

Getting staff to speak up boosts productivity: Study

Sense of psychological safety spurs workers to contribute more

WHAT MOTIVATES WORKERS

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GREAT PLACE TO WORK INSTITUTE SINGAPORE AND SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY, in a study.

Aw Cheng Wei

The more comfortable employees feel about speaking up at their workplaces, the more productive they are likely to be.

So companies can help by fostering strong interpersonal relationships and open communication, according to a survey out yesterday. It noted that such a sense of psychological safety among employees is crucial for firms to handle disruptions better and to stay competitive in a rapidly evolving digital economy.

The study was conducted by consultancy group Great Place To Work Institute Singapore and Singapore Management University (SMU).

It said: "More than remuneration, recognition and development opportunities, it is a sense of psychological safety that drives people to contribute more, take more risks and perform better as a team."

Being encouraged to balance work and personal lives and having opportunities to develop professionally are other markers of great workplaces, said SMU's Professor Richard Smith, who was one of the researchers.

Prof Smith, who is also SMU's professor of strategic management and deputy dean at its Lee Kong Chian School of Business, made his remarks at an annual awards cere-

mony held last night to celebrate positive workplaces.

He told the gathering at One Farrer Hotel that having management that genuinely seeks and responds to suggestions and ideas, and having people care about one another in the office, have a "high impact" on psychological safety in Singapore.

In comparison, the behavioural integrity of company leaders has a "medium impact", while having supportive organisational practices, including being encouraged to balance work and personal lives, has a "low impact".

The report surveyed about 400,000 employees from more than 800 organisations across eight countries in the Asia-Pacific, including Singapore, India and Australia.

At the awards ceremony organised by Great Place To Work, 13 companies were recognised for their exceptional workplace practices.

American cloud-based software company Salesforce, which was ranked top for the fourth year, introduced a fertility assistance grant in April to help employees become parents. It offers up to \$10,000 each year for staff who are looking to adopt, freeze their eggs or have in-vitro fertilisation, among other methods, depending on the country's laws.

In December last year, the company introduced three months of

leave for secondary caregivers, including fathers.

The measures were introduced so that "people can be their authentic selves at work", said Ms Linda Aiello, senior vice-president of international employee success.

Grooming young leaders helped Hays Specialist Recruitment Singapore clinch its first Great Place To Work award here, said managing director Richard Eardley.

"If people believe you and trust you, they will take the responsibility and thrive," added Mr Eardley, who is also managing director of the company's operations in Asia.

Measures, including flexible hours and a new dress code, were introduced earlier this year to boost employee retention rates.

Besides the awards, certificates to recognise organisations that encouraged learning at work were also issued by Great Place to Work and the Institute for Adult Learning.

Shalom Movers and Signify, previously known as Philips Lighting, were the first recipients. Both had at least 70 per cent of their employees responding positively in a Great Place To Work survey, earning them the certification, a statement said.

Five companies took part in the Great Place To Learn pilot programme between April and October.

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