

MALAYSIA'S HEALTHIEST W♥RKPLACE — AIA Vitality —

THE EDGE
MALAYSIA
SPECIAL REPORT
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EDITOR'S NOTE

When Chester Bennington, the lead vocalist for the American rock band Linkin Park, took his own life in July last year, I was stunned. Being a big fan of the band means it was a sad day for me. As fans, we knew of the musician's troubled life ... how he battled with cocaine and methamphetamine addiction and suffered sexual abuse as a child.

Bennington described that journey as "a lifetime of building blocks to unhealthy emotion, mental behaviour, emotional pain".

His death has, in a way, made me more passionate about mental health. So, when I was asked to work on this project, I jumped at the chance, determined to make it as relevant as possible to our community. Thanks to the amazing people at AIA, we were able to get this done in time and I hope that when you flip through these pages, you will realise that you are not alone on this journey of life.

Focusing on mental health is timely as there is increasing awareness of the issue in the corporate world. Hollywood is one of those places that has been open about its "mental health crisis", which helped fans to become more aware of the issue. Others also stepped up efforts to stop bullying, which often leads to depression, trauma and mental illness. It is worth noting, too, that the #MeToo movement has gained a lot of traction in the media in the last one year, but more awareness in the corporate world is needed to introduce measures to ensure a healthier workplace.

Cabinet ministers have also been open about mental health. Health Minister Dr Zulkefly Ahmad has urged all stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations and government agencies, to work together to increase awareness of mental health

issues and get rid of the stigma surrounding mental illness. Sarawak Minister of Welfare, Community Well-being, Women, Family and Childhood Development Datuk Seri Fatimah Abdullah also called for action to tackle mental illness.

The growing awareness is also reflected in the participation of corporates in the Malaysia's Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality 2018 survey, in which Malaysian organisations constituted more than one third of respondents across four countries — Malaysia, Hong Kong, Thailand and Australia. The huge increase in the number of participating — from 47 to 117 — companies in Malaysia also helped to improve the accuracy of the survey.

As this is *The Edge Malaysia's* second year partnering AIA to present the survey, there is so much that we have learnt as well. It has indeed been a personal wake-up call for most of us — journalists who are caught with tight deadlines and breaking news stories. Indeed, it is a good reminder that we need to make time to rest, sleep, exercise and disconnect from our mobile devices or other social media platforms. These little things can make a difference in the long run.

I will leave it to the experts to share some of the key things to look at in promoting a healthy workplace. While the work to achieve that might seem like an impossible task, I hope you will find encouragement from this quote: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step". Let's take the first step by reading this!

*Billy Toh
Project Editor
The Edge Malaysia*

MESSAGE FROM ANUSHA THAVARAJAH, CEO, AIA BHD

It might surprise you to know that one-third of your life is spent at work and if we were to equate this to hours, you would be spending about 90,000 hours at work.

Now, that is a sobering number! However, this only highlights how important it is for us to have a healthy workplace — one that supports us and provides us with the resources to live a healthy and fulfilled life.

Let's start with the current level of Malaysian employees' health and well-being, which, based on data, outlines a reality that is far from ideal. Polling responses from 11,551 employees across 117 companies in Malaysia, the latest Malaysia's Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality 2018 survey reveals that 98% of Malaysian employees have a higher AIA Vitality Age (lifestyle, clinical and mental well-being risks on an individual's long-term health) than their age. This means employees are functioning with a body and mental state that is older than their actual age.

But how does this affect an employee's health and well-being in the workplace? The survey has also highlighted the financial impact that an employee's health and well-being can have on an organisation's productivity. Evidence shows that RM2.3 million has been lost due to absenteeism and presenteeism. These revelations are just the tip of the iceberg from the findings of the 2018 edition of Malaysia's Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality survey.

For us, the journey to championing workplace health has only just begun.

Start the conversation and keep it going

When we embarked on Malaysia's Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality surveys, it was a natural progression from our introduction of AIA Vitality back in 2016. AIA Vitality is our unique science-backed health and wellness programme that helps to incentivise Malaysians with rewards for the healthy choices they make. Today, the programme supports more than 80,000 AIA customers with knowledge, tools and motivation to improve their health.

Taking AIA Vitality into the workplace made perfect sense, especially when Malaysians spend a substantial portion of their waking hours at work. As Malaysia's leading provider of group employee benefit schemes, AIA supports the advocacy for the health and well-being of employees, and it is important for us to spark the realisation of a workplace environment that better supports employees holistically.

Since we started the initiative in 2017, we've been amazed by the traction it has helped create. The survey results have brought to the fore the issue of high productivity loss caused by absenteeism and presenteeism, as well as other factors like lack of sleep, stress, poor eating habits, physical inactivity as well as overall mental health and well-being. It has ignited awareness of the importance of workplace health and well-being among employers and employees, and spurred conversations around this increasingly important topic.

In fact, we are thrilled to see that the number of participating companies have doubled from last year! This indicates Corporate Malaysia's growing interest in finding out where it stands, as well as its commitment in providing better workplaces to attract and retain people, supporting their people's health and well-being and, in the process, boosting productivity.

Walking the journey of life together

Over the past 70 years in Malaysia, our role as an insurer has evolved — we are no longer just here for our customers in their time of need, we view



ourselves as a trusted partner in their journey of life. We protect their future, their hopes and dreams, and encourage them to live healthier, longer and better lives with their loved ones.

It is part of our brand promise and one that we are proud to keep holding high.

And, sometimes, that means putting the spotlight on difficult issues and even challenging ourselves at AIA to address them head on. Our latest focus has been on mental health, one of the biggest but least talked about issues in the workplace. It is a topic that continues to be largely ignored, unrecognised and undetected due to a lack of understanding and the stigma surrounding it.

Mental health, as we are increasingly coming to understand, manifests in all sorts of forms and outlets, one of the most common being stress. Workplace stress is the number one workforce risk as recognised across 15 countries, according to the Global Wellness Institute. Bring that closer to home, it is estimated that it will be the second biggest health problem in Malaysia, after heart disease, by 2020.

In fact, we are already seeing the effects today, where 4.2 million Malaysians face some form of mental illness, according to the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015. A recent survey by Regus found that some 70% of Malaysian employees are afflicted with diseases stemming

from rising levels of stress at work.

These statistics indicate a silent call for help — a call that requires the employer's support, compassion and understanding. There is a need for us to build within our organisation a safe workplace environment that encourages disclosure and healing without judgment.

I'm glad that this special report with *The Edge Malaysia* spotlights mental health and well-being in the workplace, providing a platform to discuss and encourage action from every quarter so that employees will no longer be alone in their journey to betterment.

On behalf of my team and myself, I would like to thank all participating organisations for their input this year — we couldn't have done it without you. My sincere appreciation also goes to our media partner, *The Edge Malaysia*, for sharing our vision and collaborating with us on this report.

We hope that Malaysia's Healthiest Workplace will continue to grow as a voice in promoting better workplace environments and that we will continue to achieve more milestones in the years to come. I urge parties across the public and private sectors to participate and share their insights. Registration for next year's survey commences on Jan 1, 2019.

Together, we can achieve healthier, longer and better lives. Enjoy reading the supplement!

METHODOLOGY & DEMOGRAPHICS

This is the **second year** of Malaysia's Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality Survey

This year, Malaysian organisations constitute more than a third of all organisations that participated across Asia (Australia, Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia) in the Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality survey.

The survey analyses employee lifestyle, sleeping patterns, mental wellbeing and clinical health.

It also studies the comparison of health promotion efforts between employers so that effective interventions can be identified to help organisations to be more productive.

Academic partners

The study is commissioned by AIA and delivered in partnership with RAND Europe.

In Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) is the local academic partner working with AIA and RAND Europe to provide academic advisory as well as to validate the survey questionnaire and findings.

AIA has brought this survey to Asia to help organisations improve their understanding of their employees' personal health and well-being as well as to enable them to identify effective interventions to create a healthier work environment for their people.

ASIA
340 participating organisations across Australia, Hong Kong, Thailand & Malaysia
(2017: 104)

MALAYSIA
117 participating organisations
(2017: 47)

24,187 employees
(2017: 10,001)

11,551 employees
(2017: 5,369)



PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION SIZE



SMALL

20-249 employees



MEDIUM

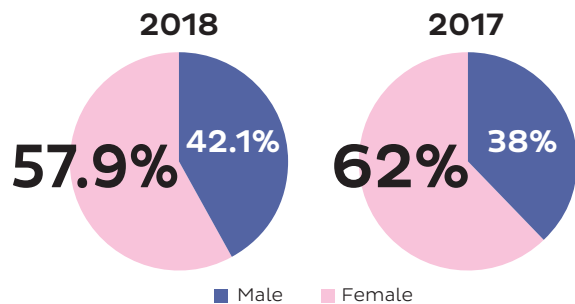
250-999 employees



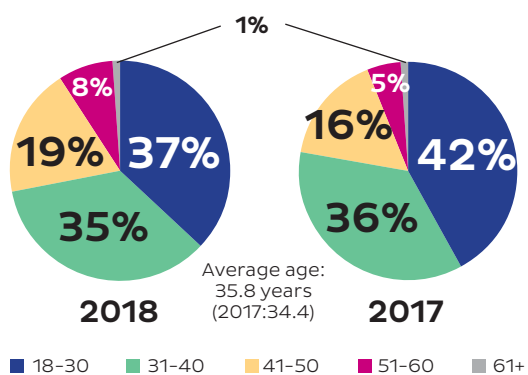
LARGE

1,000+ employees

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS (GENDER)



DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS (AGE GROUP)



TOPICS IN FOCUS

1. Lifestyle Health

- Physical activity
- Nutrition
- Smoking
- Alcohol



2. Sleep

- #### 3. Mental Well-being
- Work-related stress
 - Financial concerns

4. Clinical Health

- BMI
- Health screening
- Musculoskeletal conditions
- Chronic conditions

5. Absence, Presenteeism & Productivity

6. Leadership and Culture

7. Workplace Health Interventions – Facilities and Services



HOW IS THE SURVEY CONDUCTED?

