Workplace Futures in Asia-Pacific: what role for IFM in improving Quality of Life?
As an in-house ‘think-tank’, the Sodexo Institute for Quality of Life is inspired by Sodexo’s deeply held conviction that improving Quality of Life leads to the progress of individuals and contributes to the performance of organisations. Its role is to gather and develop insight to help Sodexo understand better the levers of Quality of Life.

This report is inspired by the Sodexo Institute for Quality of Life ‘Dialogues’ that took place in Mumbai and Singapore on 30 October and 1 November 2018 respectively and whose participants were:

Jessica Carr  
Workplace Director, Corporate Services Asia Pacific, Sodexo

Daphné Carthy  
Researcher, Sodexo Institute for Quality of Life

Joanne Cheung  
Regional Director, REF Commercial Asia Pacific, GSK

Nick Denny  
Head of Sales and Business Development, Corporate Services Asia Pacific, Sodexo

Veronica Dias  
Director Amenities, Morgan Stanley

Rishi Gour  
Country President, Sodexo India

Thomas Jelley  
Vice President, Sodexo Institute for Quality of Life

Anthea Miranda  
South Asia Service Delivery Manager, Hindustan Unilever

Cdr. Subroto Mukherjee  
Head of Administration and Facilities Management, Cipla

Sunil Nayak  
CEO, Corporate Services Asia Pacific, Sodexo

Joslyn Pereira  
India Micro Region Lead – Commercial, Johnson & Johnson

Angelo Pinto  
Regional Head of Learning & Development and Head of APAC Campus, BNP Paribas

Cdr. Dinesh Rai  
Senior General Manager Administration, TCS

Aravind Ramaraju  
Director, Work Place Experience, Cognizant

Bertrand Rousseau  
Regional Director and Country President Singapore, Corporate Services, Sodexo

Dhanesh Sadalge  
Manager Sourcing – RE & FM, APAC, Mondelez

James Soback  
Executive Director, Corporate Services and Real Estate, Goldman Sachs

Daniel Romero Vega  
General Services Branch, Interpol

Neha Singh  
Operations Director, Corporate Services Asia Pacific, Sodexo

Pauline Soh  
Service Delivery Manager, Singapore, Unilever

Rutesh Sonawane  
Real Estate & Facilities Management – South Asia, Orange

Maj. Vijayakannan Subramanian  
IFM Head, Morgan Stanley

Vineeta Tikekar  
Marketing Director, Corporate Services Asia Pacific, Sodexo

Karan Totlani  
Vice President, Corporate Services Asia Pacific, Sodexo

Gouri Verma  
Segment Director, Corporate Services Asia Pacific, Sodexo

Roger Wong  
Vice President, Head of Siemens Real Estate, Siemens
Workplace futures rightly fascinate and challenge individuals, their organisations and policymakers alike. The sense of uncertainty combined with fast-paced change is impossible to avoid or ignore. In this report, we combine a sector and an Asia-Pacific (APAC) regional view to understand better the role of integrated facilities management (IFM) in quality of life in the future workplace to the mid-2020s.

How do we go about this? With the benefit of global and workplace trends, insight on quality of life through an intercultural lens, and how to prepare for the advent of intelligent robotics in the workplace, we convened Sodexo clients from leading organisations to Dialogues in Mumbai and Singapore in October and November 2018.

We start this report with a brief outline of the insight that helped to inform the methodology we used, we then outline the essence of different mid-2020s scenarios. To conclude, we put forward recommendations for IFM. In the annexes, we use playful, imaginary story-boards to bring the scenarios to life.
In the following sections, we set the scene for this report:

- **megatrends** that continually redefine the contours of society
- **workplace trends** that help us to anticipate and make sense of the ever-evolving world of work
- Our research on **quality of life around the world** brings a cultural lens to people’s multiple perceptions of their life at work
- Our findings on the **advent of intelligent robotics in the workplace** remind us that organisations are genuinely well placed to ensure the integration of technology at work improves quality of life, human progress and organisational performance

I. Megatrends

The forces of rapid change reshaping the world we live and work in are well documented and felt across the APAC region. They include:

- demographic shifts
- urbanisation
- disruptive technology
- environmental sustainability pressures
Change in the APAC region is asymmetric. For example, India paints a very different picture to many other countries:

- By 2020, India is expected to have the world’s youngest population.
- By 2022, of the workforce in India will have jobs that do not exist today or jobs that require radically different skills sets.
- Before 2025, India is expected to overtake China as the world’s largest population.
- By 2030, India will account for about 30% of the world’s workforce.
- By 2020, India is expected to overtake China as the world’s largest population.
- By 2022, India is expected to have the world’s youngest population.
- By 2025, the local workforce size is expected to decline.
- From 2020 onwards, it is estimated that two thirds of Singaporean workers will be professionals, managers, executives and technicians compared to about half today.

