

HAVING THE RIGHT MINDSET FOR AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE



MR SHAWN ONG
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Mr Shawn Ong is the Chief Operating Officer of Galmon (S) Pte Ltd, and one of the recipients of the bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award (Gold) 2019 and bizSAFE Champion Award (Gold) 2019. As an advocate for mental health at work, Galmon went the extra mile to put in place mental wellness programmes and activities to care for their employees' mental well-being.

Tell us a bit more about your company and what it does.

Galmon (S) Pte Ltd has been a pioneer in the use of Mobile Elevating Work Platforms (MEWP) in Singapore since 1982. We focus on a range of Work-At-Height access equipment and provide rental, sales, leasing, servicing, and training of MEWPs.

Many SMEs think that only MNCs can afford looking after mental well-being as they have more resources and bandwidth. What made your company think otherwise?

At Galmon, we believe that every bit counts. We recognise the importance of mental well-being and that having a healthy and happy workforce can significantly impact productivity. Thus, we make the effort to put together and develop our workplace safety and health programmes to promote mental well-being in the workplace.

Were there challenges that held your company back initially from embarking on mental well-being initiatives? How did you overcome them?

The first was to convince our older employees. To them, work stress is a certainty, and personal stress cannot affect work as it should be dealt with separately. It was hard for them to see how work and life are interconnected. The second was to engage our employees individually, so that they can speak more freely and be more comfortable in being open within their private space. We also came up with an initiative to appoint "buddies" to colleagues who were facing mental health struggles. The workload of the buddies was then reviewed to ensure that they themselves were not overwhelmed with work after taking on added responsibilities.

What are some of the mental well-being initiatives that your company has in place? Why were these chosen, and who else within the company did you partner with in implementing them?

We have an anonymous feedback system whereby employees are encouraged to provide suggestions for improvement. With this, we hope to inculcate an open culture where everyone feels comfortable and safe in being honest, without fear of consequences.

As mentioned earlier, our "Buddy programme" plays a pivotal role in supporting fellow colleagues who are struggling. Those who need help are offered a listening ear without the fear of being judged. Buddies work together to manage the issues, with some even seeking healthcare interventions should there be a need to.

How have your employees benefitted from these initiatives? In turn, how has your company gained from such improvements?

With the buddy system, our employees do not feel isolated and are happy and comfortable working at Galmon. Knowing that

the company values them, they feel secure and are more open in sharing feedback. Our attrition rate is kept low, and staff loyalty is evident, even during challenging times.

What advice would you offer other SMEs in creating a more conducive and supportive environment to encourage open conversations about mental well-being at the workplace?

Many people feel uncomfortable sharing their stressors because they fear being judged and the possible consequences. We can allay such fears by creating an open work culture so that employees feel safe to speak up. This can be done through a feedback system for employees to share their views anonymously.

What advice would you offer to employees who may be affected by mental health issues at work?

Do not be afraid to speak up and reach out for help when needed. It is important to recognise that when stress builds up over a prolonged period, it can lead to chronic fatigue and even long-term medical problems. Therefore, try to manage the issues early by seeking help as soon as they surface and not keep them bottled within.

What is your wish for the mental well-being of Singapore's workforce?

A happy and healthy workforce is key to the success of any organisation, as our employees are most productive when they are stress-free. I wish that all organisations recognise the importance of mental well-being at the workplace and advocate for a positive and happy workforce.

What do you think the government can do to better support SMEs?

Grants and incentives are essential for SMEs to be able to implement mental health initiatives at their workplace. It is also important to have a clear and definitive roadmap so that SMEs can fully appreciate the importance of mental well-being and understand the role that they play in enhancing the mental health of its workforce.

Find out how your company can manage your employees' health and safety in an integrated way, and educate them on how to better care for their well-being through our **Total Workplace Safety and Health Programme.**