

# SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE

HOW EUROPEAN COMPANIES AND  
INSTITUTIONS CONTRIBUTE TO SINGAPORE'S  
SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE

POSITION PAPER & E-BOOK

2021-2022



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In the wake, of the coronavirus pandemic, there has been an increased focus on the wellbeing of the workforce and the conversation has turned towards a sustainable workforce. In 2021, the European Chamber of Commerce in Singapore decided to embrace this topic in the hopes of obtaining a better understanding of what is needed for the industry and government in order to make the workforce sustainable.

In the Sustainable Workforce Whitebook the aim was to understand how European companies and institutions can contribute to Singapore's sustainable workforce as well as how we can build a sustainable workforce in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Singapore has previously announced its 2030 green plan and here it is important as well to take into consideration the need to build a sustainable workforce in the transition towards a green economy.

The Sustainability Whitebook is comprised of a position paper on the topic of the Sustainable Workforce written by Dr Bob Aubrey, Founder of the ASEAN Human Development Organisation (AHDO) and Chair of EuroCham's Human Development Committee. Additionally, the Whitebook contains two eBooks from EuroCham hosted webinars on the topic of the Sustainable Workforce with speakers from the industry, the institutions, and the government.

# ABOUT EUROCHAM



## WHO WE ARE

EuroCham is an independent non-profit organisation governed by members, representing the common interest of the European business community in promoting bilateral trade, services and investments between Europe and Singapore and the region.

## WHAT WE DO

EuroCham represents the voice of the European business community in Singapore. We provide our members with a forum for advocacy, networking and information sharing within the European and Singaporean business communities and governmental circles.

## OUR NETWORK

EuroCham gives you access to a large networking pool consisting of the bilateral National Business Groups, European companies operating in Singapore, the Singaporean government, the Singaporean business community, the diplomatic circle and key partners across ASEAN.

Our network helps you connect with business leaders from a variety of business industries. We offer a wide range of events such as prestigious gala dinners or luncheons attended by high-level executives like the "European Luncheon", "Schuman Lecture" and the "Awards Gala Dinner". Take part in discussions rounds with experts and business representatives and social networking events such as the "European Networking Nights" that provide your company with a increased corporate visibility.

## OUR COMMITTEES

Our committees provide a common European platform to exchange information, discuss common issues businesses face and undertake coordinated initiatives. Through 12 committees we carry out advocacy work and publish position papers to put forward our recommendations.



SMART MOBILITY



HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



SUSTAINABILITY



DIGITAL ECONOMY



INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR)



WINE & SPIRITS



FINANCIAL SERVICES



REGIONAL TAX



AEROSPACE & AIR TRAVEL



HEALTHCARE



SUPPLY CHAIN



PACKAGING



## CHAPTER 1:

# SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE POSITION PAPER

2021 - 2020

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## INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

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The Human Development Committee of the European Chamber of Commerce in Singapore (EuroCham) enables senior-level executives to share information and perspectives on the workforce in Singapore and across the region. The Committee provides regulatory updates, features experts and innovators, and organises dialogues with the Singapore government and regional bodies. Members include HR representatives of European companies based in Singapore, business schools, and consulting firms for exchange on strategic matters pertaining to human development including leadership, learning, technology, sustainability, and the future of work.

The Human Development Committee of EuroCham Singapore has long been a proactive partner for workforce issues with the Singapore government, not only as a business stakeholder and investor but also as a promoter of human development for Singaporeans in European companies. For example, in 2014 we published a white paper “The Internship Imperative” on the growing importance of internships in higher education, with a Singapore delegation hosted by Siemens in Munich to see first-hand how European internships work. Over the years, we have organised dialogue sessions with tripartite members and participated in conferences and projects.

The COVID-19 pandemic reveals a new context for collaboration between the European business community and the Singapore government: workforce sustainability. The workforce sustainability project led by the Human Development Committee worked collaborated with Accenture, represented by Mr Nesan Govender, ASEAN Talent & Organisation Lead for the overall sustainability project.

The committee held two separate panel webinar discussions on the Singapore sustainable workforce.

The first was held on 30 June 2021 on the theme 'Developing a Sustainable Workforce in the Transition towards a Green Economy' with a panel of speakers:

- Mr Nesan Govender, Accenture in the role of moderator
- Ms Chelvin Loh, Director - Jobs Skills Insights Division, SkillsFuture Singapore
- Mr Adrian Tan, Strategist, Institute for Human Resource Professionals (IHRP)
- Mr Gavin Adda, CEO (Asia) at Total Solar

The second was held on 23 September 2021 on the theme 'Building a Sustainable Workforce and Society' with a panel of speakers:

- Dr Bob Aubrey, Founder and Strategic Advisor, ASEAN Human Development Organisation in the role of moderator
- Ms Low Peck Kem, CHRO & Advisor (Workforce Development), Singapore Public Service Division
- Dr Thai Lai Pham, President & CEO, Siemens ASEAN
- Mr Nesan Govender, ASEAN Talent & Organisation Lead, Accenture
- Mr Alvin Goh, Executive Director, Singapore Human Resources Institute (SHRI)

Additionally, the Human Development Committee participated in a dialogue meeting at NTUC on 27 August 2021.

On 6 October 2021, EuroCham engaged closed-door dialogue on issues of “fairness on the work floor” during a 1 ½ hour session with Minister of Manpower Dr Tan See Leng and Senior Minister of State, Mr Zaqy Mohamad. Dr Bob Aubrey, facilitated the questions from various firms that participated, covering wide-ranging topics such as the challenges of COVID-19, anti-discrimination laws and workplace fairness, and developing Singapore’s workforce in an open economy.

These meetings and panel discussions have allowed the Human Development Committee to identify 10 areas of dialogue and collaboration with Singapore stakeholders that promote a sustainable workforce and society.

## DEFINITION OF THE SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE

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The sustainable workforce is defined by EuroCham as a diverse and inclusive workforce that continues to develop social stakeholders as well as achieving the economic goals of the business. This definition represents a human development model whose purpose goes beyond the purely economic goals of "human resource" and "human capital" models. Sustainability requires a model of work that includes all human stakeholders in a process of continuous development, which is why we use the expression 'sustainable workforce and society'.

What is NOT sustainable is corporate practices where real income stagnates while productivity grows, where employers 'race to the bottom' to find the cheapest labour, where there is inadequate investment in workforce training and reskilling, and where social stakeholders are excluded through bias.

Simply put, a sustainable workforce is a circular social contract where human development drives business sustainability, and business, in turn, invests in the sustainable human development of its stakeholders.

