

inFeedo



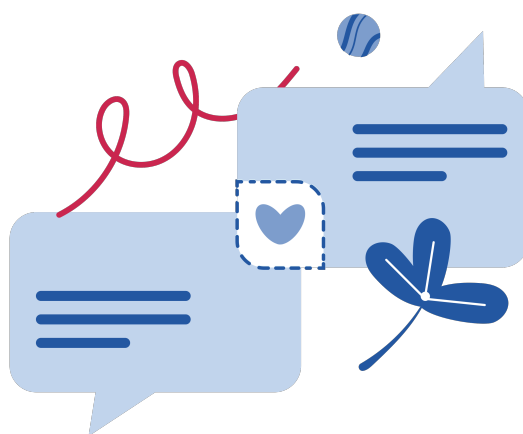
Employee Experience Insights 2021

Southeast Asia



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Meet Amber, The Engagement Bot 120+ HR Teams Trust

She is an AI-enabled engagement bot talking to 300,000+ employees in 50+ countries & helping HR leaders proactively find those who are disengaged or about to leave.

Want to meet Amber?

[Click Here](#)



MEDIACOM

Moët Hennessy

groupm

 Sun Life

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Introduction

Following the emergence of the unforgettable COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, organizations have had to adjust to a morphed economic climate overnight. For many companies in the Southeast Asia region, this adjustment involved layoffs, permanent restructuring of business practices and teams, and the shift to remote working. Even before the pandemic, human resources in the sub-continent had its share of challenges when it comes to employee engagement, and workplace culture and wellness-- which directly contributed to high attrition, low retention, and poor performance, revenue and growth. Thankfully, in the post-COVID workplace, HR leaders understand that issues once considered “soft” are urgent challenges impeding business sustainability and growth. Therefore, they’ve been taking a more active role in managing programmes and developing workforce capability and learning. They are beginning to acknowledge school approach to employee management was increasingly ineffective at keeping pace – much less closing the talent gap.

Now that workplace 2.0 is at least partially remote, how can human resources leaders in Southeast Asia keep pace with growing business demands by not just acquiring and retaining the talent necessary, but doing so optimally? Read on .



The pandemic-led shift in the Southeast Asian workplace

Starting March last year, companies in the Southeast Asian subcontinent have had to redefine their policies to create a hybrid workplace for their employees, who had been otherwise accustomed to physical proximity, face-to-face conversations, and in-office camaraderie.

To understand the impact of the colossal shift on employees' wellbeing and support them through this time, Amber, the predictive people analytics AI bot, interacted directly and discreetly with approximately 2000 working professionals across Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Macau, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Amber asked employees to answer a few Likert scale survey questions such as these:

1. Do you receive regular & constructive feedback from your manager on your work?
2. Do you find it is easy to collaborate with different teams to get work done?
3. Do you have regular one-on-one conversations with your manager?
4. Is the work environment flexible to balance professional and personal commitments?
5. When something unexpected comes up in your work, do you feel confident in approaching your manager for help?
6. Looking back at your career growth in the organization so far, do you see yourself growing further?
7. Did you feel welcomed into the organization when you joined?
8. Do you get enough credit for a job well done?

Likert scales (named after their creator, American social scientist Rensis Likert) are quite popular because they are one of the most reliable ways to measure opinions, perceptions, and behaviors. Compared to binary questions, which give you only two answer options, Likert-type questions capture more granular feedback about whether your product was just “good enough” or (hopefully) “excellent.” For example, Likert questions can help you decide whether a recent company Townhall left employees feeling “very satisfied,” “somewhat dissatisfied,” or maybe just neutral.

This method will let you uncover degrees of opinion that could make a real difference in understanding the workplace culture feedback and determining areas of improvement.

In this report, we analyze the responses Amber received to derive insights on the state of employee engagement, workplace productivity and motivation, and mental health in Southeast Asia, 2020.



Some surprising findings from Amber are:

1. Lines between working hours and personal hours blur when working remotely which has caused employees' physical and mental health to suffer.
2. Leaders will need to work harder to ensure frequent and more effective communication to ensure that employees don't feel excluded or demotivated.
3. For good or bad, team managers are perceived to be representative of the entire leadership at organizations, and hence, their actions immediately impact employee experiences.

