309 leaders.

The SuperMan Forum programme affords middle managers a wealth of support and information. It is an excellent platform for supervisors and managers to network and engage in ongoing professional conversations that help keep them engaged. They benefit from a diversity of thought and perspectives, increased peer interaction and collaborative teamwork.

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### **Impact on business outcomes**

NEA's Organisational Climate Survey in 2015 showed that employees were engaged and felt motivated at work.

- Employees articulated that they felt engaged and positive at work most of the time and that they were able to sustain the level of energy to perform their jobs effectively.
- 90% of its 3,828 employees took part in this survey, which showed improvements in almost all 17 categories of measurement, with significant improvements in areas pertaining to sustainable engagement, performance management, organisation change, workload and NEA core values.

The organisation was also able to retain good employees, with the attrition rate dropping to 4.9% in 2014, compared with 5.5% in 2013.

NEA has maintained a reputation as one of the most popular graduate recruiters in Singapore, and has been featured in the "Singapore's 100 Leading Graduate Employers" survey rankings for five consecutive years from 2011 to 2015.

### **The path to success**

The NEA management is actively involved in HR matters. It sets the vision and directions, and participates in policy formulation and implementation. All key HR policies are deliberated in-depth by the HR Executive Committee chaired by the CEO with Divisional Directors as members. The strong support and personal engagement from senior management members in programmes like the Change Management Workshops and the SuperMan Forum demonstrate management's commitment to the organisation's HR directions.

## **Network Courier**

### **Introduction – Established Singapore-based courier company**

Network Courier is a Singapore-based courier services provider. It provides domestic and international courier services for businesses and individual customers. From its beginnings in 1990, it has grown to a workforce of nearly 200 Networkers. Network Courier views people as the core of its business, and aspires to bring together passionate and dedicated talents who bond together to achieve common goals. With its ideology of “Fostering Meaningful Relationships”, Network Courier aims to connect through each delivery, to build a long-term and trusted relationship with every stakeholder.

Network Courier operates on three core values – Passion, Perseverance, and Professionalism. This means always being ready to go beyond routine tasks to surpass customer expectations, overcoming all challenges to accomplish tasks, being the best in the business and excelling above the competition.

### **Business case – Managing a labour-intensive business in a competitive market**

In an industry that is seen to be labour-intensive, not particularly glamorous and saturated with many local and foreign competitors, building a sustainable business is a challenge that Network Courier has navigated successfully. It adopts technology to enhance its operations, and made changes to its business model to tap on mature workers and non-traditional courier channels. This ultimately led to giving its workforce, its “Networkers”, an opportunity to develop a career in the courier services sector.

### **Best practices – Building a Networker family**

What are the secrets to Network Courier’s progress? In more than 25 years of operations, Network Courier has built a reservoir of experience through retaining and nurturing its loyal employees. Only 20% of Networkers have been with company for less than 3 years, while 35% have been with the organisation for more than 10 years. The loyalty of its workforce enables deeper relationships to be fostered with stakeholders and repeated opportunities to demonstrate its service promise to its customers.

Network Courier actively provides for its diverse workforce. All Networkers, van drivers, motorcyclists, cyclists and train riders, enjoy daily meals provided by the company. They celebrate their various cultural festivals regardless of the ethnicity, life events such as weddings and births, and come together to acknowledge the demise of family members. After the untimely demise of a Networker from a heart attack while he was at work due to pre-existing health conditions, the company installed an automated external defibrillator (AED) on its premises to ensure that help is at hand, if needed.

Network Courier starts engaging its employees from their first day at work. All new employees are inducted into the company by Human Resources, through a comprehensive 1-hour briefing on the company’s objectives and targets and how they are part of these long-term plans. They are informed of who their supervisors and human resource department personnel are so that they know who to reach out to in times of need. The constant human touch maintained throughout their employment helps ensure all employees have that sense of belonging from the instance they join the ‘family’.

The company organises regular Networker’s Networking nights with buffet dinners. After dinner, all employees and the Managing Director share their views and feedback on a variety of different issues

in a town hall meeting format. Management demonstrates its commitment to the Networkers by recording their views and following up on all feedback received, implementing feasible recommendations and ensuring that the rationale for non-implemented feedback or suggestions are explained to employees.

Network Courier has always retained its mature workers, some of whom have served for more than 20 years. It has also reached out to more mature workers, developing a timely employment scheme to reach the aging population in Singapore. With its Train Rider scheme, mature workers who might not have the physical ability to handle a motorcycle became part of the delivery team in Singapore by using the MRT network.

