



Leadership, Care and Impact:

Highlights from Singapore Best
Workplace Responses to COVID-19

2020



EVELYN KWEK & TYLER THORPE

DEDICATION

Our 2020 Singapore Insights Report is dedicated to “People-first” leaders, who have had to navigate the challenges of COVID-19, while keeping employees safe, teams engaged and organizations stable. They have demonstrated the power of leaders willing to be vulnerable, humble and driven by purposes far greater than profits. Under tremendous pressure, they have led the way in enabling great workplaces For All.

2020 has been a year of historic challenges for workplaces, employees and families. In February, COVID-19 was front page news; by March, it had brought global disruption to economies and daily life. Singapore went into its circuit breaker phase in early April, and most employees were required to work from home. The impact on organizations varied greatly: some businesses closed temporarily while others were permanently shuttered. Some companies saw their markets grow and profits increase, while others saw demand shrink and revenue plummet. Some employers had all of their

employees working remotely, while others assigned essential staff to continue to work on the manufacturing floor, in the field and on the front lines. A number of organizations saw an initial drop in productivity as employees adjusted to their new circumstances, followed by a notable increase as they demonstrated their ability to stay productive under rapidly changing conditions.

In the face of COVID-19, these 2020 Singapore Best Workplaces stepped up to the challenge and responded with urgency, resilience and creativity in how they cared for their people, customers and communities.



Selection of the 2020 Singapore Best Workplaces



A great place to work is one where you trust the people you work for, have pride in what you do, and enjoy the people that you work with. Our selection of Best Workplaces always begins with the employee experience, measured by the results of our Employee Trust Index[®] Survey across 60 survey statements. We also use our Culture Audit[®] to assess management's approach to creating a great workplace For All.

For 2020, in recognition of the great disruption that leadership confronted due to COVID-19, we focused our Culture Audit on one question:

“TELL US ABOUT THE BOLD ACTS OF LEADERSHIP YOUR ORGANIZATION HAS TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS TO CREATE A GREAT WORKPLACE FOR ALL FOR YOUR PEOPLE, IN YOUR COMMUNITY OR IN THE WORLD.”

To determine the Best Workplaces, our team of culture consultants reviewed and ranked each Culture Audit according to:

- 1 the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the organization, its business and people,
- 2 the strength and consistency of leadership action taken in response,
- 3 the level of care, human touch and generosity demonstrated in supporting employees and their families, and

- 4 the breadth of action and impact on their people and communities.

The response to the Culture Audit question accounted for 40% of the overall ranking. This was combined with each organization's Trust Index Survey results, which accounted for 60% of the overall ranking in determining our 2020 Best Workplaces.



About this Report

In this first of a two-part release, we share highlights from our study of this year's Best Workplaces Culture Audit submissions and the common characteristics that thread across how Best Workplaces showed up for their people and the Singapore community .

[A fuller report](#) due to be released in Q12021 will take a deeper dive into our employee survey data, including comparisons between employee experience in 2020 and 2019, during pre-COVID times. This study is conducted together with Richard R. Smith, Professor and Vice Dean of the Carey School of Business at Johns Hopkins University and faculty at Singapore Management University (SMU).

Common Characteristics of Best Workplaces



Impact of the Crisis

WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS ON THE ORGANIZATION, ITS WORK AND ITS PEOPLE?

The Singapore Best Workplaces are representative of the wide range of situations employers experienced before, during and after circuit breaker.