By some contrast, in Singapore:

- By 2030, of the population is expected to be aged 65 and above, compared to 13% in 2015.
Amidst these forces of change, the future role of IFM is technology-enabled: smart, cloud-based, data-fuelled, AI-enhanced, connected and flexible.

We expect technologies to converge and revolutionise the contribution of IFM to the daily working lives of many by 2025.

Just how IFM anticipates this in its evolving role is not inevitable; the quality of life, economic, social and environmental impacts leading organisations aspire to are up to them.

Urbanisation is expected to spawn more megacities in the APAC region, especially in India and China. Of 440 emerging cities, over 60% are in Asia and they are expected to generate almost half of GDP growth to 2025.
II. Workplace trends

High performance organisations not only attract the ‘best and the brightest’ talent to succeed, they also motivate, engage and recognise their talent to retain it; a workplace experience and culture in which people can flourish is under the microscope like never before.

To help inform our clients’ plans for the future, the Sodexo Global Workplace Trends report 2018 gathered the expertise of futures thinkers and strategists to explore aspects of organisational change that also guided the work behind this report:

- The Internet of Things: Shaping the Future Workplace
- Creating the Emotionally Intelligent Workplace
- Getting Ready for Gen Z
- Re-imagining Resources in the Sharing Economy
- Moving the Needle on Gender Balance
- Human Capital Management 3.0: Transforming the Employee Experience
- Employees: New Change Agents for Corporate Responsibility
III. The advent of intelligent robotics in the workplace

Technological advances unquestionably drive workplace change but our own human attitudes do as much. In 2017, we explored human responses to intelligent robotics in the workplace. We found that while some $14 trillion of human activity or one billion jobs could be automated with current technology, it has not yet happened: organisations can envision and plan for best case scenarios to make them reality, despite the trade-offs they need to navigate. For example, between a focus on cost-minimisation framed in terms of human–technology competition for jobs and resources, loss of human control or decision-making autonomy and, in the alternative, a focus on value-adding human–technology collaboration framed in terms of worker quality of life, skill and capability augmentation. Envisioning the role of IFM in future workplaces in the APAC region is a contribution to understanding these trade-offs.
IV. Quality of Life around the World

No matter how advanced its technology, the workplace remains shaped by cultural factors including attitudes to work, conflict, money, authority, rules of behaviour and knowledge. Each of these plays a role in our quality of life at work and how we manage our work and non-work lives. For example, organisations everywhere are challenged by tensions and trade-offs between ‘traditional’, ‘pyramid-style’ hierarchy, and flatter models.

When asked about our work, we sometimes focus on our role (‘What do I do?’) but also on our status (‘What is my position in the organisation?’). In our 2016 research, APAC region interviewees’ organisations were mostly still based on a strong pyramid-style hierarchy but viewed in different ways: they were supported (as in Malaysia), respected (as in China and India) or criticised (as in Indonesia). Our work on quality of life around the world reminds us to resist the temptation to devise and apply universal rules. Instead, we should aim to develop more nuanced perspectives from deep insight that combines the person, place, community, moment in time, situation and culture. These considerations are important for IFM as they provide the invisible yet ingrained cultural lens through which different people experience their place of work.
Methodology

To envision the role of IFM in the APAC region’s future workplace means getting to grips with huge diversity. For example, India and Singapore alone represent significant contrasts in terms of population size, demographic age profile, transport infrastructure, among many other factors that organisations and workplaces must take into account. The industry sectors represented in the genesis of this report – financial services, FMCG, pharmaceuticals, engineering, agriculture, snack foods, public administration, and the functional roles that participated – learning and development, procurement, FM, corporate real estate – also add colour. We put them to use during our Dialogues by envisioning workplaces of the future with method, creativity and imagination thanks to co-designed scenarios and personas.

