

SKILLfully

SkillFully is created to provide enterprises with useful information on SkillsFuture initiatives. Through SkillFully, we hope to stay connected with you as you power up your workplace “fully” with competitive skills.

Embracing Diversity and Glowing with Inclusivity

The Regent Singapore

Redesigning jobs with
the heart

O Brew Culture

A person-centred approach
to skills enablement

Boxgreen

Delivering purpose,
one snack at a time

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Message from the **Editorial Team**



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Front Row (Seated): Hernizah Mohd Amin, Lee Yen Soon, Peggy Lim, Dinath, Cecilia Low*

Dear friends and partners,

Welcome to the seventh edition of SkillFully!

In curating this edition, we put up an open call to enterprises to share your stories with us to profile on SkillFully. We are immensely grateful to those of you who had responded to our call and shared your upskilling stories. The shortlisting process was tough as there were so many inspirational stories that deserve to be told. We eventually selected four stories in the lifestyle cluster as the sectors were most heavily hit by the “Covid-19” pandemic. We felt it is timely to lighten the atmosphere and celebrate triumphs and jublations.

Hear the heart-warming sharing by O Brew Culture and BoxGreen, two small enterprises that have taken the unconventional path in dignifying jobs, and see through the lens of Commonwealth Capital and The Regent Singapore, two bigger companies that have embraced skills-based practices, and practise their people management with a heart. Discover how all of them have reaped the benefits from building inclusive workplaces.

We hope you will enjoy the four stories in this edition of SkillFully and do visit the [Enterprise Portal for Jobs and Skills](#) to look for the resources to fulfil your (emerging) needs as business picks up.

Till then, keep learning!

Yours Sincerely,
Team @ The Enterprise Engagement Office

Redesigning jobs with the heart

Empathy is the glue that binds and key to success in building an inclusive workplace culture.



The pandemic posed an immense challenge to hotels. Revenue was affected as tourism came to a standstill and operations had to be adjusted as workers could not come to work due to Covid-19 infections and lockdowns.

For Regent Singapore, its labour pool was reduced from 400 staff to 300 during that period.

However, Cecilia Matthews, Director of Human Resources at Regent Singapore, was not beaten by it.

Empathy in hiring and retention

"At Regent, we focus on our employees' abilities and what they can do, instead of what they are unable to achieve," Cecilia shared.

This positive people philosophy means designing jobs and schedules around their employees' needs. Regent's workforce include single mothers and caregivers who can only work for certain days or hours, and persons with disabilities who perform tasks that are customised to fit their abilities.

This empathy-based recruitment and retention policy is extended to all staff in Regent.

"Some of our full-time staff also require flexible work arrangement for personal reasons and we adjust the schedules around them," Cecilia said. She further shared that a "Regent Coach" is attached to new hires to provide mentorship and support in all departments. The empathy journey starts on day one when a new employee joins the hotel.

A culture that infiltrates throughout the organisation

"This empathetic work culture has enabled all departments to work closely together as people focus on the work that needs to be done rather than their differences. We believe in being one

team, with one goal," Cecilia affirmed. Leading by example, Cecilia rolled up her sleeves and assisted the operations during the busy Mother's Day period.

The same philosophy is used to optimise the potential of Regent's employees. "If you have a talent in an area and want to excel in it, we're more than happy to facilitate a job transfer and help you develop the skills to go further," Cecilia stated.

For example, in 2019, Muhammad Haziq Bin Jamil was a Regent Club Officer, serving VIP customers in the executive lounge. However, during the pandemic, he expressed interest in creating short video clips to help Regent's social media presence, and was given the opportunity to do so on a part-time basis for the marketing department. Today, Haziq has been promoted to a permanent role as a design and multimedia executive in the department.

In redesigning jobs, the hotel also opens up the opportunity for staff to choose if they want to participate. Cecilia used the Skills Framework to understand the skills and career pathways in the industry. She and her team also visited other hotels to learn their job redesign experiences, and extensive consultations were conducted with supervisors to discuss how job roles could be redesigned and merged.

Ultimately, it was the hotel's nurturing culture that motivated staff to take on the redesigned roles.



"It is not easy for people to go to different departments and do things they are not used to, but we did it as we have supportive supervisors who guided us patiently," Muhammad Dzulfikar Bin Noor Azmi (Fikar) shared. Like Haziq, he was working as a Regent Club Officer at the executive lounge. During the pandemic, he shifted to the front office, and has since been promoted to an Operations Executive after completing an in-house job redesign programme.

The benefits of job redesign have gone beyond addressing a practical manpower challenge for Regent, it has glued the workforce together and uplifted the entire employee experience. Reflecting on the job redesign process thus far, Cecilia mused: "The best part of having staff who can work in multiple areas is that they can help each other". It breeds empathy and the ultimate staff bonding we get is priceless.

