

50 IDEAS TO ENGAGE YOUR *REMOTE WORK FORCE*



DISCLAIMER

This document contains data from both secondary and primary data sources. Secondary information is extracted from various reliable sources for which further references are provided. Primary data includes opinions, ideas and judgement of individuals/experts of certain industry experts in the field of employee engagement Feedback Insights interacted with. This whitepaper is intended as a compendium of ideas available in public domain curated by practitioners.

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PREFACE

The recent pandemic has resulted in a paradigm shift within organizations by asking tough questions on how employers need to recognize and rearrange their short term and long-term priorities when it comes to working styles, modes of measurement and engagement. Organizations need to adapt to the new normal, especially in ensuring high levels of productivity, employee connect despite a majority or several staff now working from home. This is even tougher for new recruits i.e. fresh talent or lateral hires.

Communication barriers, lack of personal touch and availability of proper resources to settle into the new work environment posed as early challenges that need to be addressed for business continuity purposes however policies, processes and customs which need to endure need to be defined and practiced by all parts of the organization.

Ensuring mental and physical wellness of employees during this period and allowing employees cope with extended isolations, finding the right work life balance and feeling part of a wider organization is the challenge faced by progressive firms and this paper throws light on 50 ideas practiced by different firms globally in engaging a remote workforce.

WELLNESS

01

VIRTUAL COFFEE MEETINGS

As a replacement for chance meetings in an office, virtual coffee meetings help employees break monotony, network and connect with colleagues and indulge in informal talks and banter, virtually.

- **Random employees are paired up by a bot**, on a weekly basis, and connect for half an hour over lunch or coffee through video conferencing.
- The **virtual breaks are positioned as a new social ritual** amid remote working, to ensure that the frequency of contact between colleagues does not go down



02

HOME WORKSPACE ENABLEMENT

Having an ergonomically optimized workspace goes a long way in helping employees work efficiently and productively, given the stress and health issues that are bound to arise from working in an uncomfortable workspace.

- **Complete workspace infrastructure** including ergonomic chairs, table, router, UPS, mouse, etc. are delivered to the employees' home to help them work comfortably.
- **Allowances are provided to employees** who wish to purchase and set up their own workspace at home.



WELLNESS

03

ONLINE GROUP FITNESS SESSIONS

Group fitness sessions are aimed at encouraging employees to indulge in physical activities, to not only encourage a better lifestyle amid the pandemic, but also helps overcome loneliness and isolation.

- **Weekly online fitness sessions** such as virtual yoga, aerobics and Zumba classes are organized through video conferencing, allowing groups of employees to participate together.
- Employees are given a **set of challenges** to be achieved and a scoreboard is maintained and tracked.
- **Achievers are rewarded** every month and the completion of fitness goals is celebrated virtually
- Some organizations are also including **physical exercise kit** including a yoga mat, dumbbell set branded with organization logo.



04

WALKING MEETINGS

Most people have become fixated to their workstations, working for hours at a stretch within the confines of their room. Realizing the long-term ill effects this might have on employee health, companies have come up with a simple yet effective idea to **encourage employees to walk and move, while working.**

- Employees are encouraged to attend the daily/weekly catch up calls over **hand held devices so that they are able to move and walk** (within or outside their homes) rather than being bound to their workstations. Calls are held through video conferencing/ communication software in mobile phones or tablets.



WELLNESS

05

ONLINE MINDFULNESS SESSIONS

Stress, anxiety and depression have gained prominence more than ever during this pandemic. Virtual mindfulness/meditation sessions help in overcoming anxiety and stress.

- **Fortnightly/monthly sessions on mindfulness** are organized for groups of employees.
- **Experts are invited to conduct the sessions** and offer guidance on self-care and combating stress and anxiety during these difficult times.