#1

Employee mental health fluctuated, but HR leaders rose to the challenge

While tracking employee engagement across organizations in Southeast Asia, we noted an overall upward trend of 9% since January 2020 (see Figure 1). This shows that despite the sudden disruption in working style, HR leaders continued to be on top of employee mental health and well being, and have been creating a supportive hybrid work environment since the pandemic. This method will let you uncover degrees of opinion that could make a real difference in understanding the workplace culture feedback and determining areas of improvement.

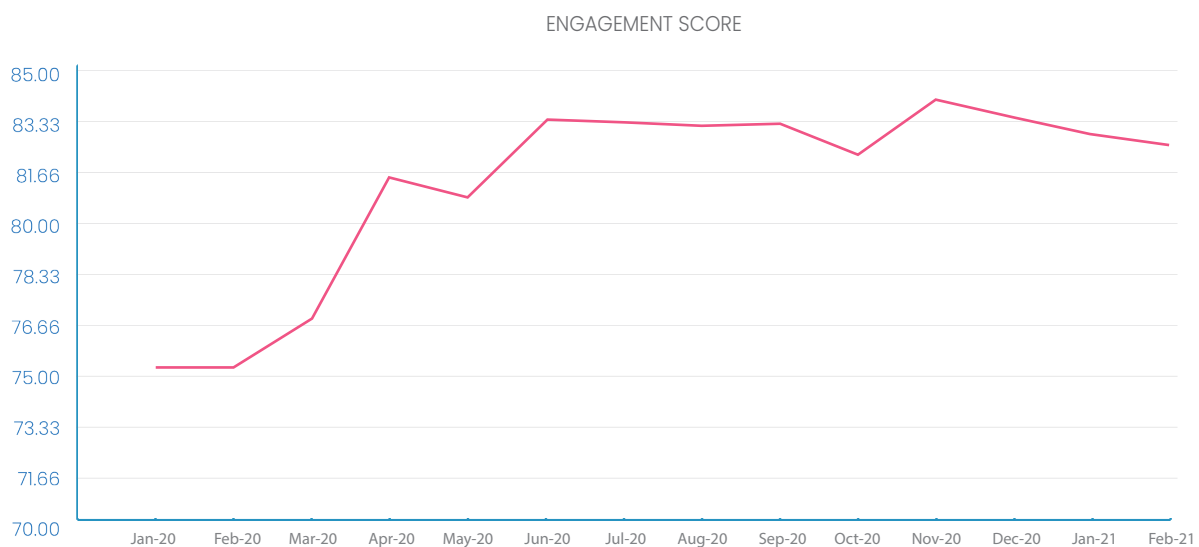


FIGURE 1: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT TREND



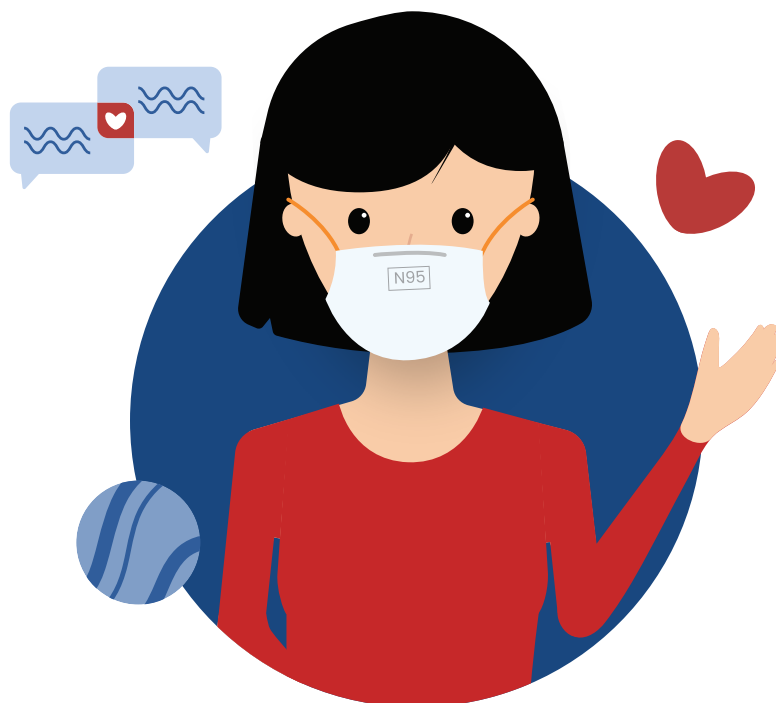
“Every single person working within the HR department plays a role in making sure that people feel safe and people feel okay to open up about mental health,”

– **Aziph Mustapha,**
Head of Culture Transformation,
Celcom.