**During the Dialogues: use of scenarios and personas**

With clients in India and Singapore we outlined ‘best’, ‘worst’ and ‘disruptive’ case scenarios before imagining ‘a day in the life’ of different personas. The personas represented a diversity of imaginary women and men, workers of different ages, types of role and relative seniority in their organisation, with different family and health profiles, favourite activities, different home and work locations. By working through their average working day set in different contexts, we identified barriers to quality of life and IFM-related enablers to support each personas.

Below we set out the scenarios that we worked on followed by our concluding thoughts based on the recommendations provided by our clients during the Dialogue.
Scenarios

In the best case scenario,

we envisioned an era of outstanding technological potential which, when deployed smartly, augments people’s capabilities. Across organisations, a task-based approach to automation, human-robot collaboration and a focus on the enhancement of people delivers cost efficiency and consistency. As mundane, repetitive or dangerous tasks are automated, organisations provide pathways for people to enhance their skills. With effective collaboration and augmented human capabilities, organisations are empowering their people with the freedom they need to unleash their imagination and creativity through opportunities for fulfilment and social interaction in their work.

Across workplaces, easy and efficient access to services that allow people to enjoy flexible ways of working both at the workplace and remotely are key. Personalised services that help juggle the demands of work and home lives for quality of life are an integral part of the workplace experience, allowing people to feel empowered and engaged, thereby boosting productivity. With the smart integration of embedded technology, the physical environment of the workplace also supports individuals and teams as they navigate the work areas seamlessly throughout their various work activities.

As technology transforms the way people work, it also contributes to achieving environmental objectives including more sustainable energy management, smart material and waste management. Renewable energy and participation in local sustainability governance form an integral part of mainstream business practice; people feel engaged and empowered to act.

All generations at work – from those aged 75 years and over to those under 21 – feel recognised and valued thanks to adaptable workplaces and caring, flexible working practices.
we envisioned a world where run-away technological progress overwhelms many workers. Most of the activities recently performed by humans are being automated. High levels of human worker displacement away from the traditional workplace are transforming the employment landscape as traditional forms of employment are disappearing, especially for those in manufacturing, assembly and back-office processing.

The few human workers who are left to collaborate with robots at the workplace are feeling increasingly disengaged and under pressure to be constantly connected; they feel unable to shut-off. The workplace is all about how much and how fast people can learn to compete with technology and justify their place in the organisation.

Technology has seeped into every aspect of human interaction and making work far less inclusive which in turn is exacerbating hierarchy. Previously valued human traits such as autonomy, moral agency, intuition and empathy are considered superfluous with no place in business. This is having a critical impact on people’s mental health as levels of anxiety and isolation are soaring. Organisations are under pressure to introduce new tools in order to boost productivity but these are introduced with no time for human workers to adapt and assimilate them.

The impacts of climate change are increasingly felt on an ageing infrastructure as public policy has failed to develop proactive measures to address devastating environmental consequences. Organisations are suffering as a result as buildings and facilities are not designed to withstand such environmental disruptions.

Some organisations are implementing measures aimed at mitigating the impact of such difficult conditions on their workforce by:
- re-introducing people in people-facing roles assisted by technology to work towards a value-adding, augmented human-robot collaboration
- rolling out training sessions on new technological tools and making sure employees feel supported around the adoption of these new tools
- implementing quarterly feedback sessions with all occupants and IFM team to identify pain points that need to be addressed urgently
- considering the creation of a dedicated team to review facilities as a whole, their vulnerability to extreme weather events and resilience (both personal and organisational)
we envisioned two alternatives: one in India in which environmental factors oblige public authorities to limit urban commuting significantly forcing people to work from home, the other in Singapore in which public authorities raise the retirement age significantly without warning.

**India Scenario**
The ability to work from home is one of the hallmarks of ‘flexible working’ thanks to fast internet connections and modern software. Flexible working continues to have an impact on workplace design and occupation but what if, from one day to the next, organisations were forced to radically rethink how to use space because most of their workers were no longer able to travel to the workplace?
The ability to avoid commuting would delight many workers, at least in the short term. However, most also recognise the value of the social interaction they get from the workplace, its contribution to their sense of ‘belonging’ in an organisation, also the services and amenity available at work (e.g. foodservice, a well maintained and controlled environment, different spaces for different types of work etc.).

