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# Workplace culture and empowerment in the new digital economy

Derick Teo, Director, Enterprise Go-Digital Solutions, BIPO, shares his observations and insights on why building an employee-first culture is critical.

By: **Shawn Liew** | February 23, 2021

Topics: Asia-Pacific | Covid-19 | Digital Transformation | Employee Experience | Features | Health and Wellness | Leadership | Professional Development | Singapore | Talent Management



With the pandemic accelerating the digital transformation in the Asia-Pacific region, many organisations are pivoting towards an employee-first culture to strengthen the employee experience.

While businesses have always focused on fostering a strong workplace culture, there has been a unanimous shift towards employee empowerment, observed Derick Teo, Director, Enterprise Go-Digital Solutions, BIPO.

Speaking exclusively with *HRM Asia*, he said, “Businesses are now more open and ready to empower employees. This is especially true during COVID-19, when virtually all interactions shifted to the online space overnight as businesses reacted swiftly to the changing economic environment.”

In supporting a culture of empowerment, organisations need to enable employees to make decisions, with the knowledge that the leadership team will support them when a positive impact on the business can be gained. This, however, requires a change in mindset, as Teo explained, “There are challenges as managers fear ‘losing control’, while employees are not accustomed to making decisions without first checking with their line managers.”

To affect successful change, start with the recruitment process, he advised. “As hiring managers, we often look at candidates with the right skills and experience first, but there needs to be a greater focus on critical thinking that comes with making sound business decisions, as well as the proven track record and accountability that go with it.”

Citing a Gartner survey of global CEOs where 56% of leaders believe that digital transformation will benefit employees, Teo also urged organisations to ensure that digital tools are in place to enable employees to carry out decisions they have been empowered to make.

When these digital tools are firmly in place, organisations then need to ask themselves, “Are we creating opportunities where employees have the autonomy to make simple business decisions as a start, and have we done enough to support and instil confidence in our employees?”

### **Transitioning successfully into a new digital economy**

With BIPO supporting over 1,600 clients across 87 countries and regions with a range of HR and payroll solutions, Teo has worked with a diverse portfolio of enterprises in Singapore and across Asia, where he has seen an increase in the use of technology and digital tools to support business operations.

These range from e-invoicing and e-payment platforms to the now ubiquitous use of cloud-based, virtual communication tools such as Zooms, Teams and Google Meet to empower employees and facilitate collaboration.

Teo added, “A recent report by PwC estimated that cloud spending rose by 37% to US\$29 billion during the first quarter of 2020 alone, hastened no doubt by COVID-19. This reinforces our observations that the need for cost-effective, off-premises technology will be a growing trend as businesses continue to turn to such solutions to empower teams.”

As an organisation, their people are at the heart of BIPO’s digital transformation, which then allows the company to better serve the HR and business community in their digitalisation efforts. “Michael Chen, our CEO, has consistently pushed our teams to take BIPO’s solutions one step further – a robust, intuitive and user-friendly platform that is ‘made-for-mobility’ to support employees working virtually from any location,” Teo revealed.

BIPO’s integrated cloud-based HRMS platform is also complemented by a versatile mobile app, available in multiple languages to support multi-generational teams throughout the employee lifecycle from pre-onboarding to off-boarding.

A recent deployment of the BIPO’s solution for a client in the F&B industry with over 4,000 employees in Singapore proved to be transformative, as Teo shared, “The initial project to migrate their existing HR software to BIPO’s platform is now seen as a game-changer for the business, and potentially, the service industry,

He added, “Within two months of deployment, there was a significant shift in the hiring process. Store managers are now empowered to hire staff immediately, as our platform enables them to upload employee data on-site, without waiting for HR teams to do so, as was previously the case.”

This has allowed the average recruitment time for the client to be reduced by almost two weeks, while their HR teams are now able to manage employee data, process payroll, oversee attendance with multiple shift patterns remotely, without having to travel physically to store outlets to complete certain functions.

As organisations continue to build a workplace culture that emphasises the employee experience in a new digital economy, this serves as a prime example of how technology leads to operational transformation, and in turn, impacts workplace culture and drives the employee experience, Teo concluded.