Companies have a key role in creating a sustainable workforce - but so do governments, education institutions, professional service firms, and civil service organisations. That is why the Human Development Committee includes European companies (multi-nationals as well as small and medium-sized enterprises), European business schools and Singapore universities, consulting firms, and not-for-profit organisations like ASEAN Human Development Organisation and the EU-ASEAN SHARE project for higher education.

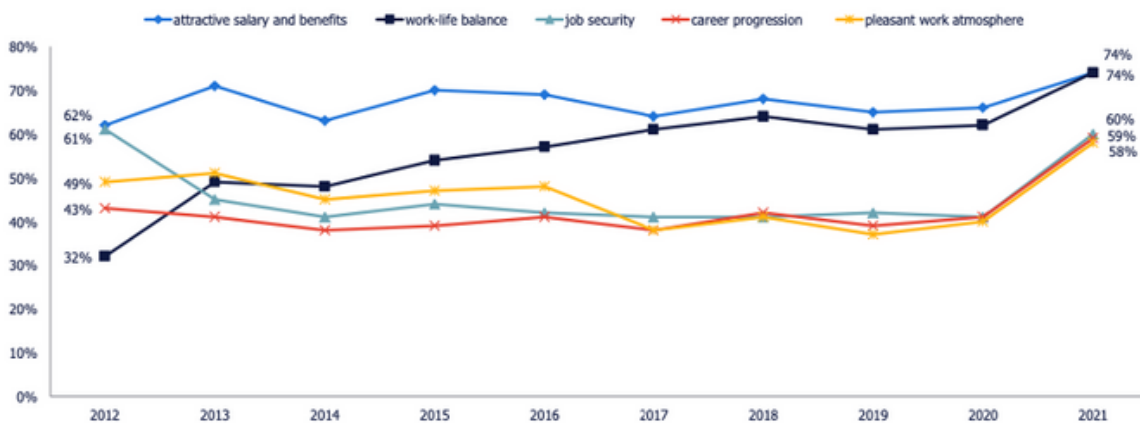


## IS SINGAPORE READY FOR A MORE HOLISTIC MODEL OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT?

Sustaining a competitive workforce in Singapore has always been driven by investment to create a skilled workforce, adaptation to new technologies, and enterprise creation. What is new for sustaining Singapore’s workforce are the social and ethical issues that have emerged with the COVID-19 pandemic.

To take an example, a Randstad study showed that for workers in Singapore, working from home especially with children, working online without time limitations, and anxiety over unemployment and organisational restructuring has significantly increased the importance of work-life balance to the point where it is equal to salary in importance.

### WORK-LIFE BALANCE CONSISTENCY INCREASE IN IMPORTANCE AMONG LOCAL RESPONDENTS



Current workforce sustainability issues for companies in Singapore include promotion of the Fair Consideration Framework, training and exposure of Singaporeans for key positions in multinational companies, promotion of health and work-life balance for employees, flexibility in working time and place of work, inclusion measures for seniors and disabled, progressive remuneration especially for low-income workers, safety nets for gig- and contract workers, and - importantly for EuroCham - promotion of a harmonious social atmosphere in which Singaporeans and expatriates live and work together.





## THE VOICE OF SINGAPORE AND EUROPEAN LEADERS

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Singaporean and European business leaders agree that in an advanced economy like Singapore, building a sustainable workforce and society is no longer a question of adding a few new indicators to a human capital model. It is about the social and economic welfare using the more holistic model of human development.

Federico Donato, EuroCham President, represents the voice of the European business community in Singapore when he states:

*Digitalisation and re-skilling the workforce has been on the agenda for both the government and businesses for several years now, however, the COVID pandemic has accelerated this move exponentially. Thus, it is important that we support the government in up-skilling the local workforce while also encouraging the exchange of talent between Singapore and the rest of the world so that Singapore continues to grow even bigger as a global hub.*

Dr Thai Lai Pham, President & CEO Siemens ASEAN discussed in our second workshop how European companies are promoting better use of time for a more productive workforce:

*We are moving away from a 'presence economy' to a more 'output driven economy' For us, it is not so important to work in the office; performance is about work quality and productivity. We now have a global policy where our workforce can work two to three days a week on a mobile basis, from work locations where they are most productive.*

The Singapore Business Federation is tackling the issue of inequality in the Singapore workforce through their sustainable employment initiative:

*Even as the government seeks to strengthen social cohesion, the business community can help to nurture an inclusive society by addressing the needs of the elderly, the less well-off, and those who are vulnerable to job disruption. There are no winners when the social compact breaks down.<sup>1</sup>*

According to Ms Low Peck Kem, CHRO and Advisor (Workforce Development) at Singapore Public Service Division, and President of the Singapore Human Resources Institute SHRI, the government is well aware that improving welfare for everyone is a social goal for sustainable employment.

*As the single largest employer in Singapore, the public service is looking not only at how to enhance productivity but also how to improve the quality of life for everyone. With a changing workforce, we thrive to promote fair, progressive, and sustainable people strategies to ensure a high-performing public service in Singapore.*

<sup>1</sup> The Singapore Business Federation brochure "Sustainable Employment: Achieving Purposeful Business Success Together"

According to Mr Nesan Govender, research at Accenture shows a strong rise in stakeholder demand for the sustainability of the workforce:

*Our future of work research shows that employees believe that organisations should be responsible for leaving them 'net better off'. What this means is a holistic responsibility for taking care of their financial needs, their learning needs, and also their emotional needs. Gone are the days when sustainability was a policy or reporting-driven topic, it is more a holistic topic that requires contributions from all stakeholders in an organization for building a sustainable workforce.*

