

CONVERSATIONS

HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE 4.0

With COVID-19 and the rising demand for healthcare services these days, NTUC Health Co-operative Limited is focused on futureproofing its workforce. Joan Tay, Head of Human Resources, tells us more.

1. To NTUC Health, what is the role of human capital in fulfilling its mission as a health and eldercare service provider?

As part of a manpower-intensive sector, NTUC Health has always recognised the need to invest in our people. Manpower is always a challenge in the health and eldercare sector, so all workers young or old are a welcomed pool of talent.

NTUC Health's philosophy of care applies not only to our clients, but also to our employees. The development of our people is one of the key pillars of our business. It is important to nurture their capabilities so that they grow with the company and continually provide quality services that meet the rising and changing needs of families and their dependents.

2. The healthcare industry is constantly growing, often with much change and challenge. What are some of your key strategies to attract and retain talent in this rapidly evolving landscape?

As rightly pointed out, the healthcare and eldercare services industry is constantly evolving, with challenges including changing manpower policies, competition among acute players, and the need to constantly maintain a diversified and innovative workforce. Singapore is also facing an ageing population, which is both a rising growing interest and concern for our community. We believe all these challenges present exciting opportunities for us to develop our human capital initiatives. Good people practices such as the emphasis on a diverse workforce will allow access to a wider talent pool and fresh entrants from non-related sectors. Experienced talents with highly transferrable skillsets such as critical thinking, strong leadership skills and an inquisitive mind would be attracted to join our sector.

We also want to maintain an innovative workplace by building a steady pipeline of new talents from local universities, polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education through internship opportunities. We will be leveraging the SGUnited Traineeship Programme to attract more graduates into our workforce.

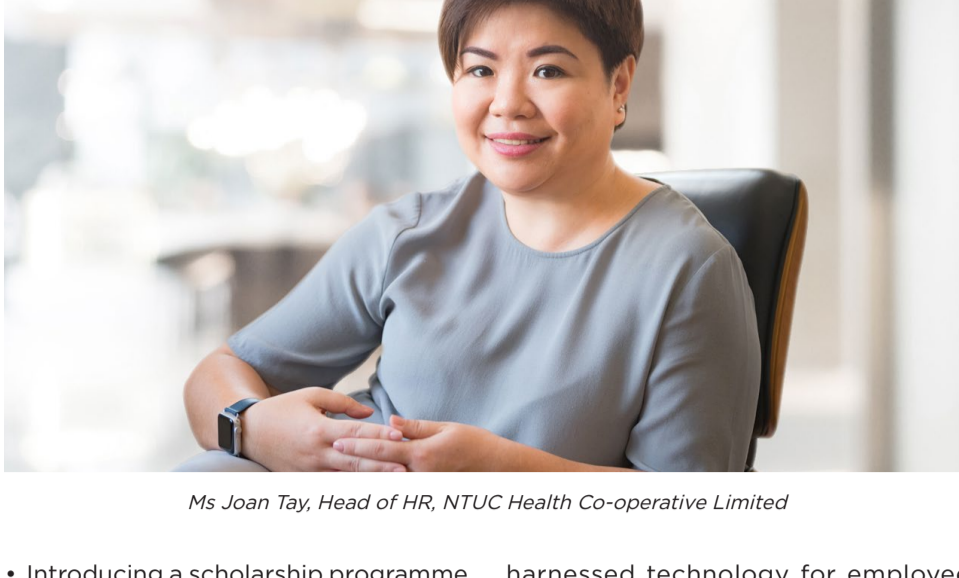
Apart from ensuring fair employment practices, we also aim to retain our talents by ensuring frequent activities to promote engagement and transparency among our employees. These activities include:

- cross-functional engagement events such as the Learn-on-Lunch programme and G.E.M (Going Extra Mile) recognition programme;
- employee engagement surveys;
- structured, face-to-face feedback sessions between managers and their direct reports about organisational and personal performances twice a year; and
- self-care programmes to build resilience, mental strength and self-development.

