If you’re reading this, I’d like to thank you for taking the time to do so. Most readers will likely skip to the colourful and informative infographics (on Pages 4 to 9) right now.

It is also likely many readers will allocate just enough time to read the paper as it takes them to finish a cup of coffee. That is, if incoming messages on the omnipresent smartphone does not distract. We’re certainly short of time these days, aren’t we?

Being busy has become incredibly fashionable. Work, of course, is the chief reason, consuming time all the time. For inspiration, we have included interviews with the most outstanding participants – companies that have in place some of the healthiest employees around.

Just like work, when it comes to health, it involves little things, like watching what I eat more closely and trying to sleep earlier. It also takes big commitments that are easy to put off, like getting a gym membership.

The survey puts in numbers what many of us might have intuitively assumed in the past – that Malaysians are unhealthy. It even sheds light on a subject that many shy away from – mental health.

For their inaugural survey, a heartwarming 47 companies participated. That’s more than in Singapore and Hong Kong combined.

The survey puts in numbers what many of us might have intuitively assumed in the past – that Malaysians are unhealthy. It even sheds light on a subject that many shy away from – mental health.

I hope you will take the time to digest the findings of the survey and take stock of your own health. Perhaps, even exploring some of the health interventions provided for by your employer.

More importantly, I hope the findings of this survey capture the attention of business owners, employers and HR managers – people who can have a big say in developing better health and well-being plans for employees.

For inspiration, we have included interviews with the most outstanding participants – companies that have in place some of the most comprehensive and innovative workplace interventions as well as those with some of the healthiest employees around.

I’ll leave it to the experts to expound the virtues of a healthy workplace. But in the spirit of change and self-improvement, I part with an unutterably cheesy quote from a motivational poster that I once saw: “One day or day one, you decide.”
CEO

This year, AIA is proud to launch the inaugural Malaysia’s Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality – a research study that shines the spotlight on health and well-being in the workplace. This study, which is modelled after Britain’s Healthiest Workplace, is the first comprehensive workplace survey in Malaysia that captures data on the health and well-being of employees, as well as health strategies and activities practiced by employers in the country.

Why workplace health? Why now?
In recent years, the media has continued to highlight the health issues that affect our nation – obesity, diabetes, hypertension, hypercholesterolemia and, more recently, depression along with other illnesses of the mind.

The sad truth is that many of these conditions are brought about by unhealthy lifestyle choices, particularly poor nutrition, lack of exercise and smoking.

The state of Malaysia’s health has become a cause of national concern, and a key pillar of the 11th Malaysia Plan is improved well-being for all. However, while there has been a lot of focus on the role of individuals, government and the community in promoting healthy behaviour, we found that there has been little focus on the role of employers in championing good health at the workplace.

Given that working Malaysians spend most of their waking hours at work, it is important for us to understand, measure and improve health and well-being at the workplace.

After all, a healthy workforce is good for business. Among the benefits of having healthy employees are increased productivity, stronger business performance and higher employee engagement, not to mention a reduction in accidents and work-related sickness, controlled medical costs and less pressure on employers to cover health-related absenteeism and presenteeism.

What Malaysian employers and employees say
A total of 47 employers participated in the Malaysia’s Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality survey, with 5393 Malaysian employees providing feedback on health and well-being at their place of work.

We were very heartened by the participation rate, as this in itself is an indicator that Malaysian companies value in improving the health and well-being of their people.

The survey data, which was analysed over the period of two months, found that Malaysia experiences a high level of productivity at the average annual cost of health-related absenteeism or presenteeism is approximately RM2.7 million per organisation.

The survey brings to the fore the issue of presenteeism, which refers to employees who are physically present at work but are unable to focus on their tasks because they are unwell.

The survey results show that out of the 67 days that an employee loses in a year, 59 days were lost due to presenteeism, which refers to employees who are physically present at work but are unable to focus on their tasks because they are unwell.

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The results went on to highlight other behaviours and factors that negatively impact employee health, particularly a lack of sleep, long hours spent at work, stress brought about by financial concerns as well as other known behaviours such as poor eating, physical inactivity and smoking.

The study also revealed that Malaysia’s workforce is at high risk of mental illnesses and obesity.

What’s next?
Malaysia’s Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality survey was designed to be a catalyst to get employers to place employee health and well-being at the centre of their corporate strategy. Information is power, and armed with data on their employees’ health and well-being, the participating companies can now pursue proactive interventions that can effect positive behavioural change among their employees.

The personalised Organisational Health Report that eligible participating companies receive will enable them to understand the health of their organisation, as well as the effectiveness of their current health strategies. This can act as an important baseline by which they can develop and implement the health and well-being programmes that their employees most need.

Over time, we believe that these interventions will improve employee engagement, establish more positive attitudes towards health and ultimately increase business productivity. It will be a win for the employee, a win for the employer and a win for our country.

Thanks and appreciation
I would like to thank all the companies and employees who took the time to participate in the first ever Malaysia’s Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality survey. You have played a pivotal role in starting us on our journey to improve workplace health in Malaysia. The data that we have collected based on your feedback will serve as an important baseline for future research. We hope that you will make full use of your Organisational Health Report to make healthy strides in improving well-being in your workplace.

