

CONVERSATIONS

HUMAN CAPITAL INSIGHTS: A CHAT WITH RAJAH & TANN

An Engaged Workforce For Business Success

Law firm Rajah & Tann Singapore has been thriving on a people-centric philosophy since it was established over two decades ago. Managing Partner Patrick Ang shares why and how the firm capitalises on human capital development and workplace-friendly initiatives to develop its people and in turn, prime its business for success.

To Rajah & Tann, what is the role of human capital in business success?

Human capital is essential to our ability to deliver services to clients. We see it as our main pillar of strength and success, now and in the future. After all, a company is as good as the product of its people combined.

I quote my predecessor, Mr Lee Eng Beng. He has said that as our firm grows, our people must grow with it, and it is important that every next generation is better than the current one. Otherwise, our firm will always remain in the same place. If we want the next generation to be better than the current one, it is imperative that we invest heavily in talent development. This is why we commit ourselves to developing their capabilities at every level, from top management to the operational staff – especially in continuous education and training.

Just this year, the firm saw a 100% employee engagement score. What's the motivation behind the firm's belief in engagement, and what are some strategies you have implemented to engage your people?

At Rajah & Tann, our vision is to provide one unified team, one commitment, and one standard for our clients. Our employees are our 'ambassadors' and they are fundamental pillars in business success, hence it is important to keep our employees loyal, motivated and engaged through good work-life strategies and healthy lifestyle programmes for our people.

On an annual basis, there are a suite of programmes such as Movie Night, corporate marathons, National Steps Challenge, Fruits & Milk Day, Health & Wellness workshops, exercise classes and many other social programmes for our employees to participate and be healthy.

What are some business benefits of work-life arrangements the firm has seen?

Our work-life practices such as flexi-time, part time work, interim work and telecommuting have enabled Rajah and Tann to consistently hire and retain high performing employees who are attracted to the firm's supportive and friendly work culture.

With technology as an enabler and leadership support on flexible work arrangements, we see positive responses to our recruitment and retention of high performing employees.

As Managing Partner, you focus on prioritising training, as well as mentoring young partners in their 40s to take on leadership roles in the company. How do you think this form

of talent development plays a part in the firm's success?

At Rajah & Tann, our leaders are put through robust management training and we continue to put the young partners in their 40's into management and leadership roles to ensure a pipeline of successors. My current Executive Council team is currently filled with young and aspiring partners who lead various strategy teams in recruitment, talent management, training and business development. This is to ensure we continue to grow vertically and horizontally into new legal ventures.

Tell us about some of the firm's other talent development programmes.

Rajah & Tann believes in developing our people through skills upgrading and lifelong learning. We provide opportunities for job rotations, mentorship, upskilling in legal and technical knowledge, and more. Before we appoint employees as partners, we offer workshops and courses to help them to enrich their capabilities and skills to develop a successful legal practice.

All our new Partners attend the Legal Practice Management Course to brush up on skills relevant to developing a successful legal practice before being made Partner of the firm. We believe that our employees must be given opportunities to learn and grow and be equipped with the skills to do their current job competently. The firm conducts in-house workshops such as "Raising the Bar" and "Business Simulation Workshop" to increase the personal effectiveness of legal practitioners.

Besides the in-house programmes, our lawyers and staff also attend external workshops and seminars on an on-going basis, typically held overseas and external programmes to continue their personal and professional development.

With the world undergoing digital transformation so rapidly, what is Rajah & Tann doing to ensure it stays aligned with such change?

We provide our lawyers with laptops, iPads and remote access so that they can work efficiently, even when they are offsite or on flexible work arrangements. This enables us to streamline our document-heavy workflow, so that our documents can be integrated in real-time across our regional offices. Also, using cloud technology enables our people to enjoy flexibility, as they can access their emails, read documents, Skype and more on the go.