06

MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Mental health assistance programs are **aimed at creating a space for employees to open up freely and receive consultation from experts, without being concerned about privacy.**

- Employees are encouraged to connect with mental health counsellors over one-on-one virtual sessions or on telephone, to seek professional help and open up about challenges to resolve personal/work related issues.
- Companies partner with individual experts or centres and the programs are made available to all employees, on need basis.

WELLNESS



07

'No meeting' Fridays

Back to back virtual meetings are a nightmare to many employees, resulting in burnout and mental fatigue. **A day in the week without any meetings has been brought up as a solution by some firms.**

- Employees are encouraged to put out messages or automatic replies informing unavailability for meetings, on a particular day in the week.
- **The time is required to be utilized for self-development** and completing other deadlines and pending activities.



08

Compulsory leave

Despite the availability of unused leaves, employees at times hesitate to take time off, especially while working remotely. **A day off helps employees to reboot and break from prolonged work hours.**

- Firms are including **mandatory paid leave for every employee, every month**, to unwind themselves and attend to personal needs.

WELLNESS

09

INSTALLING APPS TO TRACK SYMPTOMS

With growing health concerns and lack of clarity and information during the pandemic, firms are encouraging employees to **use of apps to track their health conditions and take necessary precautions.**

- All employees, especially front-line employees are required to install healthcare apps on their mobile phones to **receive regular pop up notifications on guidelines, medical advises and updates on their current health condition.**



RECRUITMENT PROCESS

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COMPLETE ONLINE RECRUITMENT

Online recruitment modes not only ensure uninterrupted talent acquisition during the pandemic, but also helps building the employer brand, if handled well.

- **Advanced video interview software** and recruitment platforms come with features to document the **virtual interview and analyse the candidate even on the softer aspects like body language and eye movement.**
- Applicants are shared tips and pointers on virtual interview etiquette to ace the online interview.

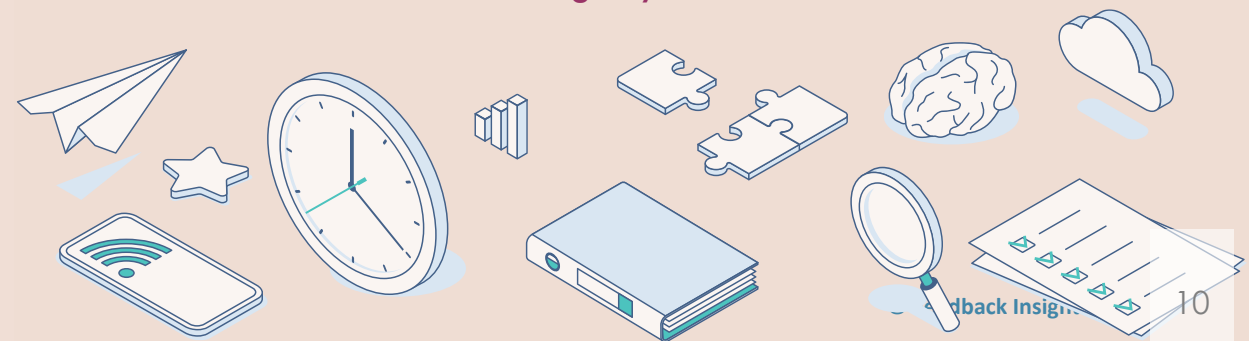


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REVAMPED ONBOARDING KITS

Onboarding kits delivered to recruits in remote working conditions need to include resources essential for the new remote work culture. **The kit should enable employees to seamlessly start working on their new job.**

- Onboarding kits containing essential products such as **laptop, noise suppressor headphones, mouse, router, UPS etc.** are delivered to the residence of the new employee
- Informative guides, paperwork, necessary resources for internal processes and projects are made **digitally** available



RECRUITMENT PROCESS

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VIRTUAL WELCOME PARTY

Virtual welcome parties help new recruits get **comfortable** and accustomed to colleagues informally, in a remote working set up.