To the winners of the first ever Malaysia’s Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality, congratulations and keep up your efforts! We will be looking to you as champions of workplace health, and we hope that others, too, will see value in implementing programmes that promote better health and well-being at work.

This survey could not have been successfully rolled out without the support of RAND Europe, AIA’s research partner, as well as Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, our local academic partner. Your commitment to implementing a solid research methodology and careful analysis of the data have been impeccable and we are very proud to have worked with you on this.

My sincere appreciation also goes to The Edge for sharing our vision to promote workplace health and working closely with us to create this supplement.

The road ahead
For AIA, the journey to promoting workplace wellness has just begun. Armed with the data from this inaugural survey, we hope to work together with the government, corporations, healthcare providers and the community at large to enact policies and practices that can help Malaysia’s workforce live longer, healthier and better lives.

If you are a business leader, I encourage you to sign up for Malaysia’s Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality 2018 and take the first step towards creating a healthy and happy workplace for your people.

Let’s all work together to make Malaysia a healthier nation for all!
This year is the first year that AIA has launched Malaysia’s Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality — the first science-backed workplace survey to promote employee health and well-being to all organisations, regardless of their size. A total of 47 organisations participated and 5,369 employees in urban areas were surveyed in total. The wider Healthiest Workplace survey, encompassing Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore, saw 104 organisations participated in total, with 10,001 employees surveyed.

The study was developed by AIA and is 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. Having inherited Britain’s Healthiest Workplace, which started in 2013 and has helped nearly 370 organisations, AIA has brought this to Asia for the first time to help organisations improve their understanding of their employees’ personal health and well-being.
It starts with a check-up, Malaysian workplaces!

Malaysians are running harder than ever in the modern rat race and the country’s burgeoning middle class is proof of the hard work put in. But just as the number of Malaysians moving up the social ladder has grown over the years, so too have their waistlines and blood pressure.

“Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases have become a serious threat to public health. And it should be taken seriously because it has implications on productivity in the workplace,” says Associate Professor Dr Wee Lei Hum from the Faculty of Health Sciences at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Wee notes that NCDs are estimated to make up a whopping 73% of total deaths in Malaysia. Not surprisingly, the Malaysia’s Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality survey found that Malaysian employees reported more health risks than their peers in Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia.

More than 100 employers and 10,000 employees from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Australia were polled in the survey launched in May, whose results were released last month.

The results of the entire survey can be summarised quite succinctly in what is called the AIA Vitality Age, which reflects the state of an individual’s health, failing which they can face serious health risks, but almost 44% of employers offer no interventions at all. The key to successful behavioural change is through the promotion of health and wellness strategies in the workplace and making sure they are ingrained in the organisational culture. This can only be achieved with strong support from the employers,” says Wee.

While it is difficult to quantify the return on investments in terms of employee health and well-being, successful programmes can pay incalculable dividends in the long run in the form of higher productivity, lower turnover and attracting the best talent.

“Each company will find that its employees exhibit different risk profiles. With the personalisation of data gathered from the survey, employers should reflect on the findings and identify and address the specific issues that arise in their organisations,” says Wee.

The Malaysia’s Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality survey is a useful health assessment tool because it breaks down and provides personalised data not only to every employee so that they are informed of their health risks and can then take the necessary redress but also to their organisations so that they too can act on their responsibility for the well-being of their staff. And with continued participation in future editions of the survey, they can monitor the progress of their health.

Wee stresses that intervention programmes cannot operate in isolation but as part of a wider holistic approach to improve health in the workplace. One area that often gets overlooked is mental health, she notes.

Based on the survey, 53% of employees face mental health risks, but almost 44% of employers offer no interventions at all.

The good news from this survey is that Malaysians were motivated to change their lifestyles. Almost 90% indicated that they wanted help to reduce their weight, while approximately 65% were eager to improve physical activity.

However, Wee cautions that the high level of motivation may not translate into actual action. She says employers play a huge role in enabling their staff to act on their motivation to change. In particular, she stresses the importance of regular health screenings for early detection of risks.

However, Malaysian employees still perceive themselves as healthy even though they have four or more risk factors. Wee stresses that a person needs to have a realistic perception of their health, failing which they will be less likely to change their unhealthy behaviour.

Associate Professor Dr Wee Lei Hum, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Malaysian employees were found to have poor lifestyle habits compared to Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia — with unbalanced diet consumption as the most common issue.

**Lifestyle Choices — The 4 Risk Factors**

- **Nutrition**
  - How can healthy nutrition habits, or a balanced diet — servings of fruits, vegetables and whole grains — be a norm at work?
  - Supplements will not make the difference.
  - Having a balanced diet should be the main aim.
  - Eat a fruit and some vegetables for a start instead.”
  — Dr Christian van Stolk, VP, RAND Europe
  - EMPLOYERS CAN: Swap office snacks for fruits! Healthy servings (with calorie tagging) can also be provided during meetings or briefings.
  - Recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables — United Nations
  - Natural salt in daily diet is sufficient — WHO
  - is one of the barriers stopping employees from eating a balanced diet
  - of all surveyed workplaces worldwide offer fresh fruits and vegetables at work!