## HOW EUROPEAN COMPANIES CAN CONTRIBUTE TO NEW SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES FOR SINGAPORE

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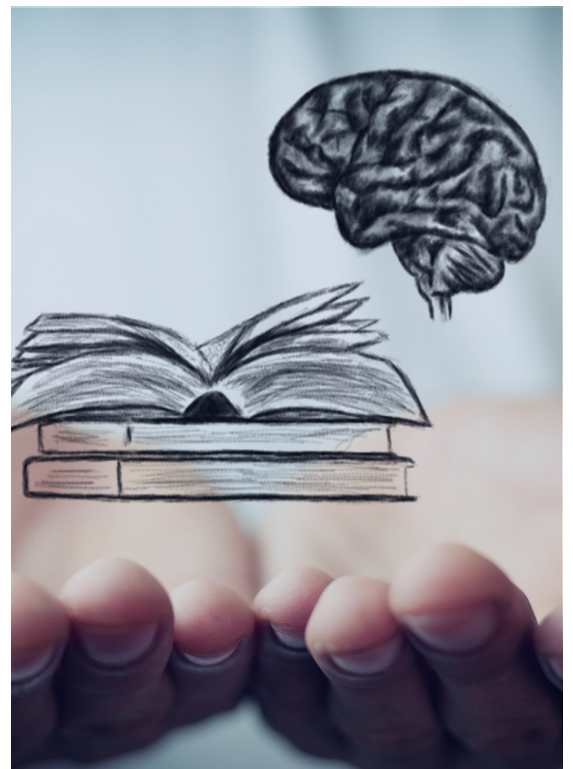
European companies are among the leading partners for Singapore in the new areas of building a sustainable workforce and society. This is because European laws and labor policies are stakeholder-based, with work cultures that promote respect for human rights, the ILO decent work mission, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Another important contribution by European companies comes from the fact that they are multicultural by nature. European universities and business schools, as well as corporate training programmes, promote multicultural leadership and diverse workforces. The EU is committed to reducing social inequalities, maintaining social justice, and investing in human development in the workplace. And no business culture is stronger in promoting mobility and exposure to other cultures and capabilities in managing diversity and inclusion of different cultures for a productive workforce.

In Singapore, European companies have embraced and are amongst the leading examples for implementation of the Fair Consideration Framework of Singapore as well as providing opportunities for Singaporeans to develop their careers outside their home country and develop regional and global leadership experience.

At the same time in Singapore, European business has expressed concerns about the sustainability of Singapore as an advanced business hub. Changes in work pass policies as well as social media and political statements have brought into question the recognition of expatriates as contributors to the sustainability of the Singaporean workforce and society. These concerns have been aired in meeting with different Singaporean stakeholders.

The good news is that, difficult as the COVID pandemic has been for business and society in all countries, we believe EuroCham and Singapore have the opportunity to enlarge the scope of collaboration.



The Human Development Committee has identified a number of sustainability challenges for the Singapore workforce and society where constructive dialogue and action can have an impact. These are:

1. Managing a multinational workforce in which Singaporean workers and foreign work pass holders work harmoniously together and Singaporeans have opportunities for key positions in the company, according to the Fair Treatment Framework.
2. Building sustainability for contingent workers (freelancers, remote and part-time workers) with social safety nets and future career opportunities.
3. Improving Work-Life balance, resilience, and mental health at work. This includes managing humane policies for presence in the workplace and preparing eventual reduction in working hours from the current 44 hours per week standard.
4. Investing in total factor productivity measures that benefit a sustainable workforce.
5. Ensuring a skilled and digitally capable workforce with lifelong learning for all workers, as well as soft skills and leadership capabilities and mindsets.
6. Managing environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies.
7. Promoting a multigenerational workplace (interns, early career, working parents, senior workers).
8. Providing international exposure. This includes opportunities for student interns and young career professionals for future career development. It also includes developing distance working where expatriates do not have to reside in Singapore to work in Singapore, and Singaporeans can work internationally from Singapore.
9. Collaborating on initiatives and policies that promote ecological and infrastructure sustainability.
10. Collaboration on initiatives and policies that promote lifestyle, health, and meaning for workers and for quality of life in Singapore.

## CONCLUSION

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The sustainable workforce is not a fad or marketing concept but represents a shift in defining people as a purpose and as stakeholders for the economy and business. Human development is not for countries trying to catch up with advanced economies: Singapore's advanced economy is confronted with social as well as economic human development challenges, just as the EU is regularly challenged by human development issues.

The position of EuroCham Singapore, represented by its Human Development Committee is that the post-COVID 'new normal' is not at all a return to the traditional models of people as a human resource or human capital. Social as well as economic development is essential for Singapore to build the next model of its sustainable workforce, and European businesses and institutions in Singapore have a uniquely advantageous role to play as dialogue partners and workforce leaders in Singapore's post-COVID journey.

## ABBREVIATIONS

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ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
DEI	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
EU	European Union
EU SHARE	EU Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region
EuroCham	European Chamber of Commerce
ICO	International Labour Organization
IHRP	Institute for Human Resources
NTUC	National Trade Union Congress
SHRI	Singapore Human Resource Institute
UN	United Nation



## CHAPTER 2:

# THE NEED TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE

## IN THE TRANSITION TOWARDS A GREEN ECONOMY

E-Book:

A resource for the attendees of the webinar held on 29 June, 2021

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**Ms Chelvin Loh**

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**SkillsFuture Singapore**

**Speaker**

**Mr Gavin Adda**

Chief Executive Officer

Total Solar Distributed Generation Asia

**Speaker**

**Mr Adrian Tan**

Strategist, Future of Work

Institute for Human Resource

Professionals

**Speaker**

**Mr Nesan Govender**

ASEAN Talent & Organisational

Lead

Accenture

**Moderator**



# SUMMARY

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On 29 June 2021, the European Chamber of Commerce (Singapore) invited distinguished speakers from SkillsFuture Singapore, Institute for Human Resource Professionals, Total Energies, and Accenture to share their knowledge with the public in a webinar titled "The Need for Developing a Sustainable Workforce in the Transition towards Green Economy". The aim was to discuss the impact of Singapore 2030 Green Plan on the labour market and what is required in the creation of "green jobs".

One of the key takeaways from the webinar was that organisations have to start their sustainability journey sooner rather than later. It might be worth starting small and exploring what works but the organisation has to remember to include the entire workforce. There was no doubt from the speakers that Singapore's 2030 Green Plan offers a variety of opportunities for organisation to become more sustainable.

Another key takeaway from the webinar was that organisations are increasingly focusing on soft skills. Soft skills are more easily transferable between different sectors compared to hard skills.

# INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that there is a lot of conversation going on about the decarbonisation economy. At the moment many organisations are trying to understand how to move forward in terms of the right behaviours, getting the right scorecards and metrics in place. However, one of the most critical elements that organisations should keep in mind is the future of work. How should organisations think about green jobs and green skills? How does an organisation take into consideration the sustainability of its workforce?



**IT IS IMPORTANT THAT EVERY SINGLE EMPLOYEE IS AWARE OF THE ORGANISATION'S SUSTAINABILITY GOALS.**

on sustainable organisations

**Mr Nesan Govender**  
**ASEAN Talent &**  
**Organisation Lead**  
**Accenture**

There are a number of different sustainability elements that are working in harmony with each other for a sustainable workforce to be achievable. These include diversity and inclusion. It also includes ways in which organisations actively seek to level the playing fields and bring together various components of the ecosystem within the organisation to ensure the mission and purpose of the organisation are aligned with the sustainability agenda.