3. NTUC Health also believes in enhancing the skillsets of its existing workforce. Why?

We envision to transform our people into "Healthcare Workers 4.0". That is, workers who are ready to take on Industry 4.0, a revolution brought along by digital and automated technologies. We do this by equipping them with adaptive, technology and technical skills.

Over the years, we have been committed to creating an inclusive work environment for our employees as well as invested in innovative approaches to pave the way into the future of work. Some examples were:



Ms Joan Tay, Head of HR, NTUC Health Co-operative Limited

- Introducing a scholarship programme largely subsidised by the company to support our employees' education aspirations, develop and retain promising talents, and facilitate succession planning.
- Identifying promising managers and offering them a range of developmental assignments and training programmes to build their leadership capabilities and soft skills.
- Supporting line managers in age-friendly practices by introducing assessment tools and coaching by the Human Resources department on how to work with workers from different age groups.
- Implementing future-proof learning programmes to ensure relevance among existing employees in a rapidly changing digital landscape. For example, an online Learning Management System (LMS) was launched to empower staff to initiate their own learning by applying for courses more conveniently.
- Most recently, we signed an MOU with the Healthcare Academy to establish a Jobs, Skills and Training Committee. The Committee aims to help workers upskill, secure better work prospects and be mentally resilient to handle the rigours of a transformed healthcare environment.

4. How has COVID-19 changed the way people at NTUC Health work?

Many, if not all staff, have been activated in one way or another to respond to the outbreak.

While COVID-19 has thrown the community a curveball this year, it has also provided us with an opportunity to advance our transformation agenda in areas such as learning and development, as well as digitalisation. Our employees had to re-think and redesign current work processes to ensure quick responses to the ever-changing situation.

Concerned that seniors may lapse into inactivity during this time, our employees have also devised new and creative ways of keeping in touch with our clients. These include sharing activity kits that family members can do together with their elderly loved ones at home, producing and sharing videos of elderly-friendly workouts for clients to practise at home, as well as live cooking demonstrations streamed from kitchens of staff working from home for residents at our nursing homes. Over at our headquarters, the various corporate office functions also adapted according to the situation. For example, Human Resources and Finance ensured that business continuity was possible by implementing digital payments, electronic billing, virtual interviews and electronic job offers.

Without the possibility of face-to-face meetings in a time of safe distancing, we have also effectively

harnessed technology for employee engagement unlike before. Staff training has shifted online to ensure teams remain up to date, well-adjusted and prepared. New joiners to the NTUC Health family go through orientation sessions where they are introduced to the organisation and meet with our CEO and heads of departments through video calls; these help them ease into their new environment during such extraordinary times. To keep the lines of communication open, a series of virtual town halls were also arranged for management to meet all staff.

5. What is the organisation doing to help its workforce cope with the changes brought along by COVID-19?

There was an increase in expectations from various stakeholders from the onset of the pandemic, which were brought about by the rise in various critical and complex scenarios. Apart from having a strong infrastructure, a task force comprising representatives from all business and key functional departments has been set up to decide on appropriate actions to be taken and distribute information to the ground in a timely manner. Additionally, our management team organises a weekly meeting for scenario planning and to coordinate efforts across different business units. On top of the usual precautionary measures, we have also tested emergency responses through calling trees as well as emphasised to staff the need to exercise social responsibility by exercising good personal hygiene and to stay at home if they are not feeling well.

We also expedited online learning for all of our employees to acquire new skills while working from home, thus improving their quality of work in the long run. Some of our employees have already managed to apply their new skills into their everyday work, as they have designed new ways to engage with our clients at home using video calls; or with our residents at nursing homes by connecting them with their loved ones via video calls as well.

To prepare ourselves for the long haul, we have ensured that staff morale is kept high with frequent updates and encouragement from the task force and management. We have also distributed care packages to all staff as a reminder to take care of their health while they focus on the well-being of our clients.