How can HR leaders do better in 2021?

8% out of nearly 2000 employees speaking to Amber reported that their mental and physical well-being have taken a toll due to poor work-life balance since the pandemic. The factors contributing to this were found to be managers not respecting employee schedules, unreasonable deadlines, and erratic work schedules over the week and sometimes, even the weekends.

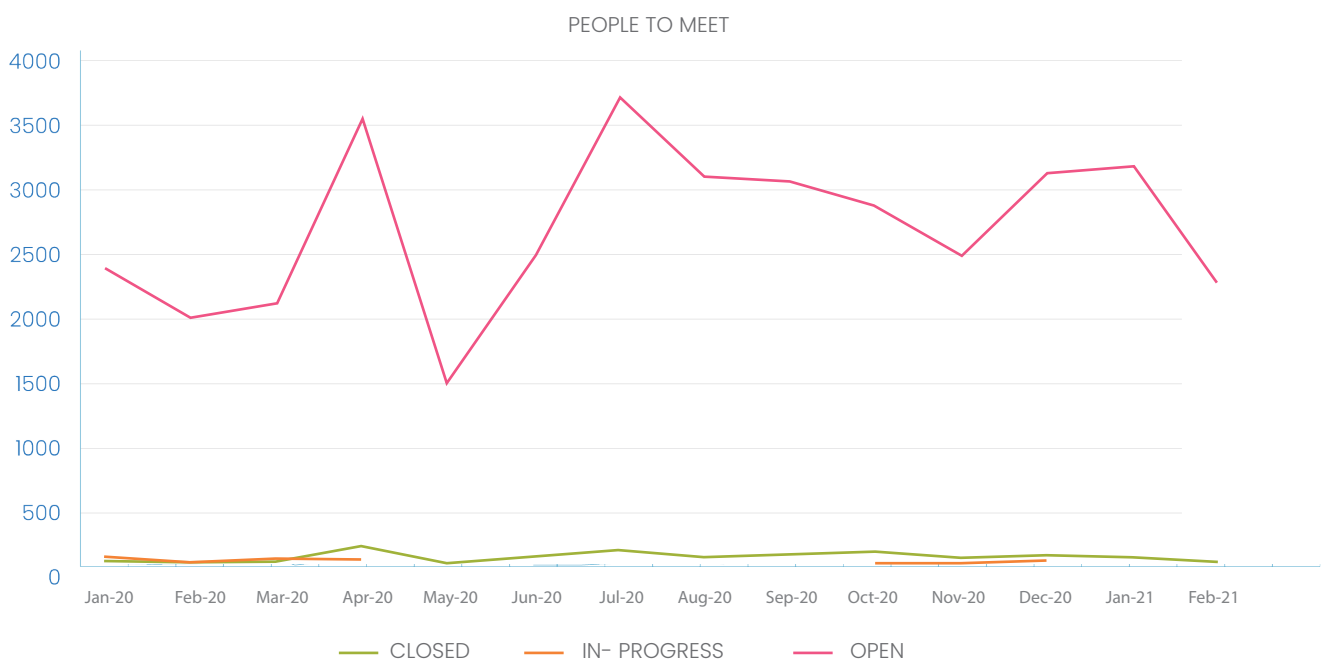
To address the issue, HR leaders could acknowledge the high work intensity and reduced autonomy remote workers experience due to their ability to communicate with colleagues through their devices at any time. Then, both HR leaders and employees can work together to cultivate broader professional identities, ones that leave space for family, community, and that find meaning in activities beyond work.



#2

Post-COVID, employees are more likely to leave if they're unhappy

The pandemic period has reminded people of their priorities in life and they aren't willing to settle anymore. While company leaders are still knee-deep dealing with the pandemic, they'll need to look ahead and address employee issues on time if they want to fend off a talent tsunami. Many employees are feeling burnt out, stagnated or rethinking their skill set.



“At many organizations, leadership often may not fully appreciate the importance or impact to the business of employee engagement efforts, and in turn find it hard-pressed to justify the returns on investment, when the returns are loyalty in people,”

— **Alex Png,**
Chief People Officer,
Intrepid Group Asia

How can HR leaders do better in 2021?

Let's take an example. A troublesome relationship between two colleagues is causing a rift in the team, effectively creating two sides on a single team. Or, a personal problem has been causing a top performer to feel disengaged. If such issues don't get highlighted on time, it would impact employee engagement, well being and cause alarming attrition. For organizations, this means massive losses in terms of time and resources to replace lost talent.

