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CREATING A PURPOSEFUL WORKPLACE

BY PATHMA SUBRAMANIAM

People are the pillars of growth in any organisation. Hartalega Holdings Bhd staunchly believes this and that is why the world's largest manufacturer of nitrile gloves was recognised as a purposeful workplace at the Kincentric Best Employers — Malaysia 2019 (formerly known as Aon Best Employers) awards this year.

Managing director Kuan Mun Leong attributes the win to its employees and the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes. It is not possible to grow the business in a sustainable manner without a strong workforce, he points out.

"In fact, we started transforming our people practices in 2010 to improve our ability to attract, recruit, develop, engage and retain talent," says Kuan.

"We have put a lot of effort into the learning and development of Hartanians to ensure that they are well equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge to perform to their best ability and grow in the company."

The company's Competency Development Programme (CDP) is an example of strategies mapped out to assess employee competency and identify the relevant training programmes required.

"Our structured on-the-job training (SOJT), an integral part of the CDP, help Hartanians carry out their tasks better. To date, we have developed more than 330 SOJT modules across all departments," says Kuan.

To ensure that employees benefit from the company's growth, its benefits and rewards package is regularly benchmarked against those in the employment market. "For example, our increments and bonuses are higher than the industry average. Our Employee Share Option Scheme has collectively generated a profit of more than RM300 million for Hartanians, allowing them to participate in the growth and success of Hartalega," he says.

Kuan says the company holds town hall meetings at least twice a year to keep employees abreast of Hartalega's performance, issues and challenges as well as



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its future plans. "Hartanians are free to ask me and the senior leadership team questions. At recent town hall meetings, we started to use online tools such as Pigeonhole to improve our interactions.

"We also run internal surveys using our employee portal twice a year to gauge employee satisfaction. The results are tabulated and shared with the entire management team and high and low performing departments are highlighted.

"The human resources department analyses the data to identify areas for improvement in our people practices. We also have plans to make engagement scores a key performance indicator for the leadership team to drive cultural change."

Another factor that sets Hartalega apart are its in-house programmes targeted at employee welfare and engagement. "We have placed importance on CSR from the early days because we feel that if the company does well, we have a duty to contribute to the community and environment because we are interdependent," says Kuan.

Under Hartagize — the company's employee wellness programme that was launched in December 2017 — more than 250 activities that focused on health, volunteerism and engagement were organised.

This included water rafting, the Skytrex challenge (a thrilling adventure circuit in the forest), climbing Mount Kinabalu, go-karting and movie nights. "More than 2,500 of our staff participate in Hartagize activities," says Kuan.

"Hartagize brought about visible improvement in Hartanians' wellness and engagement levels. By the end of the 13-month period, we saw a 5% reduction in the number of employees taking medical leave. The number of MC [medical certificate] days taken fell by 9% and employee attrition dropped 18% from the year before.

"Our efforts to improve Hartanian welfare was further entrenched when Hartalega won the accolade of Malaysia's Healthiest Employees in the large organisations category from AIA Bhd."

After years of extensive CSR work, the company established Yayasan Hartalega last year as a means of rolling out more impactful projects with a wider reach. The foundation is aimed at enriching the quality of life for individuals and communities through programmes that focus on the company's key focus areas of health, education and environment.

"This is part of our vision to contribute towards nation-building by cultivating a society that is equitable, harmonious and prosperous. In recognition of our dedication towards good environmental, social and corporate governance practices, Hartalega was inducted into the FTSE4Good Bursa Malaysia Index in 2014," says Kuan.

One of the main activities under Yayasan Hartalega was the adoption of public schools, in collaboration with non-governmental organisations such as Teach for Malaysia. The foundation also works with bodies such as the Forest Research Institute Malaysia to organise environmental awareness programmes and Inspirasi Kawa, which focuses on river health protection and the preservation of fireflies. ■