



RESEARCH REPORT

WORKING IN ASIA:

KEY HR AND LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES FOR 2017

Saradevi Gopal Prabhakaran

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Saradevi Gopal Prabhakaran

May 2017

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- Profile Search & Selection colleagues Richard Letcher and James Rushworth

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The author would also like to especially thank Alison Hoare and Debbie Beaney for the design and typesetting of this report; as well as Carol Hatcher for editing and proofing the report.

Introduction

This report presents the findings of Roffey Park and Profile Search & Selection's research - Working in Asia: Key HR and Leadership Priorities for 2017. The report covers the views of employees on working life across Singapore, Hong Kong and mainland China. This survey is in its second year and is based on Roffey Park's annual Management Agenda in the UK and Singapore. Our intention in launching the research is to highlight employee views on working life and provide rigorous and relevant data which will enable leaders in organisations across the three countries to decide what they may need to start, stop and continue doing to build and further develop their organisation to ensure its continued success.

1,000 managers from Singapore, close to 500 managers from Hong Kong and 300 managers from mainland China, from both inside and outside HR and of varying levels of seniority responded to this year's survey. The respondents were from a wide range of industrial sectors and from organisations both large and small. Details on the profile of respondents, and the organisations they work for, can be found in Appendix 1. Information on how the research was conducted can be found in Appendix 2.

The report covers a broad range of aspects of organisational life, from leadership and organisational change to talent and performance management. The report is structured as follows:

Executive Summary

Chapter 1 – HR and people challenges

Chapter 2 – Leadership and organisational change

Chapter 3 – Impact of digital and flexible working

Chapter 4 – Diversity

Chapter 5 – Human Potential and its development

Rather than present an exhaustive account of the data collected in this year's survey, we have chosen to focus on aspects of the data that appear most interesting and which, we hope, in combination provide an engaging and informative view of the challenges and perspectives of today's managers in Singapore, Hong Kong and mainland China.

We refer to "mainland China" as "China" in the report, due to space constraints.

Introducing the team



Saradevi Gopal, BSocSc (Psychology)

Sara is an experienced researcher with knowledge of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Her recent research work include developing a framework for team resilience, analysing 360-feedback data and moderating focus group discussions. Sara's research interests are around organisational change and design, resilience and psychological well-being at work.



Alex Swarbrick, MPhil, BSc, Dip PCP (Psychology), Chartered FCIPD

Alex is an experienced manager, consultant, facilitator and executive coach, combining a strong background in HR with over 12 years in leadership development. He works with senior, middle and junior managers across many sectors. During his career, Alex has led on the HR aspects of various strategic and operational initiatives from organisational transformation, business sale and merger, to the design of performance review processes and behavioural competency frameworks. He has a particular interest in culture and in the relational aspects of leadership and management.



Richard Letcher, BSc (Bris)

Richard is a Co-Founder and Managing Director based in Hong Kong, leading Profile Search & Selection's Human Resources practice and specialising in senior-level mandates across all industries. Richard has 23 years of executive search experience. Prior to establishing Profile in 2005, he was at a leading executive search firm in London, Hong Kong and Australia, focusing on both the accounting and human resources divisions of the business. Richard started his career as an Accountant, first at Arthur Andersen and then with Credit Suisse First Boston in London.



James Rushworth, BA (QMUL)

James is a Managing Director based in Singapore, responsible for Profile Search & Selection's Southeast Asia operations. James has over 16 years of executive search experience in Southeast Asia. Prior to establishing Profile's presence in Singapore, he was at a leading executive search firm in London, and then relocated to Singapore to lead their financial services division, recruiting senior executives across Southeast Asia, as well as managing their human resources division. James began his career in financial services, first as an FX broker with Harlow Butler Ueda, and then as Forwards Trader with Standard Chartered Bank.

Executive Summary

Leadership that fosters learning is needed to meet the challenges of the prevailing context

It is commonly said now that the only constant is change. Organisations in all sectors are faced with rapid and unpredictable change. Social, technological, political and economic change are all occurring at faster rates than previously, and combining in new and unanticipated ways. The World is more connected than ever, and changes in one part of the World can quickly affect others. All of this means that traditional command and control styles of leadership are no longer appropriate or effective. A more flexible and facilitative style of leadership is needed. A form of leadership that is better able to anticipate and react to changing events, co-create a shared vision and solve complex problems utilising the inputs of many, diverse perspectives. Whilst there are lots of positives to take from this year's data, the most common leadership capability gaps in Singapore, Hong Kong, and China centre around the ability to foster a learning culture, and engage employees in a shared purpose. Gaps also emerge in leaders' capability to balance task and relational aspects of their role, in particular setting clear expectations and connecting with employees on a personal and emotional level. These gaps are evident when barriers to organisational change are considered. The most common barriers, aside from individual resistance, are issues such as lack of direction, lack of employee involvement and lack of clarity about the purpose of change. It would seem, then, that there is much scope to enhance current leadership practice to better fit the prevailing context and challenges.

Changing managers' mental model of politics

Current business challenges and the need to do more with less have given rise to a need for managers and leaders who can operate effectively across boundaries, both inside and outside organisations. With the rise of matrix environments, agile, task forces and project teams, the ability to influence without authority and navigate organisational politics has become a key skill for managers. It seems, though, that when managers think of politics in organisations, they see this as something they wish to avoid. Our data shows that it is one of the most common sources of dissatisfaction, workplace stress and indeed reasons for leaving an organisation. It is unlikely managers can be really effective if they see things this way. Politics is part and parcel of organisational life, and a central part of a manager's role. To be effective, managers may need to build their capability to work positively with politics.

Whilst organisations are generally seen as accepting diversity, more diverse senior leadership teams are needed and managers need to be better skilled in harnessing the benefits of diversity

The workplace of the future is expected to be increasingly multi-cultural and multi-generational. In essence, increasingly diverse. Whilst organisations have become more diverse, managers surveyed for this report do not, on the whole, believe that there is sufficient diversity in senior leadership teams. Organisations need to do more on this front, from scrutinising existing recruitment and promotion procedures to ensuring that dominant and preferred modes of leadership do not in some way unfairly favour one group over another. It is also apparent from our data that whilst organisations may be diverse and accepting of difference, managers may lack the skills and capabilities to harness the potential benefits of different views and perspectives. Building managerial capability in the ability to work effectively with different types of people would add much value.

Organisational change continues to be a challenge, and a tendency to blame individual resistance to change is counter-productive

Our data suggests that attempts to change culture are commonplace, and yet, it seems that roughly one in two change efforts are unsuccessful. This is despite 'change' becoming almost an industry in its own right. So, what is the problem? One of the problems may be a tendency to write off failed change attempts as due to something to do with the attitude of individual employees. Things are rarely that simple when it comes to people and organisations. Looking at other barriers mentioned by managers, it is clear that many of these are likely to affect an individual employee's perception of change. For example, lack of leadership direction, proper communication, involvement of employees and felt lack of transparency around the reasons for change are all cited by managers as barriers. All of these clearly impact on any one individual's response to change. Perhaps part of the answer to making change work better is to focus on communicating openly and often, engaging employees in genuine dialogue and creating a shared sense of vision and purpose.

Performance management is failing to motivate

It is clear from this year's survey that the vast majority of managers' report their organisation having some form of performance management process. It is less clear that this is helping to achieve, arguably, its central aim – that of motivating employees. Roughly two-fifths of managers say that it is helping achieve that purpose. There has been much discussion and debate recently about the merits of performance management, and some notable organisations have publicised their scrapping of annual performance reviews in favour of more frequent feedback and conversations around performance. The impact of this change in approach has been reported to be positive. Our view on the matter is that a good process can never make up for a bad conversation; yet a good conversation can always make light of a bad process. When it comes to motivating employees, the manager is key and their ability to listen well and hold meaningful and engaging conversations with those they manage is critical.

What is wrong with talent management?

The view from both HR and non-HR managers is clear – talent management is not working as it should. With continuing recruitment and retention challenges facing the region, it becomes ever more important that organisations identify, develop and retain their talent. Talent management as a separate discipline within HR has blossomed since the 1980s, with the development of specialist roles and functions, tools and approaches. Our own work in this area suggests that many organisations have adopted Nine Box Grids and adopted frameworks that place learning agility centre stage. More mature organisations have been through that 'technical' phase and are now asking questions such as 'what is talent?' and 'what is the view of our business leaders?' It may be that in becoming ever more specialised, talent management has become too separate from leaders of the business, and perhaps now is a ripe time for HR to re-engage with the business about what it sees as talent and how HR can best support that.

HR and People Challenges

HR struggling with both the new and the old

We asked both HR and non-HR managers for their views on HR capability across a number of areas, from newer disciplines such as analytics to much more established areas of practice such as talent management and succession planning. Managers from HR and non-HR share similar views about the capability of the HR function with respect to succession planning, the use of analytics and digital HR tools. Managers in operational roles are much more critical of talent acquisition and management capability in HR. This is clearly a concern if managers in operational parts of the business do not feel HR is helping them to attract and retain the talent they need. It is also apparent that there are perceived gaps in capability across both newer and more established areas of HR practice. Whilst more than one in two HR managers in Singapore see their use of analytics as 'weak', one-third also believe their approach to talent management is 'weak'.

How would you rate the capability of your HR function with respect to its ...?

% of Singapore managers indicating that HR is 'weak' at	Use of analytics	Talent management	Talent acquisition	Succession planning	Digital HR tools	Base size (n)
HR	57	36	29	60	40	165
Non-HR	57	62	48	64	37	473
Overall	57	56	43	63	38	638

What is wrong with Talent Management?