- Companies like Amgen Singapore and Micron were considered essential businesses and key manufacturing facilities in their global networks that had to keep on-site operations running while moving a significant percentage of their workforce to work-from-home arrangements.
- Certis, a provider of advanced security, technology and facilities management with many frontline security officers working at airports and retail malls, saw a large number of facilities close during circuit breaker, leading to a significant drop in the demand for some of its services.
- foodpanda saw an expansion in demand for its island-wide food delivery services, connecting customers with restaurants and hawkers, thereby allowing food vendors to continue operating.
- Signify saw a dramatic decline in its sales volume as many of its public and private sector projects came to a complete standstill; DHL Express, seeing sharp declines in its shipment volume and its revenue dropping by double-digits that quarter, shifted to prioritize the delivery of critical medical supplies.
- At the peak of the pandemic, Medtronic, a global provider of critical healthcare products and therapies, saw their revenue and profit fall significantly as hospitals canceled all elective surgeries and delayed surgical procedures.
- PAP Community Foundation (PCF) employs over 8,000 staff who provide preschool education to more than 40,000 children at 360 facilities and senior care at 7 Senior Care centres across Singapore. The pandemic greatly disrupted their daily work—they had to function fully on a reduced number of staffers, and increase the cleaning of facilities, including daily disinfecting of toys.
- For companies like Cadence, a multinational electronic design automation software and engineering services company, and Salesforce, a customer relationship management service provider, the transition to working remotely was largely smooth as many employees already had the technology and experience to work off-site. For HP Inc., most employees also worked from home— some for the first time in their careers.
- Cisco and World Wide Technologies (WWT) saw significant increases in the utilization of and demand for their products and services that provide access to IT systems, applications and information, all of which enable organizations and employees to stay connected virtually.

Leadership Actions

WHAT BOLD AND DECISIVE ACTIONS DID LEADERS TAKE IN RESPONSE?



In times of crisis, people rely on leaders to keep them grounded and informed. In reviewing the Culture Audit submissions of our Singapore employers, we noted, across our Best Workplaces, a recurring sequence as leaders quickly determined what steps to take to keep their operations running and employees safe and productive. This began with an immediate focus on physical safety and compliance with guidance from Singapore authorities. At Best Workplaces, dedicated crisis response teams were established to coordinate planning, decision making and communication. IT leaders jumped into action assessing needs and identifying digital resources and infrastructure needed to provide timely and reliable access to information and communications to keep staff informed and connected. HR and Operations leaders went to work to understand and address the people, process and facility impacts, from implementing new health and safety practices to determining employees who needed to work on-site from those who would work from home.

At our Best Workplaces, leaders also tapped into the relationships, values and trust that were core elements of their pre-COVID workplace cultures, including:

- 1 Putting their people first and trusting their employees to do what was best,** wherever they were working. As organizations moved staff to work from home—a novel situation for some—leaders trusted them to do what was best for their situation, including providing flexibility to take care of their personal and family needs.
 - At DHL Express, “Safety First” has always been their approach, but during COVID-19 this message was amplified as they prioritized the safety of their people, customers and communities.
 - Cisco used their “Conscious Culture” framework to focus on keeping employees connected, informed, healthy and engaged.
 - Cadence led with their “One Team” values to keep their employees and communities safe and continue to create a great workplace For All.
- 2 Drawing on their organization’s values** to guide decision-making and modeling behaviors. Leaders got personally involved in engaging employees, both in-person and remotely. They communicated openly and were comfortable sharing what they knew and did not know, adapting and adjusting their messaging real time as situations changed.
 - Amgen Singapore curated a set of leadership trainings to better equip leaders with the skills to show vulnerability, have courageous conversations and facilitate virtual team building.
- 3 Creating psychological safety:** Leaders demonstrated and encouraged empathy and vulnerability. This included sharing their own challenges and adjustments. Employees felt comfortable sharing their personal and professional challenges and asking for what they needed.

4 Communicating intentionally and actively: In times of crisis, communication is key. Best Workplaces focused on ensuring timely and continuous communication with staff. They created internal webpages to serve as a single, trusted source and repository of COVID-related information to avoid confusion and misinformation.

- The Salesforce Executive Leadership Team and Board of Directors hosted weekly, company-wide “All Hands Calls” to share updates and answer questions. They also created a daily email called “The Daily COVID-19 Update” as a central source of COVID-related information and resources.