- An informal meet up or a party is organized through video conferencing to **introduce new recruits to the respective team.**
- Group activities and games are included as part of the party to **creates opportunities to interact with each other and break the ice**



LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

13

VIRTUAL REALITY

Latest technologies such as VR provide an immersive learning experience to employees, through simulations and enhanced non-verbal communication. VR ensures to hold the attention and interest of employees with engaging representations.

- Scenario-based learning, technical product training for service teams, customer training, soft skills development, diversity and inclusion training, compliance training are some of the applicable areas.
- The content is created by simply recording what happens at the actual place of work

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LEARNING CIRCLES

Learning circles are aimed at encouraging continuous learning across and between teams and also to share cross-team updates.

- Teams of 6-12 people come together virtually and discuss the challenges faced by the team and other career growth areas of interest, in the presence of a moderator.
- Solutions are brainstormed and the learnings are documented and shared with other relevant teams.
- On a quarterly basis, cross functional teams come together to present and share the best ideas gathered during the quarter.



LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

15

LEARNIFICATION

learning through gamification

In the absence of conventional classroom training sessions, **gamification-based online learning methods can make the entire process of learning enjoyable** and boosts the motivation of employees.

- **Learning bits and sessions are gamified and taught through stories**, role play quizzes and other fun games through online modes.
- Employees are given access to a personal **dashboard to track their progress** and benchmark scores with peers, to promote a healthy competition.
- **Employees get to earn points** which can later be used to claim food coupons/vouchers.

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DEAL - Drop Everything And Learn

Amid a busy work schedule, employees fail to invest time beyond working hours to upskill themselves. **The DEAL policy encourages continuous learning among employees in the junior and mid-levels.**

- **A dedicated time is allocated** during which employees are required to drop everything and engage only in learning activities
- Time spared from work **helps employees focus on their learning goals** without being concerned about their daily tasks



LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

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VIRTUAL LEARNING CHALLENGE

To ensure continuous learning and upskilling, employees are encouraged to spend the time they take to commute to office to take up microlearning programs, given that they need not travel to work while working from home.

- Employees are provided access to in-house L&D platforms with relevant courses from which they may pick and choose.
- Microlearning goals are given to employees to achieve within a short time period and rewards are given out upon successful completion of a test.



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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TO TACKLE THE NEW NORMAL

It is essential for managers to be trained to manage and lead teams effectively in remote working conditions.

- Firms are organizing training sessions for managers to effectively use communication and monitoring tools to exercise effective leadership.
- Leadership support programs and learning programs are designed to adapt to the new working model



COLLABORATION



19

AR BASED VIDEO CONFERENCING

Augmented reality superimposes the realistic environment **during conferencing and allows for effective collaboration.**

- AR platforms enable **seamless video conferencing** of almost **1,00,000 employees at a time.**
- **Allows employees to view, interact and share information with peers and managers in real time** with virtual images, which is otherwise difficult with traditional technology, especially in the absence of physical meetings



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VIRTUAL WHITE BOARD

Virtual whiteboards are a simpler and cost-effective alternative to AR based video conferencing, **allowing teams to effectively express ideas and brainstorm in real-time.**

- Several virtual online whiteboard platforms are being **increasingly adopted by firms as part of their regular brainstorming sessions.**
- **An unlimited canvas** helps draw out strategies, ideas, and propositions while recreating an office environment.
- Advanced features such as attaching files and images for reference and enhanced representations are available

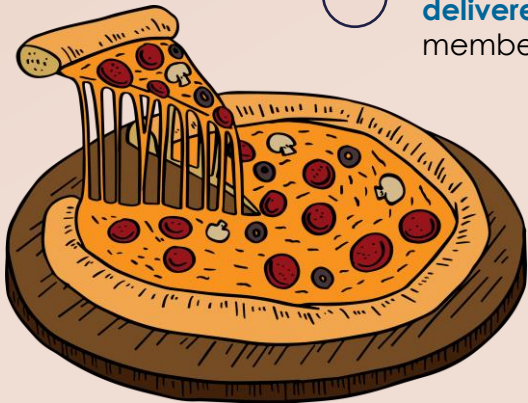
COLLABORATION

21

MEETINGS OVER LUNCH

Lunch meetings enable employees to socialize and brainstorming ideas over virtual lunch with smaller teams.

