



Tripartite Alliance for  
Fair & Progressive Employment Practices



— BEYOND 20/20 —

**DNA** OF PROGRESSIVE  
EMPLOYERS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research aims to decode the DNA of progressive employers — the keys to managing the future of work, the workforce, and the workplace. This DNA comprises **five building blocks** — **Collaborative Networks, Employee Voice, Continuous Evolution, Talent Optimisation, and Holistic Care.**

These five blocks are derived from the evaluation process of the Tripartite Alliance (TA) Award<sup>a</sup> 2021 finalists, who have excelled in the respective award categories — **Fair and Progressive Employment Practices, Age Inclusive Practices, Work-Life Excellence, and Responsible Best Sourcing.**

<sup>a</sup> The Tripartite Alliance Award is managed by the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) on behalf of the tripartite partners (Ministry of Manpower, National Trades Union Congress, and Singapore National Employers Federation). This award recognises exemplary employers who excel in building fair, responsible, and progressive employment practices and keep employees at the heart of their progress.

# DNA OF PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYERS

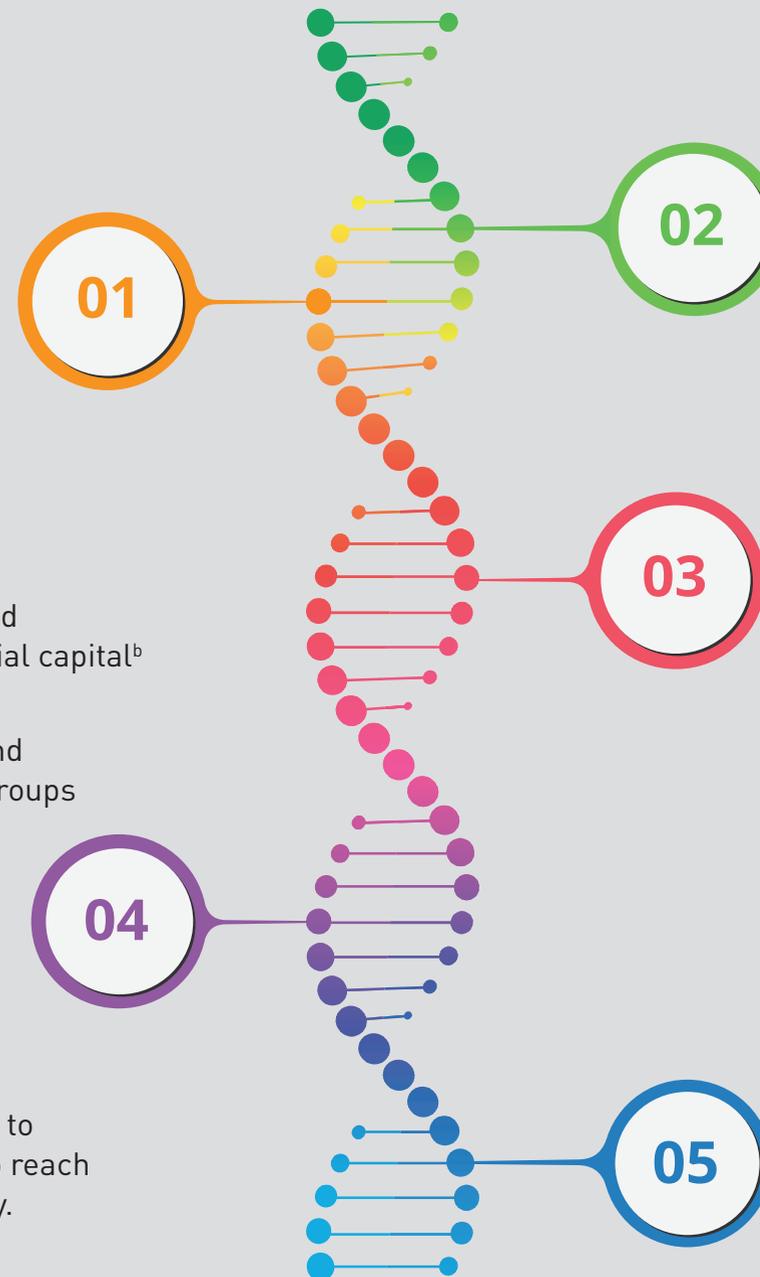
## FIVE BUILDING BLOCKS

### Collaborative Networks

- Cultivate mutual trust (between the organisation and employees, as well as between employees) and social capital<sup>b</sup> within the organisation.
- Encourage open and transparent communication and facilitate relationships between diverse employee groups to achieve business goals.

### Talent Optimisation

- Look beyond employees' current capabilities by considering their future potential.
- Leverage employees' strengths and capabilities by investing resources and providing fair opportunities to facilitate skills development to enable employees to reach their full potential and safeguard their employability.



### Employee Voice

- Value employees' feedback and leverage multiple platforms for employees to share their views and to surface concerns to top management.
- Provide a safe and secure environment for all employees to express themselves without fear of negative repercussions and take appropriate action on feedback given.

### Continuous Evolution

- Embrace change and continually improve their processes, programmes, and practices to achieve superior business outcomes.
- Experiment with new ways of working to improve the status quo and leverage data to track and measure effectiveness.

### Holistic Care

- Adopt a holistic approach to caring for their employees' well-being.
- Provide adaptive workplace programmes and practices, different career pathways and work arrangements, to better meet employees' career and life stage needs and aspirations for professional and personal success.

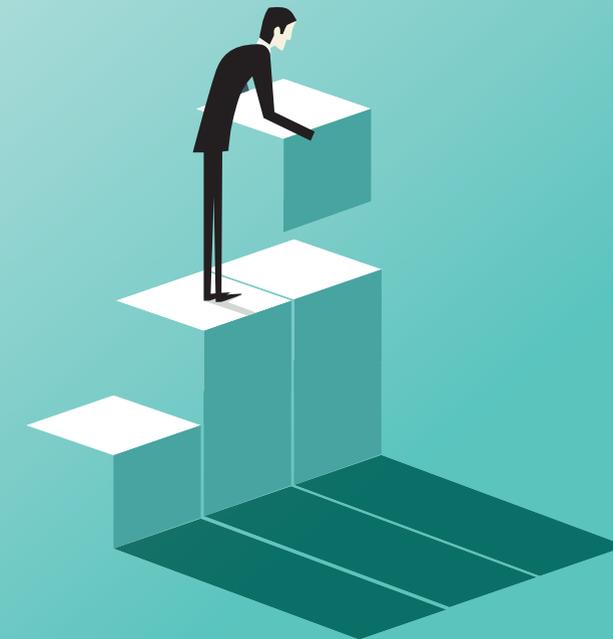
<sup>b</sup> Social Capital here refers to the networks of relationships, together with the shared norms and values in the workplace, that enable the organisation to function effectively.

“

## How can employers build these five blocks?

The path towards building the five blocks is not a linear process and requires employers to constantly align/realign their organisational **essentials** (such as culture, organisational commitment, and communication) with their **pathways** (such as the policies, practices, and programmes).

This alignment requires leaders, HR, managers, and employees to all work **together**.

”

# METHODOLOGY

As part of the TA Award 2021, we engaged the CEOs, senior leaders, HR managers, supervisors, and employees from the TA Award 2021 finalists to understand more about how progressive employment practices have developed. These stakeholders from companies of different sizes in different industries have excelled in their respective award categories.

The four categories are as follows (see Pages 18-21 for a definition of each award category):

1. Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (FPEP)
2. Age Inclusive Practices (AIP)
3. Work-Life Excellence (WLE)
4. Responsible Best Sourcing (RBS)

Using the Grounded Theory approach,<sup>c</sup> we analysed, synthesised, and triangulated five sources of data:

1. 2460 employee survey responses.
2. 102 hours of focus group discussions.
3. 45 hours of interviews with CEOs and senior management.
4. 39 TA Award submission forms.
5. 180 practitioner and academic articles.

## THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED IN FOUR STAGES:

Source of Data	Stage	Research Question Addressed
<b>Employer's Perspective via Award Application</b>	01	What are employers doing in terms of employment practices?
<b>Employee Surveys</b>	02	How are employment practices perceived?
<b>Employee and Supervisor Focus Group Discussions</b>	03	What are the experiences regarding employment practices in their organisation?
<b>Leader and Management Interviews</b>	04	How can one lead progressive employment practices?

<sup>c</sup> Grounded Theory is a set of rigorous research procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories. These concepts/categories are related to each other as a theoretical explanation of the action(s) that continually resolves the main concern of the research question. More information can be found here: <http://www.groundedtheory.com/what-is-gt.aspx>

## EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

### WHY “GOOD ENOUGH” IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH

In today’s employment landscape, there are many realities that organisations have to contend with; business models are being disrupted and the nature of work is changing alongside shifting workforce demographics and the constant evolution of workplace trends and practices.

In this environment, regardless of the uncertainty, your employees remain one constant vital success factor, no matter the market, sector, and business size. Thus, **being a “good enough” employer is not good enough** — employers must continually ensure that their employment practices are progressive, agile, and relevant to meet their business and employee needs.



## Reality 1: The nature of work is increasingly uncertain and constantly changing

**“OUR CONTINUED SUCCESS IN THE FUTURE  
DEPENDS ON US VALUING OUR PEOPLE,  
NURTURING, AND PROTECTING OUR EMPLOYEES.”**

— TA Award 2021 winner (FPEP category)



Evolving patterns of employment, production, and consumption have expanded the directions of the future of work. The World Economic Forum (WEF) has estimated that major shifts through technological advancements will lead to the curation of completely new job functions, with major implications for employment, work productivity, and skill relevancy.<sup>1</sup> For example, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and full automation has reinvented the functionality and capabilities of work (such as “lights-out” operations)<sup>d</sup> that can directly affect an organisation’s business.<sup>2</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has expedited the “future of work”, normalising the digitalisation of work, the prevalence of remote work, and the uptake of automation, among other aspects.<sup>3</sup> These trends have direct implications on human capital.

Although certain industries and roles will shrink, essential human capital skills will not be easily replaced and will remain in high demand, especially as workplaces become more cognitively complex and increasingly reliant on networking. For example, both the WEF and the World Bank have noted an increasing demand for workers with advanced cognitive and socio-behavioural skills, such as critical thinking, complex problem-solving, originality, creativity, and self-efficacy.<sup>4,5</sup> As a result of ever persisting human capital requirements, employers need to be adaptable and understand the importance of fully leveraging human capital to stay relevant.

<sup>d</sup> “Lights-out” is a term that stems from manufacturing methodology/philosophy, which refers to the absence of any human presence on-site because of the full use of automation.



## Reality 2: Workforce demographics are shifting

Based on current trends, Singapore is predicted to experience “hyper-ageing” by 2030, with more than a quarter of the population being Baby Boomers.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it will not be surprising to see a significant increase in employed residents from this generation based on current employment demographics.<sup>2</sup>

The changing workforce is not only driven by demographic shifts, but also by the diversity of worldviews, personalities, attitudes, and expectations.<sup>3</sup> This diversity must be embraced as a benefit and not as a problem. Therefore, attracting a wider and diverse talent pool through merit-based approaches is usually congruent with accepting differences, catering towards a diverse clientele base, and improving employer branding to further attract talent.

Given that the workforce itself is increasingly multi-generational, it is imperative that employers recognise the differing needs and priorities of employees at different life stages.

## Reality 3: Employee's well-being is increasingly important for productivity

**“THE HEALTH OF ANY ORGANISATION IS  
RELIANT ON THE HEALTH OF ITS PEOPLE.”**

— TA Award 2021 winner (FPEP category)



Recent reports suggest an increasing cause for concern for employee's well-being, with more seeking help for mental distress amid the pandemic.<sup>1,2</sup> The increasing incorporation of technology which enables flexible work arrangements may also blur the boundaries between work and non-work, as well as aggravate mental health risks due to isolation and lack of face-to-face social interactions.<sup>3</sup>

These trends underline the imperative for employers to drive people-centred employment practices. Grappling with COVID-19 has presented many challenges across all age groups and levels, and in many cases, triggered the need for further attention to holistic care to enable employees to bring their best to their work.

Progressive work-life practices (such as flexibility for wellness, family-centric policies and practices, etc.) improve optimism and employees' productivity. A focus on well-being helps ensure employees feel valued. In essence, work-life harmony is not a *competing contention*, but a *complementary priority* for employers.

## BEYOND GOOD: PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

### WHAT ARE PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES?

While there is a wide variety of employment practices, a progressive employer can be best identified by their practices in the following four categories of the TA Award.<sup>1,2</sup>

This report has used the progressive practices exemplified in these categories to derive the five blocks that inform how employers can develop their DNA (see Pages 30-86 for the five blocks).





## Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (FPEP)

Implementing fair employment practices makes good business sense. Given Singapore's dynamic and diverse workforce, adopting effective workplace and people practices is both a priority and the right thing to do. This involves employers proactively cultivating both an inclusive culture and strong employee relationships. This also entails a constant assessment of the organisations' relationship with the external environment and how that may affect both the business and the workforce.