It is important that every single employee is aware of the organisation's sustainability goals. These sustainability goals can range anywhere from creating an open environment where employees can have open dialogues to ensuring that the necessary practices are in place to derive the right levels of engagements. They could also include whether the organisation has responsible rescaling programmes to ensure that its workforce can be much more sustainable and maintain longevity; or whether the organisation's leadership is aligned when it comes to the organisation's sustainability framework. All of these components align to build up the concept of a sustainable workforce.

# SINGAPORE 2030 GREEN PLAN

Ms Chelvin Loh

One of the main questions when discussing the future of the green economy is to understand what are the new skills needed, be they technical or soft skills, and the potential skills gaps in our workforce.

The Singapore Green Plan 2030 was launched in February 2021. It presents clear strategies and concrete targets to strengthen the economic climate and resource resilience in Singapore as well as improve the living environment and bring about new business opportunities and job openings over the next 10 years.

There are five key pillars to the 2030 Green Plan.

The first pillar, named City in Nature, is about creating a green, liveable, and sustainable home for Singaporeans.

The second pillar is about Energy Reset, where the focus is on reducing emissions through cleaner energy. This can be achieved by increasing the energy efficiency to minimise Singapore's carbon footprint.

The third pillar revolves around Sustainable Living, through an increased focus on reducing carbon emissions, keeping the environment clean, and saving resources and energy as a way of life.

Pillar Four touches on the Green Economy where the aim is to seek new green growth opportunities across different sectors to create new jobs, transform existing industries, and harness sustainability as a competitive advantage.

The last pillar is related to the Resilient Future, which is about building a resilient culture, being climate-resilient, and enhancing food security. In the development of the Green Plan, it is paramount to understand what the environmental objectives are, how can skills and jobs be more focused on sustainability and sustainable solutions, and how can organisations develop greater sustainable use of economic resources.

## GREEN INNOVATIONS

There has been growing momentum in Singapore on green initiatives such as solar farms, high-tech aqua-culture farms, electric vehicles, and green finance. With all these green innovations emerging, the question we ask ourselves is how these innovations will transform jobs and skills. Specifically, which skill sets does the workforce need to be equipped with to tap these opportunities.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO  
UNDERSTAND  
WHAT SKILLS ARE  
NEEDED TO MAKE  
JOBS GREENER



on jobs in the green economy

**Ms Chelvin Loh**  
**Director of Job-Skills Insights**  
**Division SkillsFuture Singapore**

There are a couple of different ways to view this transformation. The first one is that "brown" industries are going green. An example of this is the transition from coal to solar or wind power, which is creating new jobs such as renewable energy account managers, solar PV technicians /engineers, and farm technologists. The second way is how new green occupations can develop due to new government regulations, new technologies, or practices. An example would be better guidelines for environmental, social, and governance (ESG) reporting which will lead to new roles such as sustainability analysts and managers. It is important to understand what skills are needed to make jobs greener, especially jobs like business development managers and financial investment analysts, as they will be called upon to assess business and investment opportunities from a sustainability perspective.

## ASSESSING THE SKILLS

How can organisations tap into the green opportunities presented by the Green Economy? Is it enough to invest alone in these specialised green skills? We believe that in the future of work, soft skills will become even more important as we manage the different digital and green technologies. In fact, 80% of employers surveyed by LinkedIn found that soft skills are increasingly important to an organisation's success. As such, it is imperative for individuals and enterprises to invest in both technical and soft skills to drive forth the future of work in the green economy.

When transitioning into a green economy, it is necessary to assess what skills are needed to make this happen. One of the ways to do this is to first assess which skills you have that are transferable. These transferable skills are usually required by more job roles and sectors, hence they help individuals better pivot across roles. On the other hand, there are also skills that are more specialised, to support specific functions in sectors. It is important for enterprises to assess what additional skills they need to prepare their workforce for the green transition.

**IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ORGANISATIONS TO DRIVE THE TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE IN SINGAPORE.**

*Ms Chelvin Loh*

At the present time, there are quite a significant number of jobs and skills in our national jobs-skills repository that are related to the green economy. They are in a wide spectrum of sectors such as manufacturing, , aerospace, engineering services, the built environment, landscape, environmental services, and marine and offshore engineering.

## LEADERSHIP SKILLS

There are a couple of skills that are more important such as speed and agility – how are management teams able to achieve the speed and agility the organisation needs. It is about taking action while starting small. One of the main questions is: where does the organisation develop its core capabilities? It is about starting smart and starting from day one. It is also important for organisations to build a culture of experimentation. With business, transformation comes workforce transformation but it is a question of where to start?

## DEFINITION OF A SUSTAINABLE WORKFOCE

The sustainable workforce should embrace three important elements, namely environmental, economic, and social inclusion. Firstly, it is important that the workforce is environmentally-conscious and use the appropriate resources. Secondly, it is important that the workforce is able to look at the needs of the business through the lens of sustainability. Lastly, the workforce has to be socially inclusive.

With the transition towards a green economy and a sustainable workforce, the world is on the cusp of a big and unprecedented change. Organisations have to think about where they stand in this change and ensure they are a part of it. It is easy to take the first step. An organisation could start by looking at the skills gaps which might be in the company or which transitions are required.

## CRITICAL CORE SKILLS (CCS)

In 2020, SkillsFuture Singapore, a statutory board under the Ministry of Education, launched the Critical Core Skills (CCS), which is a set of 16 transferable skills that enable individuals to be employable and facilitate their career mobility. The CCS are bucketed into three different areas. The first is thinking critically which includes skills like sense-making, trans-disciplinary thinking, and problem-solving. The second bucket is on interacting with others which includes new skills like building inclusivity, collaboration, and communication. The third bucket is about staying relevant where the importance is on learning agility, self-management, building global perspectives, digital fluency, as well as adaptability. CCS is relevant for everyone to develop a set of transferable soft skills to support career advancement or transition in the green economy.



# A SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE FROM AN HR PERSPECTIVE

Mr Adrian Tan

Across leadership teams, there are also a couple of skills that are more important, such as how management teams are able to achieve the speed and agility the organisation needs. It is about taking action while starting small. One of the key questions for leadership teams to deliberate on is how organisations can build a culture of experimentation, by starting smart and starting from day one to develop its core capabilities.

## NATIONAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR WORKPLACE LEARNING (NACE)

Beside skills development for individuals, it is important for organisations to be equipped with the capabilities to drive workplace learning as they seek to be more sustainable. Organisations can tap initiatives under the National Centre of Excellence for Workplace Learning (NACE), an initiative supported by SkillsFuture Singapore, to build and develop their workplace learning capabilities in various aspects such as strategy, leadership, planning, implementation and process, environment, as well as training needs analysis.

To sum it up, there is no doubt that all organisations can transit into the green economy. However, it will require organisations to set the right goals, understand how job content will change with the new sustainability requirements and technologies, and develop deliberate efforts to help their workforce identify and build the transferable technical and soft skills to support the whole green transition.

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAKE SUSTAINABILITY A KEY PART OF THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS AND ONBOARDING.**

Mr Adrian Tan

From an HR perspective, it is more about the entire process towards a sustainable workforce. The approach should not only focus on attracting and keeping the best talent for the effectiveness of the organisation but also look at reproducing and developing the existing workforce. For many years Singapore has relied on cheap labour and it is not sustainable.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A SUSTAINABLE FOCUS

Is there a more topical and urgent issue in the world right now than sustainability? Without intervention, by 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), a quarter of global deaths now are actually linked to pollution. The world is also losing arable land at a rate of around 40,000 square miles each year. According to a study done by the University of Cambridge's Institute for Sustainability, Leadership organisations are failing to respond to the unprecedented change brought about by the fourth industrial revolution. Given the scale of the crisis, there is no choice on whether to respond or not.

From a business standpoint: why is it important to be sustainable? It matters a great deal. According to a survey conducted, 64% of the surveyed stated that they will not accept a job if the organisation does not have strong Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) values. This is also reflected in the consumers where 3% stated that they would rather choose a brand with a higher focus on their social and environmental responsibilities. As leaders, this is important to keep in mind especially as more and more Millennials and GenZ enter the workforce. By not accepting the corporate sustainability response, organisation risk losing both talent and consumers.

## HOW CAN HR DRIVE SUSTAINABILITY?

There are a number of things that can be done from an HR perspective to drive the organisation's sustainability goals forward. It is important to define the company's social purpose and how leaders and employees can achieve this together. For example, Unilever's is to make sustainable living commonplace. With this definition in place, the organisation can create a Code of Conduct around it. To have set a specific purpose does not, however, mean that the organisation can disregard all the remaining sustainable goals. If an organisation is unsure where to focus an option could be to take a look at the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. There are 17 different goals from which the organisation can choose which is most relevant and resonates best with the organisation. Organisations should try to provide relevant volunteer opportunities for their employees. HR in general should aim at a more sustainable vision for the organisation and try to help drive the engagement of the employees while creating a culture of innovation. When it comes to implementing sustainability across existing business practices it may require new ways of thinking.

## STARTING THE JOURNEY OF SUSTAINABILITY

It is important for organisations to define the social purpose and review their workforce practices to ensure the practices are in line with the sustainability goals of the organisation. Any areas which do not match the sustainability goal have to be addressed and a code of ethics has to be developed and shared with the entire organisation. It is likewise important to provide the workforce with the right training and this is not only important for the organisation's own workforce but likewise for suppliers as well. The sustainability goals can be implemented in the performance reviews with an incentive attached to encourage the employee to be more aware of the organisation's sustainability goals. The organisation should also encourage employees to share any ideas they may have and especially in regard to achieving the organisations sustainability goals. Everyone can do his or her own part when it comes to sustainability but the key thing is to take the first step. Do not overthink it, just leap into it. It will always be possible to iterate along the way and there is no expectation that everything is perfect from the start. The important thing is just to begin the journey.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND RECRUITMENT

It is important to make sustainability a key part of the recruitment process and onboarding. Sustainability should be featured in all interviews and this will also help the organisation find the right cultural fit. It is important to explain to each recruit the importance of the organisation's sustainable goals and mission. An idea to make this easier could be to eliminate the organisation's use of paper in the talent acquisition process such as pamphlets, and brochures. It is worth exploring going more digital and many organisations have already invested heavily in this area through a systematic process that enables sustainability decisions to be made on a larger scale. It is possible to just start small and try to eliminate paper in general but ensure that the entire workforce of the organisation is behind the approach.

**SUSTAINABILITY SHOULD BE FEATURED IN ALL INTERVIEWS AND THIS WILL ALSO HELP THE ORGANISATION FIND THE RIGHT CULTURAL FIT.**



on sustainability and recruitment

**Mr Adrian Tan**  
**Strategist, Future of Work**  
**Institute for Human Resource Professionals**

## REDESIGNING JOBS

Many organisations and the Singapore government have been encouraging a lot of job redesigning which can be seen across many different industries. A good example is the cleaning industry where there used to be a significant amount of manual labour but with the invention of the robots, this was reduced. However, the robots are not fully automated and there is still a need for people to guide and navigate them which required a re-skilling of the workforce in this sector. As such, there are a lot of different ways for an organisation to consider job redesign, in order to make the job much more relevant. Redesigning is something that HR will want to continue to work on in order to ensure all these different elements are well-fitted.

# THE ENERGY INDUSTRY

Mr Gavin Adda

The energy industry is one of the largest industries in the world with an annual revenue of USD 3.5 trillion. It is going through a massive and very painful change presently. The solar business in the United States is the largest business within renewables when it comes to hiring and the biggest buyer of energy at the moment are companies such as Microsoft, Amazon, etc.

How does an organisation impact change? One of the early realisations was that the best way to achieve a significant change is to include the industry titans like Shell, BP, Singapore Power, etc. because when organisations like this start to get involved in renewables there will be an increase in high-value projects being implemented.

What is the driver behind the transition and push toward renewables? Both solar and wind power are becoming cheaper with an approximately 17% annual reduction.

Currently, there are three major trends hitting the industry. The first trend is the aim to transition from fossil fuels to renewables such as solar and wind. The second is going from centralised to decentralised so instead of having a power plant distributing the energy and a customer buying, it is now possible to install the solar panels directly at the customer's place. The third impact is that the industry is moving from a business-to-government focus to a business-to-customer focus. So where previously the energy companies would sell to the Singapore government, they are now able to sell directly to the customer.

This is a disruption that creates opportunity especially when it comes to jobs because renewables are cheaper than the regular grid, and it is going to continue to grow. There is a lot of challenges but there are also a lot of companies coming into Singapore right now, whether that is pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, developers, companies, etc, and they will all be looking for talent to help them launch throughout the region. There is a lot of opportunity for Singapore to be a beacon for the rest of the region in this area.

