

SAP EMPLOYEES THE ULTIMATE ASSETS

BY LAILI ISMAIL

SAP received a special recognition award for high performance at the Aon Best Employers — Malaysia 2018 awards. This marked the first win for the European multinational software corporation in Malaysia.

SAP Malaysia Sdn Bhd managing director Duncan Williamson says being an employer of choice is important to the organisation as it recognises that employees are essential assets. “Everything else is intellectual property. As a software company, the employees are our real assets. If they are not engaged, motivated, enthusiastic and high-performing, then we actually have nothing.”

Employee motivation goes beyond coming to work and doing their jobs, he adds. The company has a global mission, which is “to help the world run better and improve people’s lives”. The key part of its approach is the aim to have an impact and change the lives of not only its customers but also employees and the rest of the world.

“The employees become the centre of that mission because they are the ones who affect change, not anything else. We write the software, but we need our employees to get it out to the customers and help them run and employ it. Clearly, they are the ones who drive the changes,” says Williamson.



SHAHRIH YAHYA/THE EDGE

It has been reported that SAP customers produce 78% of the world’s food supply and 82% of the world’s medical devices. Over three-quarters of the world’s transaction revenue is said to involve an SAP system and this feat can be attributed to the company’s high-performance culture, says Williamson.

SAP Malaysia has a 155-strong workforce, most of whom are in three departments — the sales team, the service team, which assists in software implementation, and the customer support team, which helps to translate product values into commercial propositions.

A high-performance culture starts with employees having the same core values. At SAP, the values were set by the employees themselves and not defined by the department heads. “We actually went to all employees and asked them which values they would like the organisation to exhibit. We took their input and came up with the values,” says Williamson.

Its values — stay curious, embrace differences, keep promises, tell it like it is and build bridges, not silos — provide the foundation for its corporate culture, he adds. “If you have a sound basis for

the values to work from, people work and make decisions based on them. So, if you want to create a high-performance culture, which in any case is a series of behaviours that people exhibit, you need to have a value system that they subscribe to.”

Leadership is a profession and not something people just stumble into, says Williamson. “It is something we hold our leaders accountable for and we work very hard to create consistent leadership across the organisation. So, as a leader in the company, I have a self-driven programme that helps me understand the core elements of that leadership, so that I know how to deal with things such as diversity,” he adds.

Born and bred in South Africa, Williamson has worked with SAP for about 19 years in countries such as the UK, Portugal, Spain, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Singapore and Switzerland. Having lived in so many countries throughout his professional career, he values the importance of diversity and the value it brings.

“The power of individuals is in their diversity — in whatever aspect, whether it is race, culture or background. When you put these different people around a table to solve a problem, they will come at it with a different perspective, which is rooted in their personal experience, where they have lived and the kinds of jobs they have done,” says Williamson. ■