- **Physical Activity**
  - Moderate activity can incorporate a range of exercises.
  - Choose stairs over the lift, walk out for lunch, and join more HR-initiated physical activities.”
  — Thomas Wong Chief HR Officer, AIA Malaysia
  - The survey found that 64% of Malaysian employees do not do enough moderate-intensity exercise, compared with 63% in Asian countries and 36% in Australia.
  - 1 in 4 workplaces do not have interventions to encourage physical activity.
  - Most employees are sedentary (sitting at desk) throughout majority of working hours.
  - Technology may help! 77% of participating employees who own health wearables changed their behaviour towards exercise as a result.
  - 5 PORTIONS (400gm)
  - 5gm (daily)
  - COST FACTOR
  - 50%

- **Smoking**
  - Smoking can cause, among others, loss of time at work and it is a contributing factor towards absenteeism.
  - Drinking alcohol can cause blackouts, memory loss and anxiety. Go any further and you risk getting cancer, heart disease or stroke.

- **Alcohol**
  - Recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables — United Nations
  - Natural salt in daily diet is sufficient — WHO
  - is one of the barriers stopping employees from eating a balanced diet
  - of all surveyed workplaces worldwide offer fresh fruits and vegetables at work!

**On Balanced Diet:**

- **Overall Nutrition Risk Profile**
  - Employees not eating a balanced diet

**Employees’ Weekly Physical Activity Levels**

- Low-risk (151+ minutes)
- Medium-risk (120-150 minutes)
- High-risk (<120 minutes)

**Instead of pushing for intense exercise, start making smaller lifestyle changes that encourage you to be active. This is most likely to have significant initial impact on your health.”**

— Dr Christian van Stolk, VP, RAND Europe

**Employers Can:**

- Adopt the recommendation of Public Health England — seated-based workers should integrate 2 hours of light physical activity (walking discussion, stand-up meetings) during work each day.

**Nutrition**

- 90% of surveyed Malaysian employees do not eat a balanced diet. Their diets are poorest in the area of fruits and vegetables.

- Less than 5 in every 10 surveyed Malaysian employees with nutrition-related risk factors are motivated to change their diet.

**Physical Activity**
Among the surveyed Malaysian employees, 11% are current smokers, compared with 9% in Asian countries and Australia respectively.

Smokers generally find it difficult to quit. Starting to smoke at a young age will lead to habit that continues over time leading to a higher probability of significant health problems later on in life, says RAND.

**MALAYSIA’S 5 MILLION SMOKERS**

- **10%** < 19 years old
- **40%** 19–30 years old
- **50%** 31 years old and above

*Source: National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015*

Think it is costly for employers to help employees quit? Think again. In the UK, absence due to smoking habits costed employers £1.4 billion in 2011 alone. This excluded indirect costs, such as loss of productivity from cigarette breaks, among others.

Smokers should seek professional help to quit as smoking leads to nicotine dependence. Individuals must try not to smoke with each other, but help each other to quit as a group.”

— Associate Professor Dr Wee Lei Hum, UKM

**SMOKING KILLS**

- 6 million people each year — WHO
  - (In Malaysia, smoking kills 20,000 people each year)

**SECOND HAND / PASSIVE SMOKING KILLS**

- 600,000 each year, 28% of whom are children — WHO

It takes an average of 6 minutes to smoke ONE CIGARETTE — that’s two hours a pack!

**ALCOHOL**

1.1% of surveyed Malaysian employees exceeded the recommended alcohol consumption limit of 14 units of alcohol which roughly equals to 7 strong large beers — compared with the 1.2% of Asian average, and far below Australia’s 1.6%.

Binge drinking can result in **loss of concentration** and **cumulative health issues** in the longer run.

**BINGE DRINKING:**

- > 6 units per session
- or when you feel drunk, says RAND

Drinking is the lifestyle habit employees are least motivated to change.

**CLINICAL HEALTH**

The survey shows that **obesity is increasingly a problem in Malaysia.** 12.5% of surveyed Malaysian employees are obese. They are also very much at risk for high blood pressure.

**Body Mass Index (BMI)**

**OVERALL BMI RISK PROFILE**

- **Malaysia**
- **Asian countries**
- **Australia**

**Clinical indicators**

**Common chronic conditions**

**Heart / Kidney**
**Cancer / Diabetes / Hypertension**

**RESPONDENTS AT RISK OF CLINICAL INDICATORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
<th>Asian countries</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blood pressure</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood glucose</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All 3</strong></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Of those who recalled their medical result.

**Employees at risk**

- **Malaysia** 29%
- **Asian countries** 26%
- **Australia** 33%

**EMPLOYERS CAN:**

- Send their employees to undergo regular screening tests to assist in early detection and treatment.

**Top 4 musculoskeletal symptoms among affected Malaysian employees**

- **39% NECK**
- **47% SHOULDER**
- **37% LOWER BACK**
- **22% KNEE**

**Musculoskeletal conditions**

The most direct activity is making basic adjustments in the workplace such as making sure your monitor is at the right height, and having posture aids (better desks, chairs). These are often not costly.”