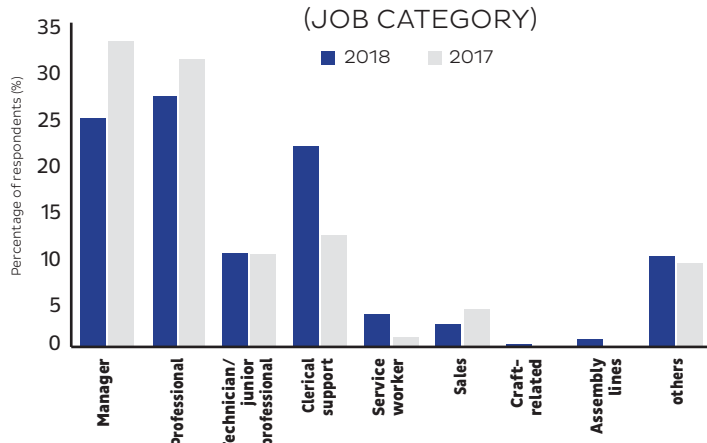
EMPLOYEES

- 20-minute online assessment by individuals
- Immediately receive a personal report outlining their AIA Vitality Age, key lifestyle and health risks and suggestions for improvements

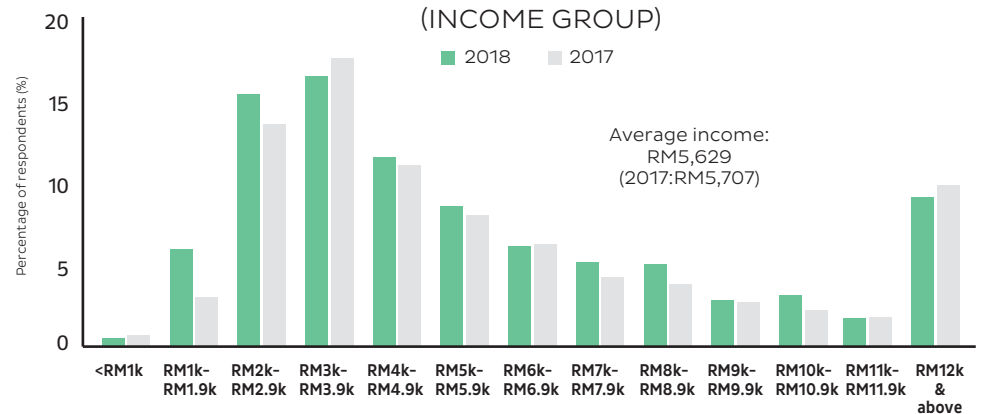
EMPLOYER

- 40-minute online assessment on organisation by a HR representative
- Obtain a comprehensive organisational report outlining the health of the organisation, with benchmarking information to enable more targeted workplace interventions

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS (JOB CATEGORY)



DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS* (INCOME GROUP)



*Respondents who preferred not to provide answers are not included

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS 2018

1 AIA Vitality Age

98% Malaysian employees have an AIA Vitality Age higher than their actual age (2017: 97%)

What does AIA Vitality Age show?

AIA Vitality Age is your age after including the impact of lifestyle, clinical and mental well-being risks on your long-term health.

AIA Vitality Age Gap = **The difference between a persons's AIA Vitality Age and his/her actual age**

The bigger the gap, the unhealthier they are.



3 Employees' health perception

13% employees have **4 or more** risk factors (2017: 15%)
however...
62% of them believe they are in good health! (2017: 45%)

What are the risk factors?

- Body Mass Index
- Physical activity
- Nutrition
- Smoking
- Alcohol

Awareness is a start...

People who perceive themselves to be healthy are less likely to make changes to their lifestyle habits.

4 Lifestyle Health

Physical activity



45.9% are physically inactive (2017: 64.1%)

Consistent exercise results in a body that is fitter and more energetic, which can improve confidence and satisfaction towards oneself.

Just like in 2017, most organisations indicate that their employees are sedentary (sitting, inactive) for a large part of their working day.

Nutrition

High prices remain a key barrier that prevents people from eating healthily as healthy food is perceived to be more expensive than unhealthy food.

Subsidising healthier food items available in the workplace can be an effective way to encourage employees to start eating a more balanced diet.



91.7% are not eating a healthy diet (2017: 89.4%)

Smoking

11.1% are current smokers (2017: 10.5%)



In the UK, there is evidence to suggest that smoking is related to absence, with the cost of absence amounting to £1.4 billion in 2011. This outcome was only one cost of smoking in the workplace. Other indirect costs include productivity lost to smoking breaks and the cost of cigarette-related fire damage.

6 Clinical Health

16.6% are obese (2017: 12.2%)

32% reported one or more chronic conditions (2017: 29%)

85% suffer one or more musculoskeletal conditions (2017: 84%)

What is clinical health?

Clinical risk factors can refer to either a range of indicators that act as precursors to disease, or to existing health conditions. Chronic conditions include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease or cancer, among others.

2 Working days lost per employee



How does the survey measure productivity at work?

Absenteeism refers to the actual absence of employees from work. It is a good indicator of the health of an employee, taking into account absences due to sickness or health problems.

Presenteeism refers to a scenario when an employee clocks in but is unable to perform work due to health issues, loss of concentration from lack of sleep, or stress, among others.

5 Sleep

54.4% sleep under **7 hours** per night (2017: 56%)

Long working hours, increasing out-of-hours connectivity and work-related stress are all factors associated with sleep problems in workers who would not normally be classified as being at risk for sleep disorders.

7 Mental Health

50.2% are at risk of at least one work-related stress (2017: 53.4%)

18.2% have a lot of financial concerns (2017: 20.3%)

20% are bullied at work (2017: 18%)

Mental health is affected by multiple factors, including lifestyle behaviours, lack of exercise, poor diet, financial concerns and stress at work.

In the UK, about 10.5 million working days are lost yearly due to work-related stress, depression and anxiety.

Work-related stress can affect organisational performance, including absenteeism, productivity and turnover. High levels of work-related stress can impact staff absence and turnover and negatively affect the productivity and performance levels of employees.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AT THE WORKPLACE — ARE WE AT THE TIPPING POINT?

Malaysia's Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality 2018 survey shows that about half of the participants still face at least one dimension of work-related stress.

"While it is a slight reduction from 2017's 53%, it still shows that half of the Malaysian workforce are facing some form of work-related stress which, in the larger scheme of things, indicates a real concern for workplace productivity," Anusha Thavarajah, CEO of AIA Bhd, says in an interview with *The Edge*.



Edwards: Communication is vital in business

Against this backdrop, the survey shows that about 20% of employees were subject to bullying at the workplace, of which 4% indicated that they were bullied often or always. On the financial front, about 18% of employees noted that they had a lot of financial concerns. This was marginally lower than 2017's 20%.

The results of the survey, which highlighted issues of mental health in the country, are also reflective of the projection that mental illness is going to be the second largest health issue in Malaysia after heart disease by 2020.

According to the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015 (NHMS 2015), 3 in 10 Malaysians were indicated as having mental health issues.

Associate Professor Dr Wee Lei Hum, health behavioural specialist at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Faculty of Health Sciences, tells *The Edge* that few people realise that mental health symptoms include what might seem to be normal daily occurrences such as having trouble sleeping, poor anger management, relationship issues, isolation and even overeating.

"Productivity issues and rebellious attitudes — these are early signs that line managers and supervisors need to understand and be aware of," says Wee.

She adds that Malaysians, in general, need to understand that mental health is

just as important as physical health when addressing an individual's total well-being.

"Because of stigma, [mental health issues] are usually swept under the carpet. It is considered a taboo subject. But once we get the ball rolling, hopefully people will understand more about how crucial it is to take care of their mental health."

Wee believes the timing is right for AIA to talk about the subject as it would encourage more corporate players to join in the conversation. Indeed, the 2018 survey shows that there has been an increase in employee participation in at least one workplace mental well-being intervention compared with in 2017.

AIA's Anusha, however, feels that this is only the tip of the iceberg. "The survey helps to broach the subject, and to help open the door for people to start thinking and talking about it. Overall, mental health well-being is a critical topic that is very real and has far-reaching implications for employees and organisations. By itself, the topic has some stigma, so we need to have more conversations and visibility so that more positive action can take place."

Dr Christian van Stolk, Vice-President of RAND Europe, concurs, pointing out that

SUHAIMI YUSUF/THE EDGE



PATRICK GOH/THE EDGE

Wee (second from right) and her team of researchers

"The survey helps to broach the subject (mental health), and to help open the door for people to start thinking and talking about it."

— Anusha

the first step to address mental health is to remove the stigma attached to the subject.