Despite continuing recruitment challenges (50% of HR managers in Singapore and 44% in Hong Kong report experiencing difficulties recruiting suitable employees at least some of the time), HR managers appear comfortable with their knowledge and capability when it comes to recruitment. 60% of HR managers report that their approach to talent acquisition is adequate and only one in five (17%) HR managers in Singapore regard recruitment as a key technical skill to possess. They appear less confident when it comes to managing talent through their organisation. Two in five (39%) of HR managers in Singapore identify talent management as the most important technical skill to possess and 37% rate their current approach to retaining and developing talented employees as 'weak'. Managers in non-HR roles are even more critical of the approach taken, with 61% viewing the current approach to managing talent as 'weak'. It appears, then, that something is not right with talent management. This is despite a proliferation of tools and approaches such as the Nine Box Grid, and the growth of talent management roles and functions within HR. The view of managers may be telling here – perhaps the increased specialisation of talent management has created an unhealthy distance between HR and line managers. There appears a strong case for HR to work in true partnership with managers in the business to define what talent looks like, define a process which has managers at its heart, and which gives managers the capability to effectively manage talent.

**37% of HR managers say that their approach to talent management is 'weak'.
61% of managers in non-HR roles think the same. Getting talent management right continues to be a key challenge, and potential source of competitive advantage, in a tight labour market.**

Is performance management failing to motivate employees?

The vast majority of HR managers report their organisation having a performance management process in place (86% of HR managers in Singapore; 88% of HR managers in Hong Kong). Yet, roughly one-fifth of HR managers (36% in Singapore and 41% in Hong Kong) say that their approach to performance management does not motivate employees. This is worrying given one of the principal purposes of performance management is to motivate employees. In the view of HR, the main issue appears to be the ability of managers to provide meaningful feedback (71% of HR managers in Singapore say this is the key issue; 73% of HR managers in Hong Kong say the same). Providing meaningful feedback and having the capability to hold sometimes difficult conversations well is a skill that needs to be developed. HR needs to equip managers with this skill. Not doing so means everyone loses: the employee, the line manager, HR and the business.

86% of HR managers in Singapore say that their organisation has a performance management process in place. Yet, only 36% say that their approach helps to motivate employees.

% of HR managers indicating that performance management is ineffective at...	Singapore (%)	Hong Kong (%)
Informing pay decisions	27	27
Helping managers provide performance guidance to employees	27	20
Setting goals and driving employee engagement	26	29
Information on promotion decisions	39	42
Motivating employees to perform better	36	41
Reflecting the values of the organisation	30	31
Assessing overall employee performance	19	26
Identifying skill gaps	45	49
Helping employees make career decisions	54	58
Managing under-performance	40	31
Base size (n)	172	123

Note: HR managers were asked to rate the effectiveness of performance management on a five-point scale, ranging from 'very effective' to 'very ineffective'.



Managers need to do a better job at providing meaningful feedback during the performance management process

Which of the following concerns you most in your current performance management approach?



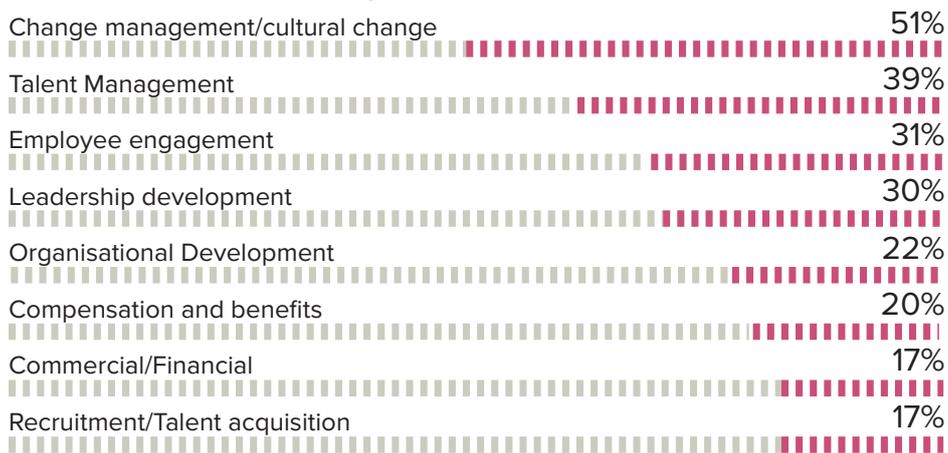
Managing (culture) change is the most important technical skill for HR professionals to possess

HR managers in both Singapore and Hong Kong identify managing (cultural) change as the most important 'technical' skill to possess. 51% of HR managers in Singapore and 48% in Hong Kong identify change as the key skill to have. This likely reflects at least two things. One, ever constant change and the need for organisations to become agile in responding to shifting social, economic and technological change. Two, the difficulties and challenges inherent in trying to bring about change at an organisational, systemic level rather than the narrower and more technical focus of, say, recruitment or compensation and benefits. More and more, what organisations need is the capability to change not just systems and processes, but behaviour. HR can add value here but only if it shifts its focus from systems and processes to people.

51% of HR managers in Singapore identify managing (culture) change as the most important technical skill to possess

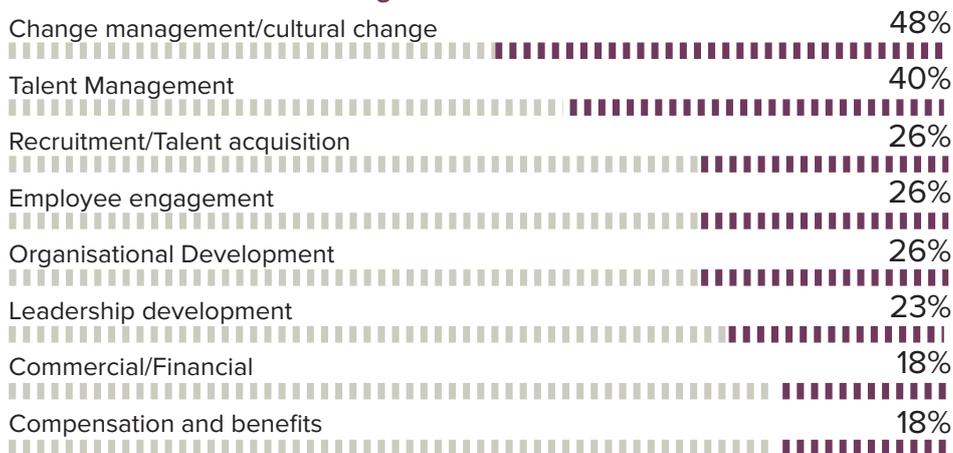
Which HR technical skills do you believe are the most important for an HR professional to possess to be highly effective in the current business environment?

SINGAPORE: % of HR managers who indicated...



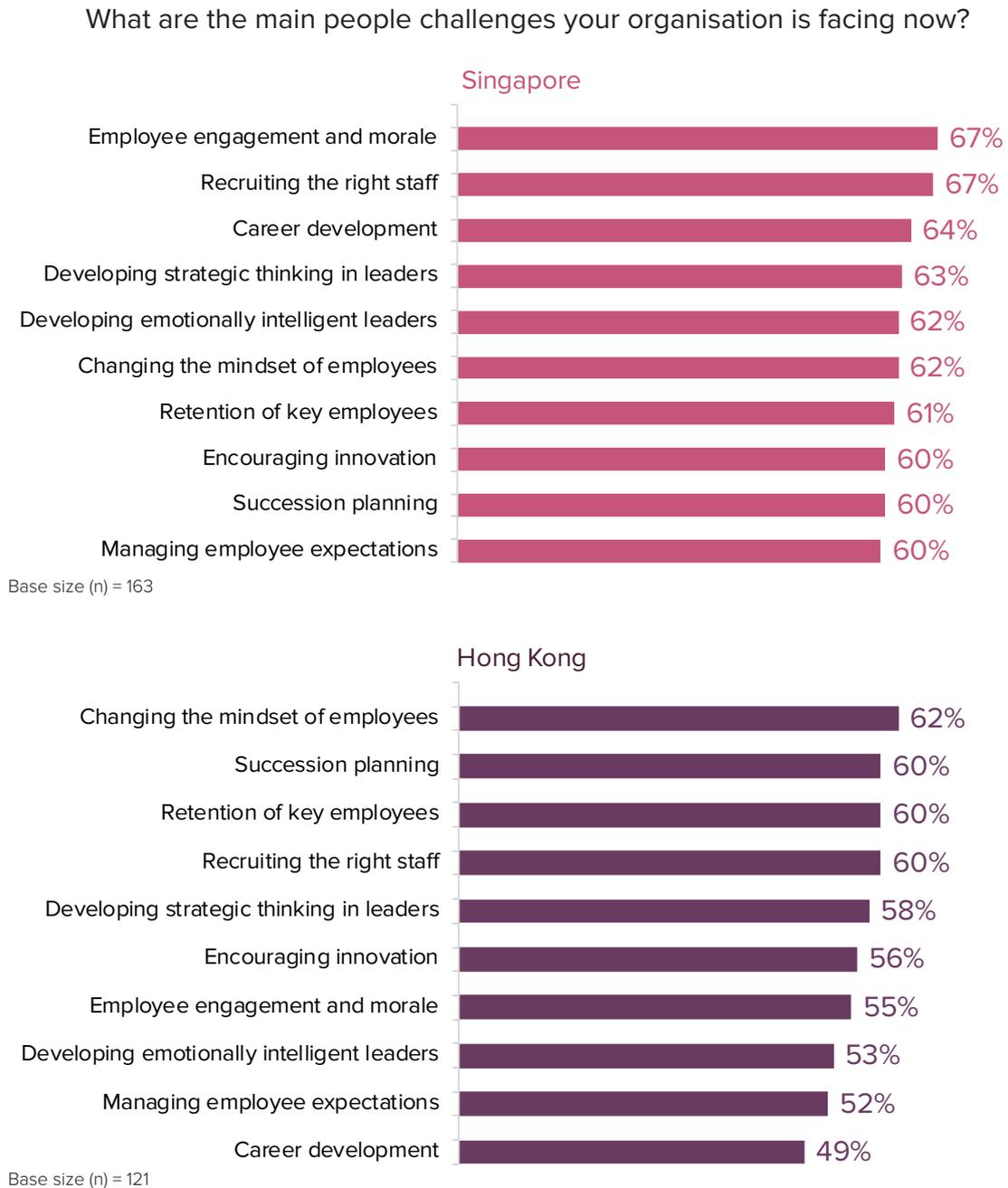
Base size (n) = 184

HONG KONG: % of HR managers who indicated...