The only way to intercept this cycle is by adapting to an employee experience bot like Amber that chats with your employees and makes them feel heard and valued. Amber also finds employees who are disengaged, unhappy, about to leave and enables organizations to take corrective measures and retain top talent. Lastly, Amber builds trust between employees and management to stimulate a culture of transparency and accountability.



#3

Learning & development programs must continue but with a greater emphasis on personalization

The pandemic led to employees to feel and raise more concerns around their career development within organizations. Some panicked about downsizing while others worried about their learning curve. However, data from Amber suggests that HR leaders were successful in addressing, communicating, and resolving employee issues around their career, learning curve, and overall development (see Figure 3).

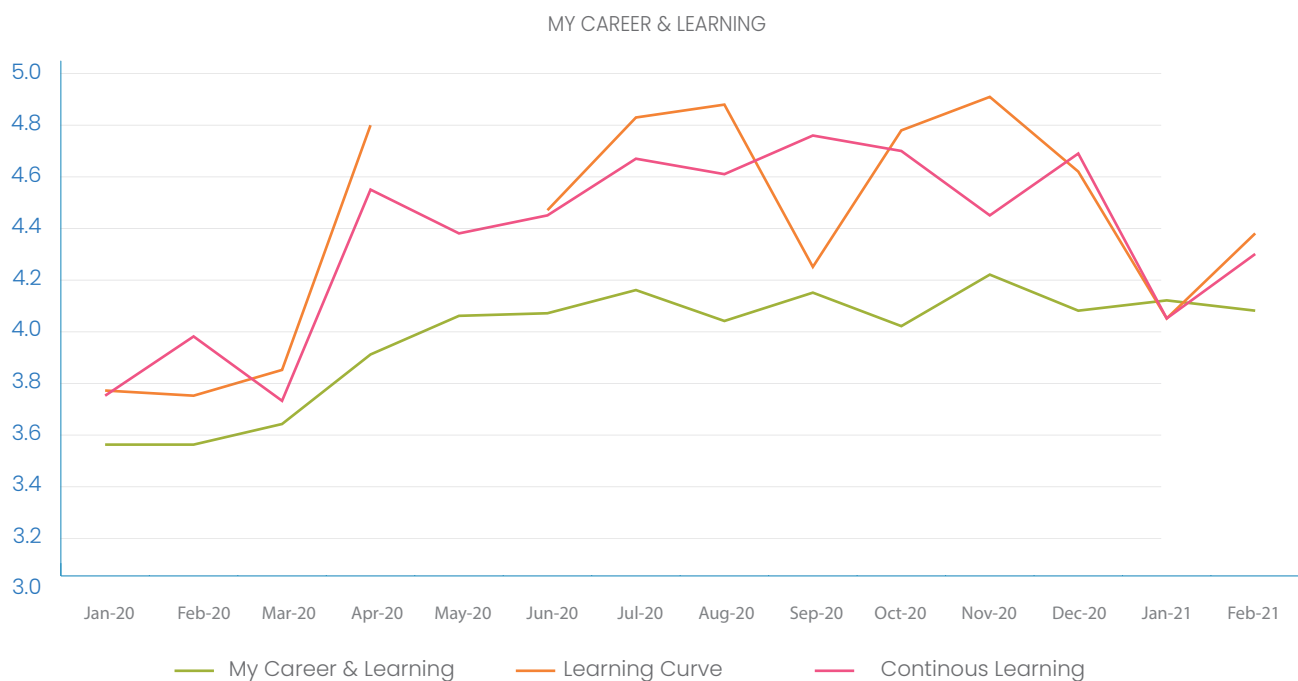
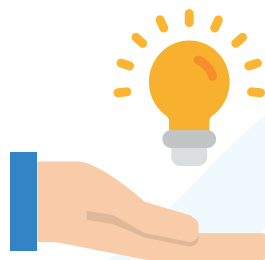


FIGURE 3: EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE WITH CAREER & LEARNING



How can HR leaders do better in 2021?

13% of over 2000 employees (259 in total) experienced a sense of stagnation because they felt a lack of defined career growth path. The career development plans seemed vague and irrelevant to them, and they felt their managers and HR leaders did not have the bandwidth to help them with career planning as they were more focussed on stabilizing the business.

These employees also felt they needed regular training to upskill themselves and reported a lack of standardized training structure, tools, and holistic curriculum (technical + soft skill) in the current initiatives.