- Unstructured meetings are scheduled** at a common convenient lunch time to discuss ideas and make decisions.
- A formal agenda is set** and a designated host is appointed as the meeting facilitator.
- Companies are also arranging for food to be delivered to ensure** the presence of all team members



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VIRTUAL HELPDESK

Employees often struggle trying to fix technical issues with their work devices, in the absence of the IT team, in a remote working condition. **Having a virtual helpdesk team that can trouble shoot and figure out solutions can help employees carry out their daily tasks without hassles.**

- A dedicated on- call or virtual technical assistance team** is set up to resolve and repair issues faster.
- Backup tablets or smaller devices are made available to critical resources for office work



COLLABORATION

23

VIRTUAL COMPANY RETREATS

Amid the pandemic, companies have had to cancel fun offsite catch-ups. However, **a yearly virtual event to reconnect, build relationship and gain momentum among all the distributed employees can work wonders.**

- Organizing teams are formed to **brainstorm ideas and prepare for the virtual retreat.**
- Continuous reminders, hashtags and other campaigns are sent out to **increase the excitement level** and ensure full involvement.
- Creative games and team activities with illustrative and goofy videos are **floatated for fun and entertainment**



COMMUNICATION

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VIRTUAL WATER COOLER BREAKS

Virtual water cooler breaks are **aimed at helping employees overcome loneliness** and take a break from long working hours. Employees are encouraged to take a break in between work hours to socialize and chit chat with fellow colleagues.

- A virtual space is created for employees to team up and **interact with colleagues in between office hours.**
- The **purpose of the meeting is clearly communicated** and employees can use the time to indulge in informal conversations and banter.
- **Reminders are set up to make sure employees do not skip the meetings**



25

VIRTUAL TOWNHALL MEETINGS

Virtual townhalls help senior leaders **interact with a larger group of employees, address queries** and keep them informed and assured about the latest developments within the firm. These sessions help build employee morale in unprecedented times.

- Several online meeting platforms accommodate a **large audience to connect online and engage in interactive sessions.**
- **Quick polls** are also included as part of the townhall to capture employee perceptions, which can later be actionized.



COMMUNICATION



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INFORMAL KNOWLEDGE SHARING SESSIONS

Knowledge sharing sessions are aimed at **connecting people who share common interests** and others who would like to explore a new hobby/activity.

- Periodic online meetings are organized for groups of employees to **discuss personal life experiences**, developing a new hobby and share ideas outside work.
- **Employees are encouraged to conduct online workshops and informal webinars** to encourage colleagues who are interested in a new hobby/activity.



27

MY VOICE' PLATFORM TO EXPRESS ONESELF

Encouraging employees to express their thoughts and ideas even in a remote set up is essential to boost engagement and foster innovation.

- The 'My Voice' platform allows **employees to express and exchange thoughts** not just about work but also about other current affairs.
- The common platform allows all employees to view ideas expressed by colleagues and also **comment and provide constructive feedback**.

COMMUNICATION

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SURVEY AND POLLS

Continuous feedback and engagement are more essential than ever to understand employee concerns and perceptions, in unprecedented times. Surveys and polls are effective channels to understand and address employee challenges and concerns.

- **Daily pulse surveys and polls are conducted to understand employee** moods during the course of the week, to assess patterns.
- Questions on workplace challenges and concerns in regards to communication, ease of working, availability of resources and other factors are posed as part of weekly/monthly surveys.



BOOSTING MORALE



29

CELEBRATING AND SHARING PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENTS/MILESTONES

Celebrating small happiness and achievements helps **spread positivity while being distributed; boosts interpersonal relationship** and makes employees more connected and comfortable in a new environment.