Senior management in these organisations are committed to adopting merit-based and progressive HR policies and practices that do not discriminate against differences but instead celebrates it by harnessing the power of diversity. This brings about better business performance and optimisation for win-win and harmonious business-employee outcomes.



## Age Inclusive Practices (AIP)

Age inclusivity is a multi-faceted approach where employers actively create a work environment that embraces individuals regardless of age. Being in one of the most rapidly ageing populations in the world with a life expectancy of around 83 years old,<sup>3</sup> Singapore-based companies need to respond to these trends by adopting age inclusive norms and practices that leverage employees' strengths, which can involve equal accessibility to career progression and openness to differentiated career pathways. Such practices not only remove barriers to employment, but also enhance business competitiveness and productivity.



## Work-Life Excellence (WLE)

Work-life harmony is a state where individuals can achieve both their professional and personal goals. Given the changing demographic landscape, family structure, and gender roles, as well as digitalisation, the divide between professional work and personal life is blurring. These domains are interrelated and affect the other now more than ever, and there is business value in helping employees maximise their performance while managing their work-life needs.

A supportive organisational culture, along with effective and sustainable work-life strategies and programmes, can help cater to both organisational objectives and employees' needs.



## Responsible Best Sourcing (RBS)

Over the last few years, the extended workforce<sup>e</sup> in organisations has expanded and is predicted to continue increasing. As they form part of an organisation's ecosystem, employers should also extend fair and progressive practices to them.

Some of these progressive practices include evaluating the employment practices of potential service providers, safeguarding the employment rights of their employees, and ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for them to positively contribute to the organisation.

<sup>e</sup> The extended workforce is defined by TAFEP as workers who are not employees of the organisation, but are engaged to complete, manage, or serve function(s) and/or projects assigned by the organisation. For example, contractors, outsourced business solution providers, and freelancers, etc.

## PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

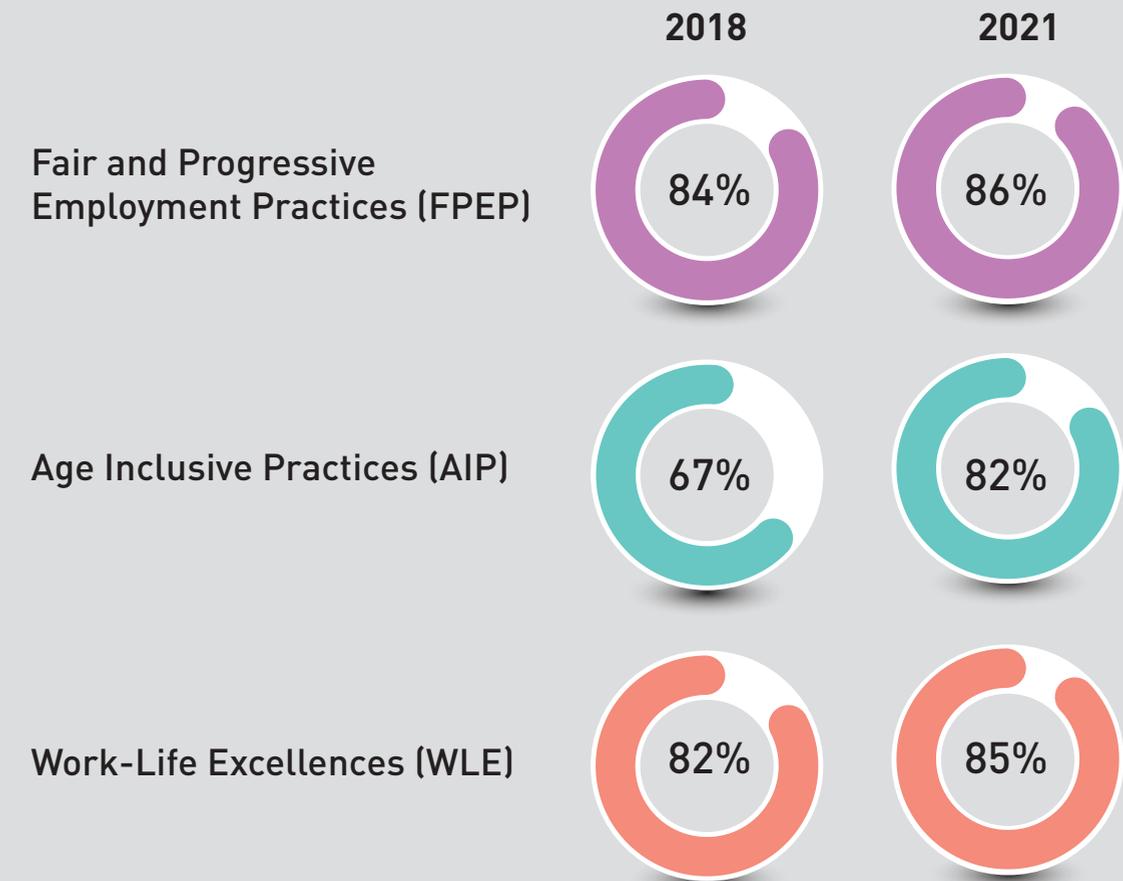
### PROGRESS SO FAR

While there remain challenges in longitudinally assessing the progress of employment practices in these four award categories in Singapore, a comparison of TA Award employee survey scores between 2018 and 2021 finalists indicates that there has been progress.

Based on the average percentage of “agree” and “strongly agree” responses for all employee survey questions, the most notable progress is in the AIP category. The consistently high percentage of agree and strongly agree responses for the FPEP and WLE categories (82-86%) also indicate that these practices have become essentials for employers to consider and implement for organisations to be a desired place to work.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>f</sup> As there were no finalists for the RBS category in TA Award 2018, it has been excluded for the purpose of comparison with the TA Award 2021. However, RBS remains important for organisations as the extended workforce offers valuable and often specialised skills that organisations can “borrow” to solve the talent shortage in their organisation. Extending fair and progressive practices to the extended workforce enables organisations to cultivate communities of talent outside their organisation.

## 2018 VS 2021: TA AWARD EMPLOYEE SURVEY SCORES



While many employers have made inroads in advancing their progressive employment practices, the journey towards being a progressive employer continues.

## DNA OF PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYERS

### FIVE BUILDING BLOCKS

This report aims to be practitioner-centred so that employers can use it to continue their journey to be progressive.

There are recommendations to help employers develop the DNA of a progressive employer and we believe employers can advance their DNA through these five building blocks.



## FIVE BUILDING BLOCKS

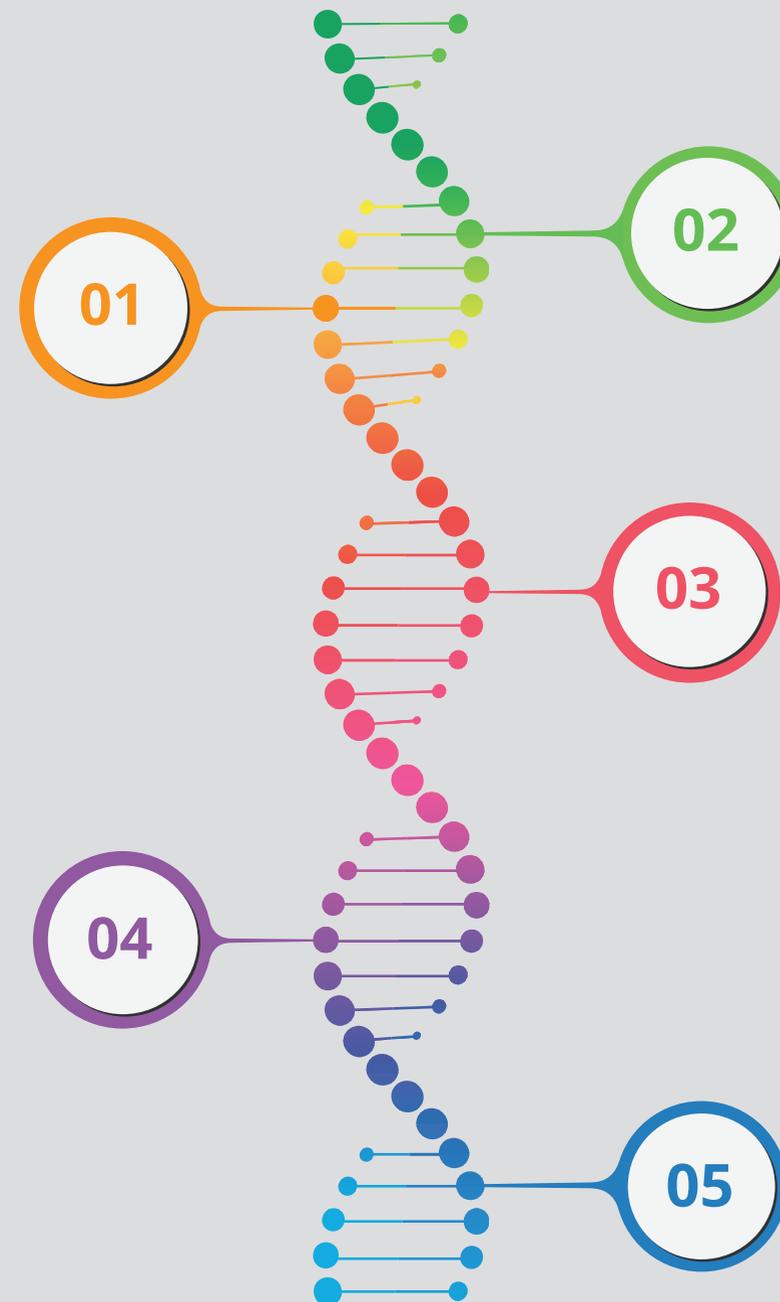
### Collaborative Networks

- Cultivate mutual trust (between the organisation and employees, as well as between employees) and social capital<sup>9</sup> within the organisation.
- Encourage open and transparent communication and facilitate relationships between diverse employee groups to achieve business goals.

### Talent Optimisation

- Look beyond employees' current capabilities by considering their future potential.
- Leverage employees' strengths and capabilities by investing resources and providing fair opportunities to facilitate skills development to enable employees to reach their full potential and safeguard their employability.

<sup>9</sup> Social Capital here refers to the networks of relationships, together with the shared norms and values in the workplace, that enable the organisation to function effectively.



### Employee Voice

- Value employees' feedback and leverage multiple platforms for employees to share their views and to surface concerns to top management.
- Provide a safe and secure environment for all employees to express themselves without fear of negative repercussions and take appropriate action on feedback given.

### Continuous Evolution

- Embrace change and continually improve processes, programmes, and practices to achieve superior business outcomes.
- Experiment with new ways of working to improve the status quo and leverage data to track and measure effectiveness.

### Holistic Care

- Adopt a holistic approach to caring for employees' well-being.
- Provide adaptive workplace programmes and practices, different career pathways and work arrangements, to better meet employees' career and life stage needs and aspirations for professional and personal success.



In the next few sections, we explore each DNA block in greater detail. For each block, we describe the essentials, pathways, and how they impact organisations:

### Essentials

- The pre-requisites that employers must have to support their journey to become progressive in their employment practices. Without these, they cannot progress far. These can include (but are not limited to) their organisation culture, leadership commitment, and communication strategies towards progressiveness.

### Pathways

- The core actions that employers execute to be progressive in the four areas identified earlier — FPEP, AIP, WLE, and RBS. These can include (but are not limited to) an organisation's policies, practices, and programmes.

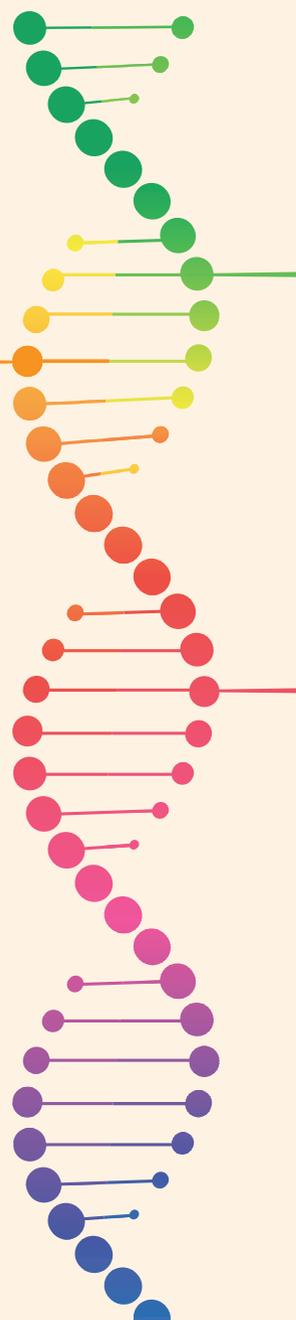
### Impact

- The tangible impact that organisations can observe, which can inform success outcomes of progressiveness at work, with the workforce, and for the workplace.