The role Singapore can play as it does not have a huge landmass is through companies setting up financial hubs or management hubs or logistics hubs here.

# SKILLS IN THE ENERGY SECTOR

There is a real challenge around hard and soft skills. Hard skills like engineering and project management are very competitive in countries like India, Thailand, and the Philippines but managing these teams is something many are keen to do out of Singapore. As such, there is a need for talented local management teams that can help to drive that. However, disruption can be difficult to control which is why there is a need for soft skills as well. Organisations are looking for soft skills such as leadership, marketing, self-starters who are able to handle ambiguity and find ways to build teams and structure processes and systems that enable the organisations to grow the renewable business across the whole of Southeast Asia.

THERE IS A LOT OF OPPORTUNITY FOR SINGAPORE TO BE A BEACON FOR THE REST OF THE REGION IN THIS AREA.



on Singapore and the future energy sector

**Mr Gavin Adda**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Total Solar Distributed  
Generation Asia

# FROM BROWN TO GREEN JOBS

When there is a need for a radical disruption and radical transformation, the organisation has to reset everything. The problem with transforming old organisations is that the better the organisations are at what they are currently doing the more difficult it becomes. For large organisations it may be worth starting small, achieving success on a small scale first, and then trying to scale up to the entire organisation. Every part of the organisation has to be committed for the organisations to transit into sustainability.

## TOTAL ENERGIES

Total Energies is present in 130 countries and is best known for oil and gas but TotalEnergies has been involved with solar panels for the last 40 years. TotalEnergies has built the largest solar project in the world which is in the United States. TotalEnergies is notably far ahead and is going through its most radical transformation at the moment. The goal is for TotalEnergies to have 40% of its revenue, currently around USD 200 billion annually, coming from renewables by 2050. This is more than all the current renewable projects across Asia at the moment. Total will install solar panels for companies and has done so for Nike for instance. TotalEnergies does all the capital investment, owns the project, all of the clearing, monitoring, and maintenance of the system. The system generates electricity which goes directly to the customer. As such it is important that TotalEnergies has employees in contact with the customer who are able to explain what sustainability is, why the customers should be doing renewables, and be part of the implementation of all of those projects.

WHEN THERE IS A NEED FOR A  
RADICAL DISRUPTION AND RADICAL  
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ORGANISATION HAS TO RESET  
EVERYTHING.

*Mr Gavin Adda*

## TOTAL ENERGIES: A SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE

For TotalEnergies, the sustainable workforce lies within the re-skilling and keeping its existing workforce. Soft skills seem easier to transfer from one sector to another whereas hard skills are more difficult. Organisations need a workforce that is building skill sets that enable them to be successful and effective in the long run.

## CHALLENGES IN THE ENERGY SECTOR

One of the challenges TotalEnergies faces is managing the stakeholders. As TotalEnergies is an oil and gas company that is what the stakeholders are expecting TotalEnergies to deliver and not renewable energy. At the same time, TotalEnergies is transforming into a renewable business and it is fundamentally a different set of risks. TotalEnergies is committed to providing better energy to the customers but there are many questions. As such, the role of sustainability officers and managers has changed significantly. In the past, the sustainability manager would mainly focus on reporting and tracking. Today, when the focus is on executing sustainability and driving sustainable initiatives, it is a completely different role.

## CHAPTER 3:

# SINGAPORE AFTER COVID-19

## BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE

E-Book:

A resource for the attendees of the webinar held on 23 September 2021

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**Ms Low Peck Kem**

CHRO & Advisor (Workforce Development)  
Singapore Public Service Division

**Speaker**

**Mr Alvin Goh**

Executive Director  
Singapore Human Resource Institute

**Speaker**

**Dr Bob Aubrey**

Founder & Strategic Advisor  
ASEAN Human Development Organisation

**Moderator**

**Mr Nesan Govender**

ASEAN Talent & Organisational Lead  
Accenture

**Speaker**

**Dr Thai Lai Pham**

President & CEO  
Siemens ASEAN

**Speaker**



## SUMMARY

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On 23 September 2021, the European Chamber of Commerce (Singapore) invited distinguished speakers from the Singapore Public Service Division, Siemens, Accenture, and Singapore Human Resource Institute to share their knowledge with the public in a webinar titled "Singapore after COVID-19: Building a Sustainable Workforce". The aim was to discuss how Singapore's workforce can continue to thrive in the new normal and how the Singapore society will develop.

One of the key takeaways from the event was that COVID-19 has provided many useful skills for the future workforce but there is still more to learn.

There is no doubt that organisations will have to adapt to the new normal and technology may be key in achieving the desired results from the workforce.

HR departments will have to adjust and not just engage in HR practices for the sake of HR.

## INTRODUCTION

Singapore has long been recognised as a world-class leader in building human capital for its local workforce as well as being a leading hub for global talent. With the COVID-19 pandemic, Singapore's focus on human capital has enlarged to larger issues of human development and social sustainability.

For the past two years, EuroCham has been discussing the topic of sustainability from various angles. COVID-19 has brought up questions on health, wellbeing, employability, productivity, entrepreneurship, regional mobility, and the use of technology. These are all considered strategic for Singapore's sustainable workforce. These different aspects all have an impact on society as a whole and not just on the workforce. Additionally, it is important to remember the gig workforce and the senior workforce where different challenges may be at the forefront.



**THESE DIFFERENT ASPECTS ALL HAVE AN IMPACT ON SOCIETY AS A WHOLE AND NOT JUST ON THE WORKFORCE.**

on the different aspects brought on by COVID-19

**Dr Bob Aubrey,  
Chair of EuroCham's  
Human Development Committee**

Collaboration between government and businesses crosses institutional divides for continuous learning, employability, enterprise creation, the gig workforce, work-life balance, and fair consideration of the rights and aspirations of employees. Going forward, how will Singapore's workforce continue to thrive and how will the Singaporean society develop?

The hope for this panel is to answer four main questions in relation to this:

1. What are the government initiatives for building a sustainable workforce and society in Singapore?
2. What are the targeted industries and development areas for economic as well as social sustainability?
3. What are the opportunities for collaboration with European companies and human development institutions?
4. What kind of human resources and human development capabilities will be the most valued in the future?