- Employees are encouraged to share pictures or videos of activities or personal events – **picture of a baked cake, videos of kids singing/dancing, pet videos etc.**
- Showcasing talent or hobbies through videos or a picture are also encouraged.

30

MOVIE NIGHT

Platform for movie buffs to come together and watch **a movie during the weekend** – brings about a sense of togetherness.

- Employees sharing a common interest for a particular movie genre **team up to stream** movies together on digital viewing platforms.
- **Online forums are created to post movie reviews and discuss** fun stuff like alternative endings and other topics pertaining to movies.



BOOSTING MORALE



31

RADIO TIME

To help employees combat loneliness, firms are constantly thinking about means to keep them connected and feel light-hearted, even beyond working hours.

- Teams are formed by a group of volunteers to set up an in-house radio channel to provide bouts of motivation and engage in fun activities, even beyond regular working hours.



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TOKENS OF APPRECIATION

Simple initiatives to recognize exemplary performance even during difficult times can go a long way in boosting employee morale and motivating co-workers.

- Managers are required to spend a few minutes to **identify and appreciate** an employee every week, for his/her outstanding performance, during team meetings.
- **Small rewards** such as vouchers or books are sent to the employee.
- A **scoreboard is maintained** to recognize the best performers over a period of time.

BOOSTING MORALE

33

ONLINE GAMES

Team building activities have always been effective in promoting team bonding and collaboration. With remote working conditions, online games and team building activities are being increasingly adopted.

- Fun and quick games such quiz, dumb charades are conducted within groups of employees across different levels and locations to take time out from work and promote team bonding.



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BOOKWORM BUDDIES

Book lovers are encouraged to exchange and share books to read during leisure.

- Online forums are created to bring together employees who share a common interest for books.
- Employees discuss and exchange books through delivery partners or share e-books.



BOOSTING MORALE

35

CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM

The crisis management team **focusses on addressing concerns and issues regularly**; bridges the communication gap between employees and the management.

- A group of internal teams are formed to interact regularly with all employees across levels with answers to the current challenges and changing business environment.
- The crisis management team coordinates with the senior management on a weekly basis to report issues faced by employees and provide suggestions to tackle the same.



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FACE TIME WITH EMPLOYEES

Video meetings are often more effective than audio-based meetings as the former **helps employees connect at a deeper level than the latter**, in a remote working set up.

- Employees are required to take part in meetings with the camera on.
- During informal occasions, family members and kids are also encouraged to join the meeting.



BOOSTING MORALE

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PLATFORMS TO SHOWCASE TALENT

Allocating a dedicated time to **showcase talent in a virtual set up** can go a long way in boosting employee morale and creating a feeling of belongingness.

- **Monthly informal meetings are scheduled to showcase talents** like singing, painting, dancing. An employee from each team is picked up every month to showcase his/her talent.



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CONNECTING WITH FAMILY MEMBERS

Allows children, elderly people or partners to connect with the families of other colleagues occasionally.

- Organize fun activities for the entire family to participate and maintain a family score board for small rewards.



BOOSTING MORALE

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CHARITY DRIVES

In difficult times like these, **employees coming together as a family to contribute and give back to the society** can boost their morale and bring about a sense of satisfaction.

- Employees are encouraged to purchase online and avail gift cards or coupons which if used, can form donations for public funds.
- Volunteers are encouraged to prepare and distribute food for the needy.
- Virtual social service programs are organized to encourage donation for good causes.



COMP & BEN

40

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

With employees struggling to handle personal and professional life in remote working conditions, child care assistance is a boon to many.

- Virtual camps are sponsored by firms to engage the children of employees, during long holidays from school.
- Allowances are provided to employees to avail child care assistance during working days.



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SPECIAL BONUS

Special bonuses are aimed at boosting morale and appreciating the service of front-line employees, amid the pandemic.

- Front line employees are given a 'Thank You' bonus for dedicated work amid the pandemic.
- Twice the actual salary is paid to employees below a certain level, to manage additional expenses.
- Compensation pay in lieu of missing shifts.