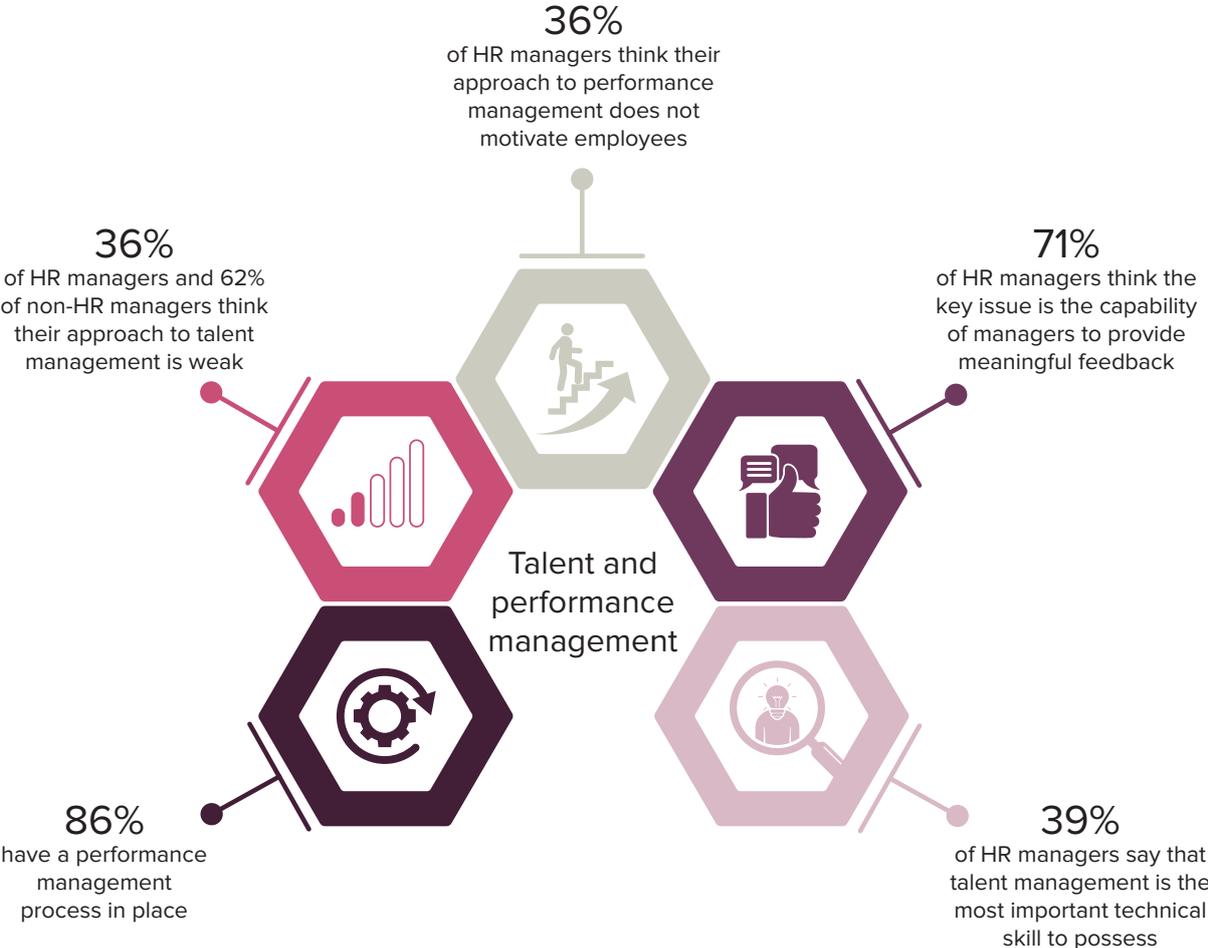
Base size (n) = 137

Engaging employees and changing mindsets are the key people challenges



HR managers in both Singapore and Hong Kong see engaging employees as their top challenge, whether that is expressed as 'morale' or 'changing mindsets'. Part of the answer here is the attraction, recruitment, selection and development of emotionally intelligent leaders, another challenge identified by HR managers

HR AND PEOPLE CHALLENGES IN A SNAPSHOT (SINGAPORE)



Which HR technical skills do you believe are the most important for an HR professional to possess to be highly effective in the current business environment?



Leadership and Organisational Change

Managers are struggling to operate strategically and lead efforts at innovation

The majority of managers believe their organisation has the leadership and management capability to deliver against its strategic objectives (56% of managers in Singapore; 62% in Hong Kong; and 65% in China say their organisation has the leadership and management capability it needs). There were some observed differences in responses across the different management levels in Singapore and Hong Kong. In both countries, C-suite leaders and non-managers were more likely to agree that their organisation had the leadership capability it needed compared with senior and middle managers.

Despite finding that the majority of managers had a positive view of leadership capability in their organisation, there appear significant and consistent gaps in capability across the three countries surveyed. The two main gaps appear to be the ability or opportunity to think strategically and set direction, and the capacity to learn and innovate. Roughly one in two managers across Singapore, Hong Kong and China view the ability to see the big picture, identify opportunities and set direction as key leadership capability gaps. Roughly similar proportions identified a lack of ability or capacity to facilitate learning, creativity and innovation as key capabilities missing from leadership. Both these, strategic thinking and the ability to learn and innovate, are crucial in a business environment characterised by constant change, shifting consumer demand and changing competitive landscapes.

Whilst the majority of managers believe their organisation has the leadership and management capability it needs, a significant minority identify gaps in strategic thinking and innovation



What, if any, do you see as the current gaps in leadership effectiveness?

Percentage of managers who indicated...



Base size (n) = 598



Base size (n) = 322



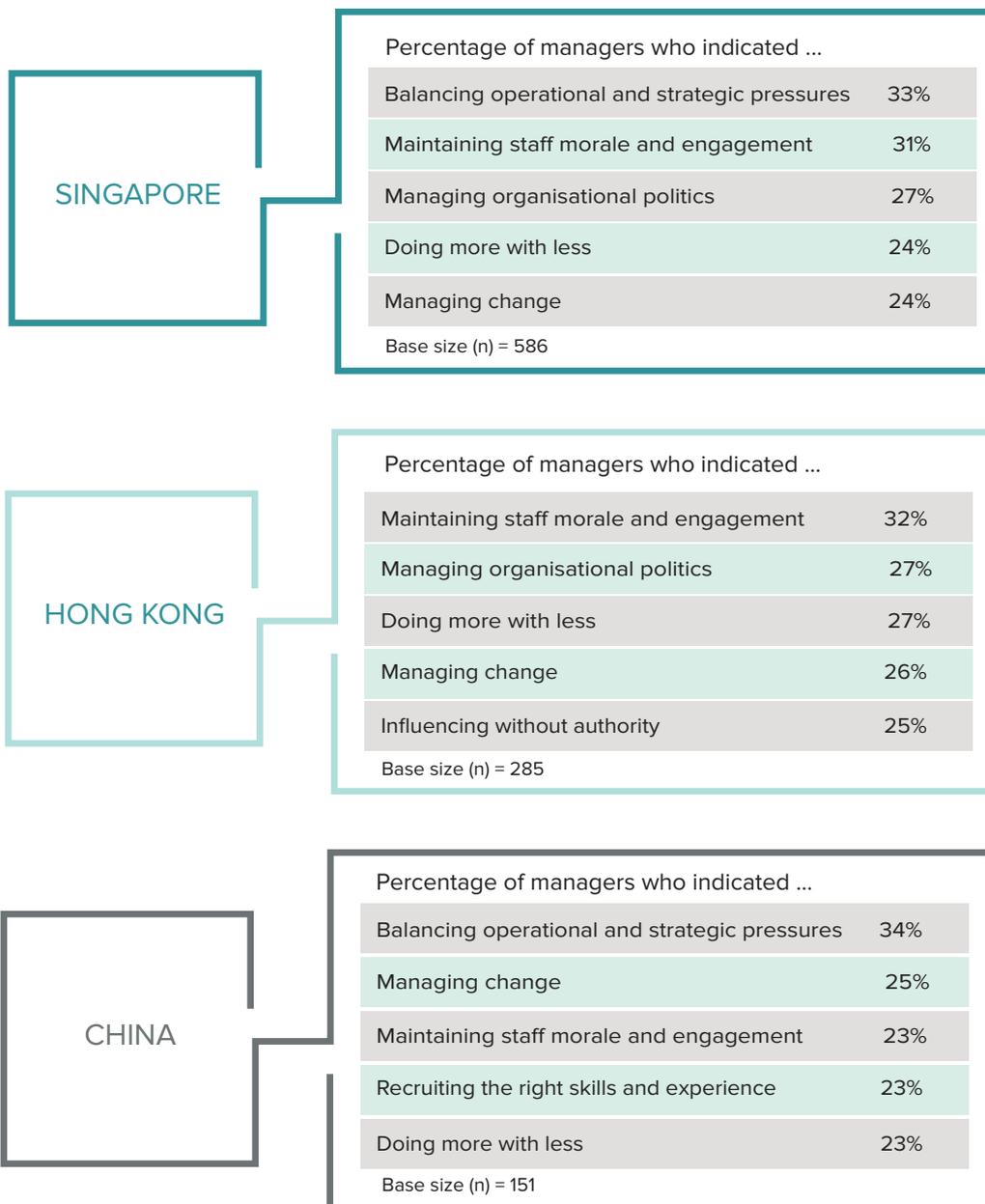
Base size (n) = 159

Leaders are stuck in the day-to-day at the expense of acting more strategically

It appears from our data that managers are struggling to balance operational and strategic pressures. One-third (33%) of managers in Singapore identify this as their top challenge, alongside maintaining employee engagement (31%) and managing politics (27%). A similar proportion of managers in China (34%) identify strategic pressures as their key challenge. It would seem, then, that perhaps as a result of pressures to do more with less, managers are not finding the space to try new ways of doing things, add value, and help ensure future competitiveness.

One-third of managers in Singapore and China identify balancing strategic and operational pressures as their key leadership challenge

What are the top three challenges you face as a leader/manager in your organisation?