Productivity initiatives have also resulted in high efficiency which provides a sense of job satisfaction to employees as they have some degree of ownership over their assignments. Network Courier uses an in-house ERP (Electronic Resource Planning) system that provides real-time information on load distribution for the delivery fleet. When a new assignment arrives, operational decision-making is delegated to the courier nearest to the delivery vicinity who can respond in real-time to accept the assignment or to pass it on to a colleague.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

Through technology and its manpower practices, Network Courier has increased its capacity, productivity and responsiveness to customers in a tight labour market. Through its engaged and loyal employees (of whom two-thirds have been with the company for more than five years), customers have the confidence that Network Courier is well established with a conducive working environment for its employees.

The impact of Networkers is felt by their customers. There have been numerous instances where staff from a customer's company move to a new company, and recommend Network Courier's services due to the supportive service architecture and cordial relationship with the despatch team. The senior despatch team (mature workers) also have very positive relationships with customers, many being referred to as "Uncle", with deference given to such employees, demonstrating the positive benefits from engaging this pool of employees.

### **The path to success**

Network Courier has leveraged the long experience of its leaders in the industry to empathise with its workforce and serve their needs. Its ongoing approach in listening to its customers and employees, and investing in tools and practices has built a strong foundation to support its business. It is able to increase the productivity of its despatch teams through technology, experience and performance incentives.

## **OCBC Bank**

### **Introduction – One of the world’s strongest banks**

OCBC Bank is the longest established Singapore bank, formed in 1932 from the merger of three local banks, the oldest of which was founded in 1912. With Group headcount of more than 29,000, OCBC Bank has expanded over the years and acquired businesses beyond the realm of commercial banking to address increasingly diverse needs across different communities and geographies.

OCBC Bank is committed to fairness of opportunity in the workplace, in line with the goal of building a diverse talent pool with a range of skills, expertise and experience. Employees hail from a broad spectrum of nationalities, professional as well as cultural backgrounds and age groups, including older employees with a wealth of accumulated knowledge. Gender diversity is represented with women on the Management Committee. These women hold senior roles within the organisation, including helping vital support functions as well as heading the Bank’s subsidiary franchises in its core overseas markets.

### **Business case – Attracting and retaining the right talent**

OCBC Bank strives to be the employer of choice to attract and retain the right talent to achieve business objectives and realise its mission of becoming a world-class financial institution. While helping people succeed through innovative financial solutions that meet their needs, the bank wants to provide its employees with the opportunities and resources for them to develop a fulfilling career and lead meaningful personal lives.

### **Best practices – Engaging and developing employees**

In its ongoing journey to engage employees, OCBC Bank adopts the mantra of “We Listen, We Act, We Improve”. The bank conducts the annual Employee Satisfaction Survey (ESS) to get employees’ feedback. Task forces are set up within each business unit to develop action plans to address specific concerns of each unit’s employees after the release of the yearly ESS results. Action plans are presented to the business units’ management for endorsement and approval prior to implementation. Supervisors also have informal catch-up sessions with their staff, and initiate conversations with employees to discuss flexible work options.

OCBC Bank aims to retain and enable employees through creating a conducive work environment. Through relevant learning programmes, the bank seeks to enhance career satisfaction, facilitate internal job mobility and manage talent within the organisation to help them succeed. In particular, employees rate the Internal Job Posting (IJP) Program very favourably. Established in 2003, the programme allows employees to move internally without restrictions from their current supervisors. This enables employees to develop new skills and be deployed in other service areas, rather than leave for a competitor. The programme was further extended in 2012 to include other OCBC-related organisations and global positions.

OCBC Bank also seeks to prepare the workforce for business changes and ensure they remain relevant with the appropriate skills. New employees complete a series of classroom and e-learning programmes in their first year as part of induction. These include components such as regulatory programmes, code of conduct, core values and an overview of banking. Employees also have access to OCBC Learning Academy’s (OCLA) programmes, with key functional pillars such as Credit, Treasury, Wealth Management, Service and Leadership, that support various stages of competencies.

Employees moving into managerial roles are supported by OCLA's Managerial and Leadership programmes and the 360-degree assessment tool.

Progressively, OCBC Bank has demonstrated its commitment to the training and development of its employees. In 2006, when the training department was expanded into a full-scale Learning & Talent Development Academy, the OCBC Learning Space was set up at OCBC Centre where an entire floor was converted into classrooms. In 2013, OCBC Campus, a 10-storey dedicated regional learning hub, was set up in the CBD. A learning management system was implemented to enable employees to register for courses, take e-learning courses, and to monitor learning progress.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

OCBC Bank's consistent performance has been validated externally and internally.