# Collaborative Networks

01

Progressive employers cultivate mutual trust (between the organisation and employees, as well as between employees) and social capital within the organisation to encourage open as well as transparent communication, and facilitate relationships between diverse employee groups to achieve business goals.



## 01 Collaborative Networks

### ESSENTIALS: Mutual Trust and Inclusivity

#### Mutual Trust

“IN GENERAL, CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COOPERATION IS BEST WHEN BOTH SIDES TRUST EACH OTHER.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

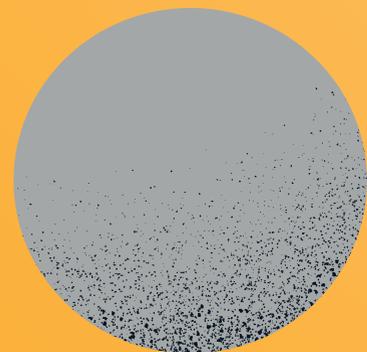
To have a vibrant team dynamic, mutual trust must first be cultivated. This happens when different employee groups are keen to explore, collaborate, and learn from one another — allowing for a better understanding of their group’s diversity and a greater appreciation for each person’s unique capabilities.<sup>1</sup>

#### Inclusivity

“WE STRIVE TO BE [FAMILY-CENTRED] RATHER THAN AGE INCLUSIVE. THIS IS BECAUSE WE ARE A FAMILY, AND AGE DOES NOT MATTER.”

— Quote from employee survey (AIP category)

An organisation that is committed to creating an inclusive environment fosters a sense of belonging that goes beyond traditional corporate hierarchies.<sup>2</sup> Emphasising the importance of treating one another fairly—regardless of seniority or role—provides holistic support for employees’ emotional well-being and career development.



## 01 Collaborative Networks

### PATHWAYS: Embracing Diversity and Relationship-Building

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#### Embracing Diversity

“OUR OUTSOURCED COLLEAGUES DINE WITH US AT OUR COLLEAGUES’ CAFETERIA. AS EVERYONE IS DRESSED IN THEIR UNIFORM, WE ARE UNABLE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN OUTSOURCED OR CORE COLLEAGUES. THERE IS NO DISCRIMINATION WHEN IT COMES TO TAKING CARE OF COLLEAGUES.”

— Quote from employee survey (RBS category)

Organisational policies that embrace diversity help cultivate empathy and reduce unconscious bias between diverse employee groups. Such policies provide long-term benefits as they set the stage for developing a diverse pipeline of employees.<sup>3</sup>

#### Mitigating Unconscious Bias

(Software Provider, Large Organisation)

Using in-house technology, this finalist ensures that their job descriptions are neutrally worded while minimising both masculine and feminine vocabulary. This approach actively mitigates unconscious bias and helps support greater diversity in hiring and recruitment.

## Relationship-Building

“WE HAVE TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES — NO MATTER HOW PRESSURISING, STRESSFUL, OR TIRING OUR DAY IS. ULTIMATELY, THE MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO ENJOY OURSELVES AND BUILD STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

Fostering collaborative networks involves building deeper relationships with and among employees. By proactively cultivating social capital among employees through relationship-building, employers can capitalise on the diversity of their workforce. This enables better alignment towards business goals.

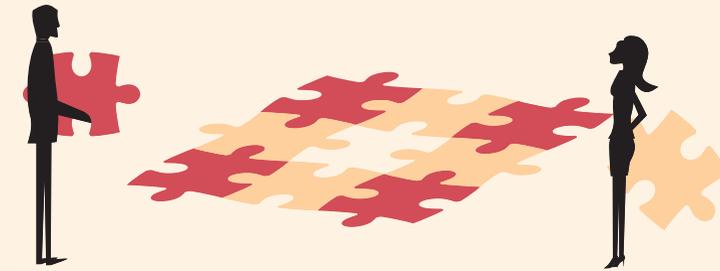
## Multi-generational Work Team

(Transportation, Large Organisation)

One of the finalists creates opportunities for employees from different age groups and departments to work together as a team to organise campaigns and roadshows. For example, the “Culture Week” roadshow allowed team members of different generations to share their perspectives and ideas on how the organisation’s attitudes and beliefs could be displayed at work. This not only provided the team the opportunity for cohesive collaboration, but it also reinforced and refreshed employees’ understanding of the organisation’s shared vision, beliefs and attitudes through games and posters.

“WHAT I FOUND HELPFUL IS... MATCHMAKING THE RIGHT MENTORS WITH MENTEES AND ACROSS DIVISIONS TO SHARE EXPERTISE AND KNOWLEDGE.”

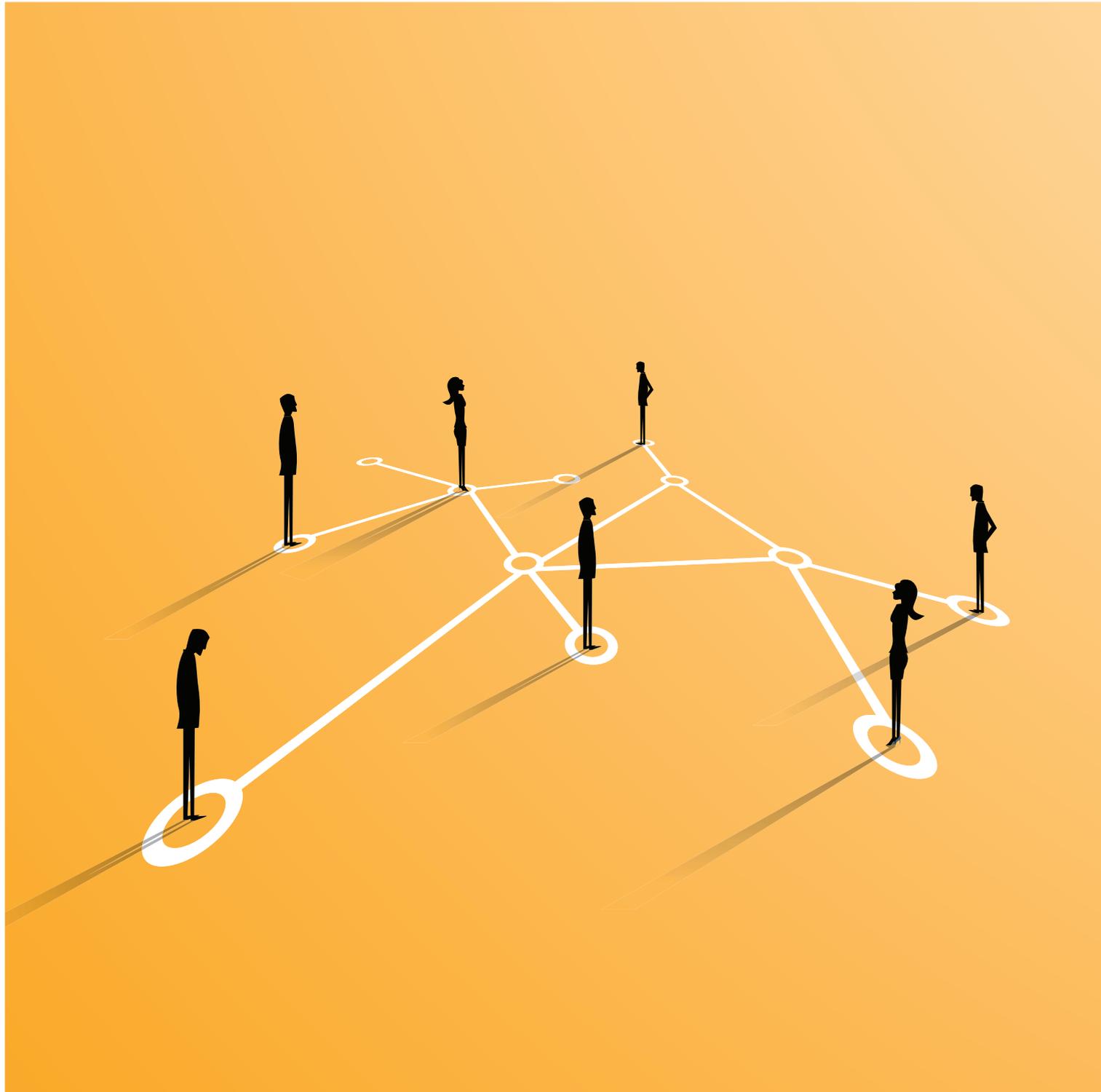
— Quote from employee survey (AIP category)



## Expert Mentoring

(Real Estate Solutions Provider, Large Organisation)

Another finalist has adopted expert mentoring, where older employees learn digital skills from their younger counterparts, and younger employees pick up new skills from older employees. Contrary to traditional notions of hierarchy, expert mentoring advocates a mentoring relationship between younger and older employees. This serves as a key step in championing for change and innovation in an organisation that wishes to retain its competitive edge in a rapidly changing work environment.<sup>4</sup> It also helps employers to look beyond age labels in their mentorship practices, paving the way for greater collaboration among employees.



## 01 Collaborative Networks

### IMPACT: Employee Retention and Knowledge Exchange

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#### Employee Retention

“REGULAR SHARING SESSIONS ARE CONDUCTED TO HELP US UNDERSTAND THE WORK ROLES OF OTHER DEPARTMENTS. THIS ENABLES ME TO UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION AMONG DEPARTMENTS, SO I CAN FORESEE MYSELF CONTINUING TO WORK HERE IN THE FUTURE.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

A collaborative culture within the workforce allows for greater engagement among employees as they learn to work with and gain a greater appreciation for one another. Possessing a greater understanding of one’s colleagues makes for a more meaningful work environment, resulting in improved levels of employee retention.<sup>5</sup>

#### Knowledge Exchange

“WE PROVIDE INTERNAL TRAINING SESSIONS WHERE COLLEAGUES FROM DIFFERENT DEPARTMENT BUSINESS UNITS, EACH WITH DIFFERENT AREAS OF EXPERTISE, ARE ABLE TO NETWORK AND LEARN TOGETHER.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

When employees of different age groups, backgrounds, skillsets, and experience levels are regularly engaging with one another, this creates a work culture where knowledge exchange is the norm.<sup>6</sup>



My organisation makes the effort to create work teams comprising employees from different age groups.

**74.9%** of respondents agree



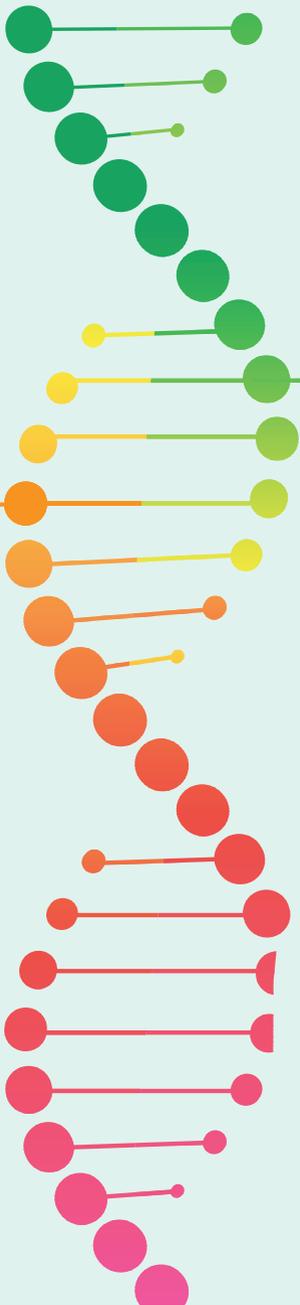
My senior leaders are committed to creating an inclusive workplace, that values the strengths and contributions of each individual and leverages their abilities, skills, knowledge, and experiences.

**87.0%** of respondents agree



**Legend**

-  Strongly Agree & Agree
-  Neutral, Disagree, & Strongly Disagree



02

## Employee Voice

Progressive employers value employees' feedback and leverage multiple platforms for employees to share their views and to surface concerns to top management.

They also provide a safe and secure environment for all employees to express themselves without fear of negative repercussions and take appropriate action on feedback given.