Opening workplaces to co-working, perhaps to client and suppliers’ workers in the first place, could be one way of addressing an unexpected inability to commute. It could bring significant network engagement effects to all organisations in the relevant ecosystem, even at a time of disruption.
Scenarios

There are, however, perceived barriers in relation to personal safety and data security - but these are likely not insurmountable:

- IT hardware and software has long included features and settings that many workers are not aware of / do not use. Awareness-raising training would help to change perceptions, raise competence and increase compliance with organisations’ policies.
- There is scope to develop standards / certifications to give confidence in relation to data / systems security when different parties use the same physical space, Wifi network and peripherals such as printers-scanners.
- Sophisticated background personal identity checks are already a reality and can be combined with facial recognition technology.
- IoT systems could allow workers to organise their time and movements in coordination with colleagues / partners in client or supplier organisations to minimise the impact of travel disruption while maintaining interaction and benefiting from workplace services.

To read a storyboard illustration of this scenario, please refer to Annex 3 on page [27].
Scenarios

Singapore Scenario

Many older adults are working longer than expected, whether by choice or necessity. As good health extends later into life for many, we can expect to see pressure for the retirement age to rise, but what if it was raised by 5+ years suddenly?

The advent of many more older adults in the workplace is an opportunity to make it a more inclusive environment for people of all ages with a diversity of needs. For example:

• a sense-sensitive approach to integrated facilities management that takes into account the impact of touch, sight, taste, smell and hearing on our wellbeing. This would inform lighting, signage, materials, temperature and acoustics – all of which have an impact on our comfort, safety and performance, whatever our age.

• taking the time to understand groups and teams that represent diversity better. This includes: acknowledging the importance of continuing to be heard as we age, valuing the ability to share past experience, still feel recognised, considered and engaged at work in our older years whatever our level of responsibility.

• purposefully avoiding a sense of ‘invisible segregation’ in the workplace that can arise in the context of fast-changing systems and processes, also significant technological leaps

• rather than champion the needs of specific interest groups, the expectation of longer working lives gives us a fresh opportunity to reconsider the limitations of agendas driven by special interest groups and turn instead towards workplaces that are more caring of workers’ needs throughout the life-course.

To read a storyboard illustration of this scenario, please refer to Annex 4 on page [30]
Concluding thoughts

We can expect workplaces in APAC to continue facing pressures that are already firmly on the agenda of leading organisations. Whether matters of environmental sustainability, technological progress or population change, each obliges leaders in workplace facilities management to consider how to make sure that the quality of life of workers is maintained and improved. From our APAC Dialogues, we heard our clients’ strongly held conviction that IFM leaders are well placed to surprise and delight clients and consumers as different scenarios unfold across the region.

Our APAC clients recommended IFM leaders keep the following in mind:
• there is huge demand for IFM-led innovation and disruption, even in industries that are thought to be ‘conservative’, such as financial services – this appetite should not be underestimated
• the door is wide open to engage with new technology, start-ups and strategic experimentation in collaboration with external IFM partners
• IFM leaders have their own in-house clients; they need support to make the business case evolve from ‘cost’ to ‘value’ models and crave the metrics / indicators that will help them pave the way
• IFM partners must pursue the ability to use predictive indicators
• in IFM, sustainability must stretch beyond environmental aspects to address social and governance challenges
• making sure that client organisations can concentrate on their core business without the need for large in-house support services teams must remain central to IFM partners’ mission

Dive into our story-boards in the following section to see this come to life!
To bring our best, worst and disruptive case scenarios to life, in these annexes we set out story-boards to illustrate them:

- **an imaginary interview** following the ‘Quality of Life at Work Awards 2023’ (best case scenario)
- **an imaginary crisis** concerning an online platform for disappointed workers (worst case scenario)
- **an imaginary internal communications messages** (disruptive case scenarios)
Annexes

Annex 1 • Best case scenario

Winning Workplaces Magazine

**APAC Quality of Life at Work Award 2023 (IFM category)**

Natalie Chin, Head of Employee Experience at WannaWorkHere (WWH), speaks to Winning Workplaces Magazine about the 2023 APAC Quality of Life at Work Award.
WWM: Hi Natalie, congratulations on winning the APAC Workplace of the Year Award 2023! Wonderful recognition for WWH!