Leaders are struggling to balance a task-focus with the more people aspects of their role

We asked managers responding to our survey about the effectiveness of their line manager using questions based on the SCARF model, a model of human motivation. SCARF has five domains of human social experience: Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness. SCARF is based on the premise that our brains are wired to minimize threats and maximise rewards. Across the five domains, leaders tend to be rated less well on the Certainty ('setting clear expectations' in the survey) and Relatedness ('connecting with you on a personal and emotional level') dimensions. It seems, then, that leaders may be struggling to balance more task-related functions with more interpersonal aspects of their role.

Singapore

How would you rate your line manager at the following ...?

% of managers who rated their line managers 'weak' at ...	Giving praise and recognition for work done	Setting clear expectations	Empowering you to make decisions	Connecting with you on a personal and emotional level	Treating people fairly	Base size (n)
Board directors & C-suite	33	35	26	37	35	728
Senior Managers	40	40	34	47	33	728
Middle Managers	37	37	32	46	34	728
First-level Managers	25	35	27	33	30	728
Non-managers	29	39	30	44	30	728

Hong Kong

How would you rate your line manager at the following ...?

% of managers who rated their line managers 'weak' at ...	Giving praise and recognition for work done	Setting clear expectations	Empowering you to make decisions	Connecting with you on a personal and emotional level	Treating people fairly	Base size (n)
Board directors & C-suite	30	37	26	37	35	340
Senior Managers	32	31	34	47	33	340
Middle Managers	39	42	32	46	34	340
First-level Managers	24	32	27	33	30	340
Non-managers	23	33	30	44	30	340

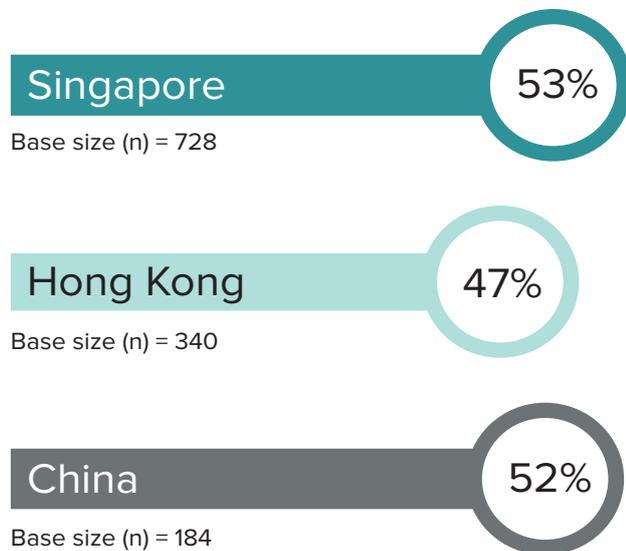
Note: Managers were asked to rate their line managers' capability on each of the five SCARF dimensions on a three-point scale, with ratings of 'excellent', 'adequate' and 'weak'. The percentages shown reflect those who rated their line manager as 'weak'. Only these percentages are shown for reasons of space.

Managing change continues to be a challenge

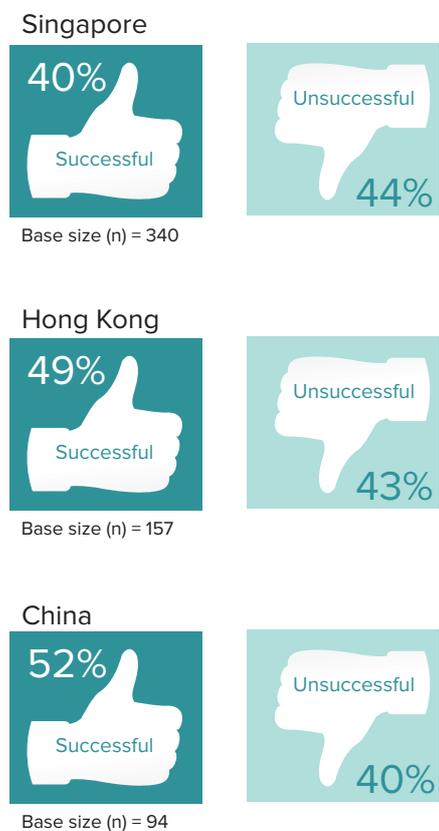
Roughly one in two managers report their organisation having undergone efforts to change culture in the last 5 years (53% of managers in Singapore report such efforts, as do 47% of managers in Hong Kong and 52% in China). Efforts to achieve culture change appear to be regarded as successful by one half or less of managers (40% of managers in Singapore regard efforts at culture change successful, compared with 49% of managers in Hong Kong and 52% of managers in China). Resistance to change at the individual level (fear of change, inertia, habit) is viewed by the majority as the main barrier to change. 56 per cent of managers in Singapore identify personal resistance to change as a main barrier, as do 58 per cent of managers in Hong Kong and 51 per cent of managers in China. The risk here is that other, more systemic barriers to change are overlooked in favour of an explanation focussed on the reluctance of individuals to change ways of working. 40 per cent or more of managers across the three countries identify a lack of leadership, employee involvement, transparency around the purpose of change and lack of proper communication as barriers. One is left wondering whether if these issues were properly addressed, individual resistance to change may be less of an issue than currently people seem to think.

Whilst the majority of organisations have attempted to change their culture in the last 5 years, efforts at change are roughly only successful in one half of cases.

Has your organisation attempted to change its culture in the last 5 years?

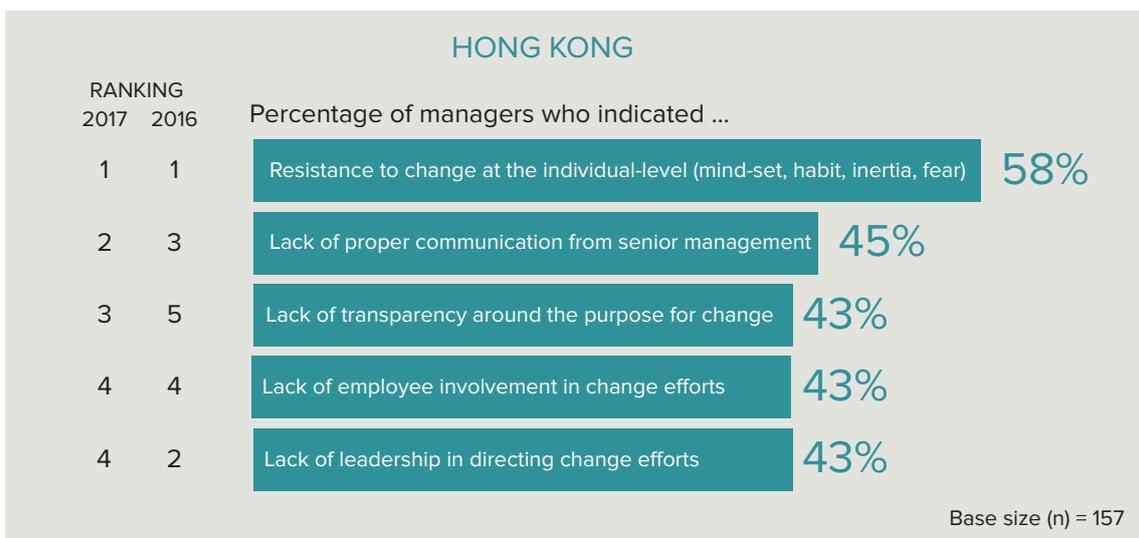
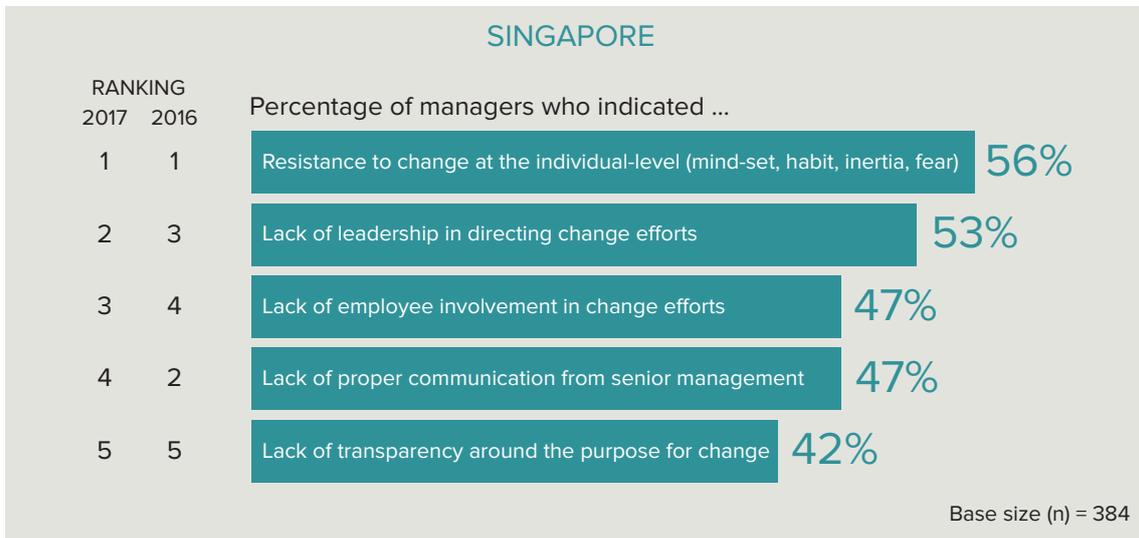


How successful have efforts been to change the culture in your organisation?