"Employees need to feel comfortable discussing their mental health and reporting it within an organisation. At the same time, awareness of mental health has to be broadened across employees and their line managers. This requires a clear message from the top, role models or champions within an organisation and more active engagement at board level with this topic," he says, adding that employees need to feel that they have the required support to have discussions on the subject.

Following that, line managers need to be able to identify mental health issues and address them in a way that benefits employees.

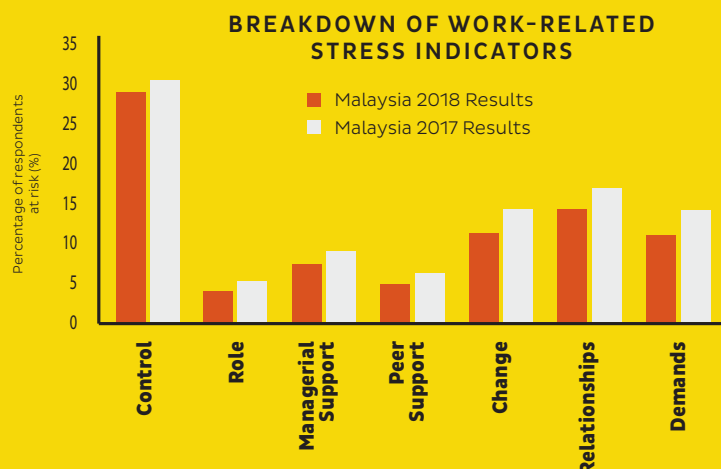
"In some ways, line managers could be both the problem and the solution. Line managers can take action to support employees, but they typically also cause many of the issues that we see in employees," says van Stolk.

He stresses that the more the issue of mental health is normalised in an organisation, the more employees will be open to reporting such matters.

MALAYSIA'S HEALTHIEST WORKPLACE BY AIA VITALITY 2018 SURVEY FINDINGS

MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

THE SURVEY SHOWS THAT
1 IN 2
EMPLOYEES FACE AT LEAST ONE STRESS FACTOR AT WORK



ALL ABOUT THE MONEY...

18.2% HAVE A LOT OF FINANCIAL CONCERNS

“So, removing the stigma may lead to an increase in mental health issues being reported. This is normal but makes monitoring improvement more difficult. Finally, anecdotal evidence suggests that those employees who have poor mental health in the UK and report it to their employer still face disciplinary action in the vast majority of cases (over 80%). This suggests that there is still a long way to go,” says van Stolk.

On the global stage, 2018 has seen an increase in media coverage of mental health, according to Nomura’s Health and Fitness Programme Director Ian Edwards. Nomura was the winner of the Britain’s Healthiest Workplace survey in 2014, 2016 and 2017 for the large organisation category.

He says the highlighting of mental health issues has come a long way in the last two years. “I feel most corporates are more open minded to this and are taking it as a great opportunity not only for the employees to feel valued and supported but also for the employers to create a communitive, harmonious and productive workforce.”

A journey to address mental health and wellbeing in the workplace

Anusha says more conversations and discussions about this topic will help spark deeper awareness and an appreciation for the matter.

“These are not new issues — they have always been present. However, it is only now that we are beginning to see them come to light. One of the critical things needed is to create a ‘safe space’ for employees to speak about these issues, and provide training for employers and organisations to manage these conversations,” she says, adding that awareness of the matter will lead to appropriate actions being taken, namely policy-making, regulations, medical and psychological support and so on.

AIA Malaysia has invested significantly in recent years in establishing an integrated health and wellness agenda that covers fitness, nutrition, mental well-being, events and corporate social responsibility, to support its employees and communities in having better engagement with their health,



Harris (left) and Blackwood believe in maintaining positive training environments at Tottenham Hotspur

and promote a more positive workplace environment.

“In addition, we are also in the midst of exploring mental health support as part of our integrated health and wellness agenda. This includes connecting employees with psychologists or psychiatrists so they can get the help they need,” says Anusha.

Indeed, counselling is important to help patients facing mental health challenges to recover.

According to Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister Hannah Yeoh, while going for counselling could be seen as a failure by some people, it is important for the country to change its mindset.

“We need to start talking about counselling in a positive manner. We need to introduce it to people,” Yeoh was quoted as saying in September during a forum on mental health awareness and suicide prevention policy.

van Stolk agrees and adds that it is critical that the awareness created be translated into action. He says employees with greater control and autonomy typically report better health.

“The line manager is critical in

“We need to start talking about counselling in a positive manner. We need to introduce it to people.” – Yeoh



LOW YEN YEING/THE EDGE PROPERTY

granting such control and autonomy. In Asia, where we see a greater number of hierarchical workplaces where workers are expected to be at their desk for a long period of time (sometimes without breaks), there may be more challenges when it comes to changing the work culture.

“However, in Europe, we are now starting to get worried about the flip side of this approach. With more people working flexible hours and working from home, we are worried that more employees will become disconnected from the workplace and isolated,” says van Stolk.

As for Nomura’s Edwards, he believes that there should be a focus on the issues of connection, activity and learning in the work environment. Management and employee training is a great way to connect the workforce.

“Communication is vital in business and, as humans, it’s important to forge new friendships and alliances, be open with how you feel and relaxed in the company of others. Managers should focus on how they talk to employees so that they really listen. They would be amazed at the outcome,” says Edwards.

He agrees that while being able to work from home is a great option for employees, it can lead to loneliness and disconnection. “It really is about moderation and having managers or specialists who are able to spot the right path for each individual.”

Anton Blackwood and Shaun Harris, International Development Coaches at Tottenham Hotspur, believe one of the ways to help their players who are feeling the pressure to perform week in, week out, is to ensure that their training sessions are fun and purposeful.

“We try to give a lot of encouragement to maintain positive training environments. This builds players up mentally and gives them a lot of confidence to try new things and not worry about making mistakes.”

They say that football and corporate workplace is not so different. Whether on the field or at the workplace, it should be a positive place where players or employees should enjoy going everyday.

MALAYSIA’S HEALTHIEST WORKPLACE BY AIA VITALITY 2018 SURVEY FINDINGS

ABSENCE, PRESENTEEISM & PRODUCTIVITY

The link between an organisation’s productivity and employees’ health and well-being can be explored through two measures — absence and presenteeism.

28%

WORKING HOURS LOST A WEEK

73.1 DAYS LOST

PER EMPLOYEE PER YEAR IN MALAYSIA

ABSENCE

7.7 DAYS

Actual absence from work

PRESENTEEISM

65.4 DAYS

Attends work but unproductive



THE COST

RM2.27 MILLION

LOST PER YEAR PER COMPANY ON AVERAGE

CURRENT WORKPLACE DETRIMENTAL TO YOUNG WORKING ADULTS

There are concerns that the current working environment could have a negative impact on the lives of millennials trying to grasp “adulting”.

“Our workplaces typically have a negative impact on young people. They have poor mental health and low engagement. We have indications in our UK data that this trend is worsening. We have indications that our workplaces are not kind to young people,” RAND Europe Vice-President Dr Christian van Stolk tells *The Edge*.

He believes that for better engagement with the millennials, there is a need for “cultural adjustment” at corporations.

An example that van Stolk cites is how the best benefits in organisations are typically awarded to those employees with the longest tenure and highest income, who usually least need such support. He says extending further benefits to these employees does not necessarily improve their productivity.

“For young employees, it could be as simple as providing them with better benefits, support and training opportunities and engaging more with them. The common mentality among employers, that young people have to learn the hard way, is counter-productive and contributes to low productivity,” he adds.

On how to improve this area, Ian Edwards, Programme Director, Health and Fitness at Nomura, says new technology and agile working have been key to the organisation’s millennial programmes.

“We promote a number of health apps with physical intervention. In one of the apps, we monitor air quality in and out of the workplace to promote active travel and clean air routes, which we then further support it with carbon monoxide testing,” he says.

The design of the office building has also been instrumental in attracting the next generation, adds Edwards. Nomura’s office is planned in such a way that managers are in an open space with their teams.

“We have water stations on all the floors, open garden areas, and medical and well-being facilities, all designed to attract and retain the next generation of rising stars.”

Some Malaysian companies, meanwhile, allow millennials to lead in their respective fields in order to boost their confidence. An example is Hartalega Holdings Bhd, whose wellness programme, known as Hartagize, is led mainly by millennials.

According to the Group’s Director of Human Resource, Kuan Vin Seung, the programme was conceived by the HR department and is run by employees in the employee communication and engagement unit, the CSR unit and the sports club, which consists mostly of millennials.

SBM Offshore Malaysia is one of the companies that provide flexible working arrangements for their employees, something that is highly rated by the millennials. This allows employees to define how their eight hours of work a day should be done based on their own priorities.

SO, HOW DO MILLENNIALS DESCRIBE A HEALTHY WORKPLACE?

Farhan Hanif, 28, consultant



“A workplace that has no clock-in features for its employees. Employees should be trusted to do their daily tasks responsibly and productively without needing to be present. Trust is crucial and will benefit both parties.

A good step to increase workplace productivity is to have a system to help employees be well informed of personal and business progress. Setting performance markers each quarter and having monthly meetings to update employees on current opportunities and challenges would also help.”

Arif Ramli, 28, fund accountant



“It’s all about facilitating a balanced diet. I would love vending machines with healthy snacks like nuts and fruit, and a free flow of non-sugary drinks such as green tea or Chinese tea!”