6. NTUC Health is part of the Human Capital Partnership programme. Can you share how you have seen this partnership benefit the firm?

As part of the Human Capital Partnership (HCP) programme, we have had the opportunity to be a part of events and activities that provide us with useful insights and ideas for enhancing our human capital initiatives. In addition, networking sessions with fellow HCP partners have also allowed us to better understand what other companies are doing for their employees and cohesively evaluate the effectiveness of different practices.

BANKING WITH HEART, FOR A RESILIENT WORKFORCE

OCBC Bank's people-centric approach is detailed, purposeful and personal, keeping employees and the company in great shape through the best and worst of times.

"At my most critical point of need, my supervisor offered her hand," recalls Ms Toh Hwee Leng, Vice President of Emerging Business (EmB) Business Compliance, Global Enterprise Banking.

In 2017, Ms Toh found herself in a difficult situation. When her domestic helper decided to return home that year, the mother of two school-going children was left to struggle with balancing work and personal commitments.

"The banking industry has a reputation for its long hours, and I also had to manage my children's varying schedules, as well as academic demands and emotional needs. I was also concerned about my elderly mother," she explains.

She talked to her supervisor, Ms Teo Sze Ling, Vice President of Global Commercial Banking Business Compliance about her plight. Ms Teo was understanding and made it possible for Ms Toh to take 12-month sabbatical leave to care for her children. This gave Ms Toh peace of mind knowing that her job would be waiting for her when the situation at home stabilised.

Ms Toh returned to work in January 2019 and works under a half-day arrangement today. She is grateful to OCBC for what the company has done for her.

"When work demand calls for it, I will not hesitate to adjust my schedule and put in extra hours to help. I would say flexibility, trust and openness in the employer-employee relationship is key to a long-lasting career," she says.

Employees' Well-being is Organisational Wealth

Ms Toh's experience is just one example of OCBC's people-centric culture at work - that is, keeping its employees at the heart of what it does. Specifically, the organisation believes in empowering its employees to balance their work and personal lives.

Today, employees at OCBC are able to thrive at both work and in life through programmes such as flexible work arrangements, part-time work, and a work-from-home scheme. They also have the freedom to take time off to care for their

families; family-centric benefits include in-house childcare centre, a PSLE leave scheme, and various leisure activities that promote family togetherness.

"Employees are more engaged when they know that the organisation truly cares for them and allows them to take care of their families during challenging times," says Mr Ernest Phang, Head of Corporate Services, Group Human Resources, OCBC Bank.

"This way, we get to retain good employees who otherwise may leave the organisation. It is a win-win situation for all," he adds.

Caring in Unprecedented Crisis

OCBC's culture of work-life excellence has been instrumental in helping the organisation cope with the COVID-19 global crisis. The pandemic has changed the way people around the world live and work, with many organisations scrambling to adjust their operations into work-from-home arrangements. For OCBC, its strong foundation in flexible work arrangements eased the stress of adapting to a predominantly work-from-home model, for both frontline and non-frontline workers.

OCBC recently launched its COVID-19 Care Package to provide employees and their immediate family with support in various forms during this period. The care package includes tele-consultations with the organisation's appointed doctors, as well as vouchers for transportation to and from clinics; this would reduce employees' exposure to infection. Employees diagnosed with the virus also receive financial support in the form of additional hospitalisation benefits.

"We have specially prepared the package for our employees and their immediate family so that they have peace of mind during this period of time," says Mr Phang.

A Keen Focus on Talent Development

Another way in which OCBC cares for its people is by nurturing them to excel amidst the rapidly evolving business landscape. Employees are equipped to prepare for the future of work through



Ms Toh Hwee Leng working from home

the Future Smart Programme, a digital transformation initiative which aims to train and develop their digital skills.

There's also Life Refresh, a lifelong learning programme that offers support in areas related to significant developments within the bank and the world at large. Courses cover areas such as digital and fintech learning, financial planning, career planning and health and fitness.