The top barrier to organisational change in the eyes of managers remains individual resistance to change

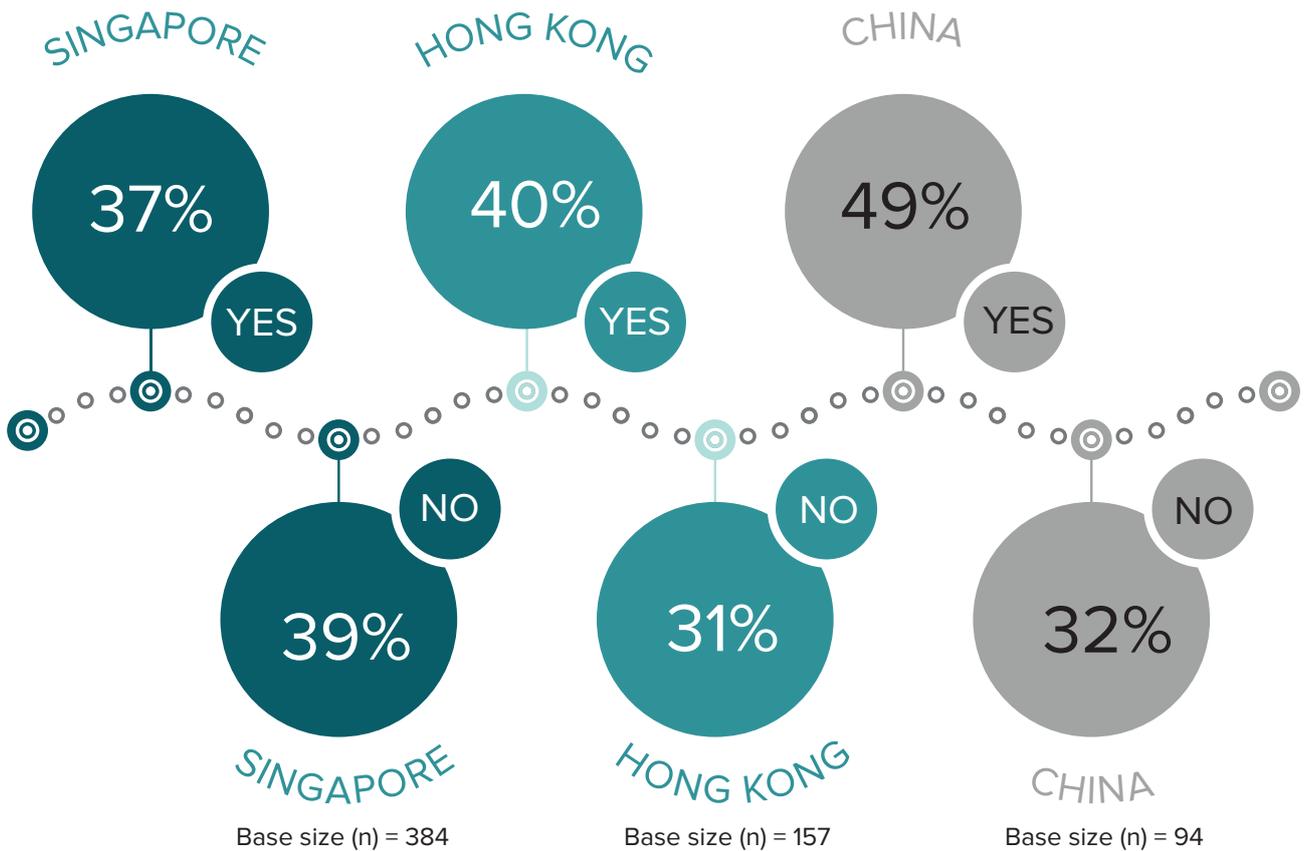
What do you think are the barriers to successful organisational change?



There appears scope for organisations to do more to help employees cope with change

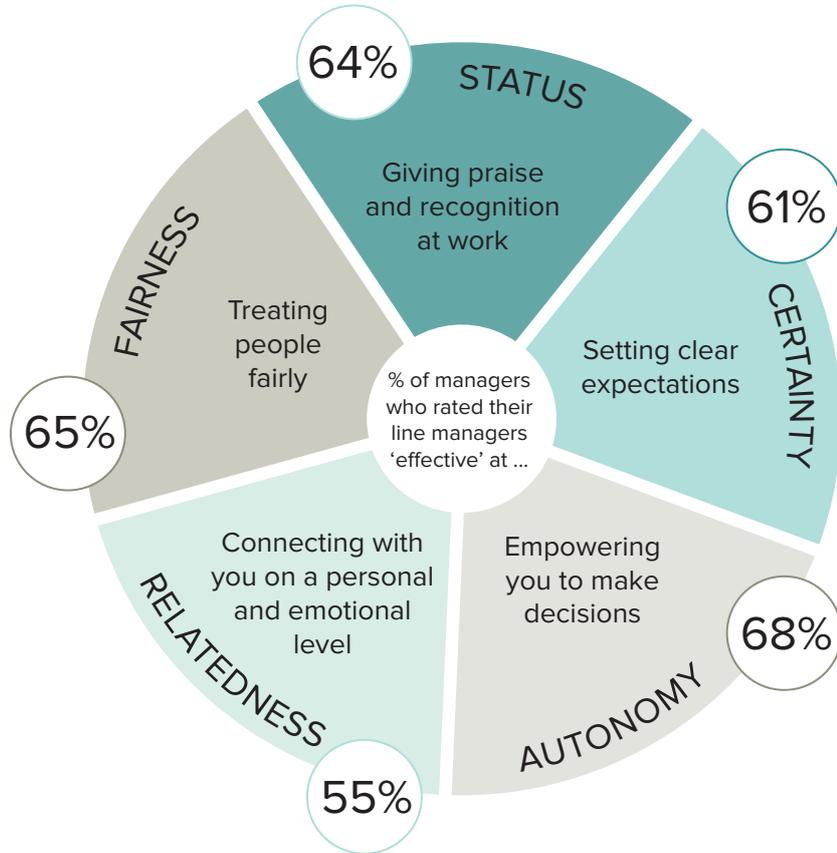
Whilst individual resistance to change is the most commonly identified barrier to change, it appears that the majority of organisations could be doing more to support employees to cope with that change. 37 per cent of managers in Singapore, 40 per cent in Hong Kong, and 49 per cent in China say that their organisation is helping them to cope with change.

Is your organisation helping you to cope with change?



LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE IN A SNAPSHOT (SINGAPORE)

How would you rate your line manager at the following?



Making change a success continues to be a challenge

How successful have efforts been to change the culture in your organisation?

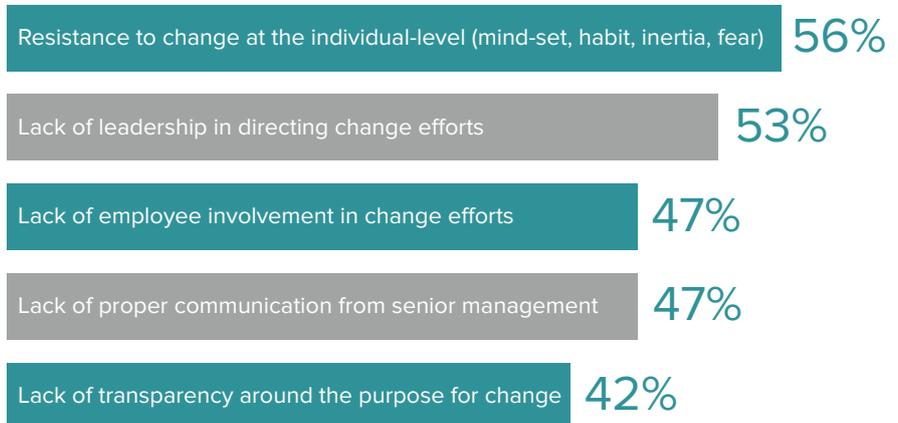


Base size (n) = 340



What do you think are the barriers to successful organisational change?

Percentage of managers who indicated ...



Impact of Digital and Flexible Working

Organisations appear to be enabling managers to work flexibly

More than one in two managers in Singapore and Hong Kong (Singapore – 56%; Hong Kong – 52%) report that their organisation enables them to ‘work wherever and whenever I want, so long as I deliver what is expected’. This is positive given that adopting flexible ways of working plays a valuable role in attracting and retaining talent. Flexible work policies are one of the top 5 things that employees look for in an organisation (Chapter 5). It is also positive in that it suggests there is a move towards managing by outputs rather than by time spent in the office.

56 per cent of managers say that their organisation enables them to ‘work wherever and whenever I want, so long as I deliver what is expected’

Whilst organisational culture appears to support work-life balance, senior leaders could do more to role model it

The majority of managers in Singapore (58%), Hong Kong (56%), and China (53%) report that their organisation’s culture supports work-life balance. On the face of it, this looks positive given that both countries tend to fare less well compared to other countries on work-life balance measures¹. Managers are less positive when it comes to whether or not senior leaders in their organisation are seen as role-modelling work-life balance. 43 per cent of managers in Singapore, 42 per cent in Hong Kong, and 45 per cent in China say that senior leaders in their organisation role model work-life balance. Senior leaders

play a critical role in setting the climate and culture of an organisation, and whether or not they intend to, their behaviour sets the tone for what is desirable. It appears, then, that senior leaders who are seen to balance work and home life would make a significant impact on organisational culture in this respect.