- Bloomberg Markets magazine has ranked OCBC Bank as ASEAN's strongest bank and one of the world's five strongest banks for five consecutive years since the ranking's inception in 2011.
- Between 2007 and 2015, employee engagement scores have risen from 53% to 76%, and 91% of employees are certain that OCBC Bank adds value to society.

### **The path to success**

OCBC Bank proactively addresses changes in the business environment and employee needs. It keeps up to speed with best practices relating to employee programmes within and outside the Financial Services industry. Practices are reviewed for feasibility of implementation with initiatives such as Employee Resource Groups launched in 2014. It has invested in its employees through HR initiatives and programmes across the past decade.

## **Philips Singapore**

### **Introduction – A leading health technology company**

Philips Singapore (Philips) is a global health technology company focused on improving people's health and enabling better outcomes in healthy living, diagnosis, treatment and home care and has operated in Singapore since 1951. Philips leverages advanced technology and deep clinical and consumer insights to deliver integrated health solutions and is a leader in diagnostic imaging, image-guided therapy, patient monitoring and health informatics, as well as in consumer health and home care.

Philips believes in offering the best place to work for people who share their passion. It believes that every employee has talent and can grow and contribute with increasing impact, and supports every individual in their development. Philips celebrates and fosters an inclusive culture where people feel valued, respected, and where everyone can thrive.

### **Business case – Transformation to a provider of integrated health technology solutions**

With the world facing healthcare challenges of an ageing population and the rise of chronic diseases, Philips sought to offer more highly integrated care delivery models enabled by health technologies and new business models. Moving from products to holistic solutions, Philips seeks to innovate with partners in a meaningful and locally relevant way, with staff collaborating more deeply to leverage each other's skills and capabilities.

### **Best practices – Integrity and innovation at the workplace**

Philips' business starts with "Acting with Integrity", a phrase describing its General Business Principles (GBP) – clear standards for business conduct for individual employees and the organisation. Employees deepen their understanding of GBP through discussions with their colleagues, and are encouraged to speak up if they have any concerns. They can also turn to their manager or a GBP Compliance Officer for advice and support. Employees can report a concern through the Philips Ethics Line, a toll-free hotline that operates globally. Since May 2015, Philips has extended access to the Philips Ethics Line to third parties beyond Philips. These practices and standards assure third parties and customers that Philips has robust mechanisms to ensure that the Philips business is trustworthy and committed to performance.

Philips operates a growth and performance culture that promotes three core behaviours – "Be eager to win, Take ownership, Team up to Excel". Employees at all levels align to these behaviours. Senior leaders actively champion an open, inclusive and non-discriminatory environment within the company, together with an ongoing culture of "Walking the Talk". Managers facilitate team agreements in being open to each other so that teams can excel together. Employees take ownership by protecting confidentiality, being aware where they have sensitive conversations and keeping confidential documents secure.

To better foster inclusive work environments, Philips strives to create a work environment in which every employee's ideas, knowledge, perspectives, experiences and styles are valued, in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organisation's success. Philips' HR practices have very much been guided by this principle.

To cater to the different needs of its diverse workforce, Philips introduced a flexible benefit plan aimed at empowering employees to take ownership of their health and well-being. The plan provides greater flexibility and choice for employees (and their families) to design their own benefits plans to spend their flexible benefits dollars on a wider array of benefit options to suit their lifestyle needs; including preventive healthcare, outpatient medical and dental, holiday and fitness expenses, learning and more. This flexibility allows all employees to fully benefit from this plan as it supports employees and their family at every life stage as they grow with Philips.

Taking innovation to the next level, Philips opened the Philips APAC Center in 2016. This facility brings together Philips' innovation and design expertise and business-creation capabilities to better serve the company's business growth and address healthcare needs in the ASEAN and Pacific region. Built and designed with Workplace Innovation (WPI) in mind, the facility enables an empowering, innovative and collaborative way of working.

WPI gives employees the flexibility to work when and where they can be most productive, and at the same time facilitate a better work-life harmony. The new building has different workspaces like regular workstations, touchdown tables for mobile workers or short tasks, focus rooms for phone calls or tasks requiring concentration or confidentiality, and phone booths. There are more than 100 meeting rooms supported by a central booking system, as well as small, medium and large breakout spaces for quiet work and informal meetings. Labs and project rooms are specialist work areas for testing and collaboration, while creative spaces allow for collaborative workspaces. These options facilitate a more dynamic work environment that empowers employees to interact and collaborate.