— Dr Christian van Stolk, VP, RAND Europe

**How motivated are employees to adopt better habits?**

Contrary to the ranking of risk profiles across the four lifestyle habits, employees are more motivated to change their lifestyle when body mass index (BMI) is involved, followed by physical activity, smoking, nutrition and, lastly, alcohol.

Findings on 129 studies of behaviour change strategies confirmed that the least effective strategies were those that aroused fear or regret in the person attempting to make a change.

“Studies have also shown that goals are easier to reach if they are specific, not too numerous, and you have practical ways to reach them,” said Associate Professor Dr Wee Lei Hum of UKM.

One simple way to do it is to tell yourself to “walk for 30 minutes a day” rather than “get more exercise”, she added. “Any effort made in the right direction is worthwhile, even if you encounter setbacks or find yourself backsliding from time to time.”
SLEEP

Small amounts of sleep loss can accumulate over time, leading to severe sleep problems and an increased risk of developing SEVERE MENTAL HEALTH conditions. Workers who report poor sleep habits are more likely to avoid social interactions at work.

Malaysians don’t get enough sleep!

Studies show 56% < 7 hours

ZzzzzZzzzz.....

RECOMMENDED HOURS OF SLEEP

7 to 9 hours healthy
6 to 7 hours +7% mortality risk
<6 hours +13% mortality risk

17% REPORTED POOR/VERY POOR QUALITY OF SLEEP DURING THE WEEK PRECEDING THE SURVEY

Long commutes due to traffic jams coupled with an Asian work culture that normalises overtime are some factors that have been blamed for poor sleep habits. Thomas Wong, Chief HR Officer, AIA Malaysia says:

“Employers can support by integrating sleep management programmes into workplace strategies and promoting education on various stress management techniques that individuals can practice.”

MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

53% are subject to at least one work–related stress factor

RAND says that Malaysia is transitioning from a traditional workplace culture towards a more flexible culture that emphasises work–life balance. The Traditional workplace culture in Malaysia could be a factor that led to less consideration for work–life balance. Policies around flexible working hours could help to manage the long–working–hours culture and ensure employees can take regular breaks that could lead to better–motivated, healthier and happier employees. From this survey, Malaysians on average work 15 hours more than their contracted hours each week.

12% of employees have high levels of anxiety or depressive symptoms. Malaysia comes in second after Hong Kong in this category.

17% of employees can’t decide when to take a break

18% of employees are bullied. 4% are bullied often/always.

Close to 44% of employers offer NO intervention to mental health

In Malaysia, mental health remains a taboo discussion. A trusting, caring and purposeful organisation can only flourish within a culture that takes care of its people holistically.”

— Thomas Wong, Chief HR Officer, AIA Malaysia

20% of surveyed employees had A LOT of financial concerns

Rand Corp studies in 2016 shows:

Lack of sleep among US working population costs the economy up to US $411 bil a year.

+US$266.4 bil to US economy if sleep improves from under 6 to between 6 and 7 hours.

14% 6%
6%
14%
46%
32%

OVERALL STRESS RISK PROFILE

Employees at risk for at least one work-related stress factor

Malaysia
Asian countries
Australia

12%

0%
10%
20%
30%
40%

END

OVERALL ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION RISK PROFILE

Employees with moderate to high depressive symptoms

Malaysia
Asian countries
Australia

14%

0%
10%
20%
30%
40%

END

OVERALL FINANCIAL CONCERNS RISK PROFILE

Employees with a lot of financial concerns

Malaysia
Asian countries
Australia

20%

0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%

END

EXTENT OF FINANCIAL CONCERNS

36%

43%

20%
None
A little
A lot

EMPLOYERS CAN: Assist employees by offering in–house psychological support.

In Malaysia, mental health remains a taboo discussion. A trusting, caring and purposeful organisation can only flourish within a culture that takes care of its people holistically.”

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EXTENT OF FINANCIAL CONCERNS

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A lot

EMPLOYERS CAN: Assist employees by offering in–house psychological support.
53% of Malaysian employees feel their line managers care about their health and well-being.

60% feel their line managers encourage them at work.

54% feel their leaders view the employee health and well-being as important to the organisation’s success.

11% of employees are highly engaged at work.

19% have low levels of work engagement.

91% of employers offer at least one intervention in their workplace.

58% of employees participate in at least one intervention.

Only 14% of employees are aware of the interventions offered on average.

Overall, employers in Malaysia have a good number of interventions. Only a minority of employers (10%) offer nothing. However, there is a blind spot in mental health, nutrition and physical activity. This survey helps employers to set a targeted intervention to solve the issues that they want to resolve.”

— Dr Christian van Stolk, VP, RAND Europe
Taking the first step to building a healthier workforce with AIA Vitality

Every company, regardless of its size, wants to have healthy and engaged employees working for them. After all, a healthy workforce is good for business.