# MANAGING COVID-19

## Ms Low Peck Kem

When it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic the clear sense is that the majority of the population is pleased with the way the Singapore government has managed the pandemic. There is a high level of trust in the government and that the government has a good understanding of what is the best and is a most balanced approach. Like many other countries, Singapore assessed different approaches to manage the pandemic. As Singapore is a small country that is not self-sustaining and is dependent upon imports and foreign investments, the government cannot close our borders completely. If nothing enters Singapore, then we will also have no food imported. Hence, the government's approach towards the pandemic had to be moderated. Since Singapore is a small country, we were able to act faster and reach out more effectively compared to larger countries. The main focus has always been what is best for the Singapore citizens.

## THE NEW NORMAL

There is no talking about the COVID-19 pandemic without talking about the new normal. But this new normal is more of a reset normal and not an incremental changed normal. There is a need to strengthen the skills and the knowledge gathered during the pandemic and use it towards the betterment of mankind. It took a while to get comfortable with hybrid work arrangements but now it has become the norm. The pandemic has also shown us how resilient and flexible the workforce can be, especially evident in relation to the quick adaption of the government's regulations in terms of the number of employees in the office, safe distancing measures, restrictions on social interactions, etc. One could say that it is important not to let a good crisis go to waste. The skills acquired under the pandemic, the ability to adapt and change quickly, both in business but also in private, will be valuable lessons for the future. The hybrid workforce provides new opportunities whether it is spending fewer hours in the office or working in a completely different country. However, it may prove difficult for organisations to manage, but in the end, it may very well result in cost-saving for the organisations and a more productive and engaged workforce.

# WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The workforce is transitioning. The former Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Goh Chok Tong shared that Singaporeans worked some of the longest hours in the world even when compared to countries such as South Korea and Japan. During his time in office, he looked towards the Swiss standards of living as the aim for Singapore. At that time, Singapore was still a manufacturing hub and it was the norm to work long, hard hours. This is why there is an increased focus from the government to take care of the physical, financial, and mental well-being of the workforce. With low fertility and an aging population, we need to better manage the local/foreign ratio. Today, a third of our workforce comprises of foreign talent and if not managed properly there is a high risk that the balance will tip over such that the majority of the workforce will be foreign talent. Singapore is constantly looking to enhance not only productivity but also the quality of life.

IT IS IMPORTANT  
NOT TO LET A  
GOOD CRISIS GO  
TO WASTE.



on the possibilities provided by COVID-19

**Ms Low Peck Kem**  
**CHRO & Advisor (Workforce Development)**  
**Singapore Public Service Division**

There are only 24 hours in a day and one of the government's main focuses is how to leverage on technology as an enabler to improve effectiveness and productivity. With hybrid work arrangements, official workplace or working hours can become blurred. A key point is for managers and leaders to respect the employee's working hours, and for the employee to likewise be able to manage their own time. For Singapore to continue to grow, there is a need to focus on work-life harmony without compromising productivity.

# SIEMENS

## Dr Thai Lai Pham

Siemens has had a presence in Singapore since 1908. It has been an honour and privilege to have the opportunity to work and support the development of Singapore.

Siemens has been engaged in many infrastructure projects in Singapore ranging from power generation, power distribution, mobility, infrastructure and healthcare infrastructure. Siemens has also supported construction in both the commercial sector and private sectors. We are proud to have been able to contribute to the market development in Singapore with almost one billion in gross value-add across the Siemens Group. Siemens Singapore has roughly 1,000 employees with a broad diversity that includes 20 different nationalities with 95% of the workforce coming from Singapore or the region. Only around 5% of the workforce originate from Germany. This is a trend we are quite proud of. Not only has it been a continuous aim to regionalise but also localise and bring in as much local talent as possible. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Siemens Singapore has hired 100 new employees and is currently offering 50 internship positions to young students who are interested in gaining practical experience in a technology-driven company.

## SIEMENS SINGAPORE

Singapore is an ideal place for Siemens as there is a keen interest in combining the physical and digital worlds as well as creating value-added services for Siemens' customers. Singapore is the ideal place for a testing hub - for Siemens to drive new solutions for customers in Singapore and also to scale the technology to the region. Singapore is thinking long-term which is what makes it a perfect place for us, as there is a good eco-system here as well as a government that is willing to look and lead when it comes to technology. Singapore is a great place as it is possible for Siemens to find the right partners who are interested in cooperating with us on solutions and services which are not even present in our headquarters yet. It is also a great place for Siemens to evolve which is why Siemens continuously invests in Singapore and the region.

When Siemens is assessing the different locations, a few key points are looked at – such as the ability to find the right competencies and rotate talent in the region as Siemens believes it is important for employees to experience different markets. This also allows Siemens to re-skill the existing workforce.

TO CREATE VALUE,  
THERE IS A NEED  
TO HAVE  
EMPLOYEES WHO  
ARE ABLE TO  
CONNECT THE  
DOTS.



On evolving the workforce

**Dr Thai Lai Pham**  
President & CEO  
Siemens ASEAN

## THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Siemens had decided to move away from the "presence economy" to a more "output-driven economy". The pandemic has accelerated this process. It is not important that the employee is in the office every day or spends many hours in the office. Siemens measures the outcome of its workforce through the KPIs which assess the quality and productivity. As such, it is not important that the employees spend a certain number of hours in the office. Siemens has a global policy allowing employees 2-3 days a week of mobile working, in wherever they are most productive. The other should be spent in the office to encourage social interaction and for the benefit of the projects in process. The idea is that this will create a more productive and creative work environment. Siemens is assisting the employees through our own technologies such as Comfy which is a space app where the employees can see and book their workspace. Another system Siemens has introduced is the STAR system which enables employees to reward colleagues and ensure continuous motivation.



## EVOLVING THE WORKFORCE

Siemens is continuously evolving the workforce through leadership and engineering enabling employees from all areas within the organisation to grow. Siemens has three different regional leadership programmes where the aim is to continuously identify the talent in the ASEAN, as it is important to look at the entire ecosystem of a company.

It is important for Siemens that the employees have the necessary skills and expertise in the different industries Siemens is operating in. In order for Siemens to create value, there is a need to have employees who are able to connect the dots. Employees who have a holistic view of solutions and business cases. Siemens believes that learning is a life-long journey and as such all employees are encouraged to clock in dedicated learning hours. This enables our workforce to continuously evolve.