On a quarterly basis, Philips tracks its progress in performance improvement and employee satisfaction through an internal employee survey. Through its format and the questions used, the survey enables a shift of accountability to where it had the biggest impact – at the individual team level. The management keeps close tabs on the results of the survey and takes an active role in driving initiatives and interactions to improve employee satisfaction.

To recognise deserving employees who are role models in demonstrating the Philips behaviours or have contributed extraordinarily in the organisation, Philips also introduced a recognition programme which awards recognition points which employees can use to redeem a range of products based on their preferences. This programme has been highly successful, with 38% of its employees in Singapore receiving recognition points in 2016. One such employee demonstrated such patience and service excellence in customer service despite a poor phone connection that an irritable customer became a strong advocate for Philips!

### **Impact on business outcomes**

Philips strengthened its commitment to improving the lives of people in ASEAN Pacific (APAC) with its new state-of-the-art Philips APAC Center in Singapore in 2016. Housed in Toa Payoh, at the same Philips site since 1972, the new 38,000-square-meter office building brings together Philips' innovation and design expertise and business-creation capabilities to better serve the company's business growth and address healthcare needs in the ASEAN and Pacific region. The building has garnered a number of prestigious design awards from the 16th Singapore Institute of Architects Architecture Design Awards, and World Architecture Festival 2016 for its people-centric design that reflects the aspirations of Philips and its people.

Philips has maintained a track record of consistency in business excellence over the decades. Two of its facilities won Spring Singapore's highest award for Business Excellence, the Singapore Quality Award, in 1998 and 2000. In 2015, Frost & Sullivan recognised Philips' relentless efforts in driving outstanding performance, continued strength and innovation in the healthcare business with industry

awards of Asia-Pacific Tele-health Company of the Year and Asia-Pacific Patient Monitoring Company of the Year Award.

Philips is also consistently rated as being among the most attractive employers across all industries in Singapore with The Randstad Award recognising Philips as among Singapore's top 75 employers from 2013 to 2016.

### **The path to success**

With its transformational change underway, Philips establishes and communicates a compelling vision for its employees. As it accelerates, Philips relies on technology, collaboration, and its people, together with clear accountabilities to facilitate its journey forward. Philips offers an exciting opportunity for employees to be part of a world-class organisation making a difference in the world today.

## **Robinsons & Company, An Al-Futtaim Group Company**

### **Introduction – Retailers of Singapore**

Robinsons & Company, An Al-Futtaim Group Company (Robinsons & Company) is a retail company comprising Robinsons and John Little department stores, and franchise outlets of Marks & Spencer in Singapore. Established in 1858, it became part of the Al-Futtaim Group in 2008. Together with the RSH Group (acquired by Al-Futtaim in 2012), there are more than 2,000 employees across 125 stores in Singapore in 2016.

### **Business case – A need for Singaporeans in retail**

Singapore retailers face challenges including high operating costs, a strong Singapore dollar vis-a-vis regional currencies and a tight labour market. Manpower remains a critical consideration – retail is manpower-intensive, whether products are purchased online or in-store. Drawing the right mix of Singaporeans into retail as a career and nurturing them is a critical challenge for the HR team in Singapore.

### **Best practices – Engaging and developing the workforce**

Working with the Ministry of Education, Robinsons & Company plays its part to give Singaporean students exposure to the retail sector. Students join for one-week attachment programmes during their school holidays. Such activities broaden the students' career exposure and enable a wider pool of potential candidates to consider retail as a career. Some join subsequently as temporary or full-time staff.

Skills development is fundamental to the organisation's success. Robinsons & Company has deployed a holistic array of training programmes to ensure that new employees understand the organisation and acquire the skills to serve their customers. As the retail industry is increasingly data-driven, employee skills-set extend beyond customer service skills to include analytical and negotiating skills, to increase their effectiveness. To build a core of future leaders, Robinsons & Company has put in place a Management Development Programme to give potential leaders experience in different departments of the organisation.

Robinsons & Company also engages the workforce actively. The organisation put in place a HR business partner structure seven years ago and started conducting employee engagement surveys three years ago. These have enabled HR and management to understand and respond to employees in relevant and meaningful ways. Management also practices skip-level meetings regularly to interact directly with staff, with the Group CEO meeting with employees in town halls quarterly.