However, as shown in the findings of the recently concluded Malaysia’s Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality survey, our health has unfortunately become a victim to the social conditions under which we live. For many of us who happen to spend a significant amount of our waking hours at work, our idea of exercise is to slocal from the office to spend another hour to get back home. Time is what we don’t have, or so we claim, when it comes to engaging in healthy pursuits.

While one can argue that it is largely depending on the individuals’ own initiative and control to address and manage their health risk factors, more and more corporates in Malaysia are realising the opportunity and the powerful societal role they play in influencing and encouraging behavioural changes amongst their employees.

With over 15 million Malaysians currently in the labour force*, establishing a healthy culture in the workplace through an effective corporate wellness programme has become increasingly important. When employees improve their lifestyle choices, not only will it help to increase employee engagement and work productivity, but will also give companies a hiring edge given that more and more employees value work-life balance.

This is where AIA Vitality can help.

*Source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia - August 2017

What is AIA Vitality?

AIA Vitality is a full-scale science-backed health programme that companies can leverage on to drive employee health and engagement. It empowers employees with the knowledge and tools to make healthier choices and achieve their health goals.

Using the latest research in behavioural economics and incentives, it is designed to encourage long-term behaviour changes in health. Members of AIA Vitality are rewarded with benefits and discounts for taking sustainable steps, however small, to improve their health and wellbeing.
How AIA Vitality works for your employees as individuals

AIA Vitality motivates you, as an individual, to make healthy choices through a sustainable and continuous 3-step cycle.

- Understand your current health status and discover your AIA Vitality Age.
- You will also earn AIA Vitality Points by completing health assessments and health checks.
- Set your health goals and engage in healthy activities like exercising and eating right.
- You can earn more AIA Vitality Points to move up your AIA Vitality Status.
- Enjoy fantastic rewards as you progress. The higher your AIA Vitality Status, the greater your rewards.

How AIA Vitality works for you as an organisation

When your employees join the AIA Vitality programme and are starting to take steps to improve their lifestyle choices, your organisation will benefit and reap greater, long-term tangible results through the power of the community of which these active and engaged employees are a part.

As your partner in championing workplace health, AIA will work with your organisation to help you drive adoption and engagement of the programme amongst your employees:

**Support System to drive organisational engagement**

- **Wellness Days at Your Doorstep**
  - We will bring wellness days to your premises and make them fun and engaging, with education sessions and partner presence to help your employees maximise their experience.

- **Integrated Communications**
  - We will work with you to embed AIA Vitality in your organisation’s existing efforts on employee wellness and engagement, with templated messaging and ideas for activities or challenges.

- **Vitality Champs and C-Suite**
  - We will guide you to set up an employee wellness team of Vitality Champs within your organisation who will create a supportive environment with peer-to-peer influence and top-down drive.

- **Comprehensive Reporting**
  - We will provide you with regular insights on your employees’ engagement with the programme, lifestyle issues, and health metrics over time.

**Delivering meaningful results**

AIA aims to work with you to achieve your organisational health goals, as well as those of your employees.

In the early years, we aim to achieve programme engagement and identification of your organisation’s health risk factors. Over the longer term, we aim to help you with healthcare cost management and productivity.

- Health Status
- Positive and caring image of the company
- Employee morale
- Productivity
- Staff turnover
- Absenteeism
- Sick leave
- Healthcare utilisation

To find out more about AIA Vitality and how you can get your organisation on board, please speak to AIA’s Corporate Solutions team, or visit www.alavitality.com.my.
SAP Malaysia uses its own expertise to improve employees' well-being

When an organisation has a vision to improve people’s lives, the best way to start working towards that goal is by enhancing the lives of its own members. That is exactly the case with SAP Malaysia.

The leading innovative enterprise software company emphasises using its own technology to improve the well-being of its employees, says managing director Terence Yong. “Our people are our most important assets,” he says. “What better way to demonstrate the organisation’s capabilities than to use them to improve the health of our own people.”

One of SAP’s key programmes is FitSAP, which applies Internet of Things and the company’s cloud platform to gather information from its employees worldwide who choose to use their wearables daily.

“To increase participation, SAP offers attractive discounts to employees to buy the Fitbit activity tracker wearable. The group then uses the data for follow-up programmes such as team and individual competitions to boost the impact of the programme,” Yong says. “To encourage employees further, we provide a quarterly incentive of RM275 to those who achieve the quarterly incentive target.

Although SAP Malaysia has only 130 employees, its office in Jalan Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur, is equipped with various facilities, including a nursing room, football table, two pantries and even a massage chair to help reduce work-related stress. The company also provides fresh fruits daily, monthly healthy lunch and cold-pressed juices once a month, among others.

It also runs an annual employee experience programme called People Week. This year, it lengthened the duration of the programme to three months to include more talks and workshops by experts globally (virtual sessions) and locally on psychology, nutrition, mental health and stress, among other things.

Apart from the usual medical benefits, SAP Malaysia also offers the Employee Assistance Programme — a third-party support platform to help employees resolve life issues — to further address stress and ensure mental well-being. The company is also running remote working programmes such as Flexi Time and Flexi Location, which it introduced in 2015.