Shanaz Stephen, 28, dental surgeon



“A healthy workplace encourages exercise by offering facilities such as showers, changing rooms and gyms. The next step is to provide encouragement, for example with awards, to those who join and excel in fitness or sports activities in and out of the workplace.”

HOW DO MILLENNIALS COPE WITH STRESS?

Samantha Ho, 24, writer



“I think I’ve learnt to cope better over the last couple of years that I’ve been working. This includes better recognising the symptoms of being overworked and then making the time and effort to rest. Some days are better than others but I think having to face a certain level of pressure is an inevitable part of working life.”

Vivien Chin, 24, consultant



“Stress and workload are unavoidable, especially in a consulting firm. I think I am doing all right after 1½ years of being in the workforce. I am still surviving! I cope by doing yoga and focusing on self-growth during the weekends.”

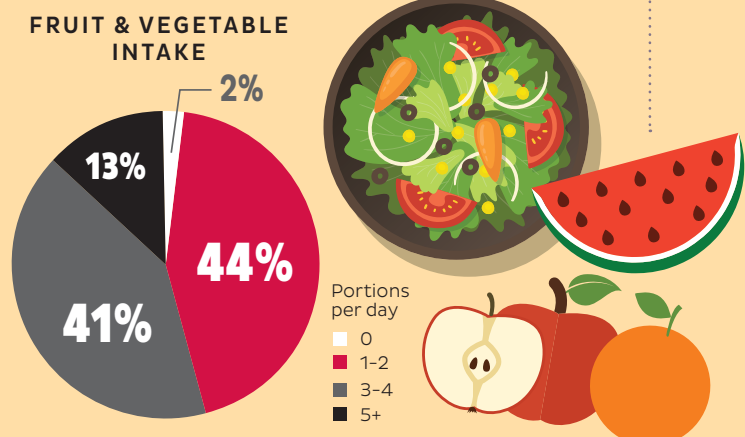
The football industry is a good example where young players become superstars before they even turn 20 but eventually come under pressure both on and off the pitch. Tottenham Hotspur International Development Coaches Anton Blackwood and Shaun Harris inform *The Edge* that mental health is crucial in football, especially among the young players because of the glare of the media on them. They say it is important for them to have an open re-

lationship with the players off the pitch in order to help them to deal with such pressure. “As coaches, we have to create relationships with our players off the pitch so they are able to speak with us, if ever they have any problems. Furthermore, pressure is part of football, which is why we try to build the players up mentally to ensure they are ready for the challenges and see these as opportunities to grow and not fold.”

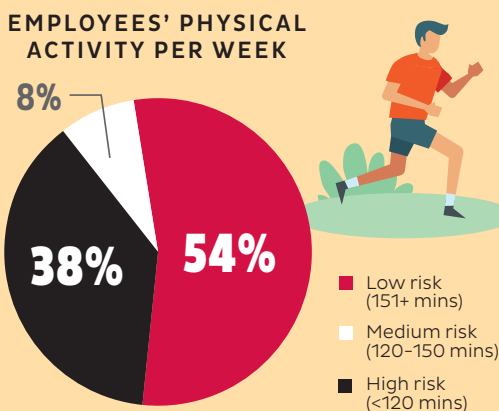
MALAYSIA’S HEALTHIEST WORKPLACE BY AIA VITALITY 2018 SURVEY FINDINGS

NUTRITION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

EAT WELL!
91.7% ARE NOT EATING A BALANCED DIET



45.9% OF OUR WORKFORCE LACK EXERCISE



SMOKING



11% EMPLOYEES ARE SMOKERS

28% OF THEM SMOKE UP TO A PACK A DAY

BULLYING: THE OFFICE'S DIRTY LITTLE SECRET

Do you feel consistently overworked? Perhaps you have lost a job promotion due to office rumours. Are you uncomfortable with being micro-managed by your supervisor?

These may seem like part and parcel of a normal workplace culture but the fact of the matter is that you could be facing one of the biggest stress factors at work — bullying.

According to the findings of Malaysia's Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality 2018 survey, one in five employees experience bullying at work.

"For a fifth of affected employees, workplace bullying is more than an occasional occurrence. It is a traumatising and distressing part of their day-to-day life," says UKM Senior Lecturer and Psychologist Dr Caryn Chan Mei Hsien, who was part of Associate Professor Dr Wee Lei Hum's team of researchers involved in the survey.

Victims of workplace bullying bear the burden of — and often fail in — determining whether they are, in fact, a victim or if they are overreacting.

Some actions are obviously bullying. These include physical, psychological or sexual harassment. Others, however, fall into a grey area, such as work overload, rumours that have negative implications, constant criticism, personal attacks or even being micro-managed.

Like mental disorders, there is a stigma attached to being bullied where the complainants are seen as incapable, which is why bullying often does not get the attention it needs.

"I could spend too much time at the workplace or be overworked until it affects my sleep, my lifestyle and my relationships. But if I still think that it is part of my work commitment, I will not lodge a report. Employees need to know their limits and have a work-life balance," says Wee, who is a health behavioural specialist at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Faculty of Health Sciences.

RAND Europe Vice-President Dr Christian van Stolk agrees, saying that bullying is "a toxic issue in the workplace that can affect morale, staff engagement and productivity." Some employers acknowledge this and are not only open in addressing the issue but also make it a priority, he tells *The Edge*.

"Broadly, we see that in Europe, most em-



PATRICK GOH/THE EDGE

(Far left) Wee: Often, employees think their bosses have the right to instruct them to do anything. How much is too much becomes very subjective

(Left) Chan: For a fifth of affected employees, workplace bullying is more than an occasional occurrence. It is a traumatising and distressing part of their day-to-day life

ployers have shifted away from tacitly accepting this issue as part of the work culture and now see it as a sign of a poor work culture that leads to bad outcomes.

"We saw a big shift in the UK where some employers, not long ago, saw bullying as part of a 'competitive' work culture but when they became concerned about rogue behaviour and compliance issues, they started to focus on outcomes like staff engagement and improving the work culture. My guess is that many in Asia will move in the same direction."

In Malaysia, like in many other Asian countries, employees accept power distance, either between the staff and superiors or between the genders, says Wee.

"The issue of gender, socioeconomic status and display of higher psychological distress if you are bullied is true across all organisations surveyed," she adds.

According to her, victims concede that in an organisation, there is bound to be inequality in power. "Often, employees think their bosses have the right to instruct them to do anything. How much is too much becomes very subjective," she says. Another common hurdle is where the people to whom the employees are supposed to report bullying are the bullies themselves.

Workplace bullying can have the undesired outcome of a high turnover rate for affected organisations. Other times, the victims have no choice but to put up with it. "A lot of workers can't leave. They are tied to the job due to financial issues," says Wee, citing another

trigger of stress.

Chan concurs. "On top of being bullied at work, these employees are not able to leave because they are not financially independent, which is a key factor contributing to the high level of psychological distress seen among employees," she says.

The experts propose a framework to address such a toxic work culture. Employees must first be aware of the necessary steps to take when bullied, such as lodging a report.

"It is very important to implement a multi-channel reporting system to ensure that the employee is able to report the bullying without hindrance or obstruction if power dynamics come into play, especially if the bully happens to be the boss or an ally of the bully," Chan stresses.

Thus, organisations should have proper guidelines for the management to monitor and resolve such cases. It needs to train the front-liners and managers on how to detect and resolve bullying at the workplace, says Wee.

An independent committee could constitute and enforce the guidelines, she adds. "It has to be independent because those being bullied are always low down in the hierarchy."

Meanwhile, Malaysian organisations involved in facilitating the nation's workforce well-being could include bullying as part of their agenda. "To be more effective, this movement must be initiated from the top down. I think it is timely that AIA picked up the issue of bullying. If not, we would be ignoring one of the more important causes of stress at the workplace," says Wee.

#MeToo movement puts bullying in the spotlight

The #MeToo movement exploded into existence about a year ago, turning the spotlight on sexual harassment and bullying at the workplace.

According to RAND Europe Vice-President Dr Christian van Stolk, reporting is absolutely critical to allow employees to speak up.

"Many organisations now have various routes through which employees can report allegations of sexual harassment and bullying. This can be an anonymous hotline, HR, through the line manager (unless the line manager is the person bullying) or to an executive responsible for people. Another way that organisations typically monitor the overall work culture is through staff engagement surveys," he says.

van Stolk acknowledges that by allowing employees to speak up, the number of reported cases will rise. He notes, however, that an open and transparent culture is often encouraged and required by the marketplace in Europe and is gaining traction.

"My sense is that in due course, investors, owners, organisational stakeholders and the public will require greater transparency. So, there will be greater reputational risks associated with suppressing bad practice in an organisation," he comments when asked about the risk of bad publicity when more people speak up about such issues.

The high-profile cases raised through the #MeToo movement in the last one year include Hollywood, media and political figures.