To support employees, the HR team seeks ongoing improvements in HR processes. Beyond implementing a structured training needs analysis framework, it has implemented e-learning to make learning accessible in real-time. It has modernised HR process interfaces to reduce paperwork and improve productivity. The HR team keeps a pulse on the different needs and interests of its employees as its workforce profile evolves, and adjusts policies and benefits periodically. When its 'birthday voucher' benefit was changed to 'birthday leave', it was well-received as employees of all ages appreciated the flexibility of leave over the monetary value of the voucher.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

With an engaged workforce, Robinsons & Company enjoys low monthly turnover rates (<2%) and a stable workforce. It is also associated with a portfolio of brands that are well regarded by customers. Its management is confident that despite the growing popularity of online shopping, customers are still drawn to Al-Futtaim's portfolio of brands. Together with synergies from operating a portfolio of stores, Robinsons & Company retains flexibility in implementing different store formats and mall events. The planning teams and operational staff also have extensive operational experience and are able to support a range of events at the same time.

### **The path to success**

The key to Robinsons & Company's success is the heartfelt philosophy of its HR leaders, who understand the importance of making sure that initiatives undertaken are relevant to the business. They proactively improve practices and discontinue those that do not work rather than react to circumstances. Their approach is to anticipate changes to business needs and create solutions early. Feedback is sought through formal and informal channels, focus groups and HR business partners, to maintain sensitivity and relevance of solutions to the business.

## Singapore General Hospital

### **Introduction – The nation’s flagship tertiary hospital**

Singapore General Hospital (SGH) is the nation’s flagship tertiary hospital and has almost 10,000 employees under its wing. Its vision is to be a renowned organisation at the leading edge of medicine, providing quality healthcare to meet the nation’s aspirations. It is committed to putting patients at the heart of all it does.

The hospital sees its success as hinging on its ability to attract, grow and retain human capital talent. The organisation has many mature employees whose knowledge and skills were assiduously cultivated and accumulated over the years. And as a major teaching hospital, it also has a high proportion of young, newly graduated healthcare professionals.

SGH sees its diverse multi-generational, multi-national workforce as a key enabler in meeting the hospital’s objectives and in lending robustness to its business strategy. It leverages its workforce diversity to ensure sufficient staffing level at all times, while ensuring that operations are not overly reliant on any one particular employee group.

### **Business case – Global competition for healthcare talent**

Over the past decade, much has been done to transform Singapore into a significant global hub for bio-medical research and innovation. This development, coupled with changing health and socio-demographic trends, has led to increased competition for healthcare talent from an expanding public and private healthcare sector. With a declining local labour force and a finite supply of foreign manpower, it has become increasingly challenging to attract and retain the best healthcare talent.

### **Best practices – Holistic manpower planning strategy**

To achieve its public service mission and to pursue the hospital’s ambition to be an Academic Medicine Centre of international repute, SGH employs a holistic manpower planning strategy to ensure an adequate supply of manpower to meet its business objectives well into the future.

In addition to formulating mid- to long-term manpower strategies and plans, SGH also conducts regular staffing reviews. These reviews allow proactive interventions and help circumvent and mitigate potential staffing gaps that could impact hospital operations and patient care. Such staffing adequacy assessments take into account staff profiles and skills-mix, and enable the hospital to better calibrate staff deployment to assure best patient care in various contingency scenarios.

To attract more local talent, SGH utilises a range of innovative ways to source for talent. A Return-to-Nursing programme encourages former trained nurses to return to the profession. There is also extensive collaboration with external partners to encourage mid-career switches to the healthcare industry. Non-healthcare workers are sponsored to obtain professional qualifications to become Enrolled Nurses, Registered Nurses, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Diagnostic Radiographers.

Appreciating that experienced healthcare workers are an invaluable asset given their key critical skills acquired over years of professional practice, SGH regularly updates its inventory of critical skills in order to facilitate the development of Allied Health staff retention plans, as well as identify potential gaps in the medium term so that anticipatory measures can be taken to address these gaps.

Another initiative to retain staff with critical skills is the Hospital Executive programme. This is a succession planning initiative to groom a pipeline of administrators as future Hospital Chief Operating Officers. The programme places promising administrators through various challenging assignments that expose them to different hospital community sub-cultures. This leads to a deeper appreciation of

the need for wide collaboration and leveraging of expertise across all professional communities in order to get the work done in a highly complex and fast-paced hospital environment.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

The hospital's holistic approach to its people strategy has yielded much success.