5 Listening: Leaders regularly asked employees to share their experiences, feedback, input and ideas through pulse surveys, virtual townhalls and one-on-one meetings. Leaders leveraged this information to make timely decisions and take further action to support their people.

- Micron launched a series of surveys to assess evolving global needs and initiate quick, decisive actions as conditions changed, collaborating across functions to create and execute decisive and effective interventions. It became clear to the leaders that more in-depth insights about emotional wellbeing and productivity were critical to knowing how to best support their workforce.

6 Supporting their people managers: Managers and supervisors found themselves needing to adapt quickly to managing split teams and a remote workforce while they adjusted to their own changes. Best Workplaces anticipated this need and were intentional in supporting their people managers by providing online guides and training resources, as well as conducting virtual workshops and forums for people managers to learn, share and problem-solve together.

- Cisco supported their people leaders in the ASEAN region by holding an engagement session on team well-being to discuss what exemplary leadership looks and feels like and what resilience means in the face of great uncertainty.

- Cadence encouraged employees and trained managers to adapt a highly flexible approach to work and personal life to accommodate the changing work environment. This included crafting comprehensive manager trainings, learning pathways and toolkits specifically on remote leadership during crisis.

7 Keeping teams connected on both work and non-work topics: Line leaders were encouraged and reminded to do regular check-ins with their teams and direct reports, especially those who were isolated during circuit breaker. Virtual team check-ins included discussions of work-related topics and project updates, but also dedicated time to stepping back from work to share laughter, personal stories and pictures of pets during fun team activities.

- HP Inc. encouraged their managers to not just talk to employees about work KPIs but to also ensure that they understood the challenges that employees were facing.

- foodpanda held regular team huddles between employees and the country and regional leaders as a platform to collaborate and celebrate success together.



Care

HOW DID ORGANIZATIONS DEMONSTRATE CARE, HUMAN TOUCH AND GENEROSITY IN SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES?

While the immediate response to COVID-19 focused on employees' physical health and safety and job and financial security, Best Workplaces quickly understood that they also needed to do more to keep colleagues connected virtually and to support the wellness and resilience of employees and their families. When employees feel genuinely cared for and see that management is taking care of them, loyalty and commitment become stronger and they are willing to reciprocate and go the extra mile in return. This reinforcing loop helps the organization to navigate immediate challenges, but also positions it for faster recovery in the long term as trust is built and feelings of pride, respect and fairness grow.

Along with care came creativity, as workplaces and employees found themselves traversing uncharted waters. Employees who worked remotely had wide-ranging experiences—from

degrees of loneliness and isolation for those living on their own, to feeling overwhelmed by sharing work spaces with parents, spouses and school-going children. Some types of support could be provided uniformly to all employees, such as access to mental health services through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) program or sending family care packages. But our Best Workplaces also understood that there are times when a “personal touch” may be needed, and so they encouraged managers and Human Resources teams to understand and be responsive to group and individual needs.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, our Best Workplaces demonstrated care and creativity **by taking holistic approaches to support employee well-being**, including physical and environmental safety, job and financial security, and psychological and emotional support.

Physical and environmental safety:

- In addition to creatively sourcing and expediting the urgent purchases of Personal Protective Equipment such as masks and sanitizers, PCF purchased 650 UV sterilizers to disinfect school supplies and toys and engaged 16 professional cleaning contractors to disinfect all 360 Preschools and 7 Senior Care centres regularly.
- Medtronic employees who needed to work on campus were provided with safety protocols, training and PPE supplies. Immunity juice stations were provided along with complimentary bento boxes for employees' lunch each day, so employees did not need to go out to local food stalls, risking exposure. Staff expensed taxi rides to and from work to reduce the chance of exposure on public transportation.