MALAYSIA'S HEALTHIEST WORKPLACE BY AIA VITALITY 2018 SURVEY FINDINGS

BULLYING

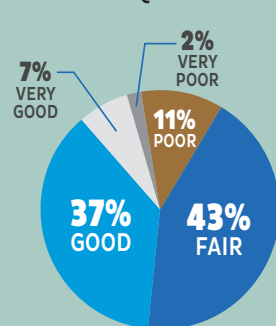
1 IN 5
MALAYSIAN
EMPLOYEES
ARE BULLIED

4%
ARE
BULLIED
OFTEN



SLEEP

SLEEP QUALITY



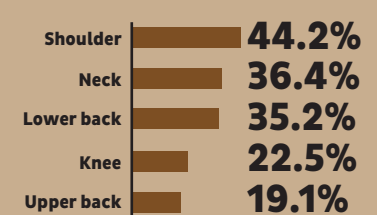
54.4%
OF MALAYSIAN EMPLOYEES SLEEP
LESS THAN 7 HOURS/NIGHT

MALAYSIAN EMPLOYEES SLEEP QUALITY PATTERNS



MUSCULOSKELETAL

TOP 5 COMMON MUSCULOSKELETAL SYMPTOMS



Percentage of employees with given symptoms (%)

85%

SUFFER AT LEAST
ONE OR MORE
MUSCULOSKELETAL
CONDITIONS

INSUFFICIENT SLEEP HURTS PRODUCTIVITY



If you think not getting enough sleep is not a big deal, think again. The RAND Sleep Report shows that the economic cost of insufficient sleep across five Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries is up to US\$680 billion a year.

Two of the five countries are the US, which is estimated to sustain an annual economic loss of US\$280 billion to US\$411 billion and Japan at US\$88 billion to US\$138 billion. They are followed by the UK, Germany and Canada.

“The findings of the economic analysis suggests that lower productivity levels and higher mortality risks related to insufficient sleep can result in substantial economic losses to modern economies,” the report says.

One of the authors of the report, RAND Europe Vice-President Christian van Stolk, points to the modern society that allows many things to encroach on rest time.

“Work is one factor. Clearly, new technology (like social media and email) often does not help us. Many corporates are now taking action to restrict email delivery on the weekends, outside of working hours or when employees are on holiday. In the end, we need to harness new technology to support us in looking after ourselves rather than working against us. Many corporates are also making sleeping pods available to staff for a quick nap, providing access to evidence-based applications like Sleepio or monitoring how much time employees spend online on company devices,” he says.

He adds that working overtime is one of the main issues that has contributed to the lack of sleep. According to van Stolk, anything that lengthens the working day is a problem as

most individuals have their own commitments beyond work such as family or other caring responsibilities.

“Commuting is a further problem. In Asia, I believe many employees face long commutes. We know that this negatively impacts sleep and mental health,” Van Stolk says.

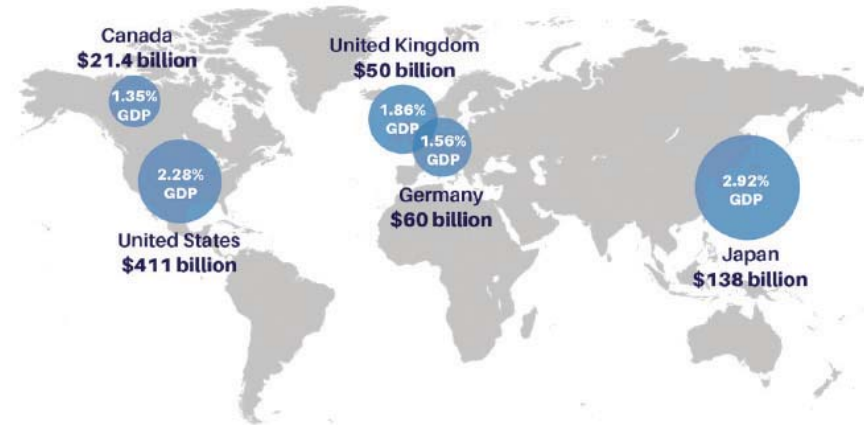
In Malaysia, the Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality 2018 survey shows that more than half of employees surveyed sleep less than the optimal seven hours a day (from the health and productivity perspective). Furthermore, 13% in-

“Many corporates are now taking action to restrict email delivery on the weekends, outside of working hours or when employees are on holiday.”

— van Stolk



Economic cost of insufficient sleep across 5 OECD Countries (US\$)



Source: RAND Europe Analysis

dicated they had poor or very poor quality sleep during the week preceding the survey.

The survey agrees with van Stolk, pointing to long working hours, increasing out-of-hours connectivity and work-related stress as factors associated with sleep problems in workers who would not normally be classified as being at risk of sleep disorders.

According to UKM Senior Lecturer and Psychologist, Dr Caryn Chan Mei Hsien, the chart relating to sleep and absenteeism has a U-shaped plotting structure, meaning that not having enough sleep, or too much sleep, may lead to high levels of absenteeism.

“Many people falsely believe that sleeping on the weekend is a way to compensate for the lack of sleep during the week. That is absolutely not true, and it is not healthy. Lack of sleep on a

regular basis will lead to the loss of grey matter, so, your cognitive function will decline. Sleeping extra on the weekend does not help,” Chan says, adding that the main factor leading to sleep deprivation is bedtime procrastination.

She says that while a lot of people are aware that in order to have enough sleep, they probably need to sleep by 10pm or 11pm in order to wake up by 6am, many choose to go to sleep past midnight, distracted by work or deadlines as well as social media and other things to do.

Chan believes there should be an alternative and Malaysians need to make a conscious effort to go to bed on time and wake up early in order to maintain good sleep patterns.

Tools and gadgets that can help people to sleep better include sleep trackers and electronic reminders to go to bed at a certain time.

RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING EMPLOYERS

Recognise the importance of sleep and the employer's role in its promotion	Employers should recognise the importance of sleep and the adverse outcomes both for individuals and businesses stemming from insufficient sleep. In some instances, this may require a cultural change in organisational thinking.
Provide facilities and amenities that help employees with sleep hygiene	Employers can put in place arrangements to support their staff's daily routines with the aim of improving their sleep outcomes.
Discourage the extended use of electronic devices	Employers may signal limits on staff's expected availability after working hours or by introducing policies limiting after-hours and out-of-office communication.

RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETING PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

Support health professionals in providing sleep-related help	Awareness campaigns and wider support activities should be aimed at professionals so that they are best equipped to assist individuals suffering from sleep disorders.
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MALAYSIA'S HEALTHIEST WORKPLACE BY AIA VITALITY 2018 SURVEY FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP

PERCEPTION OF LEADERSHIP AMONG MALAYSIAN EMPLOYEES

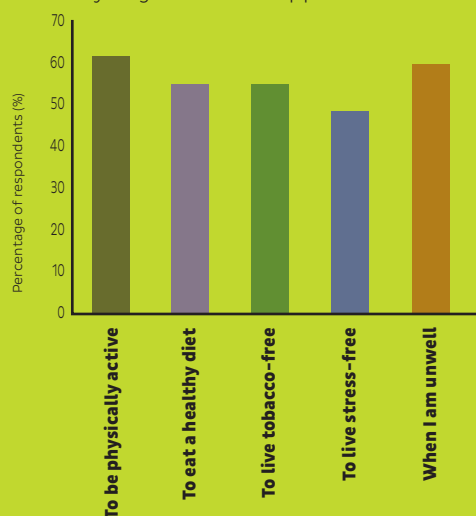
% OF PARTICIPANTS WHO AGREE/STRONGLY AGREE

- 56%** My line manager cares about my health and well-being
- 62%** My line manager encourages me at work
- 68%** Leaders view the level of employees' health and well-being as an important indicator of the organisation's success



MALAYSIAN EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION OF ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT

My organisation supports me...



WORKPLACE HEALTH & WELL-BEING INTERVENTIONS

IS YOUR ORGANISATION PROVIDING SUPPORT?

10% EMPLOYERS DON'T OFFER ANY INTERVENTION

90% EMPLOYERS OFFER AT LEAST ONE INTERVENTION

ONLY 13% EMPLOYEES ARE AWARE OF ANY INTERVENTIONS



AIA lives its brand promise

— to help people live healthier, longer, better lives

While most people step into the office expecting to attend meetings, meet deadlines and work on reports, employees at AIA Malaysia's head office can start their day in a well-equipped gym. Over the past few years, the leading insurance company has aggressively invested in its human capital as it believes that the journey to fulfil its mission and brand promise to help Malaysians live Healthier, Longer, Better Lives has to start with its own employees.

According to AIA Malaysia Chief Human Resources Officer Thomas Wong, the company wants its employees to choose a healthier lifestyle as part of its culture, personifying how it wants to help its customers.

"As an employer, we play an active role in encouraging healthy habits among our people. We provide them with the tools, the knowledge and the motivation to be able to bring the best of themselves to work. We are fully committed to embedding our mission and brand promise among our people first," Wong tells *The Edge*.

This is why the company set up its own gym in 2014, with space for about 50 people at a time. The HR department also organises variety of fitness programmes, some in collaboration with AIA Vitality partners, for its employees.

"For example, we have declared every midweek Active Wednesday at AIA, where most employees wear active wear to work. This encourages them to walk more, choose the stairs over the lift and walk out for lunch," Wong says.

He adds that physical activities are organised in the evening, either by HR or the different departments. Employees also have the opportunity to win free passes for runs or fitness activities sponsored by AIA.

"We organise mini competitions that encourage our employees to be more active and they can win free passes to our runs, such as The Music Run by AIA Vitality, which was held in October this year," Wong says.

He acknowledges that, at the end of the

day, choosing a healthy lifestyle is up to the employees themselves. The company can only encourage them to do so.

"We see it as a journey, a continuous effort. Changing habits takes time. People need the right support and motivation. That is what we are trying to do, to help with the change in mindset so we see sustainable results," he says.

Wong says AIA Malaysia sees AIA Vitality as a tool to help its employees, adding that it is a science-backed programme with a track record of over 20 years, and it has proved to help sustain healthy living and work habits.