With our recent move into our new office in Marina One, our latest investment in the digital world is the introduction of softphones (we no longer use desk phones) and interactive TV with zoom



video conferencing facilities in all client meeting rooms and internal collaboration rooms which enables us to have similar presentations at different office locations without requiring constant travel for face-to-face communication.

Rajah & Tann is part of the Human Capital Partnership Programme. Can you share with us how you have seen this partnership benefit the firm?

Being part of the Human Capital Partnership Programme allows us to have networking opportunities, share and learn best practices from other like-minded companies through the e-bulletins, information on various government grants for companies to develop their human capital. It is important for the firm to know whether our human capital management and standards are aligned with the best of the market. This is helpful and useful for those who are managing the human capital programmes in the firm and remind us of the 4 Tripartite Standards which the firm has adopted.

We had so far connected with the government agencies that we had sought assistance with. For example, SkillsFuture, SkillsConnect, expanded our secondments with other industry players such as the banks, Workplace Health Promotion, Travel Smart and WorkPro.

Any words of wisdom that you'll like to share with other companies?

Happy employees lead to happy clients and customers. While many organisations place priority over financial capital than human capital, it is equally important to include human capital development as one of the key drivers of economic growth in their overall vision.

LIFTING TALENTS UP

At Schindler Lifts Singapore, employees are constantly encouraged and empowered to up their talents and potential. Find out how the company, quite literally, helps its people take their capabilities to the next level.

Earlier in 2019, Mr Lee Yu Yang, Engineer at Schindler Lifts Singapore's Major Project's department, became the organisation's first engineer to be sent to Schindler Escalator in China for cross-border training. The cross-border training programme was part of Schindler Lifts Singapore's efforts to facilitate skills transfer for its people, giving them greater exposure in their areas of work. There, Yu Yang learnt first-hand, from overseas experts, the intricacies of building an escalator.

He was then able to take his knowledge back to Singapore, and help bring his team's aptitude to greater heights.

"We wanted Yu Yang's experience to be an enriching one for him - both personally and professionally, for the betterment of his team and company," says Ms Joanne Jeongin Lee, HR Director of Schindler Lifts Singapore.

Mr Lee Yu Yang undergoing overseas training with his trainers

It was indeed an enriching learning journey for Yu Yang, who says, "Such opportunities to learn from the best enable me to grow as an individual. I can also better develop my team members' competencies when I transfer my new knowledge to them."

To remain ahead in the vertical transportation industry, the organisation saw the need to continue developing capabilities of its local workforce through skills transfer, to enhance competency while ensuring work processes were compliant and integral with the Schindler Group's directives.

The skills transfer initiative was implemented in 2018, and the organisation engaged foreign specialists from its regional offices to share knowledge and skills with the Singapore office. The specialists conducted classroom-based and hands-on training for local employees, and provided post-training support through video conference discussions and e-mails after they returned to their countries. To date, over 65 local employees and up to 30 partners and facility managers have benefitted from the organisation's cross-country skills transfer initiatives.

ELEVATING LOCAL TALENTS

Schindler Lifts also believes in talent development through succession planning, building a talent pipeline and developmental pathways for all positions, including leadership ones – especially for its local workforce. In fact, it aims to maintain 80% of its key processes to be succeeded by locals.

Mr Muhammad Azmi Bin Bulat is an example of the organisation's commitment to help its people to grow and achieve their full potential. Azmi, who joined the organisation as a Lift Technician in 1991, is a Senior Chief Lift Engineer today, having risen through the ranks over the years. He credits his growth to Schindler Lifts, which enrolled him in various training and development opportunities, including his Diploma in Supervisory Management, which paved his pathway to leadership roles.

"Throughout my career, the numerous investments in my training and work opportunities have equipped me with much knowledge, skills and experiences, enabling me to conduct myself professionally, delivering results and solutions to our customers," says Azmi.