Job and Financial Security:

- DHL Express quickly committed to keeping all of its people employed, with no pay reduction. All employees received their annual salary increases and bonuses on time, despite worrying business performance. A one-time 300 Euro bonus was also given to all employees globally to help alleviate financial worries.
- With a promise to protect the employment of their staff, Certis implemented programs to reskill Aviation Security Officers and deploy these officers to other work sites at various Government Quarantine Facilities, shopping malls and Community Care Facilities. Certis also provided additional one-time wage supplements—\$100 for all employees; \$1,000 for frontline workers. Promotions and increments were still given, with bonuses brought forward to June to support their employees during the crisis. This was made possible in part by their CEO taking a 15% wage cut, those in positions of Senior Vice-Presidents and above accepting a 10% reduction in salary, and implementing a wage freeze for the entire Senior Leadership team.

Psychological and emotional support:

- Cadence hosted a wellbeing webinar on resilience for employees and their families to talk about how to embrace happiness despite the challenges of COVID-19.
- Signify provided a series of webinars led by a trained psychologist, as well as an online yoga session, virtual team building and family activities. They also delivered surprise gifts to employees at home.

Bringing fun and fitness into the virtual workplace:

- HP Inc.'s HR team developed and maintained an HP Spirit calendar, with activities, webinars and resources built around a theme of the day to keep employees healthy, positive and productive. Employees connected from Motivation Monday—appreciating each other, expressing gratitude and practicing mindfulness—to Family and Fun Friday— including fun activities that families got to enjoy.
- foodpanda held a “Wellness Week” with a focus on self-care, including virtual group fitness and yoga classes, as well as talks about mental wellness and nutrition.

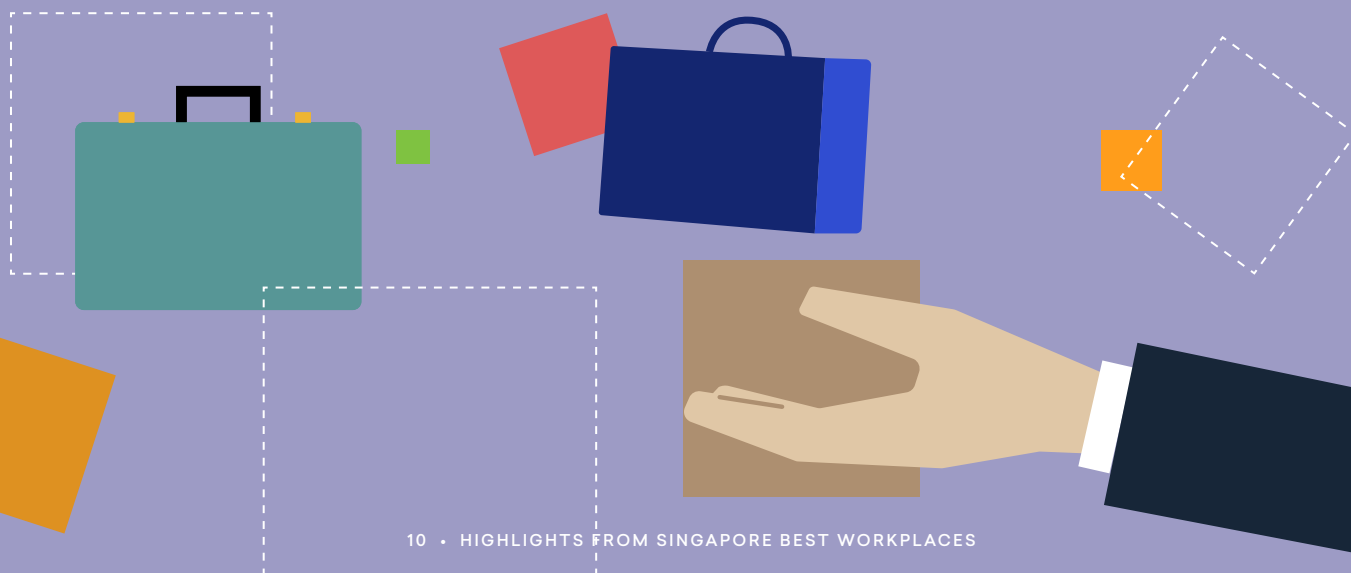
Providing support for Parents and Families: Some Best Workplaces went the extra mile to help parents manage and navigate the stress and demands of working from home and managing their children. Adjustments were made to parental leave policies to afford employees greater flexibility to manage their work timings around the needs of their children. Employee resource groups (ERGs) for parents and care-providers supported their members with virtual check-ins, expert speakers and online resources.

