

# SAFEGUARD YOUR BUSINESS THROUGH FOSTERING A HARMONIOUS, COHESIVE AND RESILIENT WORKPLACE



**T**errorism, diseases and natural disasters are among the many types of crises known to cause disruption to companies' operations, loss of assets and damage to reputations. These impacts not only affected companies, but also their critical stakeholders in the supply chain. These threats can potentially threaten business viability and the livelihood of employees.

A recent survey on the Community Engagement Programme (CEP) showed that many SMEs do not have proper crisis response plans for their companies, essentially in the area of managing employee relations.

Employees are key assets to companies, especially when facing organisational crises. Hence, the ability to effectively manage their well-being should not be underestimated. Sound employee management practices can have positive impacts on employee relations.

## How to get started?

Here are some suggestions on how you can build a harmonious, cohesive and resilient workplace.

### Foster Employee Bonding through Activities

Most SMEs have existing bonding activities for employees, such as celebrations of the different racial and religious festivals as well as recreational activities. Make use of such platforms to encourage your employees to get to know each other and promote understanding of each other's beliefs, cultures and practices.

Size is an advantage for SMEs when organising such activities. A smaller workforce means that it is easier to organise and customise activities to suit the needs of your company. It would also cost less as activities could be held in-house. Hence, take advantage of your small workforce to promote employee bonding as a start to a cohesive and resilient workforce.

*A survey has shown that while most SMEs have some business continuity plans in place, there is lack of specific plans and practices that deal with employees' needs, anxieties and concerns during crises. As the profile of workplaces become increasingly diverse, the existence of such plans and practices would strengthen a company's overall resilience during crises.*

### Adopt Fair Employment Practices

With Singapore having an increasingly diversified workforce in terms of ethnic, religious, gender and age makeup, making fair employment practices an integral part of HR policies and practices is critical to effective employee management. An inclusive working environment minimises grievances arising from discrimination and unfairness. Consequently, it also fosters harmonious working relations between your employees. Strong bonds facilitate teamwork and with a common sense of purpose towards the company, your employees are less likely to be distressed during a crisis.

### Build Employees' Capabilities

Planning for organisational crises has often been overlooked. Comprehensive business continuity plans will enhance your company's preparedness and resilience in the face of crises. This will help facilitate a faster recovery and resumption of operations. Regular reviews and simulation exercises will ensure the relevance and effectiveness of these plans.

These plans should also be clearly communicated to your employees as it is critical that they understand what to do during crises. Employees should be sent for training, if necessary, to equip them with the essential skills to handle such crisis situations.

### Communicate Effectively

During crises, it is natural that employees

will want to be kept informed of the latest updates. Hence, it is important that your company has proper plans and procedures to disseminate updates and information to your employees. This will help allay any fears and anxieties, which is likely to exacerbate rumours that may be circulating. Otherwise, such rumours would affect harmonious working relations and morale of your employees, and consequently, adversely impact on the productivity and smooth operations of your business.

### Conclusion

We know that a harmonious, cohesive and resilient workplace is critical for any business, regardless of its size. SMEs should and can be better prepared for crises. Enhancing crisis-readiness and workplace resilience need not be a costly affair as commonly perceived. Adopt the suggestions and tips in this article! Start today!

■ Article jointly contributed by the MOM Community Engagement Programme (CEP) Secretariat, Tripartite Alliance of Fair Employment Practices (TAFEP) and SPRING Singapore.

■ For information on fair employment practices, visit [www.fairemployment.sg](http://www.fairemployment.sg).

■ For more practical tips on building socially harmonious and secure workplaces visit [www.singaporeunited.sg](http://www.singaporeunited.sg).

### CONCERTED EFFORT FOR SUCCESS

EQ Insurance recently became the first and only insurance company in Singapore to achieve BCM certification. This holistic project has not only brought about greater synergy among staff, it also examines and consolidates all areas of work by the company. The certification has helped to differentiate them and provide the company with an additional competitive edge. At the end of the day, this gives EQ Insurance an assurance and peace of mind, knowing that risks to their infrastructure and data critical to their daily operations are protected. As Mr Harry Wang, Project Manager for BCM Implementation has aptly put, "We are now backed up and ready for action when faced with any business continuity threat".

### STRENGTHENING ORGANISATIONAL PREPAREDNESS THE BCM WAY

Beyond the above suggestions on how companies can build a harmonious, cohesive and resilient workplace, companies should also consider developing other contingency plans that protect critical areas of their businesses. Companies can leverage on the Business Continuity Management (BCM) to maintain operations and minimise negative impact from potential threats. SPRING Singapore has commenced a five-year National BCM Programme since 2008 to support companies in implementing BCM. The programme provides funding support for manpower costs, training, consultancy, certification and IT equipment costs that leads to BCM S5540 certification or equivalent.

To find out more on the National BCM Programme, you may contact the national BCM focal point, Singapore Business Federation at [HYPERLINK "mailto:bcm@sbf.org.sg" bcm@sbf.org.sg](mailto:bcm@sbf.org.sg) or call 6827-6867. For information on BCM, visit [HYPERLINK "http://www.bcm.org.sg" www.bcm.org.sg](http://www.bcm.org.sg).