While the organizations did partner with e-learning providers, the employees felt that these were out of context and that they needed more customized training+mentoring programs in place to help them do better at work.

The old adage is that employees don't leave companies, they leave managers. The reverse is also true, employees stay and thrive when their managers help them succeed.

Nobody is better equipped for this task than HR leaders themselves. HR teams must encourage managers to talk about company goals, why each employee was chosen, why they are important, and how the team's contributions make a difference. Next, as an organization, there must be an emphasis on continuous learning and improvement-- one that is rewarded. While this will inspire employees to take charge of their own learning, managers must simultaneously provide encouragement and access to training. Training could range from technological upskilling to soft skill development. Developing other soft skills such as intellectual curiosity, grit, and adaptability give employees transferable skills that can be used in a variety of career fields.

#4

Employees experienced a whirlwind of emotions when it comes to work

Understandably, employees have felt both a rise and dip in their overall relationship with work. Over last year, most employees have shown both an increasing and decreasing sense of commitment to work in moments when they have questioned the overall meaning of their work and its strategic impact on the overall organization. (see Figure 4)

One of the fundamental dynamics of a successful team is a unified belief that their work is making a difference. Therefore, no matter how menial a task may seem, managers and CEOs have the ability to instill nobility through perspective. But first, they must believe in the difference they make themselves.

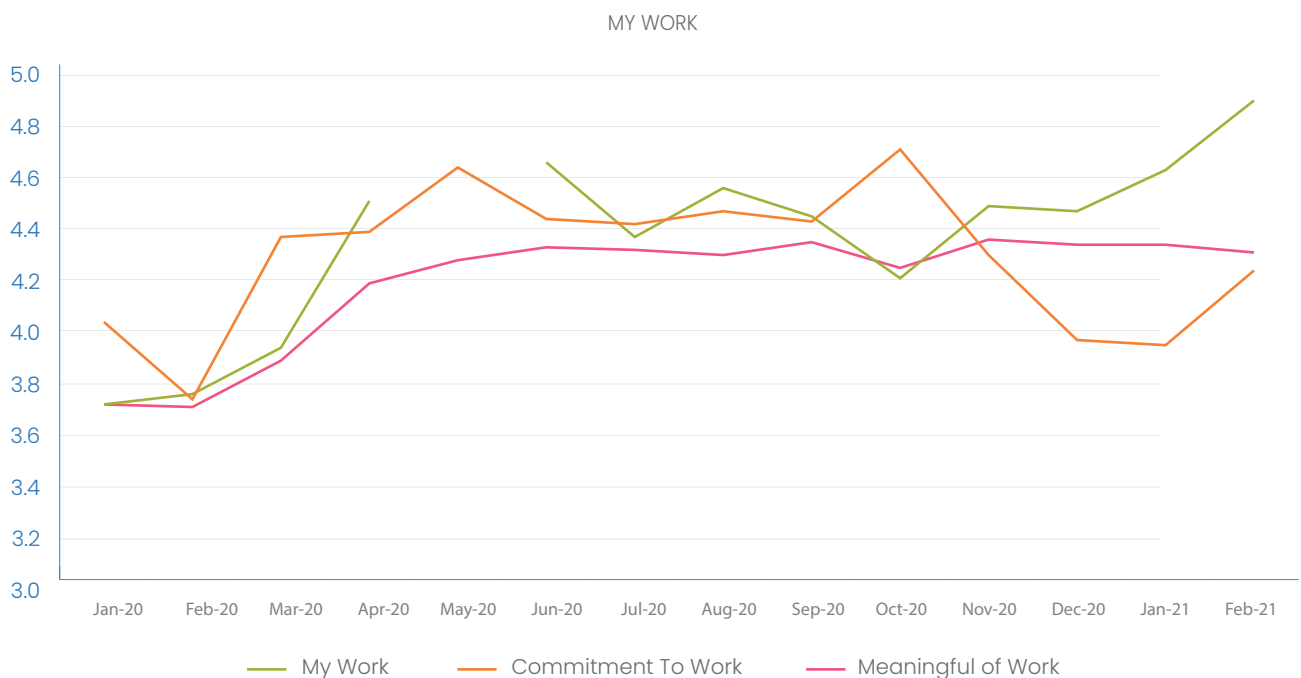


FIGURE 4: EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE WITH THE TEAM



“Through technology and machine learning, we are able to mine the minds and hearts of people, giving us a heart-line to our employees”

–**Sonia Fernandez,**
Chief Talent Officer,
Mediacom

How can HR leaders do better in 2021?