Feedback can be submitted under the company’s annual employee survey, which touches on issues such as leadership, workplace facilities and company engagement. Then, an action items list is drawn up for the following year.

“One of our cultural pillars is to ‘Tell It Like It Is’. We encourage our employees to give honest feedback to help improve the company. Without that, we will have no clear direction on what needs to be improved,” says Yong.

He says SAP Malaysia will continually approach the well-being of its employees in a holistic manner. The company is considering better perks, including subsidising gym fees, and conducting the employee feedback survey on a quarterly basis for better impact. “Our research and many others have found that healthy and happy employees are more engaged and productive,” says Yong.

“We are a very competitive organisation and we want to offer the best to them. It’s simple logic,” Yong adds.

“I think an employer of choice is not all about providing perks and benefits, but of understanding the needs and ideals of each employee. The people are the company, and we grow together. Employees who are nurtured will, in the end, prove more valuable than any single thing that we can build or create,” adds Yong.

SAP has been in Malaysia for the past 25 years. Globally, the company is at the forefront of 25 industries, so much so that it is a widely held belief that “the world’s best-run businesses run SAP”.

Datacom Systems (Asia) Sdn Bhd

Shifting employees’ preference to better choices

A cozy resting area with an unlimited supply of free sugary and high-carb snacks — such as chocolate bars, potato chips and soda — for employees is a common sight at IT companies. But at Datacom Systems (Asia) Sdn Bhd’s office, employees are provided with baskets of fruits when they want something to munch on during the long working hours. Oats, green tea, soy milk and yoghurt drinks have also been made available to discourage its staff from snacking on junk food.

The initiative of the New Zealand-based IT solutions provider is aimed at persuading its employees to eat healthily. It also wants them to participate in more outdoor activities.

Director Andrew Goodwin tells The Edge that Datacom is taking a bold step in an effort to shift the preference of its employees from well-liked high-sugar and high-carb snacks to healthy, energy-boosting foodstuff.

“It is a conscious decision as we want to promote a healthier lifestyle to our employees. Of course, we're not changing their diet entirely. Initially, it was a bit difficult. There were murmurs against certain decisions, such as why soft drinks were removed while coffee is still available.

But the free annual health screening has helped. When our employees received their results, they realised and understood why the company had made these changes,” he says. As the Kuala Lumpur office serves clients across different time zones, Datacom’s employees often have to work night shifts. Goodwin believes that the provision of healthy snacks, fruits and drinks is important, especially for those who work at night as the only food outlets that are usually still open are the mamak stalls and fast-food restaurants, which may not serve ideal food for a late-night supper.

According to him, one of the key drivers of such changes is Datacom’s holistic approach to its employees’ health and well-being. On this, the company has initiatives in place to help promote a healthy diet, physical activities, health screening, social health and mental health.

“We have a holistic view of health and well-being — it is more than just physical health. While we provide subsidised gym memberships, fruits, healthy food and drinks as well as free annual body checks, we think that is only part of the equation.

“You also have social health — things like community activities, charity work and other CSR (corporate social responsibility) events. My view is that all of these will actually lead to a healthy well-being. It’s a more holistic approach in that respect,” Goodwin remarks.

Another initiative that Datacom has undertaken is the Employee Assistance Programme, which offers free and confidential counseling to employees who need it, whether for work or personal reasons.

Its employees’ response to the health and well-being programme has been positive, with about 20% of them utilising their gym membership allowance. There has also been an increase in employee engagement results. On his advice for other companies that want to provide better health and well-being programmes for their employees, Goodwin says the role of an employer is to encourage and not to mandate.

“A lot of these things ... you can’t force people to do them. They need to have the will to do so themselves. Our job as leaders is to encourage, but not mandate. We find creative ways, such as balloon fun on the weekends, to get our employees to be active. Different teams run different activities. They could invite other teams to play together over the weekend. We used to have futsal events as well.”

Goodwin is hopeful that the Malaysia’s Healthiest Workplace by AIA Vitality survey will help companies improve and learn from others about how to better motivate and encourage their employees to have a healthier lifestyle, given the increasing work pressure in a globalised community.
Keeping medical educators healthy

GlaxoSmithKline’s (GSK) mission to help people “do more, feel better, live longer” starts with its employees. The British pharmaceutical giant prides itself on providing for the health and well-being of its patients and consumers worldwide, and this philosophy is reflected in how it treats its staff.

A testament to its patient-focused philosophy being applied to its employees, GSK — which standardises its programmes globally — recently created a new internal programme for staff called the “Partnership for Prevention” (P4P).

Under this scheme, all GSK employees and their family members, irrespective of where in the world they are based, are given access to a number of healthcare services at low or no cost.

“If you look at a lot of organisations, they focus on the curative aspects of a disease, such as medical care. We have gone a step further to say, ‘let’s talk about prevention’. So, we provide services such as immunisation, vaccination and even smoking cessation programmes for employees and their dependents and children,” says Murali Thanabalan, Human Resources Cluster Head at GlaxoSmithKline Malaysia. P4P also covers services such as general medical examinations, blood tests and cancer screenings.

