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# Buddy systems, care packs, among ways firms support staff



Staff at **BIPO** packing care packs for employees. PHOTO: **BIPO** SERVICE (SINGAPORE)



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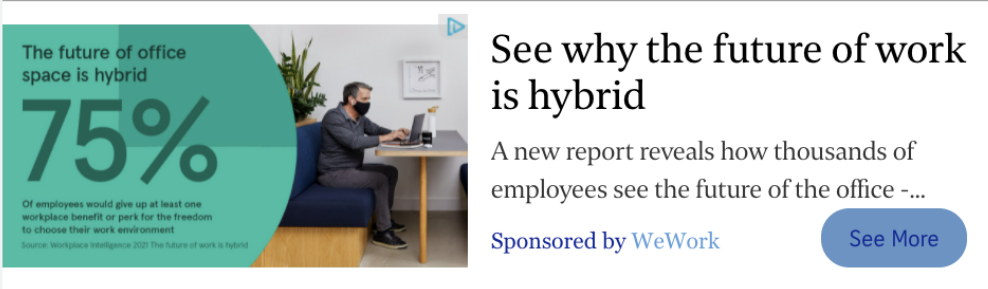
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SINGAPORE - Putting in place buddy systems, distributing care packs, organising shared activities and ensuring that mental health resources are available for staff are ways firms are supporting their employees' mental well-being during the pandemic.

These moves are especially important as the local workforce faces burn-out and exhaustion, with long hours, isolation and stress as staff work from home.

Mr Foo Mao Gen, head of South-east Asia at software company Qualtrics, noted that research by the firm found staff most want employers to provide wellness-related reimbursements, enforced working and non-working hours, well-being days and free counselling sessions.



The future of office space is hybrid

# 75%

Of employees would give up at least one workplace benefit or perk for the freedom to choose their work environment

Source: Workplace Intelligence 2021 The future of work is hybrid

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The firm itself organised Global Wellness Month in August, sharing resources and hosting guest speakers to help staff members find solutions to the challenges they face.

The company also has a Global Recharge Day - a paid day-off to completely unplug from work and focus on health and well-being.

Meanwhile, human resource service provider **Bipo** Service put in place a buddy system, where employees are supported by each other, usually with a more senior member of the team.

Regular bi-weekly virtual catch-ups are also encouraged.

Before the Phase 2 (heightened alert), the firm also organised outdoor walks for employees with planned routes mapped out with safety precautions like segregated teams.

Regular care packs are also sent to employees, containing items such as face masks, hand sanitiser and vitamins.

"This has been very well received and our line managers have now taken it upon themselves to send care packs to their individual teams. We are told that treats like snacks have been well received too," said Mr Derick Teo from the enterprise go-digital solutions department.

Other measures like providing mental wellness resources and support go a long way for insurer AIA.

The company invested in mental resilience training for its C-level executives through a webinar and subsequent check-in sessions to ensure a change in habits.

The programme has been extended to all staff and even corporate customers.

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AIA Singapore also gave its staff \$1,000 to help with work-from-home expenses, such as buying equipment for their home office.

Chief executive Wong Sze Keed said: "As the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic continue to draw new patterns of work, the avalanche of new rules, new working norms and lack of face-to-face interaction has added to the mental burden of the Singapore workforce.

"To truly deliver on our promise of enabling healthier, longer and better lives, we have to drive change from the top and empower our employees."

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