He says AIA Vitality was introduced to its employees in January 2016, and the company is encouraged by the energy and enthusiasm with which its employees have embraced it. The programme is also available to the insurance company's life planners so they can effectively communicate the benefits of AIA Vitality to its customers.

It is worth noting that the employees' engagement rate in the programme has risen steadily from 58% in 2016 to 76% last year and has maintained at over 80% throughout this year.

This year, AIA Malaysia also identified nutrition and mental well-being as focus areas, based on employee feedback from last year's Malaysia's Healthiest Workplace survey.

Wong says the company saw an opportunity to revamp the food served at its food court to give employees the option to select healthier meals.

"We recently enlisted the support of the Ministry of Health, which promotes healthy cafeterias in the workplace, to teach our food court operators about healthier food preparation," he says.

He adds that the company continues to explore mental health support as part of its integrated health and wellness agenda.

"Currently, for specific cases, we have connected the employees with psychologists or psychiatrists so they can get the help they need," Wong says, adding that HR is always supportive of any employee who may need additional support.

He adds that employees with mental health issues will not be penalised and that the company has clear guidelines for employee performance scores.

AIA Malaysia also tries to encourage its employees to kick certain negative habits such as smoking. Wong says the company introduced a smoking cessation programme last year.

"We're looking to tweak it to offer the

right motivation at those crucial moments on their journey to better health so they can successfully kick the habit. The current programme offers reimbursement for nicotine replacement therapy whereby staff can apply if they remain smoke-free after three months on the programme. It also offers a customised cessation plan from a Ministry of Health-certified intermediary and access to a counselling hotline," he says.

AIA Vitality: Know your health, improve your health, enjoy the rewards

As AIA Malaysia embraces AIA Vitality to help its employees live a healthier and better lifestyle, the company also looks at the three pillars of the programme: know your health, improve your health and enjoy the rewards.

AIA has introduced basic health screening to all staff (blood pressure, glucose, body mass index and cholesterol) via its in-house clinic, which saw a 60% take-up rate compared with 30% who do their annual health screening elsewhere.

"This is important, as the first step is to know your health. This will help create awareness among employees of their own health condition and how they can improve it with the facilities and support the company provides," Wong says.

He notes that the three pillars on their own are not new, but these separate elements working together to form an ecosystem, aided by technology and supported by rewards every step of the way, will make the difference.

"AIA Malaysia has invested significantly in recent years in its wellness programme and will continue to do so going forward via an integrated health and wellness agenda that covers fitness, nutrition, mental well-being, events and corporate social responsibility to support community and its staff to better engage in taking care of their health," Wong says.

"We see it as a journey, a continuous effort. Changing habits takes time."

— Chief Human Resources Officer Thomas Wong



BEST WORKPLACE PRACTICES

Conspec Group of Companies

Creating a love culture in the workplace

While most small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are caught up with trying to maximise the returns on their investments, Conspec Group of Companies is focused on creating a love culture for its employees through mentorship.

“We decided we needed to focus more on the mental well-being, and from there, realised that we needed to create a love culture. So this year, we launched our love culture — Love our staff, love our job, love our clients,” Managing Director Marcus Tan Cheng Tat tells *The Edge*, highlighting that his wake-up call came after he was diagnosed with cancer — Stage 2 Hodgkin’s Lymphoma.

The organisation, which employs 45 people, leverages its size as an SME to ensure that its employees have a strong bond and relationship with each other. For example, the leaders of the company make an effort to talk to the employees during work travel to understand them better while their families are invited to some of the corporate events to create stronger connections within the organisation.

The leaders of the company also helped Tan during his second bout of cancer in 2016 to ensure that the com-

pany continued to see growth in both its revenue and bottom line.

This family-like support extends across the organisation. For example, Uncle Fook, a senior site supervisor, was 69 when he retired in October 2017 after being diagnosed with Stage 4 lung cancer. The company provided him and his family with support through visits, finance, prayers and even motivation.

“One very meaningful thing that we could do for him was to organise a photoshoot for him and family. We engaged our usual photography company to do a photoshoot for him and the photographer decided to do it for free for Fook. It was so meaningful to the family as it helps to immortalise their memories together with Uncle Fook,” Tan says.

He points out that the company looks after all its employees — permanent staff as well as foreign workers, who Tan says are also part of the family.

Apart from that, the company also provides its employees with training on leadership using John Maxwell’s book, *Developing The Leader Within You*, using simple language so that everyone, regardless of their background, can understand and participate.

Moving forward, the company plans to organise marriage counselling courses for its employees as well as candle-



MOHD SHAHRIN YAHYA/THE EDGE

Marcus Tan

light dinners for all the couples in the office in order to help them learn more about their spouses so as to strengthen family ties.

As for encouraging physical health, the company launched its “Fitbit Fitness Challenge” in 2016.

“We bought fitness trackers for all our staff who signed up for the challenge. Once a month, we have activities in the office where we do workouts. As a team, we also do hiking, zumba, HIIT (high intensity interval training) programmes, jogging and so forth,” Tan says, adding that there are also talks by nutritionists on how to eat healthy on a budget.

Under the fitness challenge programme, those who join pay RM100 per year and commit to eat better, achieve 45,000 steps a week and participate in monthly exercise meetings, he shares.

At each meeting, their body composition and weight are measured to track their progress.

“We have a winner at the end of the year. We pool all the money together, and that pool of RM2,500 goes to the winner to redeem a local or overseas holiday,” Tan says.

Conspec also allocates RM600 a year to a staff welfare fund for each employee for their bonding activities. On top of that, the fitness challenge programme allocates RM1,000 to each sign-up. There is also a RM500 reward to those who do not take any medical leave for the year. Tan says while there was only one who was eligible for this reward when they started in 2015, there were five last year.

SOCSCO Rehabilitation Centre

Taking care of the carers — SOCSCO Rehabilitation Centre, Melaka

SOCSCO Rehabilitation Centre in Melaka is well known for its state-of-the-art centre that offers comprehensive medical and vocational rehabilitation services for the millions of workers in Malaysia insured under the Social Security Organisation (SOCSCO). This is to help workers with disabilities to gradually assimilate into the workforce and society.

However, in order to effectively help those who have suffered a sickness or an accident to adapt and continue to earn a living, the people working there must be taken care of first.

“We accommodate all sorts of disabilities. What we realised when the first 30 patients entered the rehab centre is that it was full of depression. They were very sad and down and we needed to provide hope and the highest level of care,” says SOCSCO Chief Executive Officer Datuk Seri Dr Mohammed Azman Aziz Mohammed.

“The staff members need to be very active and highly motivated to make sure they can overcome that. We needed to motivate the patients,” he adds.

Since it started operations in 2014, the centre has won numerous awards in terms of its design and infrastructure. The Zen-infused facility occupies 55 acres of lush greenery and boasts water features and a connecting pathway with minimal

slopes and tactile paving to allow the disabled to move around easily. Other common facilities include a working gym and a swimming pool. Azman notes that these features are used by both the patients and the staff.

“There has never been a rehab centre like us in this region before. We were lucky to have been able to plan our operations from the infrastructure design stage, so many of the facilities could be incorporated into it.

“But when you have a world-class facility, you need world-class people to operate it. [Otherwise], your facility will go down the drain,” he says.

This is the first complex in the world to have medical and vocational support.

Azman believed that a positive culture needed to be introduced and the organisation settled on Japan’s way of living “ikigai” (a reason for being), which constitutes “doing what you love using your capabilities to provide what the world needs and get paid for it”.

Apart from that, the SOCSCO Rehabilitation Centre also champions safety and health for the healthcare industry.

“In workplaces like factories and manufacturing, there are a lot of guidelines for prevention, occupational safety and health. But we found out that there was not much talk about guidelines for

Datuk Seri Dr
Mohammed
Azman Aziz
Mohammed

healthcare workers — whether the nurses suffer from back pain, whether the doctors are working long hours, exposure to chemicals or even the absence of natural light in a closed environment [for example],” Azman says.

This led to the introduction of a framework for a culture of safety and health. One simple example are the machine-assisted hospital beds that help patients move into an upright position as well as patient hoists. These keep the heavy-lifting out of the nurses’ job scope.

“We also have a 24/7 childcare centre to accommodate our late-shift staff, which sits within a 1,000 sq ft child-friendly space [in a medical facility],” says Azman.

Other policies to enforce a better work culture were introduced, including a 40-hour-week, free annual health screening and fitness test, maternity and paternity leave, annual holiday allowance and no-sick-leave allowance, among others.

“To have a balance is very important. Employees should get enough rest to maintain the world-class services they offer,” he says, pointing out that 60% to 70% of the centre’s employees take leave regularly at an average of two days per month while all the employees have taken leave so far this year.

The facility is currently operating at near-full capacity, and SOCSCO plans to emulate the same ecosystem in its future rehabilitation centres. Azman also says that more lounges and existing facilities will be improved to ensure the staff can operate in top-notch conditions.

“To us, the rehab centre is a stage. Each staff member is an actor who plays the role of a caregiver. But when a staff member becomes stressed, he needs to go backstage ... so the plan is to further establish this backstage environment so the staff members can continue delivering top-notch services.”

BEST WORKPLACE PRACTICES

AIG Shared Services (M) Sdn Bhd

AIG Shared Services prioritises all aspects of employees health in the workplace

At AIG Shared Services (M) Sdn Bhd (AIGSS), the overall health of every employee is important. This includes physical and mental health as well as other aspects of the employee's well-being, such as his financial health.

