



AIA lives its brand promise — to help people live healthier, longer, better lives

While most people step into the office expecting to attend meetings, meet deadlines and work on reports, employees at AIA Malaysia's head office can start their day in a well-equipped gym. Over the past few years, the leading insurance company has aggressively invested in its human capital as it believes that the journey to fulfil its mission and brand promise to help Malaysians live Healthier, Longer, Better Lives has to start with its own employees.

According to AIA Malaysia Chief Human Resources Officer Thomas Wong, the company wants its employees to choose a healthier lifestyle as part of its culture, personifying how it wants to help its customers.

"As an employer, we play an active role in encouraging healthy habits among our people. We provide them with the tools, the knowledge and the motivation to be able to bring the best of themselves to work. We are fully committed to embedding our mission and brand promise among our people first," Wong tells *The Edge*.

This is why the company set up its own gym in 2014, with space for about 50 people at a time. The HR department also organises variety of fitness programmes, some in collaboration with AIA Vitality partners, for its employees.

"For example, we have declared every midweek Active Wednesday at AIA, where most employees wear active wear to work. This encourages them to walk more, choose the stairs over the lift and walk out for lunch," Wong says.

He adds that physical activities are organised in the evening, either by HR or the different departments. Employees also have the opportunity to win free passes for runs or fitness activities sponsored by AIA.

"We organise mini competitions that encourage our employees to be more active and they can win free passes to our runs, such as The Music Run by AIA Vitality, which was held in October this year," Wong says.

He acknowledges that, at the end of the

day, choosing a healthy lifestyle is up to the employees themselves. The company can only encourage them to do so.

"We see it as a journey, a continuous effort. Changing habits takes time. People need the right support and motivation. That is what we are trying to do, to help with the change in mindset so we see sustainable results," he says.

Wong says AIA Malaysia sees AIA Vitality as a tool to help its employees, adding that it is a science-backed programme with a track record of over 20 years, and it has proved to help sustain healthy living and work habits.

He says AIA Vitality was introduced to its employees in January 2016, and the company is encouraged by the energy and enthusiasm with which its employees have embraced it. The programme is also available to the insurance company's life planners so they can effectively communicate the benefits of AIA Vitality to its customers.

It is worth noting that the employees' engagement rate in the programme has risen steadily from 58% in 2016 to 76% last year and has maintained at over 80% throughout this year.

This year, AIA Malaysia also identified nutrition and mental well-being as focus areas, based on employee feedback from last year's Malaysia's Healthiest Workplace survey.

Wong says the company saw an opportunity to revamp the food served at its food court to give employees the option to select healthier meals.

"We recently enlisted the support of the Ministry of Health, which promotes healthy cafeterias in the workplace, to teach our food court operators about healthier food preparation," he says.

He adds that the company continues to explore mental health support as part of its integrated health and wellness agenda.

"Currently, for specific cases, we have connected the employees with psychologists or psychiatrists so they can get the help they need," Wong says, adding that HR is always supportive of any employee who may need additional support.

He adds that employees with mental health issues will not be penalised and that the company has clear guidelines for employee performance scores.

AIA Malaysia also tries to encourage its employees to kick certain negative habits such as smoking. Wong says the company introduced a smoking cessation programme last year.

"We're looking to tweak it to offer the

right motivation at those crucial moments on their journey to better health so they can successfully kick the habit. The current programme offers reimbursement for nicotine replacement therapy whereby staff can apply if they remain smoke-free after three months on the programme. It also offers a customised cessation plan from a Ministry of Health-certified intermediary and access to a counselling hotline," he says.

AIA Vitality: Know your health, improve your health, enjoy the rewards

As AIA Malaysia embraces AIA Vitality to help its employees live a healthier and better lifestyle, the company also looks at the three pillars of the programme: know your health, improve your health and enjoy the rewards.

AIA has introduced basic health screening to all staff (blood pressure, glucose, body mass index and cholesterol) via its in-house clinic, which saw a 60% take-up rate compared with 30% who do their annual health screening elsewhere.

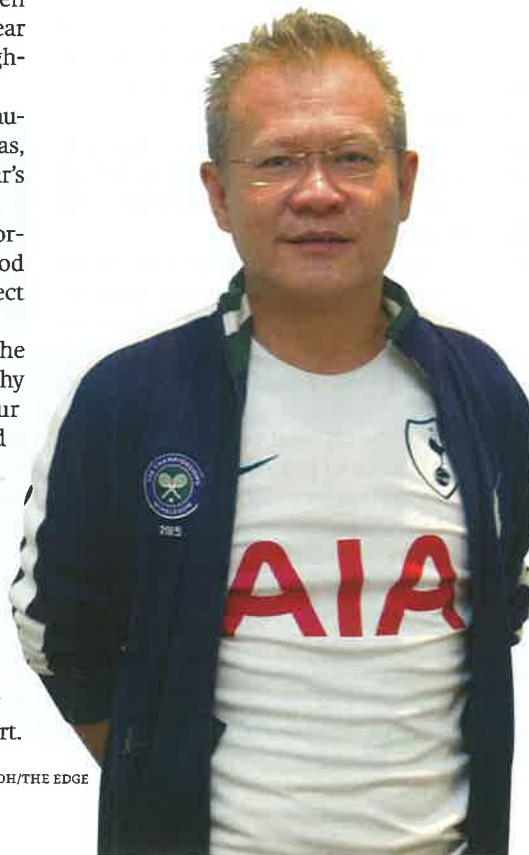
"This is important, as the first step is to know your health. This will help create awareness among employees of their own health condition and how they can improve it with the facilities and support the company provides," Wong says.

He notes that the three pillars on their own are not new, but these separate elements working together to form an ecosystem, aided by technology and supported by rewards every step of the way, will make the difference.

"AIA Malaysia has invested significantly in recent years in its wellness programme and will continue to do so going forward via an integrated health and wellness agenda that covers fitness, nutrition, mental well-being, events and corporate social responsibility to support community and its staff to better engage in taking care of their health," Wong says.

“We see it as a journey, a continuous effort. Changing habits takes time.”

— Chief Human Resources Officer Thomas Wong



PATRICK GOH/THE EDGE