IN THE PIPELINE

Schindler Lifts, which came on board the HCP Programme as a partner in



Mr Azmi sharing his expertise and guiding another lift technician at work

2019, is currently working on enhancing its efforts to build a capable and productive workforce. For instance, it is looking into grooming young talents by providing them with regional exposure through overseas leadership training and project work. It is also working on its Accelerated Two-Year Schindler Apprenticeship and Field Engineers Development Programme, where it will develop local technicians and engineers. Another initiative is the Schindler Career Development Programme, which enables its people to explore various career development and leadership opportunities through a six-year global job rotation.

Moving on, the organisation will be upscaling its employees through redesigning of processes with integration of digitisation to provide real-time solutions for predictive analysis – a shift in how they learn and perform their work, and to adapt training towards skills-focused programmes designed to meet priority skills needs.

"Business success comes from the efforts of our employees. Our People Strategy includes a holistic human capital strategy to support and grow our employees. We believe our people will be better developed in specific skill-sets to service clientele groups and targeted market segments while growing as a senior leader who drives the success of the organisation," Ms Lee adds.

HOW TO HELP OLDER WORKERS THRIVE IN THE FUTURE ECONOMY

The Tripartite Workgroup on Older Workers released its "Strengthening Support for Older Workers" report in August 2019. See its recommendations and how they can benefit businesses and employees.



"STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR OLDER WORKERS" REPORT IN A NUTSHELL

Today, Singapore has the highest life expectancy in the world. We also stay healthy for longer as we grow older – this means more people here are able to contribute to the workforce at an older age than ever before. To meet the needs of this ageing workforce, the Tripartite Workgroup on Older Workers put together this report with recommendations on achieving productive longevity. The recommendations have been accepted by the Singapore Government and will be put into force in the coming years.

THE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

RAISING RETIREMENT AND RE-EMPLOYMENT AGES

- To enable older workers to continue working if they wish to
- To enable businesses to draw from a larger pool of workers

	TODAY	1 JUL 2022	BY 2030
Changes to Retirement Age	62	63	65
Changes to Re-employment Age	67	68	70

RAISING CPF CONTRIBUTION RATES

- To boost retirement adequacy
- Rate increases go to CPF Special Account to maximise interest earned

AGE BANDS	TODAY	1 JAN 2021	LONG TERM TARGET*
≤ 55	37% (No change)		
< 55 to 60	26%	28%	37%
> 60 to 65	16.5%	18.5%	26%
> 65 to 70	12.5%	14%	16.5%
> 70	12.5% (No change)		

*Full increase to be completed within a decade as far as possible, depending on economic conditions.

CREATING INCLUSIVE AND PROGRESSIVE WORKPLACES

<h5>IMPLEMENT STRUCTURED CAREER PLANNING SESSIONS WITH OLDER WORKERS</h5> <p>Key focuses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant needed Career development Re-employment 	<h5>REDESIGN JOBS TO RAISE PRODUCTIVITY AND WORKPLACE LONGEVITY</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers should redesign jobs and careers around older workers' abilities and strengths, and provide appropriate training. Older workers must also play their part by being open to taking on different roles and responsibilities, and be willing to refresh their skills to stay relevant. 	<h5>PROVIDE MORE PART-TIME RE-EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More older workers prefer to work less intensely gradually and shift focus to other pursuits. By accommodating eligible older workers' requests for part-time re-employment, employers will be able to retain experienced workers who may otherwise retire prematurely. 	<h5>REDESIGN EMPLOYER-PROVIDED MEDICAL BENEFITS</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers should restructure Group Hospital & Surgical insurance schemes into additional MediSave contributions or other flexible benefits, which older workers can then use to purchase portable medical benefits, e.g. Integrated Shield Plans that ride on MediShield Life.
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AVAILABILITY OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORT IN ENABLING CHANGES:

- Employers can tap Government grants to create age-friendly workplaces such as the WorkPro Job Redesign Grant and Work-Life Grant.
- More details on Government support will be shared at Budget 2020.

Download the full report [HERE](#).