Whilst 58 per cent of managers in Singapore say their organisation’s culture supports work-life balance, only 43 per cent say that senior leaders in their organisation role-model work-life balance



¹ <http://www.humanresourcesonline.net/hr-fare-work-life-balance/>

Managers may need to develop their skills to effectively manage virtual teams

As technology becomes ever more advanced and widespread, and organisations more and more global, virtual working is likely to continue to increase. Our data suggests that whilst managers think that their organisation’s technological infrastructure supports virtual working, they are less likely to believe that the culture, and in particular, the capability of managers supports it. For example, whilst 56 per cent of managers in Singapore think that their organisation has the technology to support virtual working, less than half (46 per cent) feel that their organisation’s culture supports it. Roughly one-third think that the managers in their organisation have the capability to effectively manage virtual teams and workers. Previous research by Roffey Park² suggests that managers who manage virtually need to develop the following:

- An ability to build rapport and relationships quickly, and sustain them
- Have an outcome-based approach to performance management
- Excellent listening skills, able to spot underlying messages
- Coaching capability

Percentage of managers who indicated...	Singapore (%)		Hong Kong (%)		China (%)	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
My organisation's culture supports virtual working	46	49	45	52	48	46
Managers in this organisation are equipped with the skills to manage virtual teams and workers	36	55	36	58	45	48
My organisation has the technology infrastructure to support virtual teams	56	40	54	43	57	37
Base size (n)	703		327		168	

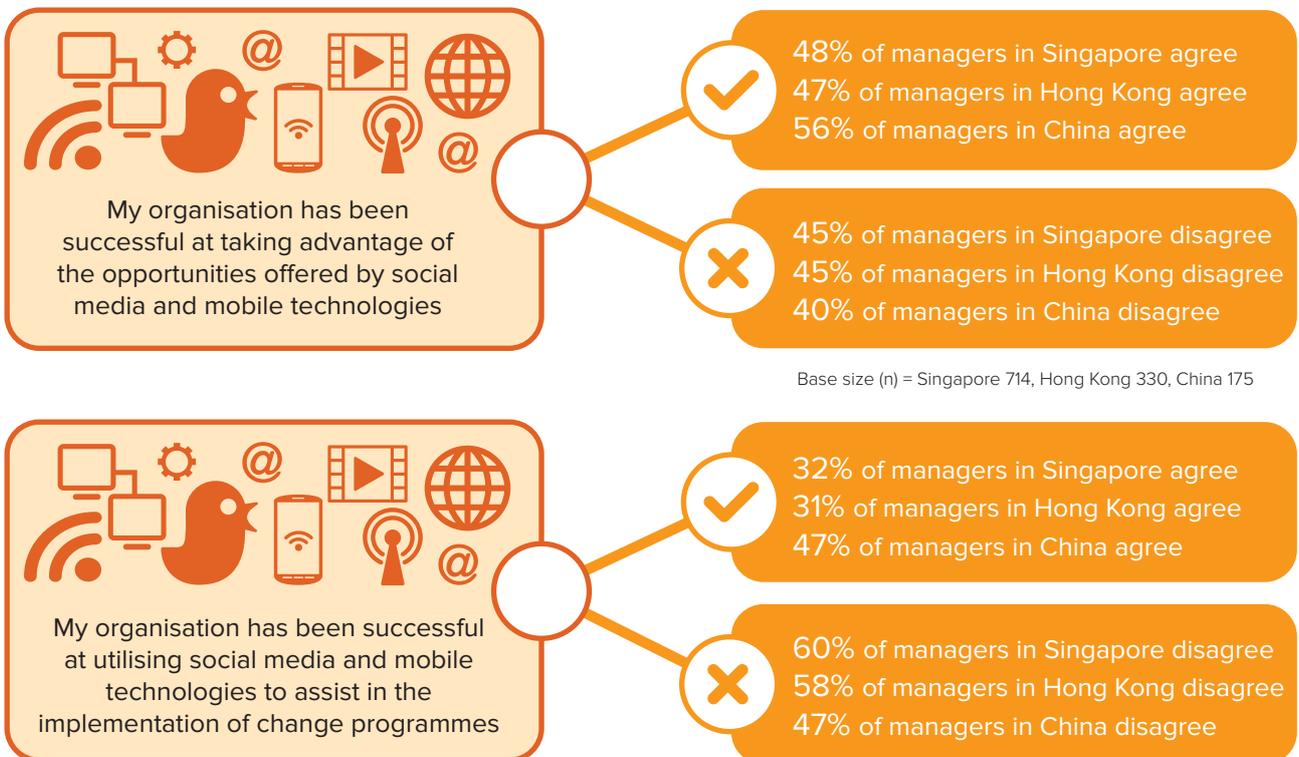
The increasing prevalence of technology in people’s lives is not seen as blurring boundaries between work and home life

Social media plays a huge part in most people’s lives, particularly in Singapore and Hong Kong where people are very tech-savvy and get a lot of their information from social media sites³. These days, organisations have started use these platforms to build their employer brand, reach out to potential employees - especially the younger ones - and to make use of workforce data to inform their decisions. Incorporating technology and digital media into the workplace is still a comparatively new thing that HR and leaders have to grapple with. And whilst some companies have their social media outreach and strategy down to a T, many others are still coming to terms with it. Whilst people in both countries are very connected in terms of technology, they do not see the boundaries between work and life blurring because of it; which is a good sign. Almost half of all managers from both Singapore (47%) and Hong Kong (46%) report that social media has not, for them, blurred the boundaries between work and home life.

² Smith A and Sinclair A (2003) 'What makes an excellent virtual manager?' Roffey Park Institute
³ <http://www.humanresourcesonline.net/asias-most-social-media-savvy-workforce/>

Whilst roughly one in two managers report their organisation taking advantage of the opportunities offered by social media and mobile technologies, they think more could be done to use these technologies in support of organisational change

48 per cent of managers in Singapore report that their organisation has been successful in taking advantage of the opportunities offered by social media and mobile technologies. In Hong Kong, 47 per cent of managers feel the same way, and in China the figure is 56 per cent. Managers in all three countries are less positive about their organisation’s use of these technologies to support change programmes. 32 per cent of managers in Singapore say that their organisation has been successful in the use of social media and mobile technologies to support change, compared with 60 per cent who disagree that this is the case. The picture is similar in Hong Kong. Social media is a great way to engage and communicate with employees in the midst of change⁴. It offers a space for people to interact with their leaders and a safe space to learn and process the changes together.

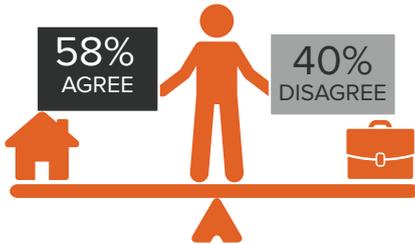


⁴ <https://hbr.org/2015/11/change-management-meets-social-media>

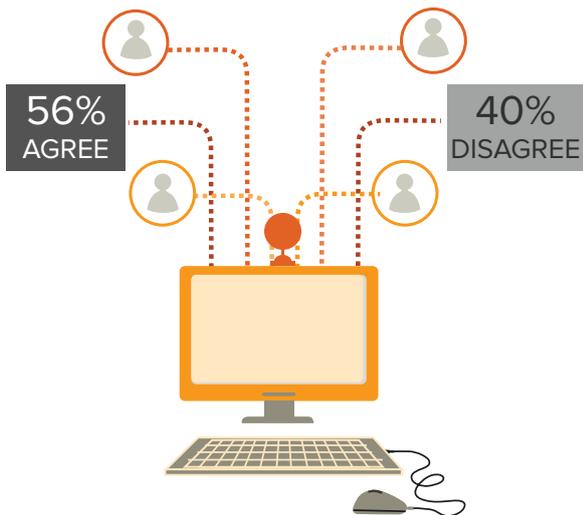
IMPACT OF DIGITAL AND FLEXIBLE WORKING IN A SNAPSHOT (SINGAPORE)

To what extent do you agree or disagree that..?

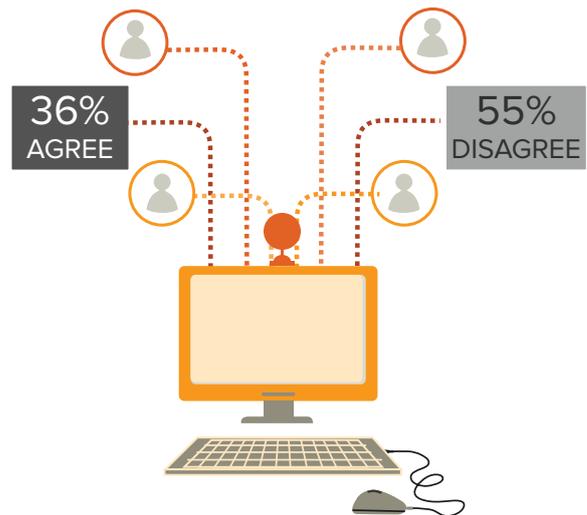
My organisation has a culture that supports work-life balance



Senior leaders in my organisation role-model work-life balance



My organisation has the technology infrastructure to support virtual teams



Managers in this organisation are equipped with the skills to manage virtual teams and workers



My organisation has been successful at taking advantage of the opportunities offered by social media and mobile technologies



My organisation has been successful at utilising social media and mobile technologies to assist in the implementation of change programmes

Diversity

Diversity is seen more as a future rather than current people challenge

Several studies have shown over the years the merits of having a diverse workforce – greater creativity and innovation, an enhanced organisational image and improved decision-making (people being less susceptible to groupthink¹). These are all factors that enhance a company's productivity and performance. In Singapore, the government has recognised the benefits² of having a diverse and inclusive workplace and have put in place several incentives and schemes³ to encourage organisations to attract and retain employees from diverse backgrounds and nationalities.

However, there still seems to be a gap between what leaders think about diversity and what is actually being done to make organisations more diverse.

In all three countries studied in this report, diversity and multi-generational issues do not seem to be high up on managers' list of current people challenges, although managers do feel these will become more important compared to other people challenges in the next five years.



A lot of people like to stay in their comfort zones; they are very comfortable with their own nationality, culture and so on. It takes a lot of effort to get people to view things from others' point of view...putting yourself in others' shoes. That is the hardest thing about attempting to embrace diversity.

Senior Manager, Mining Industry



% of managers who indicated this as a challenge...	Singapore (%)		Hong Kong (%)		China (%)	
	Now (n=635)	5 years' time (n=562)	Now (n=319)	5 years' time (n=277)	Now (n=167)	5 years' time (n=161)
Managing a multi-generational workforce	37 (18th)	38 (5th)	36 (17th)	36 (4th)	28 (17th)	44 (2nd)
Encouraging greater workforce diversity	39 (17th)	35 (10th)	35 (18th)	30 (14th)	27 (18th)	37 (8th)
Working across cultures	41 (16th)	32 (12th)	42 (14th)	25 (17th)	33 (14th)	34 (11th)
Increasing diversity in senior leadership positions	45 (15th)	39 (3rd)	41 (15th)	34 (9th)	28 (16th)	39 (6th)

1 <https://hbr.org/2016/11/why-diverse-teams-are-smarter>

2 <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/singapore/organisations-should-have/2582750.html>

3 <http://www.todayonline.com/commentary/diverse-workforce-critical-driving-growth?page=1>

More needs to be done to improve diversity at senior leadership levels

The majority of managers report that their organisations are effective at attracting and retaining individuals from diverse backgrounds, yet there is more work to be done to increase the diversity of senior leadership teams

Our data shows that, on the whole, managers believe that their organisations are accepting of difference. 62 per cent of managers in Singapore, 63 per cent in Hong Kong, and 75 per cent in China believe that their organisations are accepting of people from diverse backgrounds. Our data also suggests that the majority of managers think that their organisation is effective at attracting, recruiting and retaining individuals from different backgrounds. 51 per cent of managers in Singapore, 50 per cent in Hong Kong and 60 per cent in China say that their organisation is effective at bringing in and holding on to people from diverse backgrounds.

