

Nurturing Human Capital, the Way Forward

by Sandeep Juneja

Recently there has been extensive coverage on the shortage of skilled and knowledgeable workers in Malaysia and the government are drawing up various measures to stem the brain drain. Adding to this, there are also discussions, on what can be done to encourage the return of talented and skilled Malaysians working and living abroad.

However, Alvin Tee, senior partner with UHY in Kuala Lumpur believes that employers need to make an acute turnabout in their philosophy and approach in dealing with their employees.

“Many fail to truly understand the phrase “human capital”, employees should never be seen as an expense as they are the company’s greatest assets as they make everything possible and should be treated as such. The unrealistically low pay levels in Malaysia accentuate this problem, which is why when I started the KL office of UHY a couple of years ago, I decided to offer above market pay and benefits.” Adding that, “To facilitate better work-life balance in an industry known for a lack of it, I started a personal concierge service whereby a junior administrator is dedicated to handle personal work like bill payments, credit card payments, road tax renewals, rescheduling your child’s tuition lesson, etc. for our staff so that they can focus on work while

at work and minimise their time spent on chores when at home when they should be spending quality time with their families.”

According to Alvin, empowerment is the key to human capital development, “At UHY we practise 360 degree Management. This means that we encourage everyone to make decisions and not to wait until they are in the top management to do so. This is to cultivate them to think decisively and evaluate themselves later.” Elaborating that, “You learn from your mistakes, it’s really common sense and our mentors can educate more effectively when they can observe how their apprentices cope with pressure, deal with mistakes, their team, colleagues and what their knowledge strengths and deficiencies are.”



This is effective because UHY takes training very seriously; it was the first office in the region among the UHY network to participate in UHY's Spain Leadership Course. Alvin himself and his core team have attended Asia Works Training. He strongly believes such programs are essential to build up the value that the firm can offer to its clientele and can improve operational efficiency. It also improves retention significantly; contrary to what many may think because people generally do like learning and learning new and higher level skills allows for them to grow professionally, while handle new and more exciting challenges.

Leaning closer Alvin asks "Do you know what the leading cause of employees leaving is? It is the working environment. Company trips, sports and family day outings, birthday celebrations and my favourite – karaoke sessions help colleagues bond with one another and are an important part of UHY's culture. But there are also some sublime things that you don't at first see as being part of the equation, such as our office location in a high security grade A commercial building. Being in Mid Valley, lunch is always

an experience to look forward to! It gives the team another thing to be proud of and to look forward to when coming into work."

UHY is literally *Striving to be the Best Accounting Firm to Work For*, a tagline that Alvin coined together with *Passion Beyond Numbers*, his expression for what he refers to as "heart" commitment, dedication, loyalty; principles that he believes are essential to leadership and to driving the growth of UHY through their strategic business unit heads. These feature prominently as part of the Kuala Lumpur office's identity and is ingrained in everyone a commitment to teamwork and delivery of the best possible work that one can deliver.

Alvin's advice to employers is to change their outlook and philosophy, "You have to take the first step as an employer to create goodwill by equipping your team well, providing a good working environment, paying fairly and most importantly – promptly and investing in them."

No one wants a rundown office to come to where half the things don't work and a CCTV camera to ensure work is being done. This mentality has to go, otherwise quality talent is always going to end up with multinationals or overseas. He urges small and mid size set ups to be creative and innovative and to think out of the box adding that "Even with limited resources you can do things if you are truly committed."