- In the past 5 years since the 2010 inception of the Return-to-Nursing programme, 37 former nurses have been retrained and returned to the nursing profession.
- An average of 170 new hires above the age of 40 are hired; a testament of its age neutral fair hiring.
- The hospital's resignation rate was 7.2% compared to 15% in the health and social service sector and 24% at the national level.
- The hospital has been successful in retaining Allied Health staff with critical skills. More than half of the staff with critical skills are above age 40 and close to 7% are in post-retirement employment.
- As an acute hospital where it is extremely critical to retain staff with deep institutional knowledge, 30.2% of SGH employees have more than 10 years of service, and 13.4% have at least 20 years of service. Among these, doctors have the highest retention rates with close to 50% having more than 10 years of service, and 19.2% with more than 20 years. These experienced doctors play an important role as mentors and preceptors to new doctors.
- Experienced staff in the hospital translates into more effective and targeted patient care. In 2014, the Ministry of Health's patient report for SGH saw an overall increase in patient satisfaction as compared to 2013. 76% of patients rated the hospital's service level as 'excellent' or 'good', compared to 72% in 2013. In the 'Willingness to recommend' category, SGH made the most significant improvement of all the other institutions, with 84% of patients saying that they would recommend SGH to others, an increase of 6% as compared with 2013.

### **The path to success**

Management understands the value of being attentive to the environment that the hospital operates in. It takes a long-term view of the hospital's position and situation, anticipates changes, and identifies and addresses potential business and employee needs. To ensure that appropriate resources and attention are given to key policies and practices that matter to the business, the hospital tracks their accountability as a Key Performance Indicator in the hospital's Balanced Scorecard, for instance, in retaining staff with critical skills.

## **SSTC Institute**

### **Introduction – A private education institution**

Established in 1978, SSTC Institute (SSTC) is a private education institution offering a wide range of programmes for Singaporean and international students, ranging from preparatory courses for admission to government schools (Primary 4 & 5), to diplomas, advanced diplomas and bachelor degrees. To nurture its culturally varied student population, SSTC hires and retains a diverse team of dedicated employees.

SSTC operates from its brand new campus at City Square Mall, and has authorised agents representing the organisation in several countries including China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar. SSTC strives to be recognised for the high quality of its courses, delivery and teachers, and wants to be known as a premier school of choice for students in all the markets it serves. In order to achieve this goal SSTC offers diplomas and certificates that are of international standard and are recognised and accepted for employment as well as further studies, not only in Singapore but also internationally.

### **Business case – A diverse team serving a diverse student population**

SSTC requires employees who appreciate the different cultural backgrounds of students to facilitate their successful educational journeys in Singapore. Its employees engage with students of different nationalities and ages, and their parents and guardians, to help them deal with issues such as finding accommodation in Singapore – hostels, shared rooms or apartments.

### **Best practices – Communication and organisational flexibility**

The SSTC workforce is very diverse with almost half (47%) of the workforce above 40 years old. With their wealth of life experience coupled with their knowledge of the education sector, SSTC staff engage parents and guardians on the choice of education pathways, and assist students daily to overcome their challenges to succeed in their learning journeys.

At SSTC, frequent communication is the key to unifying its workforce to achieve organisational goals. A buddy is assigned to new employees to walk them through work processes and help them integrate into the SSTC family. Various channels are deployed to facilitate effective communication and feedback. Leadership shares updates on SSTC's performance and invites employee feedback at its annual 'Meet the Management' session. Monthly department-wide meetings are opportunities for staff to suggest improvements to respective department's work needs. Staff also meet informally at the staff lounge, especially over lunch, which contributes to the creation of a harmonious and inclusive workplace.

SSTC aligns its team toward a common purpose, behaviour and actions through its core values. It initiated the Spirit Award as an encouragement and incentive for employees to exemplify SSTC's core values of Sincerity, Professionalism, Integrity, Respect, Innovativeness and Trustworthiness. Award candidates are nominated by the leadership and the winner is chosen by peers through a voting process. In addition, SSTC deploys family-friendly work-life policies that enable staff to utilise flexible work arrangements, including part-time contracts and customised work arrangements. Paternity leave of two weeks is also provided to working dads.