## 02 Employee Voice

### ESSENTIALS: Psychological Safety and Follow-Up

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#### Psychological Safety

**“WE CAN TALK FREELY TO OUR IMMEDIATE MANAGERS ABOUT HOW WE FEEL WITHOUT FEELING JUDGED.”**

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

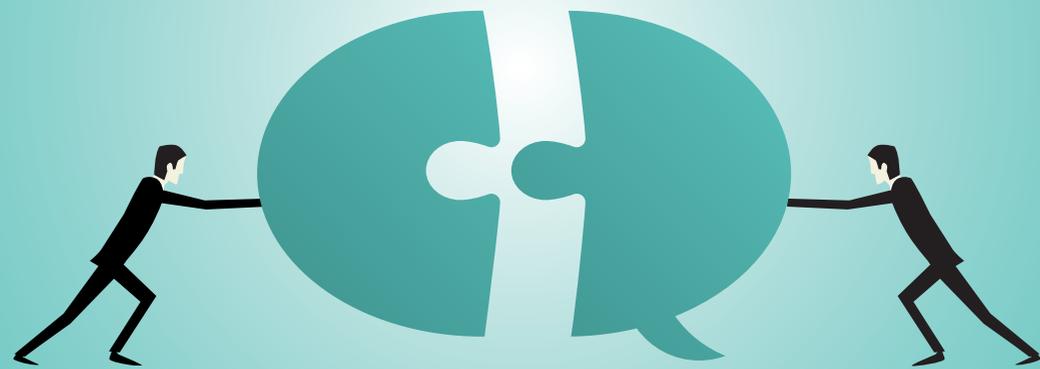
Welcoming feedback from employees helps nurture a culture of psychological safety. This opens lines of communication and concurrently supports broader viewpoints from the ground. Such engagement empowers employees to play a role in strengthening their organisation.<sup>1</sup>

#### Follow-Up

**“THE MANAGER ALWAYS LISTENS TO OUR FEEDBACK AND IMPLEMENTS CHANGES TO IMPROVE OUR WORK PROCESSES AND THE WELL-BEING OF THE STAFF.”**

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

When employers act on employees' feedback, it demonstrates their commitment to making necessary improvements to organisational practices. This gives employees confidence in their willingness and ability to follow-up on feedback — thus motivating employees to voice their opinions.<sup>2</sup>



## 02 Employee Voice

### **PATHWAYS: Shared Responsibilities, Constructive Dialogue, and Accessible Senior Leaders**

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#### **Shared Responsibilities**

“THERE IS SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN SUPERVISORS, SENIORS, AND JUNIORS. ALSO, THERE IS SWITCHING OF DUTIES OR TASK DELEGATION SO THAT EVERYONE HAS A FAIR KNOWLEDGE OF ALL WORK THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO ENSURE THE SMOOTH RUNNING OF OPERATIONS.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

Progressive employers who incorporate employees’ voices create a sense of shared responsibility. Beyond vanilla feedback mechanisms, employers should strive to co-create work-related solutions with their employees.

#### **Communities of Practice (Consultancy, Small Organisation)**

To build a culture of shared responsibility, one of the finalists established Communities of Practice (CoP), which strive to improve work-related priorities (such as productivity and engagement). These initiatives are implemented on a voluntary basis which allow employees to choose CoPs that are aligned to their interests. To ensure stronger employer-employee accountability, assigning a senior employee to lead each CoP is recommended, and to further encourage participation, employers could make these CoPs visible across the organisation (e.g. through townhall sessions).

## Constructive Dialogue

**“WE GET EMPLOYEES TO GIVE FEEDBACK AND INCLUDE THEM IN DECISION-MAKING. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE TRANSPARENTLY SHARE THE FEEDBACK WITH EMPLOYEES AND DEMONSTRATE HOW WE ARE ADDRESSING THOSE ISSUES.”**

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

Engaging employees in constructive dialogue ensures that everyone has a fair chance of expressing their opinions and having them addressed. This can be done by increasing the visibility of feedback processes and follow-up actions taken for constructive feedback to dispel the notion that feedback-giving is futile and replace it with a renewed sense of assurance that all opinions are given equal consideration.

## Facilitated Dialogue

**(Software Provider, Large Organisation)**

Larger employers often face efficiency constraints in acquiring employee feedback. One finalist adopted a micro-level practice of using questionnaires designed to help managers identify any outstanding concerns within the team. This is most effectively followed by a team dialogue session to discuss the results. Enlisting the services of certified facilitators who can offer their unbiased perspectives can also help employers with the interpretation of the data from the surveys. These facilitators can also be a powerful aid to propose plans to address issues identified.

## Accessible Senior Leaders

**“THERE IS A FEEDBACK CHANNEL THAT ALLOWS ANYONE WITH GRIEVANCES TO REACH OUT TO SENIOR MANAGEMENT DIRECTLY.”**

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

Implementing formal communication channels allows employees to share their thoughts and concerns with senior leaders. This ensures managerial accountability by revealing and managing blind spots arising from how managers treat their employees.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, such platforms create a conducive environment for the exchange of ideas and perspectives within the organisation.



## “Tell the Boss” Programme

**(Banking & Financial Services, Large Organisation)**

While grievances are usually addressed with one’s immediate supervisor before escalation, employers can go one step further in promoting transparency by having a quarterly feedback channel where feedback is addressed in real-time by the CEO. To cater to employees who prefer to have their feedback addressed privately, one of the finalists has established a hotline for employees to speak to the CEO directly. Such initiatives will grant a sense of assurance to all employees that their opinions will be heard and valued by senior management.

## 02 Employee Voice

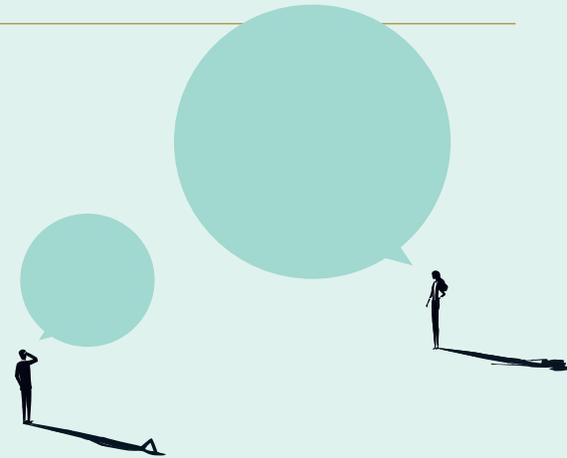
### IMPACT: Engagement and Openness

#### Engagement

“SHARING OF EXPERIENCES HELPS IN UNDERSTANDING WORK PROCESSES, TECHNIQUES IN HANDLING WORK MATTERS, AND IN ESTABLISHING COMMON APPROACHES TOWARDS CLIENTS. THIS BUILDS GREATER UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION AMONG STAFF — ALLOWING FOR BETTER MANAGEMENT AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMMON GOALS.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

Treating employees as stakeholders by granting them a voice within the organisation gives them greater clarity and alignment with their organisation's core mission and values. By providing an avenue for employees to inquire and challenge the organisation's stand on certain issues, employees feel a sense of ownership in the organisation's decision-making process, thereby improving engagement levels at work.



#### Openness

“I VALUE MY ORGANISATION'S OPENNESS AS IT ALLOWS ME TO GIVE FEEDBACK DIRECTLY TO MY SUPERVISOR OR THE MANAGEMENT TEAM. THEY LISTEN TO MY GRIEVANCES, FEEDBACK, AND IDEAS, INSTEAD OF BRUSHING THEM ASIDE.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP award category)

When leaders acknowledge their employees' opinions, this sets a precedent for other employees to be comfortable articulating their views about certain organisational practices. This cultivates a culture of candour, resulting in a greater degree of transparency and openness within the organisation, thereby paving the way for candid conversations and the formation of genuine relationships within the workforce.





My organisation's employment practices help me to feel empowered to make positive changes in my organisation.

**79.7%** of respondents agree



There is effective two-way communication between management and employees.

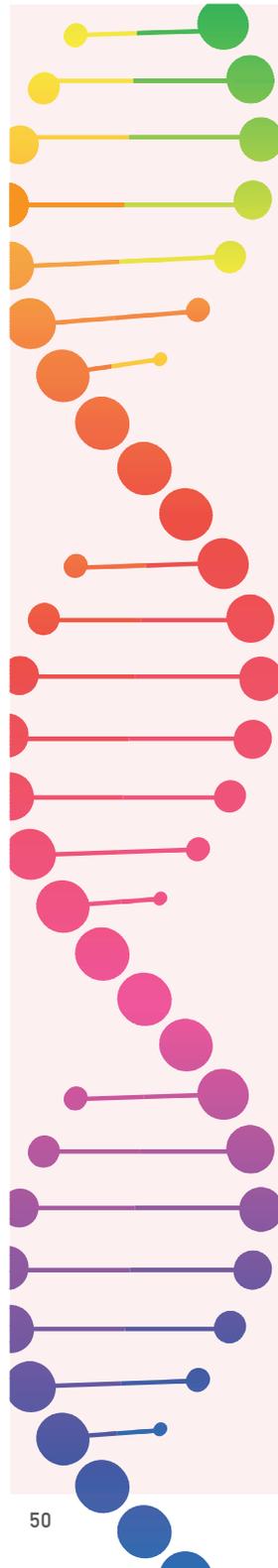
**81.6%** of respondents agree



**Legend**

 Strongly Agree & Agree

 Neutral, Disagree, & Strongly Disagree



03

## Continuous Evolution

Progressive employers embrace change and continually improve their processes, programmes, and practices to achieve superior business outcomes.

They must be willing to experiment with new ways of working to improve the status quo and leverage data to track and measure effectiveness.

### 03 Continuous Evolution

## ESSENTIALS: Experimentation and Change

### Experimentation

“MY ORGANISATION IS CURRENTLY TRANSFORMING. OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, SEVERAL INITIATIVES HAVE BEEN ROLLED OUT TO KEEP UP WITH THE CHANGING BUSINESS LANDSCAPE.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

Employers can remain adaptable to everchanging circumstances by having a culture of experimentation to cultivate a spirit of curiosity and resilience through learning from both successes and setbacks.<sup>1</sup> As the process of experimentation may not always yield positive results, both employers and employees must have the courage to stay curious to challenge norms and assumptions and be open to ideas to successfully build a culture of experimentation within the organisation.



## Change

“THE MANAGEMENT TEAM IS OPEN AND SUPPORTIVE TO NEW SUGGESTIONS... IN THE EVERCHANGING ENVIRONMENT, MANAGEMENT HAS DISPLAYED THE IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATING AND TRYING NEW STRATEGIES.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

Given that change is the only constant, employers need to be receptive towards a diverse range of signals (such as employee feedback, customer reviews, evolving business relationships, etc.) that are representative of the organisation’s successes, pitfalls, and potential improvements. Empowering employees to help create a culture of continuous improvement ultimately fuels stronger performance.<sup>2</sup>



### 03 Continuous Evolution

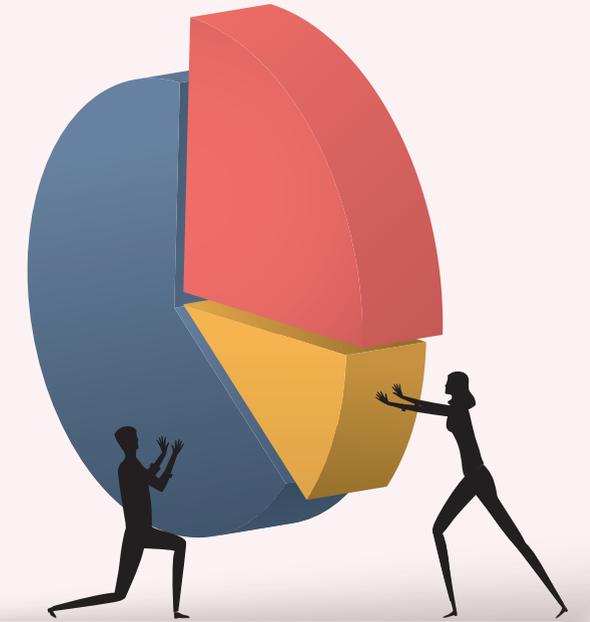
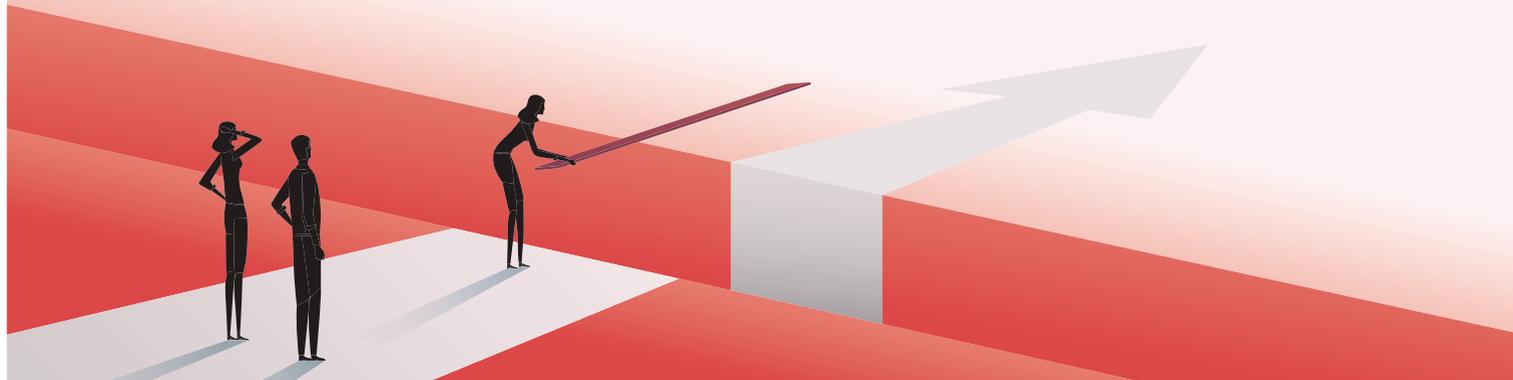
## PATHWAYS: Accountability, Adaptation, and Periodic Reviews

### Accountability

“OUR SENIOR MANAGEMENT ALLOWS EVERYONE TO VOICE THEIR QUERIES AND CONCERNS OPENLY AND WILL DIRECTLY ADDRESS THE ISSUES RAISED WITH THE INTENT TO FIND A SOLUTION AND INCREASE EFFICIENCY. THIS ALLOWS THE WHOLE ORGANISATION TO BE AWARE OF THE MANAGEMENT’S DIRECTION AND WORK TOWARDS THE INTENDED RESULTS.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

Employees may feel uncertain when confronted with rapid organisational changes and the potential information asymmetry that follows.<sup>3</sup> Having accountability can help alleviate these fears as well as elevate employees’ confidence levels towards management and the drive for change. Ultimately, this will enable employees to better embrace organisational changes.