People bring their best and do their best if they feel like they've been given the opportunity to do the best work they've ever done. Therefore, leaders and managers need to be more accountable to how employees relate to their work and the workplace. The onus is no longer on just HR but the entire leadership to offer employees vision they resonate with, results they can see and drive this as a culture change forward with continuous communication.



#5

No such thing as over-communicating in the new workplace

Employees across organizations using Amber noted that their experience with senior leaders has been overall positive (see Figure 5). This denotes an increase in trust with senior leadership since the pandemic started.

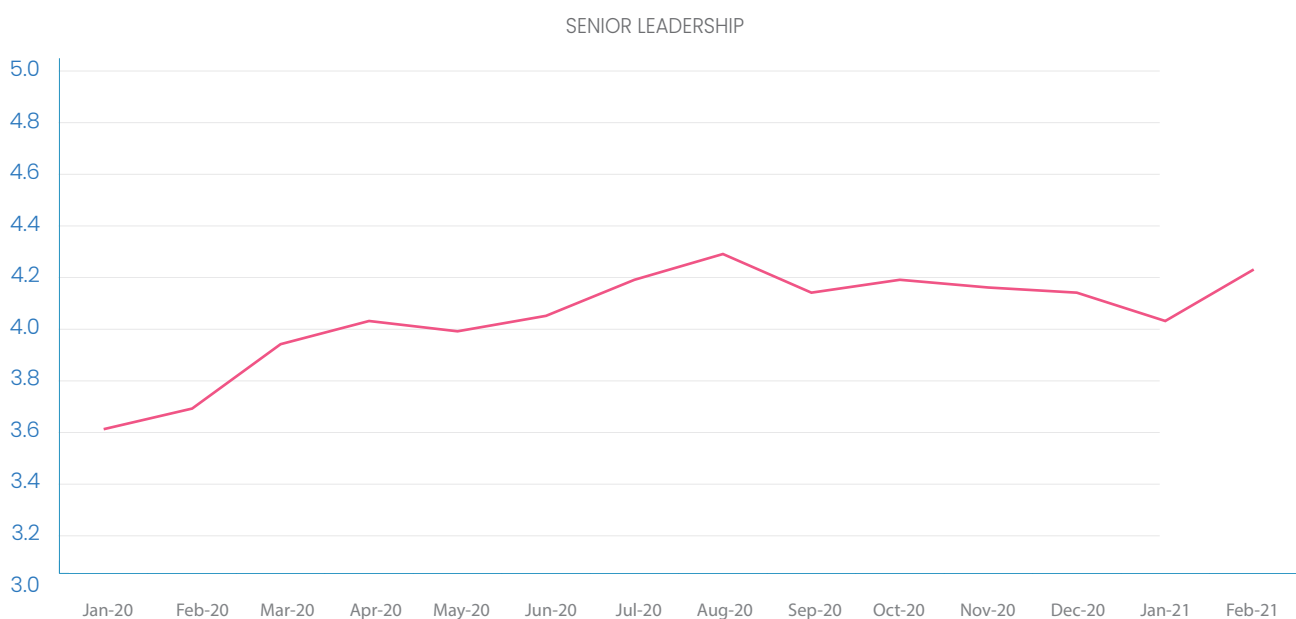


FIGURE 5: EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE WITH SENIOR LEADERSHIP



“Trust is so important for everyone. It enhances decision-making, it reduces stress if you don't have trust. Many things don't work, but, there's no real magic pill for this trust that needs to be built on all levels. Especially top down, like again, I'm so fortunate that our top management understands this and trust building is something very important to them as well.”

– **Aziph Mustapha,**

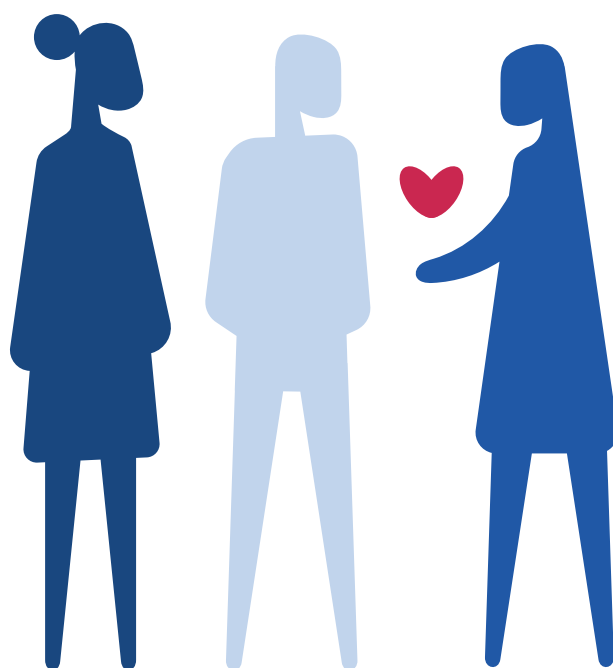
Head of Culture Transformation,
Celcom.