The organisation has an Open Door policy that encourages the team to share pressing concerns and challenges faced. In one case, an employee on maternity leave worked out a flexible maternity leave

schedule specially tailored to her needs. With the full support of her supervisors, she returned to work on a half-day schedule for another four months. SSTC also set up a mini-nursery near her workstation, thus enabling her to continue working while caring for her newborn in a conducive environment.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

SSTC's attention to its staff is paying off:

- Its annual Work-Life balance survey showed a marked improvement from 69% in 2014 to 80% in 2015.
- Staff are more energised to take up training opportunities to continue their professional growth.
- Parents and guardians of students have validated SSTC's progress with both academic and non-academic staff receiving complimentary feedback on service from parents and guardians.

### **The path to success**

SSTC's progress is due to strong and steady leadership. Its founder and CEO leverages her first-hand understanding of the demands of a family in making SSTC a workplace that is conducive for working parents to pursue their careers and manage personal and family commitments. She charts the direction toward excellence in the delivery of quality education and ensures that staff have channels for ongoing learning, and a conducive workplace environment for a diverse workforce to bond.

## **Starbucks Singapore**

### **Introduction – Starbucks' second international market**

Starbucks Singapore was Starbucks' second international market globally. 20 years since the first Singapore store was launched, Starbucks is the undisputed coffee leader in Singapore's specialty coffeehouse sector, with more than 120 stores in Singapore. Starbucks set out to be a different kind of company – one that not only celebrates coffee, but also one that connects people to the community. Starbucks sees its stores as a neighbourhood gathering place for meeting friends and family, with quality service, an inviting atmosphere and an exceptional cup of coffee.

Starbucks' mission is to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup, and one neighbourhood at a time. With its partners, its coffee and its customers at the core, Starbucks creates a culture of warmth and belonging where everyone is welcome. Starbucks seeks to act with courage, challenging the status quo and find new ways to grow the company and each other. Partners aim to be present, connecting with customers with transparency, dignity and respect, delivering the very best in all they do, and holding themselves accountable for results.

### **Business case – Delivering a community-relevant experience**

Starbucks Singapore has more than 2,000 partners (employees) in roles such as baristas, supervisors, store managers and support centre partners such as customer service, CRM, finance and IT. To build an inclusive work environment based on its core values and cultivate cultural competency with leaders, Starbucks embraces diversity across the workplace, with suppliers and in communities. Starbucks believes that diversity enriches the culture and helps Starbucks serve customers better.

"Starbucks' desire and our ability to foster these kinds of connections have always defined our culture. When we honour our relationships with our partners, we inevitably strengthen the connections they have with our customers, and in the communities where we do business. Quite simply, that is what it means to do business through the lens of humanity, and this has defined Starbucks as a business and employer." - Paul Lam, Starbucks Coffee Asia Pacific's head of partner resources.

### **Best practices – Inclusive selection and active development**

Starbucks is inclusive in its selection process and welcomes anyone into the team as long as they are passionate, enthusiastic, and eager to learn. Increasingly, Starbucks has hired mature partners in the past few years – their ages ranging from 40 to 65. To ease store partners into the multi-tasking role of a barista, Starbucks specially created a new role titled "Cafe Partner", where partners begin their journey learning the fundamentals of preparing ingredients, food display, and general housekeeping. Modifications were made to the pace of the training programme and interactions with mature partners are deliberately shaped, as Starbucks believes that their rich working experiences will aid in the development of younger team members.

At Starbucks, partners are at the heart and soul of the company and its goal is to create the best possible workplace environment for its partners, one that attracts and retains talented individuals and is regarded as a great place to work. Therefore, Starbucks supports the development of new partners. Each partner is equipped with more than a simple career roadmap. Career development opportunities in Starbucks are shared and discussed with managers on a quarterly basis with a Partner Development Plan set up for each partner. Managers are equipped with a career guide that sets expectations for each level and helps them determine if staff can perform beyond their current

roles and are ready for the next level. At Starbucks' national head office, known internally as the "Support Centre" in South Buona Vista, baristas can hone their craft with a coffee station mirroring the facility used at all Starbucks outlets, undergo rigorous training with a test at the end of the programme, to earn the title of a Coffee Master.

Each in-store partner is valued as an individual by management. In their store visits, managers begin with interactions with partners rather than store performance metrics. And when managers are not physically present, they can correspond with in-store partners through the use of mobile technologies. The deeds of partners are also celebrated. In its "Movement of Uncommon Greatness" award, a partner who does something really extraordinary for his partners or customers can be recognised with a plaque and a very special card.