NC: Thank you, it’s quite an honour really, the fifth year in a row we are recognised for our efforts in making our workplace a wellbeing destination.

WW: Can you tell us a bit more about your winning recipe for a workplace that delivers exceptional worker experience?

NC: Well, we have always believed in the potential of technology, if deployed smartly, to augment the capabilities of our people. We have adopted a task-based approach to automation; human-bot collaboration and enhancement of our people to ensure cost efficiency and consistency across our organisation. As mundane, repetitive or dangerous tasks are automated, we provide pathways for people to enhance their skills. With effective collaboration and augmented human capabilities, our people have the freedom to unleash their imagination and creativity through opportunities for fulfilment and social interaction in their work.

WWM: What role do services at the workplace play in the overall employee experience?

NC: Easy, efficient access to services that allow our people to enjoy flexible ways of working both at the workplace and remotely are key. We provide excellent access to all IT services, also health and wellbeing support in person, by phone, online, and the ability to connect with colleagues and intelligent machines seamlessly. Personalised services that help juggle the demands of work and home lives for quality of life are no longer a perk for the privileged higher earning few – for us at WWH, they are the fabric that weaves previously competing needs together seamlessly. Our people feel empowered and engaged, so productivity is on the rise in a big way!

WWM: How do you view environmental sustainability objectives?

NC: Demand for much higher levels of environmental sustainability remains high on our agenda. We continue to make good progress which we regularly communicate to ensure everyone is up to date and knows how they can keep contributing. As technology is transforming the way people work, it’s also helping us achieve environmental objectives including more sustainable energy management, smart material and waste management, across all our facilities. Renewable energy and participation in local sustainability governance form an integral part of our mainstream business practice; we value the benefits of engaging and empowering our people to act.

WWM: The workforce today is more diverse than ever before. How do you ensure harmony among all workers?

NC: By offering adaptable workplaces and caring,
flexible working, all generations at work – from those aged 75 years and over to those under 21 – feel recognised and valued. Also, our smart, sophisticated health and wellbeing portfolio – starting with balanced food offers – helps to achieve the right balance between capacities and needs across our diverse workforce.

WWM: We’ve spoken about your approach to technology in the workplace with human augmentation through collaboration; could you give us real examples?

NC: With technology at work, so much starts with the physical environment. To make sure the workplace remains supportive of great human-bot collaboration and employee augmentation, the smart integration of embedded technology helps individuals and teams to navigate the work areas seamlessly throughout their various work activities. With data streams providing real-time information on the occupancy patterns of different areas, inter-connected sensors on chairs, desks and in rooms, we are better equipped to understand the complexity of the environment and identify opportunities to respond more effectively.

Ease and efficiency is key. From booking business travel to managing expenses, coordinating diaries to finding the right space to meet – in-person or virtual – providing a transaction-less restaurant with facial recognition to get rid of queuing or on-demand concierge 24/7, our workplace is about human-centred ease, efficiency, flexibility and personalisation - any place and any time! This is made possible by seamless integration between platforms and interfaces; predictability and standardisation are priorities for the worker wow factor!

WWM: What about environmental sustainability objectives?

NC: Our smart buildings allow us to track real-time consumption of resources and emissions. Through AI-generated recommendations that are predictive and specific to our facilities, we have made changes to the operation of our buildings: they are now more comfortable, use fewer resources and cost us less to run. Energy and water management are smart and we review recommendations every quarter to see what other changes could enhance our sustainability further. With environmental sustainability high on the agenda, we make it easy for our ‘intrapreneurs’ to play a part and launch their own initiatives to support WannaWorkHere’s commitments. My own team’s role and engagement has been boosted by supporting our colleagues on topics such as benchmarking resource use across facilities, launching a champions’ league and showcasing best practice. Bonus points for team engagement!

WWM: You are well-known for your happy, diverse workforce. What’s your secret?