Although many initiatives have been introduced to employees over the years, AIGSS decided last year to further strengthen its employee health and well-being commitment by rolling out AIA Vitality to all its employees.

"We wanted a common platform and tool for our employees to monitor and track their health-related habits, and to reward them for the healthy choices they make, however small, to improve their health and well-being," says Michelle Chow, AIG's HR Director for Malaysia and the Philippines (insurance, shared services and information technology).

Introducing such a programme is one thing but creating advocacy and adoption for sustained success is another. To complement the programme and to reinforce the high priority placed on employee well-being, AIGSS holds a yearly HR day with the core theme of "Health and Wellness". The event is organised at all AIG offices in Malaysia and various activities are arranged throughout

the day that promote a healthy lifestyle and eating habits.

"We have also appointed 'champs' in the office who act as ambassadors, who can guide their colleagues in the programme. So, our people who would like to know more about AIA Vitality, can seek out these champs for guidance," says Michelle.

Under the AIA Vitality programme, as participants accumulate points, their status improves from bronze to silver and then gold and ultimately platinum.

Michelle points out that the increase in the number of platinum, gold and silver awardees is an indication that the programme is meeting its objective of creating a healthier workplace.

On top of this, AIGSS has recently been partnering with selected banks to offer financial-related services to its employees with the aim of ensuring they know how to take care of their financial health as well.

Based on its Employee Preference Survey last year involving nine countries, of which Malaysia was one, the company found that flexible work arrangements as well as time-off are important to employees. This prompted AIGSS to kick-start a "work from home" initiative this year with a small group of employees first. The aim is to test and refine how the benefits



Michelle Chow

of work from home can be implemented before it is rolled out broadly.

There are also play stations, a ping-pong table, foosball, pool table, quiet room and Astro at the workplace that can be utilised by the employees during their break.

"The recent FIFA World Cup 2018 matches were shown live at the workplace as the company did not want its employees to miss out on this world event with the commitment from the employees

that service level agreements will not be impacted. AIG places strong emphasis on the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The organisation's facilities include separate 'halal' and 'non halal' refrigerators and microwaves to cater to Muslims and non-Muslims employees," Michelle says.

The company also provides ergonomic chairs for all its staff members to ensure they do not suffer from backache.

Michelle adds that AIGSS also offers its employees a ride-hailing service between the office and the nearest LRT station to ensure their safety, especially for those who may work late or are on odd shifts.

"We have a free promo code that employees can use upon registration and the free ride will be from the designated LRT station to and from the office," she says.

All in, Michelle says she is passionate about ensuring that the right kind of initiatives are implemented to properly benefit the staff members.

"You can run a lot of programmes but if they do not relate to the employees in a relevant way, then it does not mean anything to them. Our employees' health is most important, so our initiatives are based on the voice of the employees for maximum engagement and participation."

Silverlake Axis Group

Silverlake Axis embraces flexible working arrangements

Silverlake Axis Group believes that work-life balance needs to be embedded in the company's culture and has reiterated this throughout its organisation with an emphasis on flexible work arrangements to help employees cope with both personal and work commitments.

According to the Group CEO and Managing Director Dr Raymond Kwong, the flexible work arrangements in the company have helped its employees to strike a balance between their personal and work commitments.

"For example, we support parents who need to pick up or drop off their children at school and we also accommodate employees' physical activity to attend gym classes during longer lunch breaks," Dr Raymond says.

The flexible work arrangements allow employees to adjust their daily working hours, provided that the standard working hours per week are met. Telecommuting is also allowed in the event of emergencies so that employees have the flexibility to work from anywhere.

Reduced work arrangements are also available, especially to employees who need to switch from full-time work to contractual work that requires fewer work hours with reduced workload.

Dr Raymond believes that this philos-

ophy has helped the company to manage attrition in the organisation.

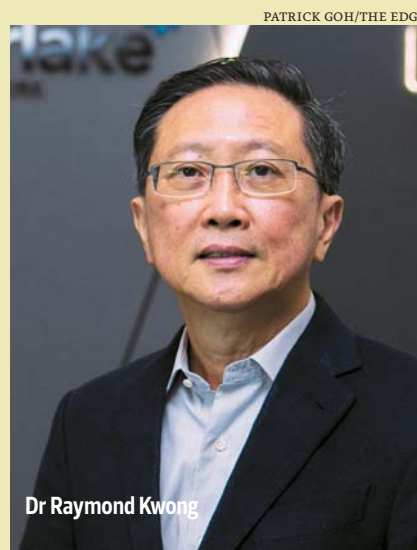
"In spite of the market trend of workforce migration to countries offering lucrative remuneration, we have managed to maintain a relatively low turnover rate in FY2018. Due to our flexible working arrangements, we have also managed to attract and retain the female workforce in our organisation as they are able to optimise work while being able to care for their families," he says.

Dr Raymond adds that the company has also created space, such as a comfortable pantry, townhall, game room and nursing room, to allow employees to have time for recreational activities at work to release stress.

"We have also created a productive work environment through comfortable work space that minimises distractions, good lighting to prevent fatigue and headaches, and inspiring office colours to stimulate brain function," he says, pointing out that engagement is also done through annual team-building and incentive-based trips.

In keeping with the group's belief in development for its employees, Silverlake Axis also provides fully subsidised development courses to improve its employees' skills and their sense of personal achievement.

The group rolled out its first group-wide corporate social responsibility (CSR)



Dr Raymond Kwong

programme called "Coding as a Life Skill" in March this year, aimed at stimulating youth's interest, equipping them with basic skills and developing self-learning.

"This programme was conducted over a four-month period across four countries — Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam — each led by our employees from the various subsidiaries," Dr Raymond says.

He adds that the programme has provided a platform for the company's employees to be part of a programme that gives them a sense of self-actualisation, which has translated into creativity, spontaneity

and positive energy.

To ensure that the employees are also physically healthy, the company provides sit-stand desks, weekly badminton games, bowling weekends and health talks, and encourages participation in local and national events, such as sponsored walks and fun runs. While some of these activities are conducted at corporate level, Dr Raymond notes that most of them are coordinated at department or business unit levels.

"Workplace health and well-being programmes not only have a positive impact on employees' wellness but they also lead to a significant increase in team engagement, cohesiveness and overall productivity. A healthy and happy workforce can reduce costs with reduced leave days caused by disability or sickness," Dr Raymond says.

As for the group's plans to improve these initiatives to engage with its employees, Dr Raymond points out that it is important for these programmes to be driven by the employees' feedback and initiatives.

"This encourages more engagement and accountability for successful programmes with the desired results. As a fluid organisation, we are open to ideas and always ready to embrace and execute changes," he says.

To Dr Raymond, the motivation behind all these initiatives is the belief that for the organisation, its employees are its biggest asset.

BEST WORKPLACE PRACTICES

HP Inc Malaysia

HP to nurture its employees on physical and mental health

HP Inc Malaysia is looking beyond growing as an innovative company as it is also aiming to grow its employees in terms of their physical and mental health.

According to Country Human Resources Leader Saravana Praveen, HP aims to nurture employees who are physical and mentally healthy.

“For example, HP Malaysia has a physical wellness programme. The activities include badminton, Zumba and yoga. Employees can also claim external investment in their physical and mental health under its flexible benefits programme. HP Malaysia is also involved in the HP Global Step Challenge, where employees in each country sign up to clock the number of steps they take each day for a certain period. This fun-filled activity allows us to check out our competition around the world and connect with our global colleagues,” he says.

Given that HP is part of a global family, he says there are allocations for the annual wellness programme around the world. “Within each country, there are separate initiatives that are aligned to the company’s wellness philosophy.”

As a company that focuses on innovation, Saravana points that HP carries out its mission to keep reinventing by extending it to the people and compa-

ny’s culture.

“This means implementing initiatives that create a healthy work environment that nurtures employees who are physically and mentally healthy,” he says.

“Our Intentional People Strategy is the beating heart of this reinvention at HP Inc. It guides our vision to help our people and our business thrive. We achieve this by giving employees the freedom to innovate and providing opportunities for everyone to learn, grow and perform. This is delivered through initiatives that cultivate a growth mindset, develop talent and embrace diversity and inclusion.”

Saravana notes that in Malaysia, the management receives resources to support wellness teams, which are headed by ambassadors who understand the local culture well. Together, the teams work to encourage healthy lifestyles and attitudes within the business.

He also says HP believes in innovating to deliver, especially in a world that is becoming increasingly mobile and connected.

“Beyond technology innovation, we understand the need for flexible work arrangements for our employees. For example, new mothers can arrange flexible working schedules with their managers to ensure they spend quality time with their families and newborn babies,” he



Saravana Praveen

says, pointing to the importance of such flexibility in helping the company retain talent, especially female talent.

He also believes that it is important for the company to encourage continuous learning. This includes learning about skills not just at work but also outside work through internal platforms like

Brain Candy, a social learning platform.

The company also encourages feedback from employees.

“By understanding their needs, challenges and triggers for success, we can put in place improvement plans to address employees’ needs,” Saravana says, pointing to how the management responds to the employees’ need by building a gym at one of its facilities in Penang.

On ways to improve the company’s initiatives to encourage a healthier lifestyle among its employees, he says it is crucial to focus on participation in these activities. “HP continues to encourage its employees to take part in its initiatives. For example, in Malaysia, we aim to achieve 100% participation in health screening activities.”