Out of nearly 2000, 9% shared positive feedback regarding how their company leadership had been communicating with them throughout the pandemic. These leaders were prompt about all organization-level updates, with HR teams specifically keeping employees informed at all times about crisis management initiatives and acclimatization to the new normal.

How can HR leaders do better in 2021?

When employees work from home, they can feel disconnected from their organizations. A significant number of employees surveyed felt that if inter-departmental communication and visibility of company goals and vision were improved, teams would stop working in silos and be able to derive greater fulfillment from knowing how they contribute to the bigger picture.

The 5 features of effective communication between leaders and the rest of the organization are: it's easy to navigate, frequent, transparent, part of a two-way dialogue, and consistent. These communication principles are especially crucial when a company's workforce is distributed.



#6

Employees expect more from the organization, be it onboarding, policies, brand value or culture

The pandemic acted as a harbinger of seismic transformation in the way organizations function. For many companies, the bulk of work is now produced off-site and delivered electronically, blurring the very definition of a “workplace”. Simultaneously, digitization and automation are enabling new tasks and simplifying others. As a result, the life span of certain skills is rapidly decreasing— to less than five years. This requires employers to continually revisit their personnel needs, and to invest more heavily in retraining, recruitment, and reorganization. And employees expect no less.

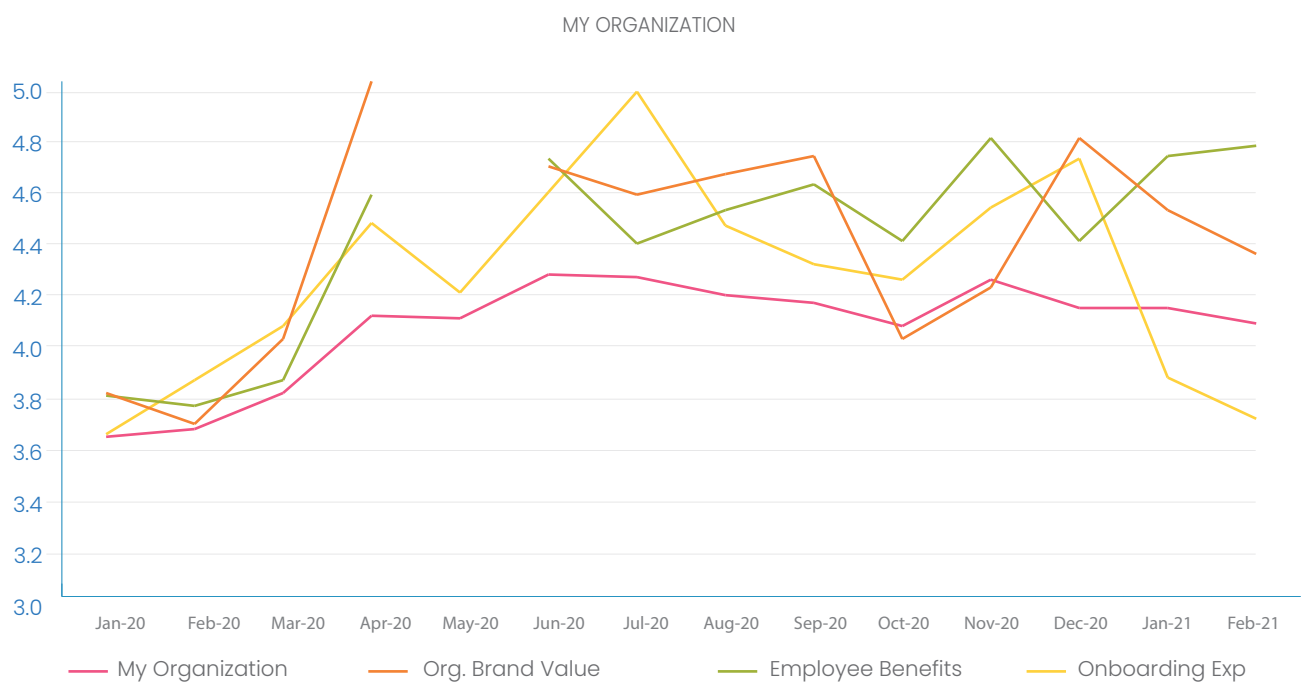


FIGURE 6: EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE WITH ORGANIZATION