### Regular Accountability through Global “All Hands” Meetings (Software Provider, Large Organisation)

Ascertaining and communicating accountability can be done by holding regular meetings e.g. quarterly. One finalist does this by organising meetings where the CEO and Management Team can convey transparently both positive and negative information. Such a policy ensures organisational accountability towards employees by keeping them updated on organisational matters and any other changes.

This policy is adaptable to any organisation to keep in closer touch with employees. Where appropriate, employers with an extended workforce should include them in such sessions — this ensures not only accountability, but also a space for social dialogue and ultimately, the workforce’s dignity as they are granted equal respect.<sup>4</sup>

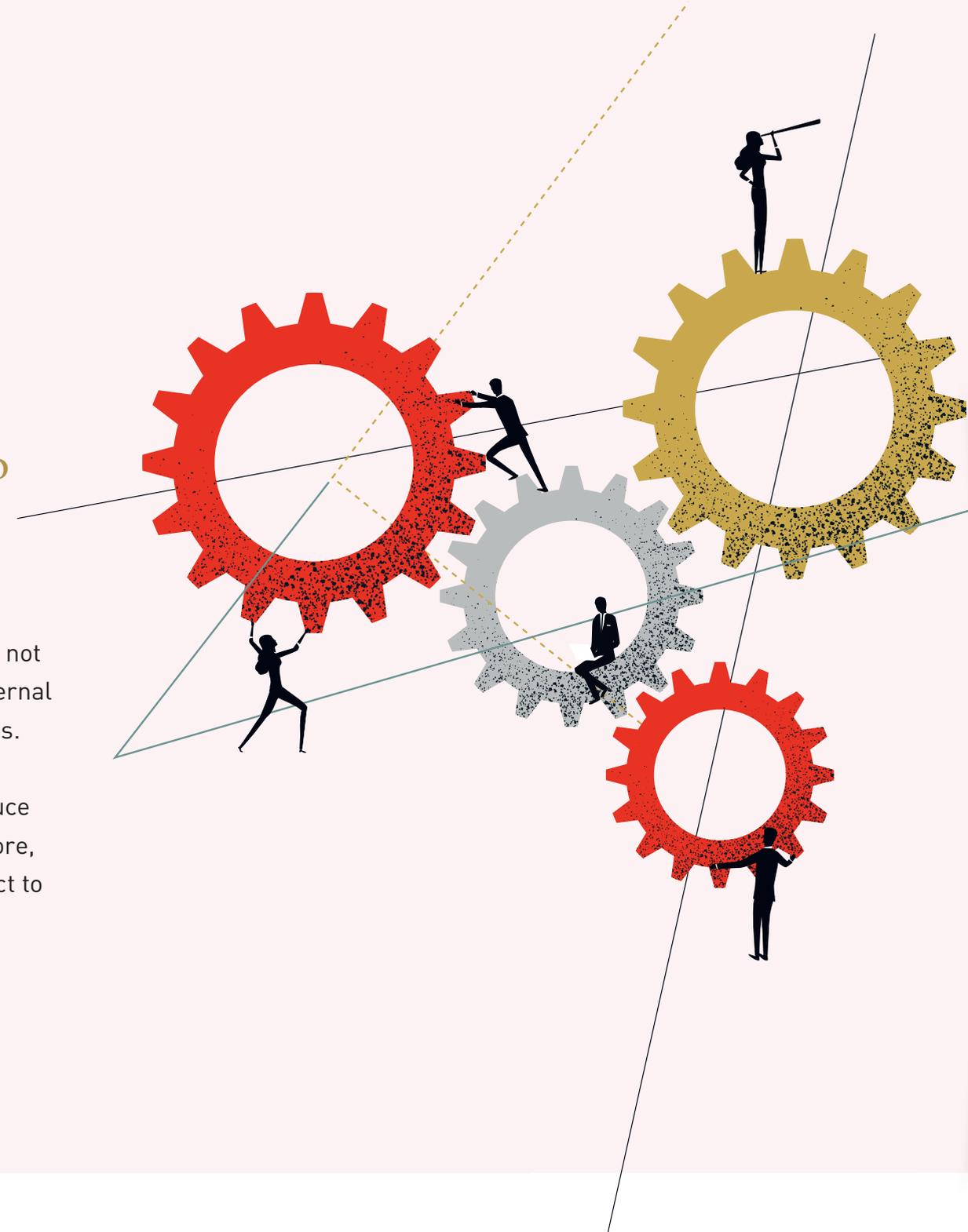
## Adaptation

“MY ORGANISATION IS GOOD AT INCULCATING CHANGE BY ADAPTING TO BOTH BUSINESS NEEDS AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN ORDER TO SUPPORT WORK PRACTICES.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

When implementing changes to job or organisational processes, employers must be adaptable. This means not only considering organisational requirements and external uncertainties but also accounting for employees' needs.

Failure to do so can cause unaccounted gaps that reduce the efficiency levels of work in the long-term.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, adaptation is key when the work environment is subject to constant change.



## Adaptable Workforce Planning (Public Service, Small Organisation)

Workforce planning is an integral component of business sustainability. To ensure this, one of the finalists anchors workforce planning in a people-centred approach. This is initiated by assessing the organisation's current workforce profile, which involves personally engaging with individual managers and employees on their needs.

Concurrently, research is done on the volatile industry landscape through a gap analysis that assesses the significance of any expected transformational change on current job scopes and roles. Through such comprehensive efforts, employers can identify career development blind spots in order to fully develop their employees and better plan for long-term work efficiency.

## Periodic Reviews

**“THE COMPANY REVIEWS ITS POLICIES ON A REGULAR BASIS.”**

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

An organisation with a culture of experimentation is bound to encounter instances where there may be no clear solutions for specific issues, e.g. challenges arising from a pilot phase of implementation. To counter such roadblocks, employers should view these as prime opportunities to improve and consult others through periodic reviews for continuous improvement.<sup>6</sup>

### **‘3-6-9’ Monthly Reviews**

**(Fintech, Small Organisation)**

Organisational pilot initiatives should not be left alone. They need to be anchored appropriately through periodic reviews. One of the finalists achieves this by adopting a ‘3-6-9’ monthly review approach, where such endeavours are reviewed every 3, 6, and 9 months.

Adopting a systematic approach to reviewing initiatives promotes agility in making minor adjustments and improvements, as opposed to having to dedicate large amounts of resources to overhauling an entire programme. For larger organisations, this same regularity can be adopted but at intervals that make business sense based on the pilot initiative, e.g. every 4, 8, and 12 months or longer.



### 03 Continuous Evolution

## IMPACT: Creativity & Innovation, and Agility

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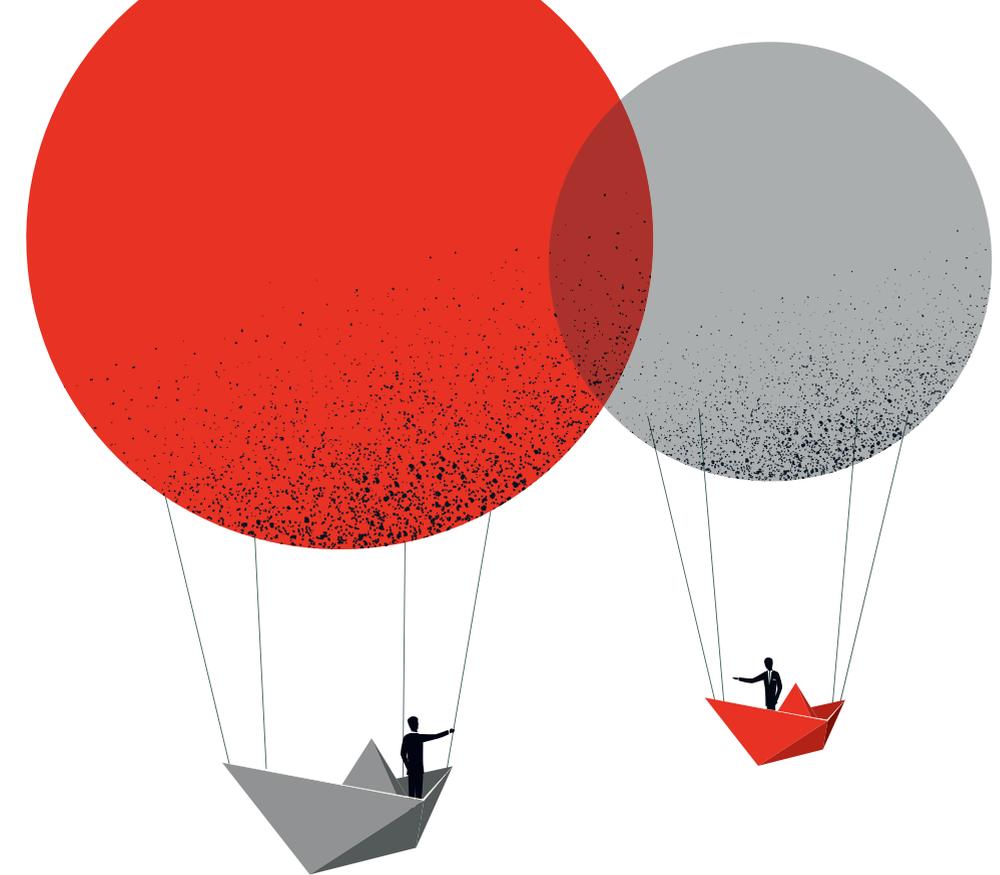
### Creativity & Innovation

**“A DIVERSE WORKFORCE BRINGS IDEAS, INNOVATION, AND CREATIVITY. STAFF COME TOGETHER TO WORK AS A TEAM AND SOLVE PROBLEMS QUICKLY.”**

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

An organisation that encourages and embraces experimentation effectively provides an avenue for employees to not only express their creativity in coming up with innovative solutions, but to do so with freedom without fear of repercussions.

This is usually modelled by leaders who offer constructive feedback without being abrasive and graciously accept criticism from subordinates. Consequently, this promotes a healthy exchange of different ideas and insights between employees and leaders, which results in a work environment where novelty can thrive in an uninhibited and organic fashion for continuous improvement and refinement.<sup>7</sup>



### Agility

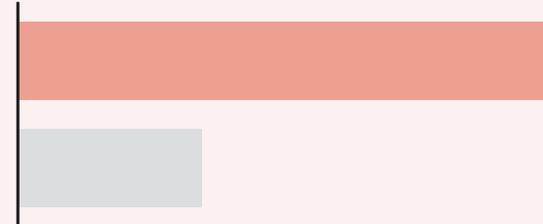
**“THE COMPANY IS VERY RESPONSIVE. FOR EXAMPLE, WITH THE RECENT COVID ISSUE, THE MANAGEMENT WAS VERY SWIFT IN TAKING IMMEDIATE ACTION TO MANAGE THE CRISIS.”**

— Quote from employee survey (WLE category)

When an organisation has a culture of experimentation and is committed to change, this results in organisational agility. This is crucial not only for synchronising employee and organisational needs, but also for better facilitating collaboration with others in a seamless and cohesive fashion towards a common objective. In short, the organisation becomes more adaptable to and comfortable with change as a collective workplace.<sup>8</sup>

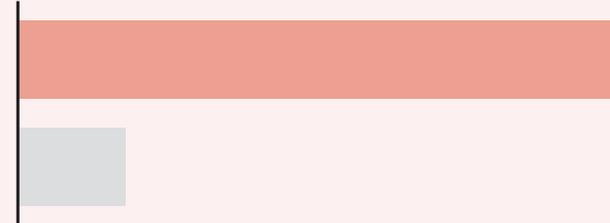
My organisation's HR policies and practices are constantly reviewed to align with changes in the industry, economy, and country, and are relevant and effective.

83.0% of respondents agree



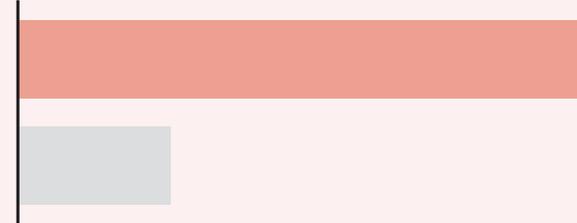
My organisation clearly communicates the value of cultivating a work environment that encourages learning, innovation, and continuous improvement.