At the business level, Starbucks has demonstrated its commitment to a wide range of communities. It has worked with the Autism Resource Centre (ARC) for more than a decade, supplying café supplies to their café. In 2014, with the opening of Starbucks' 100th store, six partners with autism were hired to work at the outlet. In 2016, Starbucks has hired 9 partners with autism with plans to hire more from ARC. Through this partnership, Starbucks builds awareness of autism and gives people with autism the opportunity to have meaningful employment.

### **Impact on business outcomes**

With 120 outlets in Singapore, delivering the Starbucks Experience consistently depends on Starbucks' processes in attracting and cultivating a strong pool of talented partners. Leaders in Starbucks Singapore have an amazing commitment to the partners and the business, which has resulted in a turnover rate of 3.3%, far lower than the food and beverage industry's turnover rate of 5.0%.

### **The path to success**

As Starbucks continues to expand its retail footprint in Singapore, store partners remain the key channel to deliver value to customers. Store partners continue to focus on customers, nurturing their personal connections built with customers to deliver the Signature Starbucks Experience, while maintaining an inclusive workplace.

## **The American Club**

### **Introduction – A home away from home**

The 68-year-old American Club (The Club) caters to about 3,300 member accounts and has about 11,000 members within its Club community. It prides itself in being a 'home away from home' for the many foreign members within its community. It offers a sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of city living, with a range of food and beverage outlets, business, fitness, wellness and recreational amenities for members and their families to enjoy.

The Club strongly believes in inclusiveness and its service philosophy permeates throughout its HR plans and initiatives. Management constantly engages with employees to ensure clear, accurate and timely information flow. There is conscious effort to create training opportunities that allow for lateral progression, and a progressive wage model provides transparency for employees to know how they are able to advance up the career ladder.

### **Business case – Tight labour market situation**

With a shrinking national labour market and a reduced influx of foreign workers, The Club was experiencing difficulty in filling its manpower requirements. The challenge was compounded by competition from the integrated resorts, numerous newly opened F&B outlets, shopping malls, and luxury, boutique and business hotels.

To address and manage this challenge, The Club put in place creative initiatives to enhance productivity and to motivate and train staff. The challenge was for employees to continue operating at the same level despite a reduced headcount.

### **Best practices – Improve productivity through technology and job re-design**

The Club made deliberate efforts to tap on various recruitment avenues, plan how mature employees could be re-employed into suitable positions, re-design jobs to make them less laborious for employees and provide flexible work arrangements.

One initiative that it adopted was the expansion of the job scope of several positions, resulting in increased skill-sets and earning capacity, and boosting employee motivation. Employees were also given opportunities to cross-train and acquire new skills so that they could easily take on different job roles and enjoy higher earnings.

Other recruitment avenues included permanent and part-time employees from lesser-tapped sources through the Yellow Ribbon Project, organisations for persons with disabilities, and secondary schools via the 'Get Out And Learn Life Skills' programme.

The Club tapped on the Inclusive Growth Programme – a fund administered by the Employment and Employability Institute (e2i) – for several productivity improvement projects. Some projects resulted in system enhancements to eliminate human error and improve efficiency and productivity. Other projects led to physical tasks becoming less strenuous, allowing employees to perform different functions with less manual effort. Overall, the smarter and lighter physical load solutions allowed employees to focus on more meaningful and personal interactions with members. As a fair and progressive employer, The Club shared the productivity gains with team members by way of salary increments.

In its quest to enable mature Singaporeans to continue being active in the workforce, The Club conducts pre-retirement counselling 12 months prior to an employee's retirement age, and endeavors to re-employ them into suitable positions by providing the necessary training and offering permanent full-time or part-time work as appropriate. The Club now has 15 mature team members in

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their late 50's to early 70's. They work shorter hours in housekeeping, stewarding and facilities, complementing the workforce in those departments.

**Impact on business outcomes**

The Club's various initiatives have contributed to a lower staff attrition rate, from an average of 2.21% in 2013 to 2.07% in 2015, and a lower sick leave utilisation rate from 22% per team member in 2013 to 18% in 2015.

The Club's strong focus on training, including the training of interns, part-timers and contractors, has resulted in better-skilled employees who are better able to serve members and work more efficiently. Even with reduced manpower, there is no negative impact on members' satisfaction.

This can be seen from its mean score for overall value and overall quality rating which has remained largely stable, reaching a high of 3.99 out of 5 points. The stable numbers suggest security and substantial trust in the Club's reliability.

**The path to success**

Management is open-minded, and willing to get creative and explore solutions to manage challenges, such as utilising non-traditional recruitment avenues, and improving productivity through technology and job re-design.

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