

DHL strives to improve lives and livelihoods

DHL Express (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd has won the Aon Best Employer – Malaysia 2017 award for the third time in a row.

One of the best employers not just in Malaysia but globally, DHL Express' commitment to empowering its employees has generated great returns for the logistics giant.

DHL Express is especially proud of the impact it is making in certain communities in Malaysia. "In this one corner of the East Coast, our customers are now, because of DHL, selling vintage T-shirts from Japan, to Australia, Europe and the US," says its Malaysia and Brunei managing director Christopher Ong.

"At first, the most expensive item they sold was a RM2,000 vintage T-shirt. But recently, they shipped a RM7,000 piece, their most valuable t-shirt to date. That was the most expensive B2C shipment that we had ever moved from Kota Baru. Yes, it is great for business, but can you imagine the impact on the community? Household incomes in the area can't be more than a thousand plus to two thousand a month, but for anyone (engaged in online B2C sales), it is easily three to five times more now," he says.

Improving lives and livelihoods – that is DHL Express' objective and it has successfully instilled this sense of purpose among its 1,000-strong workforce. According to Ong, it is derived from the company's four key pillars.

The first pillar – Motivated People – is what leads to Great Service Quality, which is the second pillar. This in turn fosters the third pillar, Loyal Customers. "We believe that if we take care of the first three pillars, the last pillar – a Profitable Network – will follow," says Ong.

"When you have engaged employees, you will get engaged customers, and they will keep coming back. As a result of our focus on the first pillar, we have seen our employee engagement survey score increase every year, with our customers also coming back day after day, month after month.

"Our active leadership score is around 89%, but even so, it is something we want to push to above 90. But where we really do well is our employees' commitment to quality, which is at 97%. So, too, is customer-centricity as well as learning and development.

"People really do feel that we invest heavily in development and training, and that we are equipping employees to face challenges."

The company continually reinvests its profits in people, adds Ong. He refers to this as a "virtuous cycle". By keeping this cycle going, couriers inevitably become trusted partners among DHL Express' customers.

This in turn causes customers to be more understanding than they otherwise would be when unexpected delays occur. "The fact is that things can go wrong: There could be a typhoon in Hong Kong, an earthquake in Japan or snowstorms in North America or Europe. But our repeat customers know that our people will go out of their way to address these challenges for them," Ong says.

He adds that DHL Express does a lot of B2C shipments these days because of the e-commerce boom and it is doing very well in reducing "exceptions" – cases in which a courier makes a delivery attempt only to find that the customer is not at the address.

"Our couriers or operations staff will find a way to contact a customer to ensure a successful delivery on the first attempt," he says. "With a regular customer, the courier will know the personalised delivery preference for future parcels."

Thanks to these very fundamental best practices, DHL Express Malaysia has been able to keep its exception level below 4% against the industry



PATRICK GOH/THE EDGE

standard of 15% to 20% for B2C residential deliveries.

DHL Express is clearly doing well on the customer front, but what are its day-to-day and operational strategies to ensure a committed and top-notch workforce? First and foremost, the company invests heavily in the health and well-being of its people.

"We do really put our people first; for employees aged 30 and above, we offer annual executive health screening services, regardless of rank. So, whether it's our couriers, operations agents, front-line staff, marketing managers, senior management team or even myself, we all get the exact same kind of health screening. In fact, we have an even more comprehensive screening for our employees aged 40 and above, called a 'head-to-toe screening,'" says Ong.

"The feedback we have received from our healthcare provider is that we are one of the very few companies that invest in this level of health screening for staff. These screenings cost at least a few thousand ringgit per person," he adds.

DHL Express' commitment to its people goes well beyond health screenings. "Whether it is diabetes, heart or weight problems, we are actively addressing these issues to ensure our people know where they are and what they can do about it," Ong says.

And the company does not just leave its employees to tackle the problem themselves. "We have a weight-loss programme, whereby our healthcare provider conducts weekly consultations with our people. A nutritionist guides them on what to eat and even tracks their progress on a weekly basis. All of this is paid for by the company, and we have seen some fantastic results, with some people losing up to 10kg in just over six weeks. Once they undergo the



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health screening and see the impact their lifestyle is having on their health, that creates the impetus for change," says Ong.

The company is also keen to support its staff's professional development. Ong says it is important for the workforce to have the tools to succeed in the workplace, regardless of where they end up, taking into consideration how expansive the DHL network is. "We facilitate training at every level. In fact, just a few weeks ago, I spent three days facilitating 'Certified International Manager' training for a group of managers and supervisors. So, we are equipping them to become better managers and leaders. And the training is all done by senior managers, not some external training company."

By equipping them with these skills, Ong notes, local staff can excel, even in international markets. "We've got Malaysians in Brunei, Hong Kong, Myanmar, Singapore and even as far as Europe, who started out here."

The opportunity for professional development is by no means limited to desk-bound staff. Ong says "professional role models" are plentiful at all levels of DHL Express, ensuring that staff are engaged and constantly motivated to improve and advance.

"One could start out as a courier, perhaps become a team lead, supervisor and then a manager in operations. At DHL, we always say that it is not a lack of opportunity, it is a lack of mobility. Are you prepared to move in order to advance?"

Ong himself is a product of such mobility. "I started working for DHL in Singapore, then I uprooted my family and moved to Vietnam, where I was based for 2½ years, before coming to Malaysia," he says.

Ong relates a story about a humble customs broker working at the Subang gateway. He was then promoted to customs supervisor, at which point he was sent to the Johor facility. "But when we set up our Kuching gateway, he was sent there. Now, he runs the whole Kuching facility!" he says.

With all the good work produced by DHL Express staff, it is important for the company to recognise the contributions of employees. DHL Express excels in this regard.

"For a start, we are big on recognition. In terms of engagement, we recognise these 'superstars' by having an 'Employee of the Year' programme. We fly our top employees to these huge recognition parties.

"In March this year, we held the event in Bangkok. For three days and two nights, these people were treated like kings and queens. We even had 50 tuk-tuks all decked out in DHL colours driving through the centre of Bangkok. The global management board members flew in from all over to recognise and appreciate the staff. In fact, for some of our top couriers and front-line staff, they didn't even have passports (before we flew them to Bangkok)," Ong says.