COMP & BEN

42

WORK FROM HOME REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

The new normal has changed the hygiene needs of employees and employers are increasingly revisiting the components that may be included under reimbursement policies.

- Components such as conveyance and lunch expenses are being replaced with elements such as tech products, WFH furniture, power back up equipment, internet charges etc.

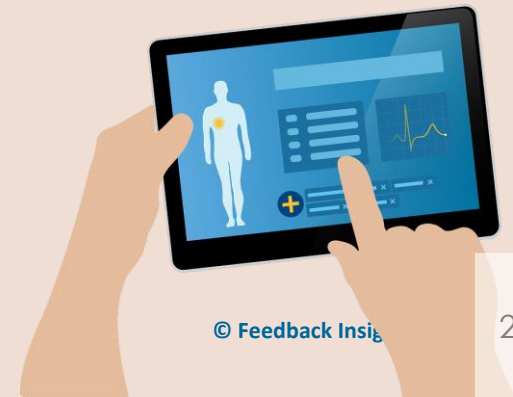


43

HEALTH CARE SUPPORT

Healthcare assistance and coverage is gaining more importance amid the pandemic and firms are looking at supporting employees, helping them avoid financial burden.

- 100% coverage is offered on expenses for COVID related diagnostic and treatment of employees and family members.
- Doctors are made available on call for virtual diagnosis and consultation.



PROCESS/POLICY CHANGES

44

DATA PROTECTION SOFTWARE

Remote working has increased the risk of data privacy and protection, calling for robust data protection protocols and tools.

- Antivirus software and software to protect against data loss are integrated into all devices of employees working remotely.
- Regular audits of employee devices are conducted to ensure adherence to data security policies.



45

SHARING THE TIME ZONE BURDEN

With employees working remotely from across the world, multinational companies are **revisiting their meeting policies and schedules, being mindful of the different time zones.**

- Meetings scheduled with the help of bots at a time convenient for all the team members, spread across the globe.
- For recurring meetings with different time zones, the schedule is rotated every alternate week to ensure fairness.



PROCESS/POLICY CHANGES

46

METRICS FOR PERFORMANCE

KPIs are being revisited keeping in mind the constraints in achieving targets, during extended periods of remote working.

- Shorter incentive plans are designed to recognize work and boost motivation.
- Performance metrics are **designed to be result driven rather than time driven.**



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PRODUCTIVITY TRACKING

Tracking productivity while working remotely can be a challenge to employers and employees are concerned about their hard work going unnoticed. To tackle this and to **make performance evaluation more transparent, advanced software are being employed.**

- **Productivity tracking software are installed into devices in order to measure the time spent** by employees on various activities, apps and website usage to monitor and evaluate productivity.
- The stats help employees manage their day and workload effectively and also allows for transparency between managers and team members.



PROCESS/POLICY CHANGES

48

CLOUD BASED ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Essential database and information need to be made **accessible to all employees** to ensure workflow continuity.

- Employees are required to **store all work-related data on the cloud for easy access** from anywhere and by all team members.



49

FINANCE PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Several employees seek **support and guidance on effective financial planning** especially during unprecedented times. A professional financial planning app could be a simple solution.

- By partnering with experts, firms are encouraging and advising employees to install reputed and validated financial planning apps
- Short sessions are organized by teaming up with experts to brief interested employees on effective financial planning.



PROCESS/POLICY CHANGES

50

EDUCATING EMPLOYEES ON SAFETY MEASURES

Awareness about safety measures is essential during difficult times like these. Employees often appreciate and trust information shared by the organization as it would be authentic.

- Dedicated sessions are organized to educate the employees on precautions and measures to combat the pandemic.
- Training programs and workshops are conducted for front-line employees on employee safety, workplace protocols, contactless service for customer, care for family and related topics, to minimize risk.
- Essential resources such as masks, PPE kits, sanitizer, head gear are given to given to employees and their family members.



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