

Interview with Alex Teo, People Ops & Government Relations Lead from ShopBack

ShopBack is a one-stop rewards platform where users can earn cashback on their purchases. To date, US\$100m of cashback has been awarded to ShopBack users. First launched in Singapore in 2014, ShopBack has since expanded its reach to Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, Australia, Vietnam, and Korea.

Company size (in Singapore): >150 staff

% of employees Working From Home: 100% during Circuit Breaker

What are some of your successful strategies and available support systems that your company has implemented to engage your employees?

Since the start of the Circuit Breaker, our approach has been to:

1. Enable and empower teams

- Rolled out a handbook of best practices for ShopBackers to use, including how to improve personal productivity (e.g. setting up your own home workstation) and sustaining team energy (e.g. cadence of regular meetings).
- Also contained an “ideas bank” to give ShopBackers ideas on how to drive engagement within their respective teams (e.g. virtual water coolers, dress up days, virtual games).

2. Continue fostering connections and strengthen company culture

- Weekly HIIT & Yoga sessions led by ShopBackers were moved online and broadcasted to other countries in the region.
- New virtual events such as a virtual cocktail night, and DJ party nights led by one of our colleagues (who is a qualified DJ!).
- Used “Donut” (a Slack bot) at the regional level, which randomly pairs ShopBackers and encourages them to arrange a short call or chat during the week.

How should your company prepare your employees to be a step ahead during these uncertain times?

1. Social & Psychological resilience

- Being intentional in fostering stronger social bonds so that team members have a strong internal support network to see through tough times. We saw this clearly during the Circuit Breaker, where ShopBackers sent food and other care packages to one another.

2. Setting the right tone and expectations from the onset

- We share the company values and goals at the start of a new joiner's journey, so that they can best align their personal goals with the company's goals. It also helps give clarity regarding how an individual should behave when no one is around to observe you.

3. Inculcating Growth Mindsets

- We have maintained learning programmes that emphasize the need for continued personal growth and development. Our hope is that ShopBackers will recognise the importance of constant self-improvement and reinvention, which will give them greater confidence to traverse times of uncertainty.

How do you think COVID-19 will influence or shape your HR practices (e.g. onboarding, offboarding processes) in your workplace during this period and moving forward?

COVID-19 has forced us to rework numerous critical work processes and rethink our approach to other practices.

1. Onboarding/Offboarding

- Working through couriers to deliver welcome packs and laptops to new hires.
- Arranging virtual welcome calls instead of a physical office tour.
- Collecting laptops and equipment from employees during offboarding.

2. Interviews

- Conducting 'virtual' group interviews

We were able to set up interviews more swiftly as there was less to buffer for travel time, and we did not need to work around the travel schedules of interviewers. We shared SOPs to more clearly designate what each interviewer should test for, as well as how to conduct debrief sessions to run through the team's feedback and observations. Hence, hiring managers still had a rich set of inputs to base their hiring decisions on.

3. Managing Teams

- Regular virtual check-in sessions or 'stand-up' meetings.
- Conducting performance feedback and 1-1s virtually.

Moving forward, although some practices may revert to being conducted in-person again, we need to be adaptable with many of our practices. If we can achieve similar (or even better) outcomes using different approaches, we must be open-minded enough to try. For instance, if we can conduct effective interviews remotely, we could potentially speed up the process and improve the experience for candidates.

Can you share with us your company's plans on returning to office after the Circuit Breaker is lifted?

In Phase 1, Work From Home (WFH) will remain the default option for us. Going forward, we may revisit the approach, keeping in mind the safety of ShopBackers, the advice from authorities, and the needs of the business.

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