In spite of this, it appears that managers are less likely to believe that there is sufficient diversity at the top of their organisations. 40 per cent of managers in Singapore, 42 per cent in Hong Kong and 57 per cent in China do not think there is sufficient diversity in the senior leadership team in their organisation.

Singapore in particular seems to lag behind other Asian countries in terms of senior leadership diversity – particularly when it came to employing women in middle and senior leadership positions⁴. Other studies have found that Singaporean women tend to feel they are unable to promote their achievements⁵. Others pointed to a preferential treatment for men and an organisational culture that does not foster diversity⁶. Although Hong Kong reportedly tends to fair slightly better⁷ when it comes to diversity in the workplace⁸, the data here shows that they also have a huge room for improvement. Diversity in senior leadership teams brings about various benefits – for one, diverse leadership teams tend to financially outperform less diverse teams. Diverse leadership teams are also more innovative and less inclined to groupthink. They process information more cautiously and are more likely to constantly re-examine facts and remain objective. Hence they make better decisions.

My organisation is accepting of difference



62%
of managers in
Singapore agree,
32% disagree

63%
of managers in
Hong Kong agree,
32% disagree

75%
of managers in
China agree,
22% disagree

My organisation is effective at attracting, recruiting and retaining individuals from diverse backgrounds

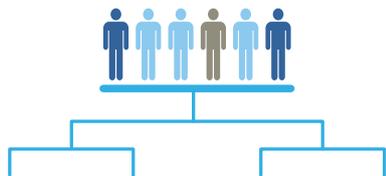


51%
of managers in
Singapore agree,
45% disagree

50%
of managers in
Hong Kong agree,
43% disagree

60%
of managers in
China agree,
37% disagree

There is sufficient diversity in the senior leadership team in my organisation



40%
of managers in
Singapore agree,
56% disagree

42%
of managers in
Hong Kong agree,
57% disagree

57%
of managers in
China agree,
38% disagree

Base size (n) = Singapore 694, Hong Kong 468, China 167

4 <http://www.straitstimes.com/business/economy/singapore-drops-two-places-to-fourth-in-gender-diversity-report> and <http://www.humanresourcesonline.net/firms-singapore-still-lack-diversity-senior-leadership-roles/>

5 <http://www.humanresourcesonline.net/regional-data-gender-diversity-malaysia-singapore-china-fare/>

6 <http://www.humanresourcesonline.net/gender-diversity-leadership-still-huge-issue-singapore/>

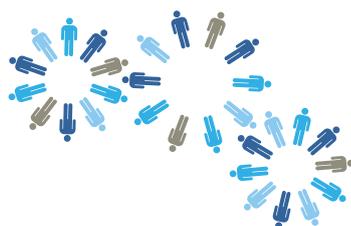
7 <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1557312/hong-kong-ranks-third-number-women-workplace-says-study>

8 <http://www.humanresourcesonline.net/hong-kong-asias-diverse-inclusive-workplaces/>

Whilst organisations in the future are likely to become increasingly international and multi-cultural, managers surveyed in this report are divided as to whether they have the skills to effectively manage difference

Predictions about the future workplace suggest that it will be increasingly international and multi-cultural. Our data suggests that managers are divided as to whether the management population in their organisation is skilled enough to work with different types of people and to manage in different cultures. 48 per cent of managers in Singapore, 50 per cent in Hong Kong, and 50 per cent in China, believe that managers in their organisation are equipped to manage in different cultures. This suggests that if organisations, and managers within them, are to be prepared to operate effectively in the future, they may need support in developing the skills to manage difference effectively.

Managers in my organisation are skilled at working with diverse types of people

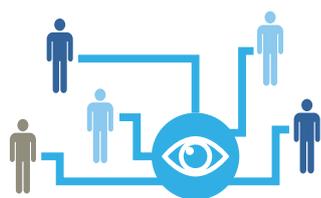


49%
of managers in
Singapore agree,
45% disagree

54%
of managers in
Hong Kong agree,
41% disagree

61%
of managers in
China agree,
34% disagree

Managers in my organisation are equipped with the skills to manage in different cultures



48%
of managers in
Singapore agree,
46% disagree

50%
of managers in
Hong Kong agree,
45% disagree

50%
of managers in
China agree,
43% disagree

Base size (n) = Singapore 694, Hong Kong 468, China 167

The majority of managers believe that there will be more inter-generational conflict in the future, yet they are less convinced that their organisations are prepared for the anticipated challenges associated with a multi-generational workforce

The future workforce is predicted to be increasingly multi-generational and this offers both advantages and challenges. It appears from our data that the vast majority of managers believe that there will be more inter-generational conflict as a consequence of the shifting age profile of the workforce. 67 per cent of managers in Singapore, 66 per cent in China and 60 per cent in Hong Kong believe that there will be more inter-generational conflict. It should be said that conflict per se is not necessarily bad, and can be constructive if well managed. How organisations anticipate and prepare for the challenges of an increasingly multi-generational workforce is key to whether it is a source of future advantage or a risk to productivity. On this front, it seems managers, particularly in Singapore, do not feel that their organisation is sufficiently prepared. 46 per cent of managers in Singapore do not feel their organisation is well prepared to meet the challenges associated with changing workforce demographics, compared with 51 per cent and 55 per cent of managers in Hong Kong and China respectively.

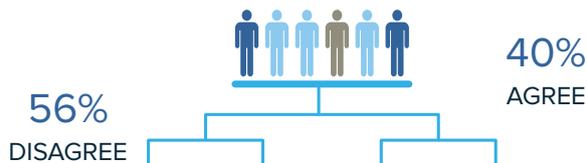
DIVERSITY IN A SNAPSHOT (SINGAPORE)

To what extent do you agree or disagree that..

My organisation is effective at attracting, recruiting and retaining individuals from diverse backgrounds



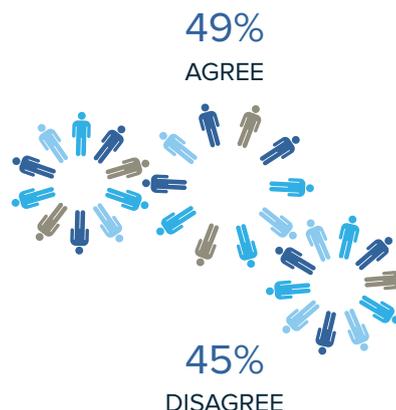
There is sufficient diversity in the senior leadership team in my organisation



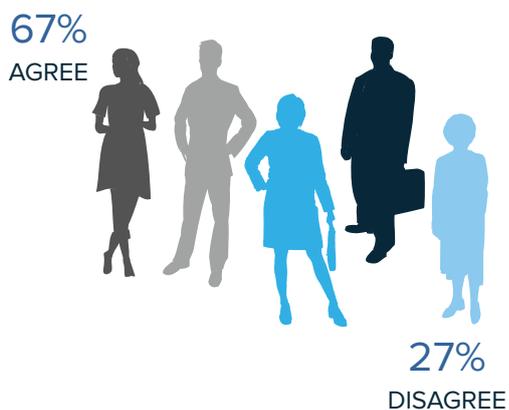
My organisation is accepting of difference



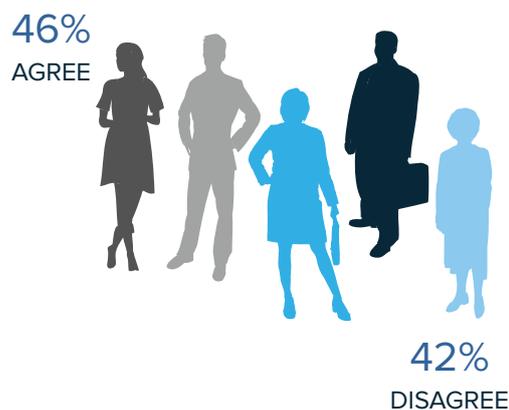
Managers in my organisation are skilled at working with diverse types of people



There will be more inter-generational conflict in the workplace as a result of changing workforce demographics



My organisation is prepared to meet the challenges associated with changing workforce demographics



Human Potential and its Development

With organisations continuing to face recruitment and retention challenges, it is worth considering what attracts and motivates employees, and ultimately encourages them to stay. On the flip side, in this chapter we also look at what are the main sources of dissatisfaction and stress at work that employees experience, and the reasons why they seek to leave.

Effective leadership and a learning culture appear critical to attracting and retaining employees

We asked employees what, when thinking about joining a new employer, they looked for. 'Good leadership' and a 'culture that embraces professional development and continuous learning' were the two most common answers across Singapore, Hong Kong and China. 'Good leadership' and the 'opportunity to develop new skills' also featured strongly in perceived sources of motivation at work. For example, 64 per cent of managers in Singapore identified leadership as a key source of motivation at work, whilst 59 per cent identified 'the opportunity to develop new skills' as a source of motivation. The importance of a culture that supports opportunities to learn and grow is perhaps underscored by the finding

that of those managers indicating an intention to leave their jobs in the near future (74 per cent of managers in Singapore and China, 69 per cent in Hong Kong), the most common reason stated for looking to leave was a 'lack of career growth and developmental opportunities' (52 per cent of managers in Singapore, 47 per cent in Hong Kong, and 48 per cent in China gave this as a reason for wanting to leave). The impact of poor leadership on reasons for looking to leave is also evident with lack of appreciation, lack of opportunity to make a difference, adverse impact of organizational politics all featuring as reasons for leaving, and all connected to the quality of leadership in an organisation.

Good leadership' and a 'culture that embraces professional development and continuous learning' are the top two reasons for joining an organisation.



What are the things you look for in an organisation?