- Cisco offered flexible work practices, support for caregivers and generous leave options. They expanded their EAP benefit to increase the number of free counseling sessions available to all employees and their immediate families, from 8 to 10.
- To alleviate stress, WWT employees could block time out during the day to focus on their kids and not worry about work as they juggled home-schooling or childcare.

Providing support for their Malaysian and other foreign workers: A number of our Best Workplaces have large numbers of workers who live in Malaysia and neighboring countries. With the surprise declaration in mid-March that Malaysia would close its borders, these organizations had 28 hours to determine if their employees would be able to stay and continue working in Singapore during the period the borders were closed. Once confirmed, they needed to make urgent arrangements for these workers' housing and other living essentials. Those workers who were not able to leave their families or ended up "stranded" in other countries had many questions as to what would happen with their work and pay since they could not travel to work in Singapore. Faced with a shortage of workers and the need to split schedules to reduce COVID exposure, organizations needed to completely rework their staffing plans.

Our Best Workplaces made extraordinary efforts to support these colleagues.

- Certis provided accommodation and practical support (e.g. toiletries, laundry services, cash allowance, etc.) for more than 1,300 Malaysian colleagues affected by the Malaysia Movement Control Order (MCO).
- For staff who were stranded overseas, PCF revised their group hospitalization and surgical coverage to remove geographical limitations, in the event that these employees needed medical attention. They also arranged for meet-and-greet services at the airport to welcome employees returning from overseas, help them transition to their prescribed quarantine locations and provide updates on government advisories.



Breadth of Action

HOW BROADLY DID THEIR ACTIONS IMPACT THEIR PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES?

Our Best Workplaces make a point of giving back to the communities in which they work and live. Providing opportunities to volunteer and work in the community can build camaraderie and instill pride.

During the circuit breaker, a great deal of community support was carried out virtually, with much of it focused on supporting local charities, such as #SGUnited and The Food Bank Singapore who provide direct support to local communities.

- WWT turned their Day of Caring into a Virtual Charity Concert to raise funds for several charities, that were then matched by WWT's Global Community Impact program.

Many companies were able to contribute by leveraging their core products and services and business competencies to support the community.

- DHL Express worked with local government agencies and the Singapore Red Cross to package and deliver PPE supplies to frontline

healthcare workers and care packages to vulnerable groups, including migrant workers and the elderly.

- Medtronic worked with Temasek Foundation in Singapore to provide more than 330 ventilators regionally. They also responded to urgent needs by donating more than USD\$1.5 million in PPE supplies to hospitals across APAC.
- Signify provided UVC lamps to sanitize common areas, including migrant worker dormitories.





Closing

THESE HIGHLIGHTS PROVIDE A GLIMPSE OF A FEW OF THE MANY HEROIC ACTS PERFORMED BY OUR BEST WORKPLACES THIS YEAR.

During very challenging times, our Best Workplaces created positive workplace experiences for their employees, and demonstrated creativity in caring, a commitment to community and the courage to connect.

[Employees of our Best Workplaces affirmed this in their survey results which we look forward to sharing with you in Part 2 of our insights report that will be released in Q12021.](#)