Encouraging a healthy lifestyle at work is high on the agenda at GSK, which has a dedicated “healthy corner” in the cafeteria. The organisation has teamed up with Global Challenge, the leading provider of technology solutions to offer modules to encourage and promote movement and physical activity, healthy eating, quality sleep as well as resilience to its employees. In teams of seven, employees track their daily activity and work towards a daily target of 10,000 steps per day.

Employees are also encouraged to take the stairs instead of the lift and encourage participation in various in-house fitness programmes held throughout the year.

“The key message is ‘get healthy, stay healthy’. Exercise and do your minimum 80%, which he says is “healthy”. And it’s fine as long as the work gets done. From the employee’s perspective, it is something they value because they don’t have to put in their own sweat and perseverance, including discipline and commitment.”

Nonetheless, with the various programmes in place and proactive engagement, GSK is determined to make it as easy as possible for its employees to make better choices with regard to their health.

GSK’s mission starts at home

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LARGE ORGANISATION
(>1,000 EMPLOYEES)

Top Glove Sdn Bhd

Executive chairman is a positive role model

While a factory may sometimes be thought of as a hazardous workplace, Top Glove Sdn Bhd — the world’s largest manufacturer of rubber gloves — boasts a workforce with a lower level of obesity than the national average.

According to founder and executive chairman Tan Sri Dr Lim Wee Chai, only 17% of the group’s employees have a body mass index of over 25 (an indication that a person is overweight). This is less than half of the 45% recorded for the overall Malaysian population.

Lim tells The Edge that Top Glove advocates five habits to ensure its employees work healthily for 100 years. These habits are clean, eat, work, exercise and sleep well.

The group’s health-focused corporate culture starts at the top — Lim himself is a firm believer of work-life balance.

“Personally, I achieve work-life balance through discipline, a well-planned schedule and investing my time wisely, and I encourage my colleagues, business partners and friends to do the same. My personal motto is, ‘Work is my hobby, exercise is my duty, health is my wealth’,” he remarks.

To encourage its employees to exercise for about 30 minutes a day, four to five times a week, Top Glove organises multiple monthly sports activities with prizes to attract staff across all its factories to participate.

“We also have a gym at our corporate tower where our staff can use the facilities free of charge. The gym also offers group classes such as Zumba, spinning and yoga. These are some of the initiatives we have undertaken to encourage work-life balance and a healthy lifestyle among our employees,” says Lim.

In fact, the health and well-being of Top Glove’s workforce are so important to the group that one of its business rules is “Do not lose your health”, he adds.

The glove maker also pays close attention to the diet of its employees. It has in-house nutritionists who work closely with the top management to design programmes that foster good eating habits. Free fruits are also provided to all its employees at its Malaysian and Thailand offices once a month.

“We recently entered into a joint venture with Global Doctors for an ambulatory care centre with a focus on preventive healthcare. It will serve not only Top Glove’s employees but also the wider community,” Lim reveals.

In order to encourage its employees to look after their own well-being and reduce preventable illnesses, Top Glove organises health talks on topics ranging from lower back pain management and cardiovascular problems to non-communicable diseases.

Lim stresses that the cultivation of a healthy and active lifestyle is only natural for it to ensure that its employees are not part of their usual routine, our constant encouragement and emphasis on the benefits of these activities helped them accept and embrace our healthy living culture,” he says.

While Top Glove’s employees have regular working hours, the company offers flexible work arrangements as part of its ongoing initiative to support them and help achieve work-life balance.

“For example, in the case of new parents, they are given the option to choose flexible working hours to help them manage. In most cases, we do see productivity increases when these benefits are used correctly,” says Lim.

To help Top Glove improve its health programme, its employees are encouraged to share their fitness, health and lifestyle data, allowing the company to analyse the internal data.

Lim says the group also actively participates in externally run, research-based studies to identify the gaps in its health strategies and to find ways to improve its programme. The organisations and universities that have conducted these studies include the Ministry of Health, UCSI University and AIA.

Nestle (M) Bhd

Affording employees a healthy lifestyle that suits them best

There’s nothing quite as satisfying as having a platter of goodies to choose from.

At Nestle (M) Bhd, employees are empowered to choose from a range of benefits and decide what best suits their needs. The company believes it is an ideal recipe for employee satisfaction.

On Nestle’s “Flexi Benefits” programme, group human resources executive director Shahzad Umar says the company provides employees with the flexibility to tailor their benefits based on individual needs and differing stages in life.

“For example, if you want to claim medical expenses for your parents, there’s an option to do that. If you want to use some of your budget or entitlement for your personal grooming or spa, you can also do that. In fact, the ‘hottest selling cake’ right now is claiming for international holidays,” he adds.

And there’s definitely more where that came from, Shahzad reveals.

Each year, the company has had a different theme — last year, the focus was on the importance of nutrition.

“Last year, we focused on the food that we serve in the canteens, so we discussed the nutrition in the food and how we could lower the salt content or relook at the oil being used,” Shahzad says, adding that free fresh fruits are provided on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

As Nestle is the largest nutrition, health and wellness company in the world, it is only natural for it to ensure that its employees are nutrition ambassadors.