Saravana also says HP will continue to focus in its initiatives, based on employees’ needs and feedback.

“At HP, we believe that when our people thrive, our business will, too. We do this through our Intentional People Strategy, which allows everyone to learn, grow and perform while creating a company that leads. We also value our talent and want their career to grow and evolve with us personally and professionally. Across all levels of the business, we achieve this by offering opportunities for growth while embracing diversity and inclusion,” he adds.

SBM Offshore Malaysia

Employee wellness programme driven by staff

SBM Offshore Malaysia believes that the empowerment of its staff will be one of the key drivers to advance its employee wellness programme in a sustainable manner. “Our biggest challenge is to improve our wellness programme. How do we make it interesting every year? We’ve found that the key is in empowering our own people,” General Manager Khairil Khairuddin says.

“Today, there are a few teams of employees collaborating with us to drive the programme”.

“They are really championing this drive. The CSR (corporate social responsibility) team and sports leaders will each choose to lead in a particular field that he or she is passionate about (yoga, running, badminton, futsal and so on). We also have the employer of choice team looking at the results of the previous year’s employee engagement survey. Then, they will come up with the kinds of activities that can improve [employee] engagement.”

One example was the charity ride from Penang to Kuala Lumpur. “I myself am not a cyclist, but I trained to join them. There was a group of eight cyclists, but the entire company supported them. We received donations from those who did not cycle. That ride covered three days

but on the first day, we rode about 110km. It was gruelling!” he says with a chuckle.

The money collected — based on the distance travelled — went to a community charity, with a portion used to fund other employees’ activities this year.

According to Khairil, one of the unique activities conducted by the company was a boot camp or the “biggest loser” competition. “When one of the employees approached me with the plan, I was a bit sceptical because we have employees from different age groups. But to my surprise, we had many participants from across the different age groups.”

The outcome of the 10-intensive boot camp session was amazing as the top three winners shed a combined weight of 18kg.

Khairil believes that the improvement in physical health will translate into higher confidence levels. As for the sporting activities, most of them are held weekly. The company also engages yoga trainers and some of the activities are carried out during lunch time. Given the location of its office in KL Sentral, the management has leveraged the availability of a nearby gym and negotiated a good rate for its employees.

There is also a strong emphasis on nutrition and diets through health talks. The company’s Health and Fitness Day on the first Thursday of every month, where



Khairil Khairuddin

fruit is provided for the staff for free.

As the company is involved in the offshore energy industry, providing floating production solutions, some of its employees are required to work offshore. To ensure that they stay healthy, the company provides a gym on the vessel and has an Eat Clean campaign at the canteen on the first Saturday of every month. Apart from that, the company also continuously improves its employee benefits such as claims for gym memberships, health supplements and others.

Last year, SBM Offshore Malaysia implemented a policy on flexible working hours. “By having this flexibility, we empower the leaders to find the right fit for each of the employees. We also have a compressed work week. This means that employees can put in additional working hours from Monday to Thursday so that on Friday, they can take half a day off after lunch,” says Khairil.

He shares that improvement has been seen in the employee engagement survey as well as an increase in the take-up rate in prevention claims following the revision in the claims policy.

With the oil and gas industry seeing a recovery, Khairil says the company cannot be complacent and he sees the wellness programme as instrumental in retaining its talent.

BEST WORKPLACE PRACTICES

Dell Global Business Center

Dell Malaysia driving social change

At Dell Malaysia, the focus is not on merely having initiatives or programmes to facilitate the needs of its employees. Instead, the vision is to drive social change that will improve overall livelihoods.

This thinking forms part of Dell's "Legacy of Good" global initiative, which, among others, looks at factors such as the work environment, culture and overall system of the company to ensure a comfortable and progressive workplace where people can thrive with little or no limitation.

The initiative is Dell's brainchild to ensure sustainability, and together with its business objectives, bring about social and environmental benefits while driving better customer outcomes. Through this initiative, Dell is committed to putting its technology and talent to work where they can do the most good for people and the planet, shaping its culture, policies and business practices.

"We place great importance on ensuring that our people are really well taken care of," says Pang Yee Beng, Managing Director of Dell Malaysia and Senior Vice-President, South Asia and Korea, Dell EMC.

He expects employees to come to work happy every day, thereby realising their full potential and performing well.

"Without a healthy body and mind, no matter how good a workplace is, it's not going to work for the person," he says.

Dell also practises "connected workplace", which allows employees to work from home, especially those who need to attend to their families' needs.

"This programme allows them to work from home, and we even pay for their internet charges and allow them to claim for the costs of office equipment such as printers. We also allow flexible working hours to help them stay at their best and deliver results. This programme is for everyone, both men and women," Pang says.

He adds that such a system helps the company keep its talent, especially female talent, of whom it was losing about 10 years ago prior to the introduction of the programme as some of them had family commitments upon marriage.

Across the three Dell offices in Malaysia, various facilities and initiatives are offered for the comfort and pleasure of the employees.

At its Cyberjaya facility, there is a games area for the staff to relax, a gym, a dedicated mother's room and a clinic. Pang says Dell has even developed an app that allows its staff to monitor their health-related activities such as the number of steps they take every day.

The company also carries out social



MOHD SHAHRIN YAHYA/THE EDGE

Pang Yee Beng

activities such as healthy food day, sports day and family day as well as volunteer activities at hospitals. Such initiatives were the results of employee feedback in the company's annual Tell Dell survey.

Pang says that while many companies conduct surveys, what is unique about Dell's is that after the survey is done, the managers and site leaders like himself will plan programmes to address some of the concerns raised.

He cites the example of transforming the dining experience at its Penang office, which had come about at the insistence of the staff and management.

"We noticed that most staff preferred to eat out instead of in the cafeteria. We wondered why and how we can attract them back. So we revamped the look and layout of the cafeteria and improved the menu by making it healthier and adding more options. It worked. The employees are now flocking back to the cafeteria. From a hall that is empty, these days, even I find it hard to get a seat," Pang says.

He points that the company spends a lot on the welfare of its employees. "We have to be consistent with our efforts, through good times and bad times, even if there's a global financial crisis. Leaders must take care of their people. This is part of the living and sustaining the legacy of our founder, Michael Dell," Pang says.

Hartalega Holdings Bhd

Hartalega introduces wellness programme to re-energise its employees

With Hartalega Holdings Bhd on an aggressive expansion phase over the last few years — doubling its sales, capacity and headcount in just three years — Director of Human Resource Kuan Vin Seung believes that the time is right to re-energise the employees, better known as Hartanians.

He says the Group's strong growth, which puts it as the world's largest nitrile glove manufacturer, was achieved because of the "blood, sweat and tears" that have been put in by Hartanians.

"We realised that some Hartanians have been working so hard that they neglected their health and well-being, resulting in being overweight and having high blood pressure and cholesterol," says Kuan, when asked about the motivation behind the Group's wellness programme, Hartagize, which was launched in December last year.

The programme, which was mooted by its Human Resource department, is run by a team comprising members of its employee communication and engagement unit, corporate social responsibility unit and Sports Club, whose members are mostly millennials. The aim of the 13-month programme is to create a fun, healthy and engaged workplace.

"Ultimately, we want to re-energise the Hartanians," says Kuan.

Some 50 activities involving health, volunteerism and engagement have been planned for the year. Those that focus on health include the 10,000 steps-a-day challenge, Mount Kinabalu climb, colour run, Skytrex, Zumba, futsal and badminton.

"The 10,000-steps challenge has been well received, and we reward the employee who took the most number of steps every month. Our record is 1.5 million steps in a month, which is equivalent to taking 50,000 steps per day consistently for 30 days. This goes to show that Hartagize really makes people go the extra mile (in this case, it was many miles) to improve their health," Kuan says.

Apart from promoting healthy living, Hartalega also encourages its employees to take part in volunteer work such as river cleaning, mangrove planting and visits to homes for the elderly. This is important as studies have shown that millennials are more likely to join companies that are socially responsible, he says.

As for promoting engagement among employees, the company organises town-halls, treasure hunts and movie screenings.

"To encourage participation, we introduced gamification into the programme



KENNY YAP/THE EDGE

Kuan Vin Seung

by awarding points for participation. This system is designed in such a way that it encourages multi-level and multi-department participation," Kuan says.

Apart from Hartagize activities, the health, safety and environment department also organises health and safety campaigns annually to create awareness of the importance of workplace safety and health.

"We have clinics in our factories to ensure Hartanians receive prompt medical attention when they require it. For emergencies, we have an ambulance team. We also have emergency response teams that are trained by the Fire Department to respond to emergencies such as fire and chemical spills," Kuan says.

As Hartagize enters its 12th month soon, the company has plenty to boast about when it comes to the effectiveness of its wellness programme — the number of employees taking medical leave has seen a 5% reduction, the number of medical leave days taken has come down by 9% and employee attrition has dropped 18%.

Despite the success, Hartalega is not resting on its laurels. Kuan tells *The Edge* that Hartagize 2.0 will see new elements added to enhance the effectiveness of its activities, which involve financial and mental wellness.

He believes a new area to focus on in the coming years is the participation of Hartanians, especially those in the management level. The company is also keeping an open mind on initiatives that have yet to be introduced such as flexible working arrangements.

MALAYSIA'S
HEALTHIEST
WORKPLACE

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