



## Employees Come First! How True Is This Statement?

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*“Businesses often forget about the culture, and ultimately, they suffer for it because you can’t deliver good service from unhappy employees” – Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos*

This is one quote, among many, that speaks of an evergreen truth in the world of business: employees are the backbone to a company’s success and that employees must always come first in an organisation.

However, while “keeping employees happy” remains a constant, I believe the way companies do this now requires significant change and adaptation to the current situation.

But before we go into that, what does the phrase “employees come first” even mean? Is it even true? Let’s take a dipstick and test this. Simply put, it means that organisations must acknowledge the role it plays in their employees’ wellbeing, and it is the organisation’s duty to provide the right support in ensuring their employees are happy.

Pre-pandemic, the role and support typically expected by employees from an organisation were relatively straightforward and easily spelled out in an employment contract. The details were direct and measurable such as number of working hours, number of leaves, healthcare benefits and allowances. But that is not the case anymore.

Today, we live in a world of blurred lines. Our physical and virtual lives, our workplace and home, our public and personal matters seemingly overlap and integrate into each other; all of which impact our capabilities to handle each facet of our lives.

Similarly, this gives a new definition of wellbeing at the workplace where “employee wellbeing” is no longer restricted to what happens in the office. Other factors in an individuals’ life, such as mental health, family wellbeing and physical fitness are now inadvertently intertwined with an employees’ productivity and happiness at the workplace.

This increasingly interconnected way of life now pushes organisations to rethink the ways it take care of its employees. How can companies ensure that its employees are cared for and satisfied, with so many facets playing a part in its employees’ wellbeing?

In a world filled with choices and overlaps, I believe the way forward for organisations to effectively ensure their employee wellbeing lies in two things: **options and tools**.

Options provide employees with the autonomy and freedom to choose productivity methods which best suit their individual needs. Tools help deliver the modes of support and accommodate those needs. Together, the provision of options and tools allow organisations help employees create a combination of support that is personalised to fit their intertwined web of life and therefore allowing them to meet their work deliverables effectively.

Based on this philosophy, we have built a network of options and tools in fulfilling the needs of Warga TM to suit their individual lifestyles.



## 1) Option: Flexible working days and hours

We recognise that time is an asset and Warga TM, like so many others, want autonomy in how they divide this precious asset across their day. We also recognise that usage of time varies heavily across individuals today, rendering the traditional 8.30 am – 5.30 pm norm undesirable and inconvenient.

Hence, options that allow for flexibility are now our way forward in upholding employee wellbeing and productivity. We implement a hybrid work system with employees being able to select any 3 days to work at the office, and any 2 days to work at home.

*Tool: Empowering the ability to work at any location, at any time through digital tools and surrounding support.*

To be able to sustain these hybrid options, we also recognise that Warga TM needs the right tools to be able to work and collaborate effectively from wherever they are without sacrificing productivity.

For us, this means supporting Warga TM's access to the entire suite of Microsoft 365 apps including Microsoft Teams for online meetings and collaborations. It also requires easy access to IT support and facilities, such as claimable home broadband. Additionally, we revamped TM's office space with digital workplaces and hot seats across our different premises in Bangsar and Cyberjaya to support seamless collaboration between those present physically and virtually.

## 2) Option: Choose the lifestyle support you need

With the definition of wellbeing differing between individuals, we also recognise the new reality of cookie-cutter solutions no longer being effective for today's workforce. Focusing on a singular aspect of wellbeing at the workplace, such as "time management" or "managing stress at the workplace" is no longer relevant due to the overlapping nature of employees' lifestyles.

With that in mind, we endeavoured to provide as wide a range of support possible across multiple aspects of wellbeing, which allows employees to choose and access the type of support that is most relevant to their individual needs and interests. This creates a network of support services that can be tailored to individual priorities. It is our way of showing Warga TM that their wellbeing, even outside the doors of TM, is what comes first.

*Tool: 360-degree holistic campaigns, digital services and activities encompassing all aspects of wellbeing*

The key to creating an effective network of support services lies in diversity and accessibility. In terms of diversity, we embarked on various campaigns and programmes such as mental health support, spiritual guidance, financial management, physical fitness and even environmental awareness activities. As for accessibility, Warga TM can access wellbeing lessons digitally covering a range of topics and issues via the Naluri app. Additionally, physical activities such as weekly games, physical talks and engagement sessions, and outdoor activities complement the digital services, allowing Warga TM to strike the right balance between the convenience of digital support and the authenticity of human connection.



Combined together, the provision of the right options and tools to support Warga TM's wellbeing has placed us on the right path of transformation. We've all heard the talk about importance of being disruptive in the age of digitalisation. The pandemic was also a heavy disruption and may have been an unwelcome push into a void of uncertainty, ultimately forcing all of us to adapt and reform. For Warga TM, it realigned their priorities for work-life balance while for the management team, it forced us to reassess how we were taking care of our employees and to acknowledge that it means more than just a timely paycheck.

Since we began looking at employee wellbeing through a wider lens and started providing choices of support, we've seen significant changes in the business. 2 years after implementing these measures, we recorded a 12% revenue growth over 2 years, with our 2022 revenue being our best since 2008. Similarly, Warga TM has consistently expressed high satisfaction rates in employee experience surveys, earning us several awards such as Asia's Best Employer in the 2022 Brand Awards.

Looking back at Tony Hsieh's quote and reflecting on Warga TM's transformative journey through the pandemic, I can say it fills me with great pride to have come this far. While awards and revenue may be recognised as the marker to a successful organisation, the true recognition and largest source of pride comes from the wellbeing and satisfaction of the people that make it great every day.

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