“This year, the company is focusing on its employees’ physical health through an initiative called ‘Fit Back’,” he adds.

To address ergonomic issues at workplace, we came up with this initiative to help people to manage back pain. Back assessment sessions are provided to determine their posture while stretching sessions are strongly recommended and reminded via notices. We also provide in-house physio clinic for employees to get help to prevent and improve their posture,” explains Shahzad.

Of the many initiatives, Nestle’s flagship programme is its weight wellness programme — a 100-day competition to shed as many pounds and as much body fat as possible.

“The whole idea is to lose weight and body fat. We also want people to know their numbers in terms of their body mass index (BMI), weight and body fat. Last year, the gentleman who won the competition lost 20kg in 100 days just by changing his food habits and exercise. From our annual health screening, he found out he was at high risk if he did not make these changes. And with the support of his family he has been successful at it,” explains Shahzad.

The programme has indeed gained traction over the years. In 2015, there was a 25% participation rate. This increased to 45% last year, which, Shahzad feels, is highly encouraging.

Currently, one of the most popular programmes is the aerobics-cum-dance Zumba class, he says. Demand has gradually increased, and more classes may need to be added soon.

Shahzad points out that it is important for health programmes to appeal to employees. Otherwise, they will be ineffective.

Sometimes, this requires a healthy dose of marketing from the HR to get employees to participate. At other times, it means swapping out old initiatives for newer, more exciting ones.

That said, Shahzad proudly points to the company’s annual sepak takraw competition, which has been running for 30 years.

Even for a company that has been in Malaysia for over 100 years, it is a notable achievement. In fact, the event has been managed by the same staff member since 1995, he says.

“We also have our own Nestle Olympics called Supermeet, which is held every four years. Last year, it was held at Universiti Malaya, and close to 1,200 staff participated with the support of their friends and families. There were more than 20 sporting events. It was great.”

Moving forward, Shahzad hopes to see an increase in participation from its 5,500-strong workforce in Malaysia.

Looking at the numbers, Nestle spends more than RM1 million annually on its programmes. Shahzad happily states that that has led to an increase in employee satisfaction.

“Our foremost priority is to ensure that our employees are healthy and that their well-being is being taken care of.”
How do you encourage thousands of employees, located in different sites, to live healthier lives? A flexible work schedule and inclusiveness provide employees the space to be passionate about living more healthily, says Dell Malaysia managing director Pang Yee Beng. Dell has a significant presence in Malaysia with three sites — Cyberjaya, Bayan Lepas and Bukit Mertajam — with key functions such as shared services, manufacturing, and sales and marketing.

"Yes, each site has a different type of workforce, so it is a challenge in itself. But the organisation adopts a working culture that pushes the right buttons," says Pang.

Dell is one of the earliest companies to advocate remote working, introducing its Connected Workplace Programme at its US headquarters in 2009. The programme allows employees to sort out their own work schedule — crucial for a company whose employees deal directly with colleagues around the world in real-time.

"There is no 'clock in, clock out'. We give them that trust, and measure the performance based on objective results. This allows them to prioritise on a daily basis," says Pang.

With a solid structural support by the company, such as subsidies for high-speed internet, Pang says employees are more satisfied and, in turn, are more participative and motivated.

In 2004, Dell introduced a comprehensive wellness and health-improvement programme, Well at Dell, which provides substantial incentives to reward participants and family members who monitor, maintain and improve their health.

For Dell Malaysia, this has translated into regular health talks by experts, free on-site clinics on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and free health screenings twice a year, among others.

The company has set up in-house gyms and showers in two of its three sites, with the last one in the planning phase. "When work requires them to be in the office, their workplace welcomes them with the facilities they need," Pang says.

Employees’ suggestions were central to the revamp of its café in Cyberjaya, which now serves fresh juices and vegetarian food. "Our café manager is a health enthusiast. That helps when the management needs to take an appropriate course of action to encourage the staff to embrace healthy diets."

"The café now doubles as a place for casual meetings away from the office environment. We plan to replicate this in the other sites as well," adds Pang.

Dell Global Business Center also provides facilities to help employees relieve stress, such as a games centre and a relaxation lounge with deck chairs.

The employees started most of the initiatives, which range from scuba diving to weight-loss competitions, says Pang. "The committee members in our recreational club are all volunteers. I believe that any motivation to improve oneself should come from within."

"A case in point … We have a very dedicated employee who runs in marathons held as far as Hong Kong. She pays all of her travel expenses to such events although we told her that we could sponsor some of the cost," says Pang.

The organisation also hosts Dellympics, an annual sports competition that sees participation from employees from all three sites. But the benefit goes beyond having an active lifestyle, says Pang. "This programme has also brought our employees closer outside work. They collaborate better."

Most importantly, Dell Malaysia is open to providing funding for these activities. "We want them to feel at one with the company, that we acknowledge their programmes, which in turn nurtures loyalty and attachment between Dell and its employees."

Over the last two years, the international technology company has won multiple awards for different aspects of its workplace environment at both national and regional levels.
BE PART OF MALAYSIA’S HEALTHIEST WORKPLACE 2018

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