88.3% of respondents agree



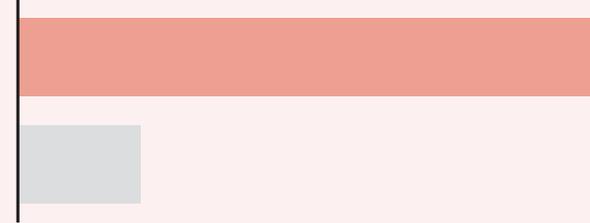
My organisation's employment practices help me to embrace new work practices (e.g. resulting from changing business needs).

85.4% of respondents agree



My organisation clearly communicates the value of embracing change and ensuring our HR policies and practices are relevant and effective in engaging employees.

86.5% of respondents agree



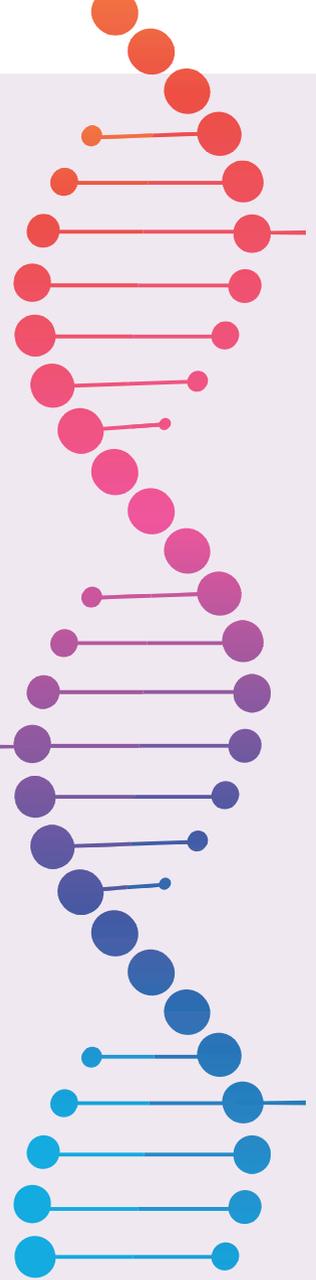
Legend

Strongly Agree & Agree    Neutral, Disagree, & Strongly Disagree

# Talent Optimisation



Progressive employers look beyond employees' current capabilities by considering their future potential. They leverage employees' strengths and capabilities by investing resources and providing fair opportunities to facilitate skills development thus enabling employees to reach their full potential and safeguard their employability.



## 04 Talent Optimisation

### ESSENTIALS: Continuous Learning and Employability

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#### Continuous Learning

**“I APPRECIATE THE OPEN, SUSTAINED, AND INCLUSIVE SUPPORT FOR CONTINUOUS LEARNING THAT IS OPEN TO ALL EMPLOYEES REGARDLESS OF THEIR ROLE AND SENIORITY.”**

— Quote from employee survey (AIP category)

An organisation that continually develops employees’ capabilities and skills needs to cultivate a culture of continuous learning. One way to achieve this is through promoting “learning journeys” that incorporate fieldwork, pre-and post-classroom digital learning, peer learning, on-the-job coaching and mentoring, and short workshops.<sup>1</sup> Investing in these opportunities generates personal growth for employees, and thereby, organisational growth and sustainability.



#### Employability

**“MY ORGANISATION HAS A WIDE RANGE OF LEARNING/ TRAINING COURSES THAT CATER TO THE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF EMPLOYEES, WHICH WILL COVER NOT ONLY THE SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE TO PERFORM THEIR CORE FUNCTIONS, BUT ALSO DEVELOP THEIR PERSONAL CAPABILITIES TO MAKE THEM MORE VALUABLE AND EMPLOYABLE IN THE INDUSTRY.”**

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

Besides having a culture of continuous learning, an organisation should also enable the employability of its employees. In other words, progressive employers ensure their employees’ employability by granting them greater autonomy over their personal and professional development. Simultaneously, employees must also actively capitalise on developmental opportunities to increase the value they bring to their organisation.



## 04 Talent Optimisation

### PATHWAYS: Upskilling, Job Crafting, and Lifelong Employment

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#### Upskilling

“THERE ARE AMPLE LEARNING AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES TO PICK UP NEW SKILLS TO STAY RELEVANT IN THE WORKFORCE. THIS ENABLES ME TO CONTINUE LEARNING AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE COMPANY.”

— Quote from employee survey (AIP category)

Upskilling refers to an organisation’s commitment to teaching existing employees new skills to enable them to take on new tasks/roles where they can add more value. In an everchanging work environment, employers can retain their present workforce by creating opportunities that allow employees to learn new skillsets and take on new positions.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when employers focus on upskilling existing employees, this mitigates the risk of a skills gap and ensures continued relevance.

#### Company-Led Training

(IT Solutions Provider, Small Organisation)

It is often a challenge for individuals to identify or afford training that is relevant. Organisations can address this by providing support in the form of a company-wide policy on the upskilling of mid-level professionals for areas that are in demand, e.g. tech-related roles. Such a policy reduces the need to hire new employees when skills requirements change. This also allows employees the benefit of picking up new skills throughout their tenure to remain employable.

## Job Crafting

**“MY ORGANISATION ALLOWS THE EXTENDED WORKFORCE TO HAVE OPPORTUNITIES IN DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS, ALLOWING THEM TO LEARN MORE ACROSS VARIOUS FUNCTIONS.”**

— Quote from employee survey (RBS category)

Instead of imposing tight regulations on employees' learning opportunities, employers should work with employees on their career development. For example, a more experienced employee may be given greater autonomy to design or look for opportunities to grow, but a less experienced employee may need more guidance in such areas.<sup>3</sup> Giving all employees some level of freedom in crafting their jobs allows room for experimentation, helps them to identify skills gaps, and pushes them beyond their comfort zones.

### “My Learning Time”

(Software Provider, Large Organisation)

Employees engaging in job crafting requires a time investment to explore possibilities, which is often limited due to the ongoing nature of work across most industries.

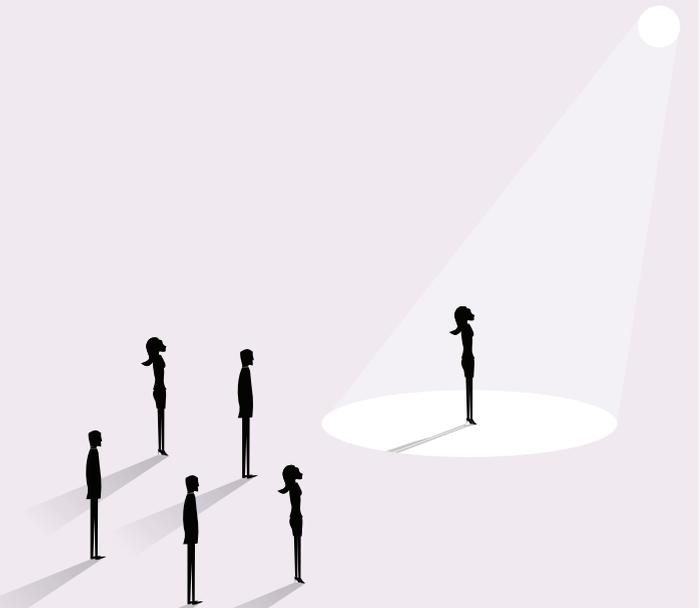
Employers have a part to play in ensuring that their employees have ample time to focus on and refresh their personal career alignments in relation to current and possible future work scope. For example, a finalist grants employees additional seven days of paid leave so they can utilise this time for their career development, to take on courses that would benefit them based on their individual preferences and needs.

## Lifelong Employment

**“LEARNING AND TRAINING AT WORK ENSURES CONTINUOUS GROWTH AND ALLOWS ME TO STAY RELEVANT TO THE INDUSTRY.”**

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

Having a programme designed to ensure that the employees remain employable for a lifetime is not simply about learning a single skillset, but about making a conscious effort to acquire new skills throughout one's career. By ensuring the relevance and adaptability of their employees' skillsets, employers can improve organisational efficiency and productivity.<sup>4</sup>



### Removing Retirement Age Cap

(Financial Services, Large Organisation)

Age inclusive organisations regard talent on the basis of merit and provide equal opportunities in development for all employees to maximise their potential. Employers can consider following the example of a finalist who removed the retirement age cap, allowing existing employees to extend their careers if they wish, giving them the time to continue working and learning new skills. This demonstrates the organisation's recognition of its employees as valuable assets and commitment to employees' continuous development.



## 04 Talent Optimisation

### IMPACT: Sustainable Talent Pipeline and Meaningfulness

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#### Sustainable Talent Pipeline

**“... THE OPEN, SUSTAINED, AND INCLUSIVE SUPPORT OF CONTINUOUS LEARNING ACROSS PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL LEARNING FOR ALL EMPLOYEES REGARDLESS OF THE ROLE AND SENIORITY.”**

— Quote from employee survey (AIP category)

To ensure talent pipeline sustainability, a forward-thinking organisation needs to anticipate and prepare for potential talent turnovers. This is primarily done by continuously upskilling a larger pool of employees so that they can fill up any talent gaps in the future.<sup>5</sup>

## Meaningfulness

**“THERE IS NO LACK OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN MY ORGANISATION — BE IT FROM COURSES TO DAY-TO-DAY WORK FEEDBACK. I FEEL EMPOWERED TO LEARN CONSTANTLY, GIVE AND RECEIVE FEEDBACK, AND TO SHARE THESE LEARNINGS WITH OTHER TEAM MEMBERS SO THAT WE CAN GROW TOGETHER.”**

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

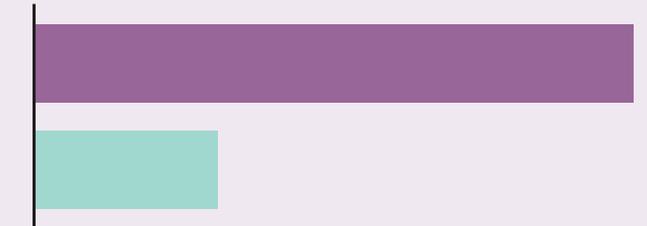


Job seekers who are actively looking for learning opportunities would be naturally inclined to choose an organisation that embraces continuous learning as part of its company culture.<sup>6</sup>

Organisations that actively advocate equitable opportunities for employees to pursue courses that are best suited to their individual needs send the message that they acknowledge and recognise the value of having a diverse workforce.<sup>7</sup> Their employees derive a sense of fulfilment and meaning from their work due to their ability to contribute to the organisation's success with their unique skillset.

My organisation promotes continuous learning and improvement for employees of all age groups.

**85.5%** of respondents agree



My organisation provides support and opportunities for us to engage in continuous learning, improve our skills and expertise, and develop ourselves in new areas so that we can perform our jobs more effectively.

**87.7%** of respondents agree



My organisation develops the capabilities of its employees to develop a sustainable workforce that can meet the organisation's needs.

**86.4%** of respondents agree



### Legend

Strongly Agree & Agree

Neutral, Disagree, & Strongly Disagree



## Holistic Care

05

Progressive employers adopt a holistic approach to caring for their employees' well-being. They provide adaptive workplace programmes and practices, different career pathways and work arrangements, to better meet employees' career and life stage needs and aspirations for professional and personal success.

### 05 Holistic Care

## ESSENTIALS: Mutual Respect & Empathy, and Workplace Well-being

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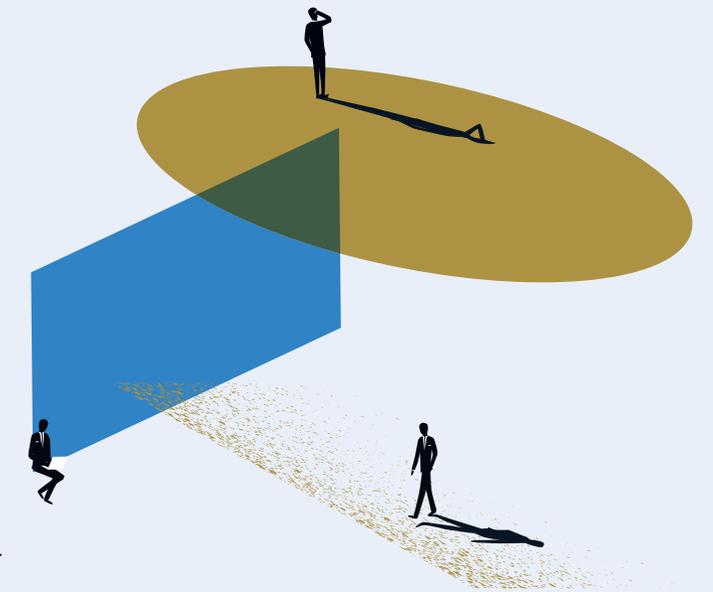
### Mutual Respect & Empathy

**“SUPERVISORS ARE RESPECTFUL IN SEEKING THOUGHTS AND VIEWS FROM EMPLOYEES AND IT IS DONE ANYTIME, OPENLY.”**

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

To provide holistic care for employees, employers must first recognise and respect that employees are multi-faceted individuals with different career and life stage needs, and aspirations. Hence, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to meeting their needs.