A person-centred approach to skills enablement

Journeying with an employee to overcome barriers to learning.

Founded in 2019, O'Brew Culture is a relatively new player in the café business. Despite its small size, it has weathered the storms of the COVID-19 pandemic well and is gearing up for future growth.

O'Brew Culture's business resilience can be attributed to its progressive owner, Steven Kuan's keen eye for market trends. For example, the café rode on the 2020 popularity of "Dalgona coffee" and launched a series of Dalgona drinks which has kept its business strong.

Besides spotting consumer trends, Steven is also good at spotting talent.

"I believe in enabling people with skills to perform their job with confidence and pride," Steven declared. "The better trained my staff are, the better service they can provide—which ultimately benefits the [business]."

When other cafes were struggling with manpower issues, Steven adopted a non-traditional recruitment approach and hired Park Seongcho (Parker), who is hearing-impaired, as his first full-time employee.

Redesigning work for inclusivity

Equipped with knowledge about design-thinking, Steven adopted a person-centred approach and modified the café's ordering and serving processes around Parker's abilities. For example, customers are greeted with signage informing them that Parker is hearing impaired and the languages he can understand. They are offered an LED writing board to communicate with him and he rings a bell to alert them when their orders are ready.

Today, Parker runs the café independently and handles the daily operations without any difficulty. Working at the café has also given him the opportunity to learn about café management and stimulated his interests in coffee roasting.



Learning does not stop with disability

You may think it makes poor business sense to hire and invest in the training of a hearing-impaired person.

For Steven, he thinks otherwise.

"I've always had the ambition to expand, and when that time comes, I want Parker to manage the outlets."

To prepare for business expansion, Steven completed a WSQ Essentials of Franchise Management course and upgraded himself with digital marketing skills to advertise his café through social media.

In supporting Parker's skills development, Steven jumped through more hoops than what a mainstream employer would have to as it was challenging to find courses suitable for learners who are hearing-impaired.



So when Steven found a coffee roasting course that fit Parker's learning interest, he took the extra step to add subtitles for the video learning materials for Parker. Steven also took the course with Parker so he could simultaneously learn about the subject matter, and more importantly, to help Parker address any questions he might have. Finally, to ensure Parker had sufficient time to master the topic and prepare for the course assessment, Steven even hired part-timers to relieve Parker from his day job so he could study without disruptions.

Steven's experience with Parker has led him to register as an Open Door Programme (ODP) employer, enabling him to create another opening to recruit one more hearing-impaired staff. It is a small step forward, but he is optimistic that his efforts will continue to pay off in the long run when his business expands. We certainly think so too and wish Steven and Parker all the best!

Delivering purpose, one snack at a time

Balancing profitability and giving back is worthwhile and attainable.

Boxgreen is a social enterprise that produces nutritious snacks. It may be small with about 30 staff, but it has a big mission to do good for the people and planet.

The company uses sustainable methods of production such as ensuring all boxes are made of recycled materials and proactively gives back to the community. In 2018, the company donated a meal to the Willing Heart Soup Kitchen that supplies a free meal to the needy, for every box of snacks sold. This amounted to two percent of the company's annual revenue.

But the company wanted to do more to spread its social impact, co-founder, Andrew Lim shared. He believes employment is a powerful way to uplift lives and give people dignity and purpose.

Creating purpose through the Yellow Ribbon Project

This belief led him to set up a new production facility in Changi Prison to give inmates job opportunities packing snacks for Boxgreen. These inmates are regarded as valuable extended members of the Boxgreen family and given equal opportunities in skills progression and growth.

For example, when Boxgreen automated its packaging processes, inmates were coached to operate the machines and trained to troubleshoot and problem-solve. The inmates also work with the supervisors for product development, and have contributed to the creation of a new line of products called Chocolate Bites, which Boxgreen intends to promote for the year-end gifting season. To-date, over 100 inmates have passed through and worked for Boxgreen at its Changi Prison's facility; and three have joined the company as full-time staff since their release.

Age and experience do not matter

As part of Boxgreen's culture of inclusivity, Andrew recruited several mid-career new hires from the Workforce Singapore's Professional Conversion Programmes (PCP), now known as Career Conversion Programmes, for job roles in e-commerce, supply chain, international trading, and digital sales.

Hazel Ng, who has been with Boxgreen since 2020, took on the PCP for Digital Sales Executives, and picked up valuable skills like how to generate leads through online and offline channels, how to qualify leads with a clear understanding of the buyer persona, all of which supported her in her daily work as a Senior Business Development Executive.

Boxgreen also conducts an employee survey twice a year to identify skills gaps. The results are used by the HR department to identify skills training courses for staff. Employees are additionally given 10 days of training leave annually to support their learning pursuits.