MY ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

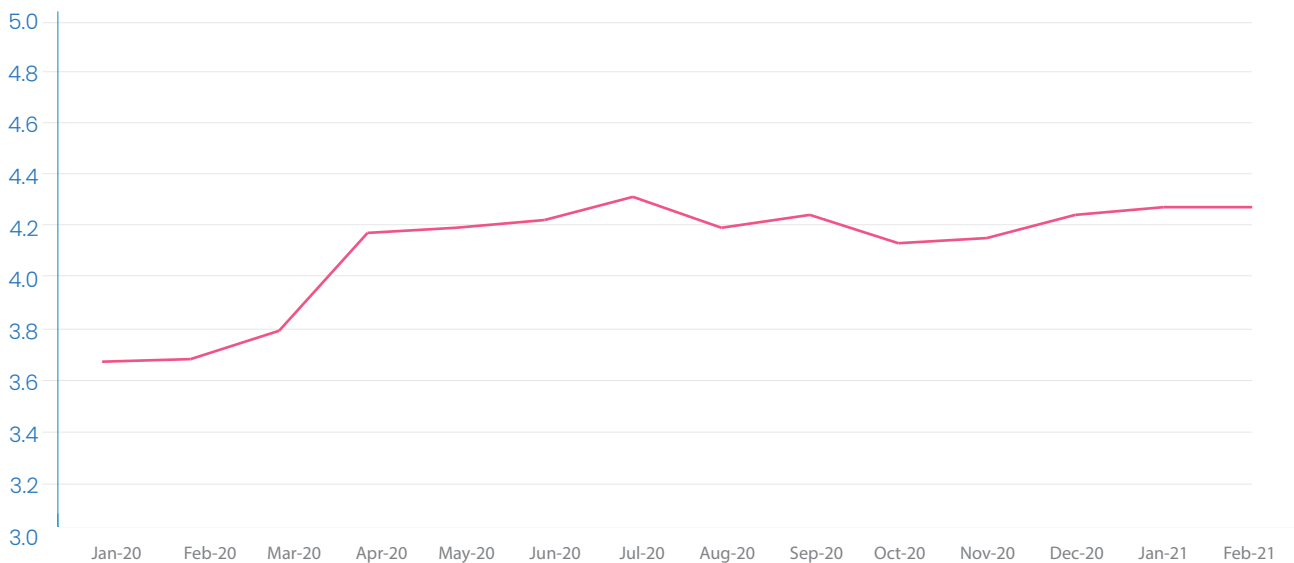


FIGURE 7: EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE WITH ORGANIZATION CULTURE

How can HR leaders do better in 2021?

What's the worst thing that can happen to a company besides losing customers? Losing good employees. CHROs and other HR leaders can tackle this challenge by setting a single goal: To be able to offer employees autonomy, feedback, flexibility, purpose and growth opportunities...or at least most of these things.



"If we can give positive experiences to our employees, we can expect positive performance"

-Rudy Manik,
Chief HR Officer,
FWD Insurance, Indonesia

The takeaway

With over 4500 conversations that Amber has had with nearly 2000 employees all over Southeast Asia, it is clear that the pandemic has caused many fluctuations at the workplace, giving rise to new problems but also increasing trust and loyalty towards the brands that show genuine support and care.

More importantly, it has become abundantly clear that high-skilled workers gravitate toward companies that demonstrate a vision for maximizing the quality of the employee experience over time-- which, in turn, has a significant and positive impact on a company's bottom-line and top-line performance. This is where CHROs and other HR leaders can make a decisive difference in the future of their organizations and prepare better for whatever "unprecedented changes" that lay ahead.

In recent years, CHROs in Southeast Asia have trusted Amber with employee well being and workplace culture of their organizations, and they've all seen exemplary data-driven results.

Data suggests that these organizations have a good team climate with great team support and synergy. Employees have a rapport with their managers that has contributed to higher productivity. Interpersonal experience has been seen to be definitively positive within these organizations and employees have reported a higher sense of pride in their organization and work.



Would you like to join the league?

Sign up

*for a free demo here
and witness Amber in action.*