NC: Today, work is multi-generational. Our people can work flexibly from different locations as a matter of course and we understand that new forms of work...
Annexes

Annex 1 • Best case scenario

play a part in the talent pool needed in this rapidly changing landscape. At WWH, we’ve had a huge change in mindset away from the outdated cost-based approach to managing facilities to a value-based approach that is sensitive to the experience of people, informed by metrics that combine frequent real-time personal evaluations with live systems data. Five years ago, we worried that the workplace was about to disappear. Now, our workplace provides an unrivalled, meaningful destination for our people to exchange ideas, engage in thought-provoking discussions and build on shared endeavours. It’s a place where we feel good, where we can be ourselves, a place that nurtures a sense of belonging and fosters strong connections among the great diversity of people that are brought together around a shared vision. We provide areas that promote discussion and idea sharing between individuals and teams, face to face and remotely, spaces that stimulate the senses and so creativity. Chance encounters with people from different backgrounds are also a key ingredient of our creative enterprise and these even happen in our quiet areas, at the gym, the crèche, the concierge and home services desk...

WWM: Thank you very much, Natalie, for speaking with me today. Congratulations again on your award!

NC: Thank you!
Annexes

Annex 2 • Worst case scenario

---

e-mail dated 28 February 2023
From: Viveka Singh
To: Barsati Mitali [HRD APAC]; Zhong Li [IFM + CRE Lead APAC]
Subject: [Urgent response needed]

Dear both,
Please check the posts pasted below - we’ve just picked them up from www.wheresthedoor.leave in our weekly social listening sweep and things really don’t look good at all... Could you please send ideas on how to address the points raised? We need to fix this fast!
@BarsatiMitali: from an HR perspective, this may take you a bit longer to address, that’s why I’ve copied @ZhongLi. There may be quick, effective steps we can take from an IFM + CRE perspective to respond and avoid escalation? (I hope so!!)
Many thanks – over to you, happy to help stem the flow of negative comments!
Best,
Viveka Singh
Head of Social Media
www.wheresthedoor.leave

[Former employee – anonymous]
“Do not work here!”
I’ve rated this company 1 star as there is no lower score but it really doesn’t deserve any... no regard for people whatsoever. Complete obsession with tech and firm belief among leaders that they can fully replace human workers. I spent 6 years working there as a receptionist and was recently let go to be completely replaced by an “intelligent” bot. Ugh... my former colleagues tell me that the system often crashes and that they really miss dealing with an actual person who could simply get them. They don’t feel like coming to the office anymore. I just don’t get it, clients were vvv. clear they still wanted ppl. front of house even if back of house had to be automated. Naff + really rough experience; avoid!
Annex 2 • Worst case scenario

[Current employee – anonymous]
“IT’s all about tech, nothing about people”
Despite being in management, workplace hierarchy is made worse by tech here – makes work far less inclusive. Under pressure to be 365/24/7 and feel unable to shut-off. I haven’t slept since I joined and my doctor keeps telling me that my job is having a serious impact on my general health and wellbeing… it’s also affecting my family… but what choice do I have? There’s a bot breathing down my back…

[Former employee – anonymous]
“A cold environment, made for robots (by robots too, I guess)”
Very cold workplace, no face-to-face interaction. Everything done through tech. so all very ‘flat’. Spent two months working in the HR department and felt so isolated and miserable while working there… Kept hearing that whatever human employees are left in the company are feeling increasingly anxious and lonely which is leading to poor mental health across the org.

[Former employee – anonymous]
“Humans not welcome here”
Ugh… complete breakdown between tech progress, intro. of new tools and our ability to adapt and assimilate. New tools constantly introduced and human workers just expected to start using them without any sort of training / up-skilling. Anyone need a text-book example of how not to integrate tech…!? Look no further.

[Current employee – anonymous]
“Hi, I’m a nice person looking to work with other nice people, please hire me :)”
Working @ this place for 6 mths and currently looking for exit B4 2L8! Joined looking for a new challenge to unleash creativity in exciting projects. Was looking forward to meeting like-minded people to share ideas and build innovative solutions... Only shattered dreams left: my team is made up of robots – technology-based choice-editing has taken over. All the really big human capacity stuff – ‘autonomy’, ‘moral agency’, ‘intuition’, ‘empathy’ (hahaha…weep) are all so-called ‘over-the-top’ human traits that have no place in business. Beam me up outta here!
**Worst case scenario**

**[Current employee - anonymous]**

"Another storm, another loss of time and productivity"

I've been here 10 yrs and though we've been seeing clear impacts of climate change in recent years [yes, extreme weather is the new reality TV], still no plan in place to proactively address the consequences of environmental disruptions… Yet another severe storm last night which has wreaked havoc on the building and facilities. Our operations will now be down for at least 48 hrs while repair works are going on…what a waste of time!