About Great Place to Work®

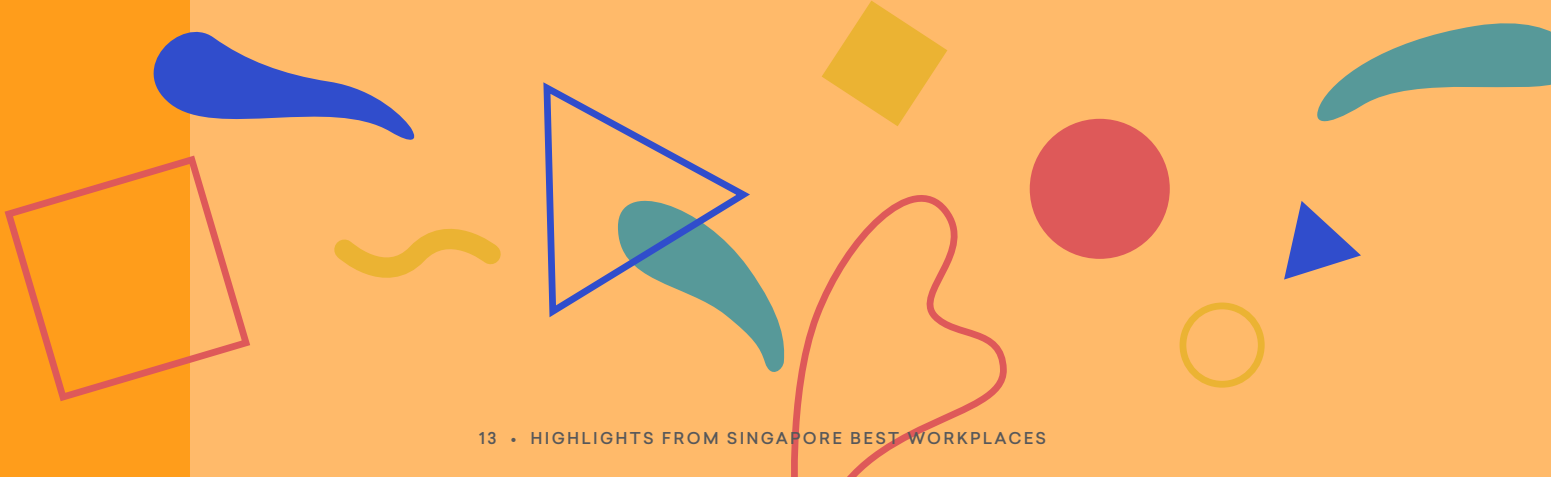
Great Place to Work® is the global authority on workplace culture.

Since 1992, we have surveyed more than 100 million employees around the world and used those deep insights to define what makes a great workplace: trust.

We help organizations quantify their culture and produce better business results by creating a high trust work experience for all employees.

Everything we do is driven by our mission: to build a better world by helping every organization become a great place to work For All™.

To learn more about how you can create a great workplace for all, visit www.greatplacetowork.com.sg





Build a great global company culture.

Survey your employees around the world on Emprising™, the platform built for you by Great Place to Work®, the global authority on workplace culture.

SURVEY EMPLOYEES EVERYWHERE

- Emprising makes it easy to survey employees in over 40 languages and 75+ countries/regions.
- Only the Trust Index survey model is proven to accurately measure employee experience at all workplace cultures worldwide.
- Add unlimited custom survey content for individual countries, regions or global divisions.
- Manager Access easily distributes select results to leaders anywhere.

GET RECOGNIZED AROUND THE WORLD

- Great Place to Work is the global authority on workplace culture.
- With just one survey, you can earn recognition on 70+ Best Workplaces lists around the world.
- Our premier media partners feature your brand as an employer of choice in the most respected global publications and websites.

Singapore Best Workplaces™ Award Winners



Best Medium & Large Workplaces™



Top 10 Medium & Large Workplaces™

1. DHL Express (Singapore) Pte Ltd
2. Cisco
3. Salesforce
4. Medtronic
5. Amgen Singapore Manufacturing
6. PAP Community Foundation
7. Micron Semiconductor Asia Operations Pte Ltd.
8. Certis
9. HP Inc.
10. foodpanda

Best Small Workplaces™



Top 3 Small Workplaces™

1. Signify Singapore
2. Cadence
3. WWT APJ-Singapore Pte Ltd

Special Award: Resilience Award

- Tan Tock Seng Hospital