Employers should adopt an appreciative and user-centred<sup>1</sup> approach towards understanding their employees' career and work-life needs. This will help employers and employees develop a win-win solution/outcome that concurrently addresses their needs and thereby improving productivity and job satisfaction.<sup>2,3</sup>



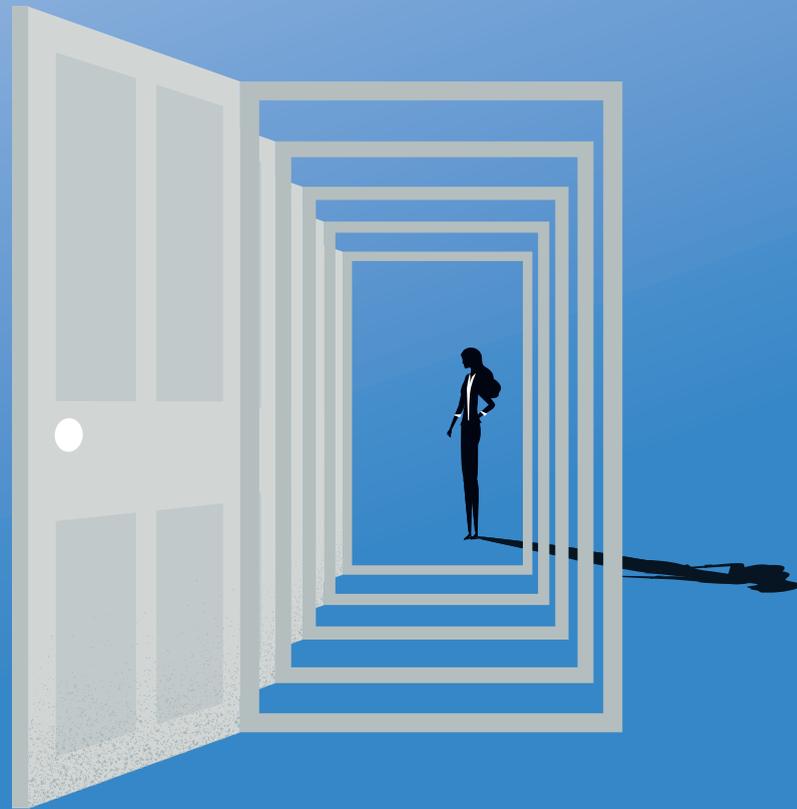
## Workplace Well-being

“EMPLOYEES ARE INVITED TO SHARE THEIR FEEDBACK ON HOW THEIR CURRENT WORK ENVIRONMENT AND EXPERIENCE IS LIKE. FOR EXAMPLE, OLDER EMPLOYEES ARE ENCOURAGED TO SHARE THEIR CURRENT WORK SUITABILITY — FROM A PHYSICAL AND MENTAL STANDPOINT.”

— Quote from employee survey (AIP category)

Employees’ well-being is very much dependent on workplace well-being. Workplace well-being encompasses all aspects of working life, including the physical work environment and how employees feel about their jobs.<sup>4</sup> Progressive employers demonstrate their care by not only focusing on employees’ well-being but also the work environment itself.





## 05 Holistic Care

### **PATHWAYS: Flexibility and Customising Initiatives, and Life-Career Development**

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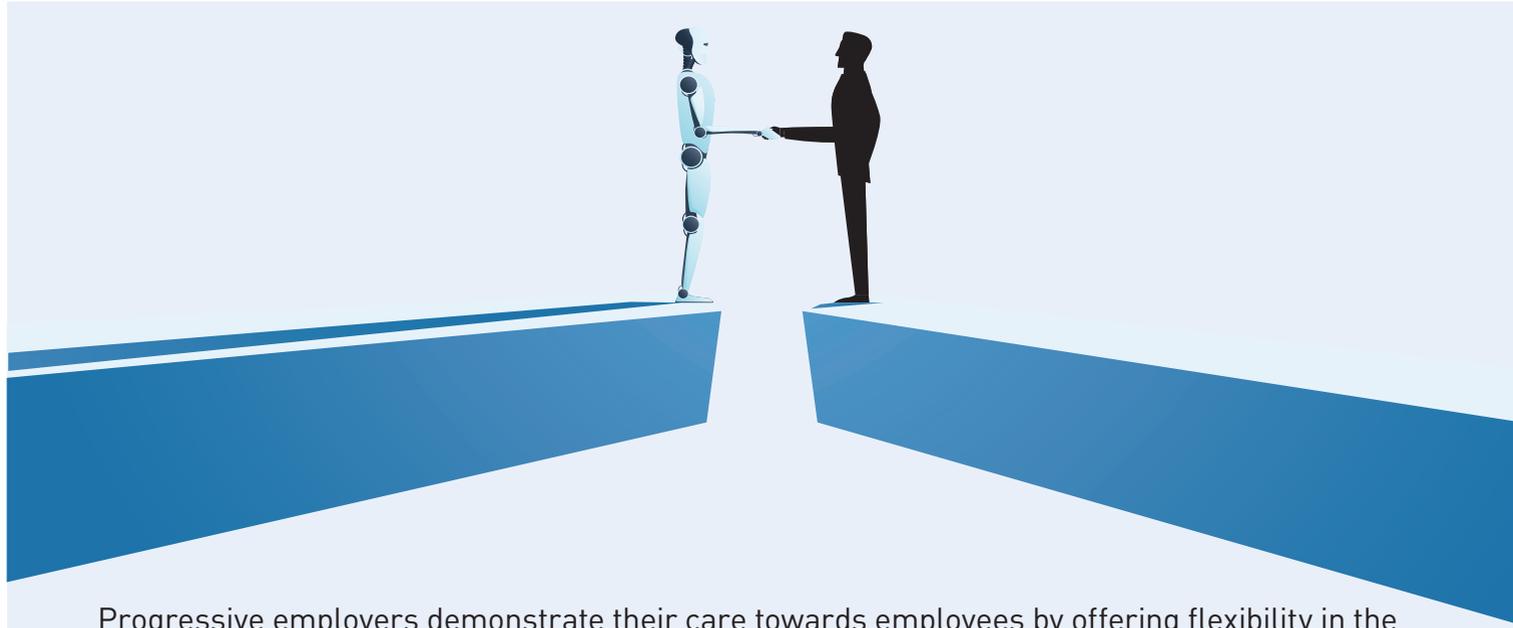
#### **Flexibility and Customising Initiatives**

“I GREATLY APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITIES AND EMPOWERMENT THAT THE COMPANY HAS GIVEN TO ME. I STARTED OFF AS AN OPERATIONS SUPERVISOR AND THE COMPANY MADE SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS TO DEPLOY ME TO A LESS PHYSICALLY STRENUOUS JOB ASSIGNMENT... SO I CAN CONTINUE WORKING AND CONTRIBUTE EFFECTIVELY.”

— Quote from employee of a Finalist (AIP category)

“THE BENEFITS PROGRAMME IS INCLUSIVE AND CUSTOMISED TO THE VARIOUS NEEDS OF DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES. IT’S A COMMITMENT TOWARDS NO DISCRIMINATION WHERE EVERYONE IS EQUALLY VALUED.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)



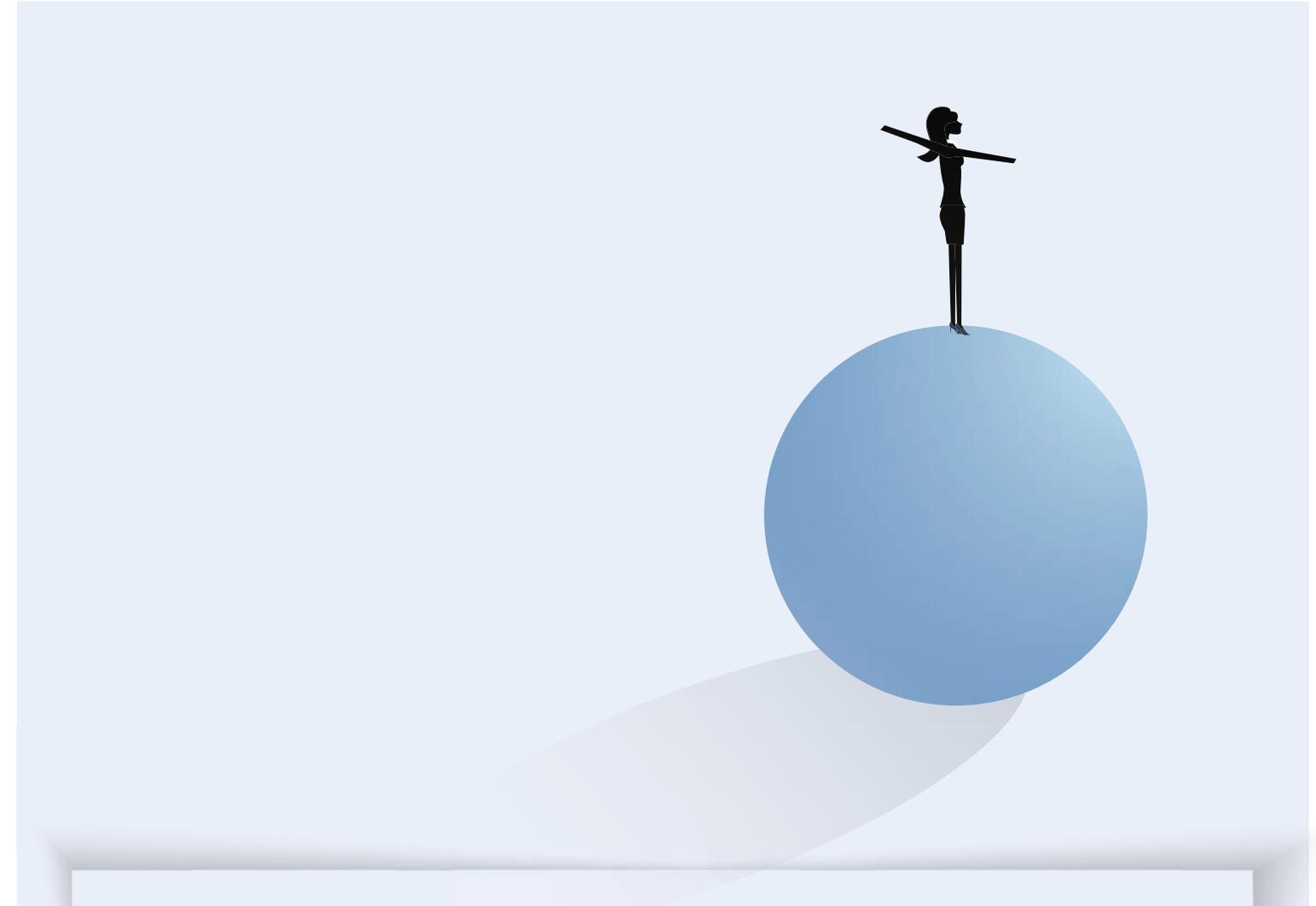
Progressive employers demonstrate their care towards employees by offering flexibility in the workplace. This includes but is not limited to programmes such as flexible work arrangements and other organisational schemes and initiatives. It also covers job redesign and redeployment to capitalise the strengths of employees to better suit the organisation and employees' needs.

Such an approach embodies the spirit of tailoring initiatives where appropriate and delivering holistic care to employees by prioritising their needs alongside organisational outcomes.

## **Job Redesign**

**(Airport Operation Services, Large Organisation)**

One of the finalists with a mature workforce had redesigned its job processes through automation to make work less physically demanding. This not only improved the employees' productivity, it also allowed them to continue contributing effectively to the organisation and enhanced their employability.



## **Flexible Benefits Programme**

**(Banking and Financial Services, Large Organisation)**

Another finalist introduced a flexible benefits programme that allowed employees to use their flex-dollars for approved family expenses, for instance purchasing electronic goods or medical bills for family members. This enhances the positive perceptions of employees towards the organisation as it allows them to use their benefits that best suit their personal needs.

## Life-Career Development

“PROVISION OF STUDY LEAVE ENCOURAGES US TO UPSKILL BY TAKING UP COURSES AND HIGHER QUALIFICATIONS. THIS HELPS US TO HANDLE WIDER ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGES.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

To be progressive, companies should care for the holistic development of their employees: as much as it is important to support employees in meeting their current goals it is also critical to prepare them to accomplish their future career goals.

## “Triple E” Talent Development Framework

(Banking & Financial Services, Large Organisation)

One finalist introduced the “Triple E” framework to facilitate career planning and internal mobility. This framework encompasses: **Education** through acquiring knowledge and picking up new skills, **Exposure** through mentoring, coaching, and networking and **Experience** by taking on new or stretched roles to accelerate career growth. By employing such holistic talent development frameworks, organisations can develop in-house talent and play a pivotal role in developing and shaping employees’ careers.