Additionally, OCBC empowers its people to grow within the organisation. It does this through the Xplore Programme, where employees have the opportunity to explore short-term stints within or across divisions.

Banking on a Happy Workforce

With such initiatives in place, it is little surprise that OCBC was recognised as an exemplary employer for Work-Life Excellence at the Tripartite Alliance Award 2018. It continues to work on doing more for its people.

After all, its people are one of its most valuable assets.

As Mr Phang puts it, "Our success is due to the people working with us - from staff on the ground behind counters all the way to leaders at the top. This strong base of loyal and competent employees who identify strongly with us is the strength that has carried us through the years, through financial crisis and economic downturns."

"We believe that our continued success into the future is dependent on us nurturing, growing and protecting our employees through the implementation of a conducive environment," he adds.

MORE HELP FOR LOCAL MID-CAREER EMPLOYEES

The new SkillsFuture Mid-Career Support Package aims to create more career transition opportunities for locals in their 40s and 50s to remain employable and access good jobs.

The SkillsFuture Mid-Career Support Package is for:

- Eligible Singaporeans and Permanent Residents¹ in their 40s to 50s
- Businesses looking to hire Singaporean and Permanent Resident jobseekers aged 40 and above

What to expect:



For Hiring Incentive under the Skillsfuture Mid-Career Support Package (1 April 2020 to 26 May 2020)

Employers² who hire a local worker aged 40 and above who had gone through an eligible reskilling programme can receive salary support of 20% for six months, capped at \$6,000 in total.

The eligible reskilling programmes are:

- Professional Conversion Programme
- Career Transition Programmes by Continuing Education and Training (CET) centres
- Place-and-Train programmes for rank-and-file workers

For Enhanced Hiring Incentive under SGUnited Jobs and Skills package (27 May 2020 onwards)

Employers² who hire a local worker aged 40 and above who had gone through an eligible reskilling or training programme can receive salary support of 40% for six months, capped at \$12,000 in total.

Employers² who hire a local worker aged below 40 who had gone through an eligible reskilling programme or training programme can receive salary support of 20% for six months, capped at \$6,000 in total.

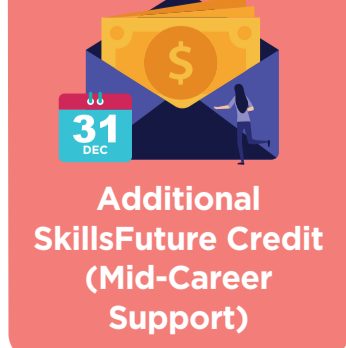
The eligible reskilling or training programmes are:

- Professional Conversion Programme
- SGUnited Traineeships Programme
- Place-and-Train programmes for rank-and-file workers
- SGUnited Mid-Career Pathways Programme
- Career Transition Programmes by CET centres
- SGUnited Skills Programme



The programmes with increased capacities include:

- Professional Conversion Programme
- Career Transition Programmes by CET centres
- Place-and-Train programmes for rank-and-file workers
- TechSkills Accelerator Company-Led Training for information communications and technology jobs



An additional credit of \$500* will be provided to every Singapore Citizen aged 40 to 60 (inclusive) as at 31 December 2020. This will be over and above the \$500 credit at top-up provided for all Singapore citizens aged 25 and above as at 31 December 2020. This additional credit can be used on about 200 Career Transition Programmes offered by the CET centres.

Need more info?

Visit www.skillsfuture.sg/midcareersupportpackage and www.wsg.gov.sg/hiring-incentive.html to find out more.

¹ Eligibility is dependent on the individual initiatives.

² An employer who is already claiming salary support for a mature person hired under Workforce Singapore's Career Support Programme and/or Assistance Grant under the P-Max Programme will not be able to claim the hiring incentive or enhanced hiring incentive for the same worker(s).

* The additional SkillsFuture Credit (Mid-Career Support) is valid from 1 October 2020 and unused credit will lapse after 31 December 2025.