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Unilever Asia wins top HR award for its policies

Corporate practice of helping staff reach their goals pays off for consumer goods firm

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At Unilever Asia, every employee counts – a corporate mindset that paid off when the company won the top award and several others at a leading human resources award ceremony last night.

The consumer goods firm speaks with all its employees about what they want to achieve and then devises steps to help them reach their goals. The employees are also given mentors and training.

Mr Lennard Boogaard, Unilever Asia's vice-president for human resources in South-east Asia and Australasia, told The Straits Times: "For us, it is very normal that you sit together with your line manager to discuss your future. This is in our DNA – a commitment to the success of our people and a focus on constantly developing at all levels."

Employees really like having such a development plan, he said.

Unilever Asia was recognised for its HR policies as it won the top award – the Hays Award for Employer of Choice – at the 13th Annual HRM Awards last night.

Over 800 HR and business leaders gathered at The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore for the event.

The awards ranged across 28 categories and went to both individuals and organisations. The judging panel comprised HR experts from both the public and private sectors.

Unilever Asia also scooped up the Best Talent Management Practices Award and a Special Recognition Award for Best Leadership Development.

Another firm that might not have the same size of operations

but is still committed to employee engagement is Atlas Sound and Vision, which won the SMEs @ HR Summit Award for SME Employer of the Year.

The firm, which distributes audio-visual equipment, sets aside \$200 per employee each year to promote bonding among staff. The sum can be used for karaoke, meals or even to book sports facilities.

Before implementing an initiative, the firm seeks feedback from staff by speaking with them and conducting surveys to make sure the move is right for them.

For instance, when it was considering implementing a flexible work-hours policy, it first sought feedback from the staff and found that that was what they wanted.

As a result, its workers have become more engaged and customer satisfaction and sales have improved, said its director for strategy and planning Kenneth Wong.

Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel took home the Best Training, Learning and Development Award for companies with fewer than 500 employees. It said that it pays close attention to training employees to take care of guests.

Employees who face guests spend their first week with the hotel getting basic hospitality training. They are trained on the job while paired with a senior for the rest of their first three months.

The hotel then speaks with the employees to assess their progress and make adjustments to their training if necessary. After another 90 days of training, they are allowed to be independent.

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