Reflecting on the employee survey, Hazel shared: "I am grateful that I can learn and upgrade myself while working." She added that she hopes to use the training leave to learn about international business and organisational management in the future.

Balancing profit and purpose

Admittedly, like other businesses, the struggle between profit and staying true to purpose remains, and Boxgreen "hasn't gotten everything right along the way". But Andrew believes that "the attitude of putting culture first" will continue to sustain and grow Boxgreen in the future.

For one thing, it has attracted like-minded people who are genuinely invested in Boxgreen's values, and are excited to help carry the company forward in doing good. The company has been able to expand its operations, survive the pandemic, and is still generating profits.

"I don't think making profit and building a sustainable business is incongruent with doing good," Andrew concluded.



Championing skills-based progression

The secret sauce to winning the war for talent is recognising skills, not qualifications.



In 2021, Commonwealth Capital Pte Ltd (CCPL) supported a customer service executive, Eric Ramos for a Robotics Process Automation (RPA) course. Eric used the skills acquired to code a programme to extract delivery information from pdf sales order and transfer them into an Excel spreadsheet to integrate with CCPL's enterprise planning system to automate the delivery process. This saved the department over 1,440 manhours a year, equivalent to 0.5 headcounts. According to Audrey Koh, Group Director, Human Resources, this is one of the many tangible examples at CCPL where skills training has reaped positive returns for the business.

Workforce transformation is entrenched in business transformation

CCPL is a group with a diversified portfolio of businesses spanning the entire F&B vertical, from manufacturing, logistics, barramundi farming, to bakeries and restaurants with more than 300 retail points across 13 countries.

For CCPL, supporting such a diversified business is challenging but the winning formula to bind these businesses is developing both people and skills. "Business transformation is deeply intertwined with workforce transformation and the latter is crucial to deliver success," said Audrey.

Since 2018, CCPL has tapped on Enterprise Singapore's Enterprise Development and Productivity Solutions Grants to support digitalisation. Today, the group is reaping the gains from these transformative projects that range from warehouse, transport, sales, and HR management.



These technologies were able to speed up processes and create a more seamless customer experience. It also frees staff up to focus on more value-added work—all of which contributes to CCPL's overall productivity.

As the company upgraded its systems, it also embarked on parallel efforts to upgrade its team of 1,200 employees. One of the initiatives involved partnering with Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) to redesign jobs, and invested heavily in staff training to help them adjust to new norms. "We don't want anyone to be left behind," Audrey shared.

Today, the company actively sponsors their employees for SSG-funded courses to help them stay relevant. It has also set up a new talent management program to groom high-potential staff and established structured skills-based pathways to guide employee career development.

Espousing skills-based progression

Employees at any levels, regardless of their qualifications and hierarchy, are encouraged to have conversations with their supervisors to discuss their skills and progression opportunities. This has allowed many employees to flourish. For example, Eric Ang, started as a cook and rose through the ranks to be a general manager currently based on his skills harnessed over the years, and not qualifications.

Another good example to illustrate CCPL's inclusive culture is through Daisy Abraham, a 48-year-old mid-careerist who switched from being a nurse to a production assistant role when she joined CCPL. Thanks to her supervisor's patience and support, and her willingness to learn, Daisy transitioned smoothly to her new role.

Looking at how far CCPL has come and the plans it has for the future, Audrey's advice is to make skills development a top-line business agenda to cope with the fast changing business needs. Experience has showed her there are no reasons to regret it.



How to Build an Inclusive and Diverse Workplace

Looking to create a more inclusive culture and diverse workforce? Consider the following steps!

01

Promote effective learning with the National Centre of Excellence for Workplace Learning (NACE)

NACE helps your enterprise build and develop an inclusive workplace culture through training needs analysis, consultancy and structured On-The-Job Training blueprinting.

 **Find out more about NACE!**

02

Train and host mid-career individuals through the SkillsFuture Career Transition Programme (SCTP)

The SCTP supports mid-career individuals in acquiring industry-relevant skills to improve employability and pivot to new sectors or job roles. It is a train-and-place programme that is available on a part-time or full-time format, ranging from three to 12 months.

 **Find out more about the SCTP!**

03

Get additional funding support with the SkillsFuture Enterprise Credit (SFEC)

Tap on the SFEC and embark on business transformation and skills development. Eligible employers can benefit from an additional 90% funding support for their out-of-pocket expenses.

 **Find out more about the SFEC!**

For more information

Visit the **Enterprise Portal for Jobs and Skills (EPJS)**, a one-stop portal for enterprises' upskilling needs. Search for courses to support your business transformation needs, eligible funding scheme, upskilling insights and more!

Check out the EPJS now!



For more information and enquiries

Email us at enterprise_engage@ssg.gov.sg or **scan the QR code** to discover upcoming events, receive latest news and get in touch with us for opportunities to profile your company!



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