**[Current employee - anonymous]**

"Follow my blog!"

Fresh out of college, I joined this company 2 months ago as part of their graduate programme. Feeling completely misunderstood by my manager. We only get face-to-face time once every two weeks (yep, even in on-boarding) and she keeps telling me I need to focus more, but I'm the most focused person I know! I do gigs on the side in the evenings, sometimes through the night – I need to sort out my student debt! I guess the good thing about this job is that I never share workspace with colleagues so I tend to get my work done with 24/7/365 News.com live in the background, I like to keep up with breaking stories – they keep me on the edge of my seat and make me feel part of whatever's happening around the world. I continuously share my thoughts on Twitter and engage with my personal blog community throughout the day. I need to keep my followers happy or they'll stop paying attention and unsubscribe – it's all about the likes and keeping them engaged!

**[Former employee – anonymous]**

"No time for anything, just land and run!"

I worked in HR for this co. just 11 months before I had to leave. Talent attraction and retention was a nightmare – new people arriving into the business non-stop and staying only months before moving on! When I joined, I was expected to manage all HR programmes autonomously without any previous experience. It’s all about how much and how fast we can learn to compete with tech and justify our existence in the org. Loyalty and honesty? Waste of time here… so glad I left!
Hi Viveka,

Thanks for raising this!

I get it, here are key areas to focus on as a start – we will:

- re-introduce people in reception and floor captain roles assisted by tech to make sure we don’t lose our human touch despite the inevitable and indeed value-adding presence of tech to augment our work capabilities
- roll-out training sessions on new tech tools and informal Q&A lunch-and-learn sessions to address any doubts / concerns etc. surrounding existing tools
- implement quarterly feedback sessions with all occupants and IFM team to identify pain points that need to be addressed express-style
- launch consultation re. a dedicated team to review facilities as a whole, vulnerability to extreme weather events + resilience (personal and organisational)

Feel free to get back to me with any Qs. but I hope this will stem the social media flow!

Thx + best,

Zhong Li
Head of IFM
15 January 2023

Dear Colleagues,

As announced yesterday, in cities across the country, traffic congestion and air pollution have crossed the maximum threshold set in 2018. Owing to the ongoing severe impacts on productivity and public health, all organisations are expected to ensure that desk-based workers stay at home at least every Tuesday and Thursday. There are financial incentives if desk-based workers stay at home an extra third day every week. This initiative aims to give people in cities a break: cleaner air, better health, greater productivity. It’s also the opportunity to conduct road infrastructure upgrades.

We were not expecting this but we are committed to being part of the solution. We are rapidly making plans on how to adapt but also recognise that you, our teams, are our best source of innovation, we therefore invite your ideas and suggestions in these areas:

- many of our workplaces will now be empty several days of the week; how should we manage them?
  - how should we finance our workspaces if we don’t use them two or three days a week?
  - could we open our workspaces to co-working, so instead of travelling by car, by public transport, or being alone at home, anyone (from this organisation or not) who lives close to one of our offices can still enjoy interaction and workplace facilities close to where they live?

- how should we keep our teams connected, with a sense of belonging, despite only being in the office 2 or at most 3 days a week?

Thank you in advance!

CRE, IFM and HR @ Your Org.
Later that day, employees react to the announcement on the online workplace chat...

I’d love to co-work somewhere closer to home: if I could avoid the commute some days, I could be so much more productive! Though I guess I’d miss you all...

Hang on! I see a BIG trade-off here between flexibility (nice!) and systems + data security (tricky), which we need to get our heads round first... Sorry!

Yeah, sure, but there are many IT security features that we already have but aren’t fully aware of / don’t know how to use and so don’t use; why don’t we start there? Also, face it: (informally, admit it!) we already work loads in cafes, hotel lobbies, on trains, at airports and on planes without safe wi-fi or even basic privacy screens...