## 05 Holistic Care

### IMPACT: Work Effectiveness and Job Development

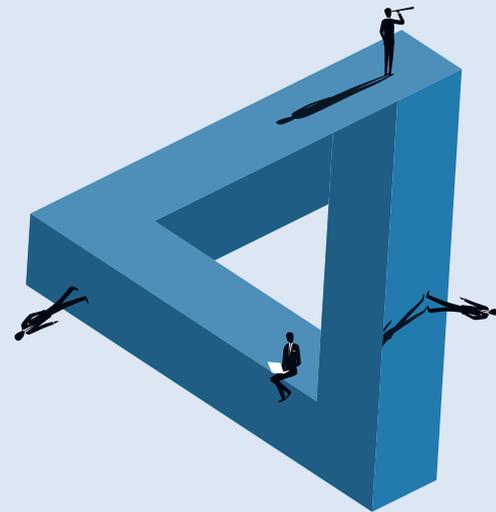
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#### Work Effectiveness

“OUR ORGANISATION EXEMPLIFIES THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL, LEADERSHIP AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT BY OFFERING STAFF DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES, SUCH AS OVERSEAS AND LOCAL STUDY TRIPS, ONLINE TRAINING, AND STUDY AWARDS FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO FURTHER THEIR STUDIES. THESE HAVE GREATLY CONTRIBUTED TO OUR EFFECTIVENESS AT WORK.”

— Quote from employee survey (FPEP category)

As holistic care focuses on meeting employees' needs, offering relevant support for unforeseen work and life challenges is crucial for reducing employees' stress. By showing care and commitment for employees' professional and personal growth, employers can catalyse high employee engagement and work effectiveness.

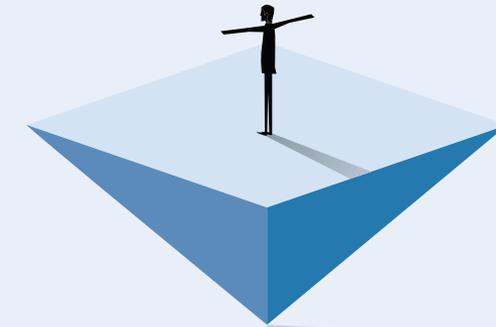


#### Job Satisfaction

“HOLDING A REGIONAL ROLE AND ONE THAT REQUIRES CALLS AND COLLABORATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL TEAMS AT ODD HOURS MAKES THE WORK INEFFECTIVE AND CONTRIBUTES TO WORK-LIFE IMBALANCE. HOWEVER, WITH FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS AND THE TREMENDOUS SUPPORT FROM MY MANAGER AND TEAMMATES, I AM STILL ABLE TO AVOID BURNOUT AND STAY PRODUCTIVE, IN BOTH MY PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LIFE. SUCH FLEXIBILITY ENABLES US TO BALANCE OUR WORK AND FAMILY NEEDS AND BE PART OF A POSITIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT.”

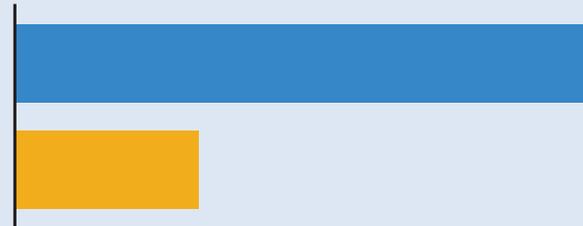
— Quote from employee survey (WLE category)

Changing organisational initiatives to promote work-life harmony goes a long way in drastically improving job satisfaction levels among employees. This is typically achieved by viewing work-life harmony as ‘an integration, rather than equilibrium’,<sup>5</sup> where employees are able to thrive both inside and outside of work, as well as experience a sense of accomplishment and enjoyment.



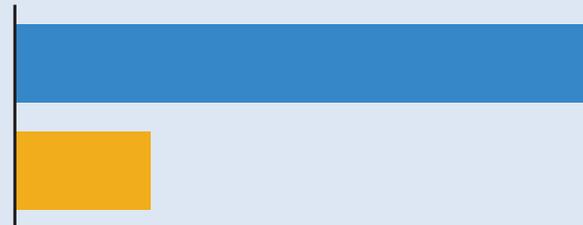
There is a positive work-life culture in my organisation.

84.2% of respondents agree



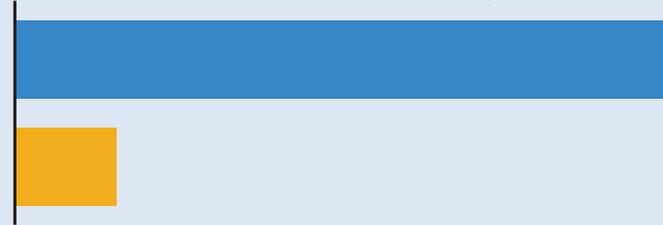
My supervisor is considerate of my personal responsibilities outside of work.

84.4% of respondents agree



My organisation promotes a healthy work environment through health and wellness programmes.

89.0% of respondents agree



**Legend**

Strongly Agree & Agree      Neutral, Disagree, & Strongly Disagree

## FINAL WORDS: A CALL TO ACTION

Even as Singapore's work landscape evolves, employees remain the one constant factor crucial to organisational success, regardless of market, sector, and business size. While being a good employer is admirable, this in itself is not sufficient to prepare the organisation for a rapidly changing future. Going 'beyond good' to future-proof the organisation requires investing in **Collaborative Networks**, the **Employee Voice**, **Continuous Evolution**, **Talent Optimisation**, and **Holistic Care**.

Building the five blocks is not a linear process and requires employers to constantly align/realign their organisational **essentials** (such as culture, organisational commitment, and communication) with their **pathways** (such as policies, practices, and programmes). While the DNA cannot be built overnight, its five blocks cannot be dismantled easily once organisations have it.

The call to action in the following section is a good starting point for leaders, HR, managers, and employees to **build these five blocks, as a collective and cohesive group**.

## LEADERS

Set the strategic direction, garner stakeholder buy-in for alignment, and demonstrate visible commitment to:

### 1. Collaborative Networks: Develop a culture of trust and encourage collaboration and teamwork across departments.

- Communicate the importance of teamwork and collaboration and how these can contribute to organisation's vision and mission, and encourage initiatives that promote inclusivity.
- Inspire employees with a vision where every employee can contribute and be recognised for their contributions.

### 2. Employee Voice: Create a psychologically safe environment to enable authentic and constructive feedback.

- Support HR to implement relevant feedback mechanisms in the organisation, where employees can safely provide their opinions and views without fear of repercussions.

### 3. Continuous Evolution: Nurture an environment of continuous learning and improvement, and willingness to support the cycle of change.

- Encourage a mindset of experimentation with a view to improving work processes and outcomes, and empower line managers to act on employee suggestions where appropriate.
- Promote a workplace that celebrates employee creativity and organisational innovation.

### 4. Talent Optimisation: Encourage long-term employability of employees through sustainable learning and development strategies.

- Build and sustain a learning organisational culture.
- Allocate sufficient resources (e.g. HR budget) to implement development programmes to grow and develop talent and critical skills.

### 5. Holistic Care: Demonstrate authenticity in respecting employees' career and personal ambitions and success.

- Promote an organisational culture of mutual respect and appreciation of individual differences.
- Encourage a fair and outcome-based work culture that recognises individual contributions.
- Collaborate synergistically with HR to develop a holistic suite of programmes to address employees' career aspirations, work and personal well-being, and other areas in line with the overall business strategy.

## HR PROFESSIONALS

Establish policies, processes and programmes to enable the implementation of organisational initiatives to:

### 1. Collaborative Networks: Encourage collaboration and teamwork across departments.

- Identify and implement programmes to foster connections between individuals from different parts of the organisation, e.g. mentoring programmes.
- Recognise and reward employees for teamwork and collaboration (e.g. appraise collaboration as part of performance reviews).

### 2. Employee Voice: Create safe and accessible channels for employees to share their feedback.

- Set up accessible feedback channels for employees to voice their opinions and share their views honestly without fear of reprisal.
- Establish and communicate the resolution process to manage feedback received and close the feedback loop.
- Train leaders and managers to facilitate open conversations to solicit feedback and demonstrate empathetic listening.

### 3. Continuous Evolution: Support continuous learning and improvement & facilitate change.

- Provide employees with relevant training to equip them with the skills and competencies to engage in continuous improvement activities.
- Conduct SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives implemented through qualitative and quantitative measures, e.g. feedback from employees, KPI achieved, and utilisation rate.
- Equip those responsible for managing and implementing change (e.g. line managers, project leads) with the knowledge and skills to support, guide and motivate employees through the change process.

### 4. Talent Optimisation: Enable employees to be equipped with the relevant competencies to perform their current and future job role(s) successfully.

- Develop a competency framework setting out the specific skills, knowledge and behavioral requirements that would enable employees to perform their job successfully.
- Keep abreast of new and relevant skills needed by the organisation to stay ahead and conduct skills analysis to amplify and build new employee skills.
- Develop appropriate programmes for job role development and skills acquisition to enable role expansion and opportunities for exposure to diverse job functions, e.g. cross-training, job rotation.

### 5. Holistic Care: Facilitate employees' career and personal needs.

- Conduct employee needs assessment to understand employees' career and personal needs, e.g. through surveys, workforce profiling, and small group/one-to-one discussions, etc.
- Design appropriate programmes and evaluate their effectiveness with a view to making refinements/improvements to ensure continued relevance.
- Develop a communication plan and use a variety of channels to raise awareness of the programmes available and any other relevant information, e.g. objectives, eligibility criteria, and application process.

## MANAGERS / SUPERVISORS

Role model desired behaviours, nurture and facilitate change within teams. Managers and supervisors can:

- 1. Collaborative Networks: Build trust and encourage collaboration and teamwork within teams and across departments.**
  - Create opportunities for team members to increase mutual understanding and positive interactions with one another to create a harmonious workplace, e.g. cross-team collaboration, mentoring, team bonding activities.
- 2. Employee Voice: Create a team environment that encourages feedback from team members.**
  - Regularly ask for feedback, e.g. through team or one-to-one check-ins, and provide the assurance of a safe feedback environment.
  - Express appreciation for constructive feedback and follow-up as appropriate, so that team members feel supported and confident to speak up in the future.
- 3. Continuous Evolution: Build a team that is willing to learn and seek continuous improvements.**
  - Act as role models by encouraging innovation in everyday work, and encourage a culture of sharing learning opportunities for continuous improvement.
  - Clearly communicate the change vision for the team and provide team members the necessary support during a change process.
- 4. Talent Optimisation: Identify team's potential and developmental needs.**
  - Nurture/coach team members and guide them in their development needs with a view to enabling their long-term employability.
  - Keep an open mind to enable team members to take on opportunities beyond their current functional area.
- 5. Holistic Care: Demonstrate empathy and support team members' career and personal aspirations.**
  - Respect individual differences and demonstrate empathy for diverse employee needs and aspirations.
  - Engage team members on a regular basis to understand their individual needs. Where a request cannot be granted, clearly and sensitively communicate the reasons, and discuss suitable alternatives that better meet the needs of both employer and employee, where possible.

## EMPLOYEES

Take charge of one's own professional and personal development/needs. Individuals should:

- 1. Collaborative Networks: Build trust and forge positive relationships with co-workers.**
  - Be open to new connections and self-reflect on current networks, e.g. who among my co-workers do I interact with/ask for advice?
  - Participate in activities organised by the organisation to encourage interactions across different groups of employees.
  - Develop communication skills; ask appropriate questions and practice active listening to learn more about your co-workers (e.g. differing preferences and needs) to deepen work relationships.
- 2. Employee Voice: Be accountable for making a positive difference in one's work and work environment by sharing constructive feedback.**
  - Provide constructive feedback in a timely fashion with a view to making improvements, e.g. work process and outcomes, work environment.
  - Practice active listening to understand others point of view and communicate sensitively and effectively with co-workers.
- 3. Continuous Evolution: Actively seek opportunities for continuous improvement and learn from mistakes.**
  - Adopt a "Kaizen"<sup>h</sup> mindset and keep an eye out for proactive process and strategic improvements that contribute to innovation at work.
- 4. Talent Optimisation: Take ownership of own development needs, and be willing to learn, unlearn and relearn.**
  - Be open to learn new skills, try new roles and take on projects beyond one's comfort zone, to expand skill sets and experiences for long-term employability.
- 5. Holistic Care: Take personal responsibility in career and personal aspirations.**
  - Be open to share concerns and work/personal challenges with managers/supervisors and be willing to co-create solutions.
  - Take ownership as well as accountability and ensure delivery of quality work outcomes in a timely fashion.

<sup>h</sup> Kaizen is a "continuous improvement" approach adopted from the manufacturing industry, where everyone in an organisation proactively works together towards regular and gradual improvements in work processes. For more information, refer to: <https://www.leanproduction.com/kaizen.html>

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