**THE SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE IS NOT ONLY ABOUT THE MALE/FEMALE RATIO BUT ABOUT THE BROADER SCALE WHEN IT COMES TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.**

*Mr Nesan Goveneder*

## INTERNSHIPS

Internships are very important to Siemens. The dual educational training system where it is possible to combine theory and practice which the government is adopting could prove very crucial to Singapore and for the continued development of its workforce. An area of further improvement could be for the students to enter into contracts with the companies and not engage in mere single assignments. In this way, the company will mentor the student and this could be a key differentiating factor for Singapore.

## NEW TRENDS FOR ORGANISATIONS

**Mr Nesan Goveneder**

The most important component when discussing the sustainable workforce is the importance of inclusion and diversity. It is not only about the male/female ratio but about the broader scale when it comes to diversity and inclusion. When looking at the sustainable workforce from a broader perspective nothing much has changed despite the COVID-19 pandemic. However, one of the main things which have changed as a result of COVID-19 is the social contract between organisations and society, where organisations are facing more scrutiny. Customers are no longer simply making decisions based on the organisation's branding or what it stands for but also the organisation's reputation in the employment market. When employees are choosing an organisation to work for, they are considering a more holistic view of the organisation and the organisation's contribution to society. Another important point is the obligation organisations are facing. Organisations today have a higher obligation to elevate individuals within their workforce. Over the last two years, there has been a significant increase in the investment in technologies such as AI but there has also been a significant investment in re-skilling. It is clear that organisations believe re-skilling of their workforce will bring them a competitive advantage.

## STUDY ON THE FUTURE OF WORK

Accenture has recently completed a research study on the Future of Work which confirms that employees believe that organisations should be responsible for leaving them "Net Better Off" - meaning that the organisations are responsible for not only the financial needs or the learning needs but the emotional needs as well. It is a holistic view where employees are of the opinion that it is the organisation's responsibility to take care of their employees. The data points from the study relating to the consumers also clearly indicate that consumers are increasingly leaning towards more sustainable and ethical purchases. So, while employees are saying that their organisation should leave them "Net Better Off", consumers are looking for organisations to become increasingly sustainable and ethically correct.

The data also shows that investors have increasingly contributed towards the UN's Principles for Responsible Investment. All of these data points are telling the same story namely that sustainability and a sustainable workforce is no longer an option but an imperative. A sustainable organisation is value-led with a specific focus on growth and prosperity. The values are overall for the organisation and it is key to keep the organisation accountable. However, to build a sustainable workforce every single person is accountable to ensure that the organisation delivers in terms of their human, social and environmental impact.

## RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ORGANISATION

Accenture recently conducted another study in conjunction with the World Economic Forum. The aim of the study was to understand organisations' responsibilities and how to build a responsible organisation. The narrative was about responsible leaders understanding that they have to deliver both a financial performance as well as sustainable and equitable impact in order to create value for all their different stakeholders. Some organisation may be struggling to create the lasting behavioural change which is needed to achieve this. The research shows that high-performing leaders implemented a concept referred to as sustainability DNA which is a set of systems and processes that create the foundation for the organisation to transition into true sustainability. The sustainability DNA fosters human connections and boosts the collective intelligence of the organisation with these organisations outperforming their competitors by 25% in terms of operating profit. In order for an organisation to become sustainable many components have to be considered such as learning and leadership development. Stakeholder inclusion is likewise important as well as safeguarding the trust and positive impact for everyone and the trust between the organisation and the workforce. Another important component is emotional intuition which can unlock the commitment and creativity of all aspects of the employee's performance.

The key is to focus both on the outcome and on the behavioural aspect meaning as long as the employee is delivering the necessary outcome it is not as important how or where this is achieved. A clear mission and purpose will help the organisation on the journey towards sustainability and will make it easier to align the workforce towards the organisation's goals. Finally, technology and innovation can ease the journey towards a sustainable workforce. A sustainable workforce has to encompass all of these components.

## SUSTAINABILITY DNA FOSTERS HUMAN CONNECTIONS AND BOOSTS THE COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE OF THE ORGANISATION



on the sustainability DNA

**Mr Nesan Govender**  
ASEAN Talent &  
Organisational Lead  
Accenture

## THE ROLE OF HR

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**Mr Alvin Goh**

Two decades ago, it was predicted that organisations that failed to attract, develop, and maintain top talent, and especially global leadership talent, would face to some extent corporate destruction from within. One thing COVID-19, technology, and the changing times have shown is that skills have a shelf-life limit and leaders have to develop a "sustainable DNA" to keep up with ever-changing realities. What has been developed over the past two decades might not be entirely relevant. The truth is that there will be both creation and destruction of jobs and therefore there is a need to reassess how organisations are re-skilling and up-skilling in tandem with their business strategy to ensure their continued relevance in the future.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF L&D

When COVID-19 hit, the first thing business leaders did was to cut the L&D budget. However, if the aim is to develop the skillsets of the workforce to drive it towards a more sustainable workforce, then there needs to be a paradigm shift. Organisations cannot always cut the L&D budget whenever the organisation faces economic challenges. From a development standpoint, there is a need to focus on developing future-oriented competencies to enable not only a sustainable workforce but also growth. This development should include not only computational analysis, cross-cultural sensitivity, employability, and harmonious multigenerational inclusion but also focus on social intelligence and the use of virtual platforms for better collaborations in order for the future workforce to be able to connect the dots across boundaries.

## MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

If the aim for Singapore is to develop a multi-generational workforce, then from an HR policy standpoint, we are lagging behind. Diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) are the key HR components, and the Singapore Human Resource Institute believes that there is a need for age-friendly policies and leaders should aim at becoming more empathetic and compassionate as the world transitions into the New Normal. DEI goes beyond recruiting minorities; it should also encompass the development of a value statement based on the organisation's overall posturing.

## HR FOR THE SAKE OF HR

From an HR perspective, there is a need to stop doing HR for the sake of HR. The HR department has to change and evolve. HR has a tendency to get hung up on buzzwords. When innovation happens or the organisation faces economic changes HR is slow to react. A key point improvement could be to try to build more intimate relationships, understand how organisations work, the different types of business models, different types of revenue models, etc. The role of HR is not just about having the right talent at the right time and in the right place but also about creating a culture that prepares the current workforce for the future of work and by doing so enabling the organisation to compete effectively in the market.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

You cannot develop leaders if you adhere to all the norms. Creative thinking is essential. There are three different types of people: 1) those who think within the box, 2) those who think outside of the box, and 3) those who throw away the box. An organisation should have a good mix.

### SKILLS HAVE A LIMITED SHELF-LIFE



on the up-skilling and re-skilling of the workforce

**Mr Alvin Goh**  
Executive Director  
Singapore Human Resource  
Institute



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