OK, perhaps some e-learning needed on privacy + security features already at our fingertips, but how about going a step further? For our workspaces to be available and attractive to other orgs’ people with similar concerns, we could look into standards / certifications that can give confidence re. data / systems security, right? With our smart IoT workplace assets I see an opportunity to really maximise CRE use seamlessly here!

PLS, PLS, PLS also remember the basics: our physical security in the workplace! I need to be confident that background identity checks are up to scratch + combine cards / tags etc. with face recognition as standard!!
Mmmh, I hear you but this sounds like a big hassle when we can just work from home and use IT to connect, ditch office space and make huge savings, no?

I know what you mean but this is a crowded city with small living places and the office at least gives us the chance to not be cooped up all day, far from real workplace tools, services and people... when instead we could still work in larger surroundings with amenities, services, choice, variety and, best of all for me, real face to face interaction :-)

Yep! Surely we make this co-working idea work – even with external people – and benefit from more like-minded / org-related people using our space in a better way with economies of scale?

OK – I’ll reach out to clients and suppliers with space in the city and see if we can launch a pilot network of orgs. to recognise and value each other’s teams (as we work on the medium-long term response to this unexpected challenge). Thanks for sharing your concerns and ideas; v. helpful!
Annexes

NEW ORG.

YOU ARE INVITED

New Retirement Age Symposium

Wednesday 15 April 2023 | 8:30 am - 4pm

New Org, Blk 85 Jalan Brakus Crescent, Singapore 994812

As an organisation committed to diversity and inclusion in the workplace, we are delighted to invite you to a symposium on the new retirement age. As you know, this is rising from 62 to 70 years on 1 June and represents a significant change in the composition of our workforce:

- overnight, we will have an even more diverse workforce presenting a variety of physical and cognitive age-related profiles
- we urgently need to adapt aspects of our workplace to support our evolving workforce and ensure we all continue to thrive

At the symposium, you will hear from:

**Professor Linda Yin** – an expert on approaches to facilities that are founded on the five senses (touch, sight, taste, smell, hearing). The foundation for Linda’s work is our senses as the bridge through which we interpret the world around us and translate it into feelings of wellbeing. As we age, our senses undergo changes and tend to become less acute but IFM has a huge contribution to make in terms of helping to mitigate this while making the workplace better adapted to the needs of people of all ages. Think lighting, signage, materials, temperature, acoustics – all the things that help us do but also feel comfortable, safe, able to focus and interact with each other!

**Dr. Maurice Ho** – with over a decade’s expertise in the study and facilitation of workplace communities, Maurice will inspire us to understand groups and teams better. In particular, he will illustrate the importance of continuing to be heard, the ability to share past experience, still feel valued, considered and engaged at work in our older years whatever our level of responsibility. Maurice will share his team’s latest research on the impacts of ‘invisible segregation’ in the workplace that can be driven by fast-changing systems and process, also the pitfalls of tech as an instrument of hierarchy rather than a ‘pyramid’ buster. (Signed copies of ‘Living and learning the longer life-course’ will be available.)

**BK Koh** – a leading advocate of the ‘caring workplace’ movement, BK will illustrate the limitations of agendas driven by special interest groups. In the caring workplace, all caring needs are implicitly recognised and a sense of inclusion drives daily purpose, ‘over and above’ discretionary effort, and a sense of belonging in people of all ages whether parent, child of an older adult or grand-parent. From the latest advances in multi-generational spaces to the role and value of services that aim to support workers in their personal and home lives, BK’s thinking challenges age and life-stage based segregation.
Footnotes


6 In 2016, the Sodexo Institute for Quality of Life sponsored a project led by a French expert in intercultural relations who set out to explore the multiple interpretations and components of quality of life across ten countries. Inspired by the insights gathered through her interviews, the Institute published a report to explore the variety of ways in which quality of life is experienced across cultures in three sections: our place in the world; our relation to others; our work culture. Read more here: Quality of Life around the world: an intercultural introduction.


Population SG, Older Singaporeans to double by 2030. Aug 2016. Available at: https://www.population.sg/articles/older-singaporeans-to-double-by-2030


Sodexo Institute for Quality of Life. Intelligent robotics and Quality of Life at work: compete, control or collaborate? 2017. Available at: https://www.sodexo.com/home/media/publications/studies-and-reports/intelligent-robotics-and-quality.html