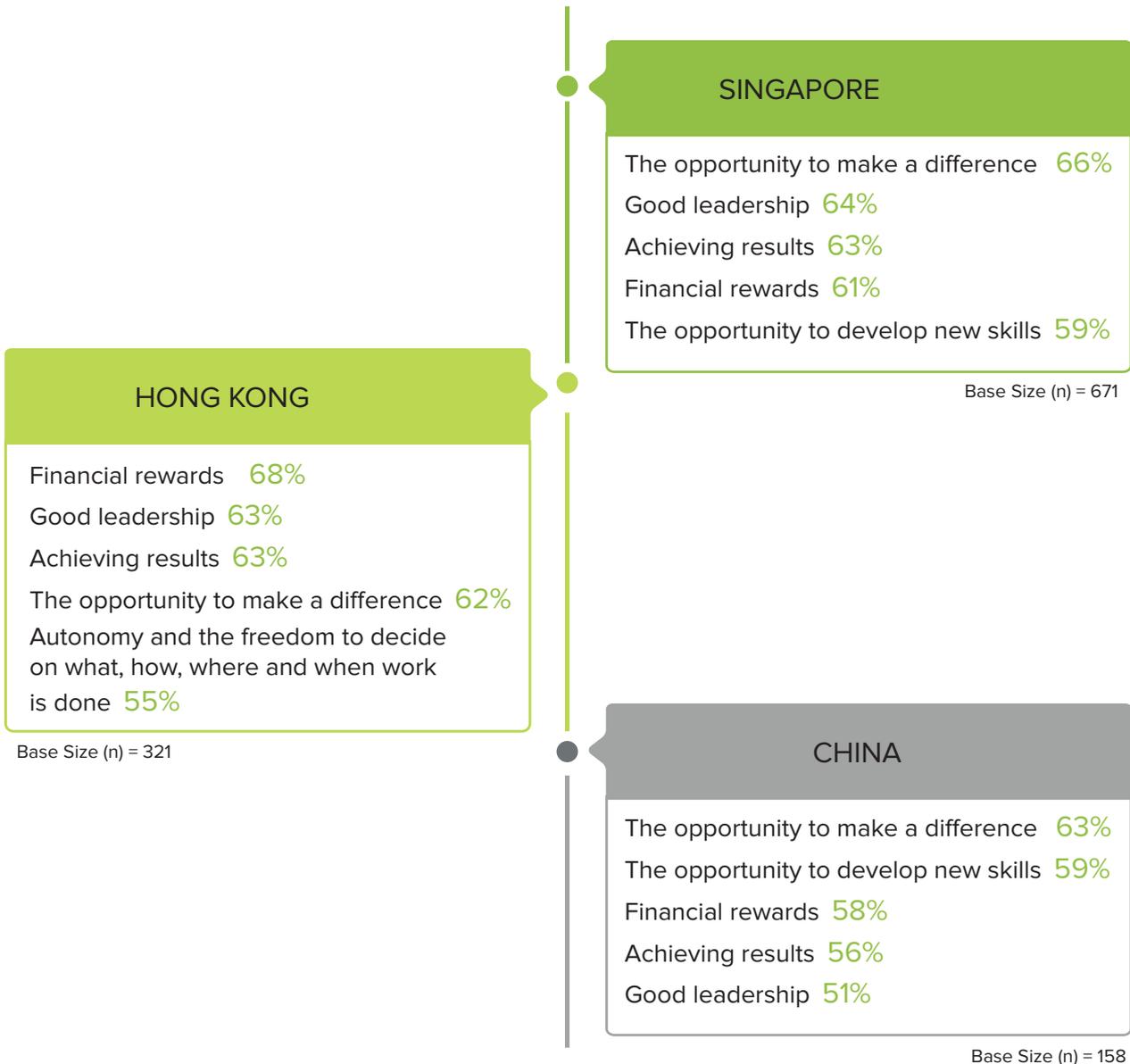


Meaningful work matters

It is striking that the 'opportunity to make a difference' is the most common source of workplace motivation in both Singapore and China, viewed as more motivating than financial rewards. It may be that financial rewards are essentially a 'hygiene factor', a source of dissatisfaction if needs are not met rather than a source of motivation. The 'opportunity to make a difference' is also in the top five sources of motivation in Hong Kong. It seems that meaningful work matters. Autonomy, leadership and the opportunity to develop are all linked to the capability and space to make a difference and it is no surprise to see these feature as sources of motivation also.

What motivates you at work?

Percentages of managers who indicated ...

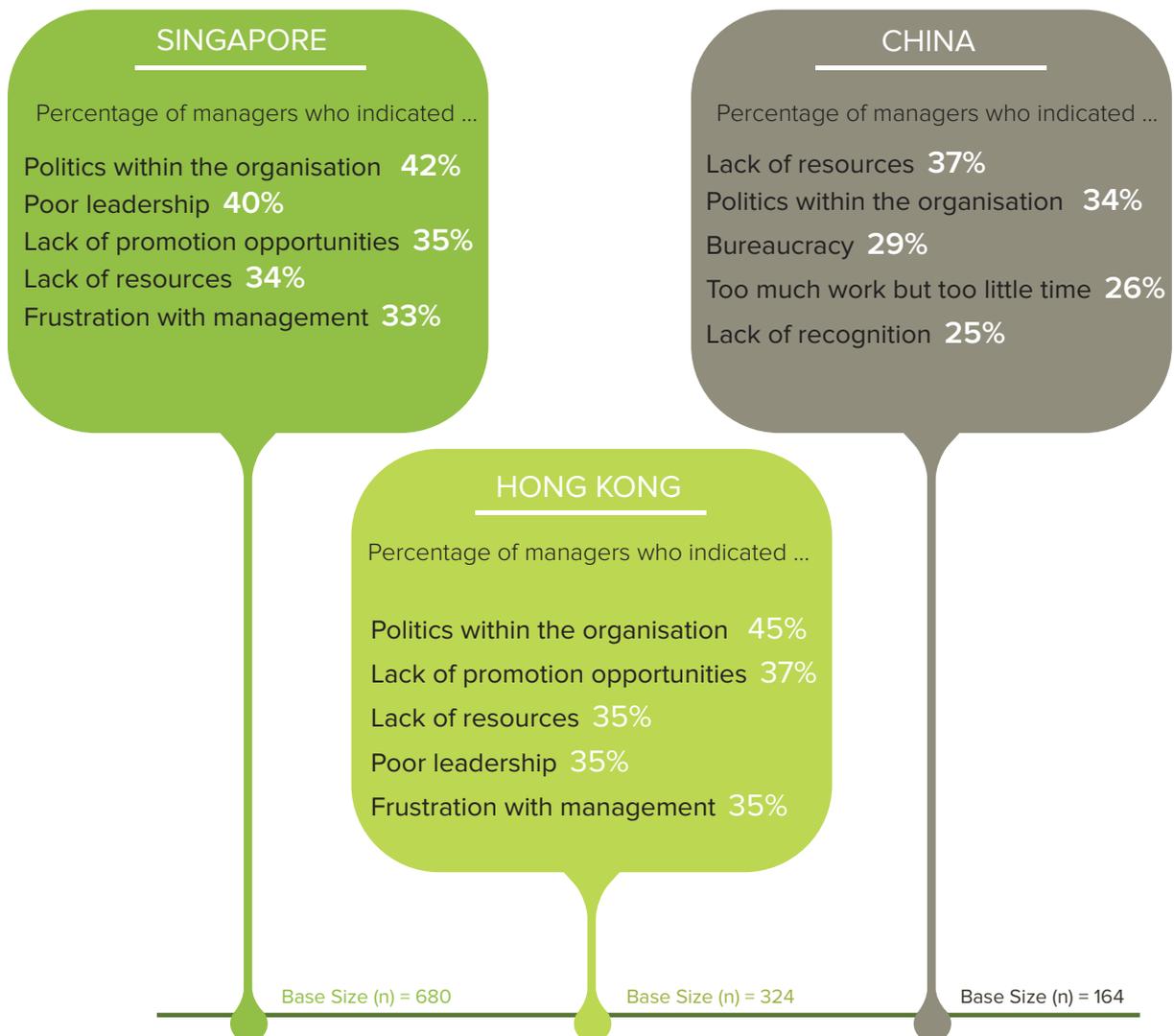


Politics is a dirty word

'Politics within the organisation' is identified as the main source of dissatisfaction with work by managers in Singapore and Hong Kong. 42 per cent of managers in Singapore identify politics as a source of dissatisfaction compared with 45 per cent in Hong Kong. It is also the second most commonly cited cause of dissatisfaction at work by managers in China (34 per cent). It is also in the top two causes of workplace stress in each of the three countries studied in this report, and in the top three reasons cited by managers across the three countries for looking to leave their organisation. 39 per cent of managers in Hong Kong, 38 per cent in Singapore, and 28 per cent in China all identify politics as a key reason for looking to leave. It seems, then, that politics is perceived by managers as a dark art or a dirty word. The reality is that managing politics is part and parcel of a managers' role, and there is both good and bad politics. Managers may need to develop more effective influencing skills and understand how to do 'good politics' to mobilise support and effect change.

Organisational politics is a key source of dissatisfaction with work, workplace stress and ultimately reasons for leaving an organisation. Managers need to be equipped with the confidence and skills to manage political life inside organisations positively and to see it as part and parcel of their role

What are the major dissatisfactions of your role?



Managers are struggling with new ways of working

Looking at the aspects of organisational life that managers find most stressful, a pattern appears to emerge. Managers report that lack of strategic direction from the top, lack of clarity concerning goals and objectives, and organisational politics are all common sources of stress. One can argue that all of these sources of stress emerge from the move away from command and control, bureaucratic structures to forms of work that require enhanced influencing skills, the ability to manage effectively not only downwards, but upwards and across also, and often across organisational boundaries. These new forms of working are critical to operating effectively in complex, rapidly changing environments and require higher levels of interpersonal skill.

What do you consider to be the major stressors in your life?

SINGAPORE

Percentage of managers who indicated ...

- Poor strategic direction from the top **45%**
- Organisational politics **40%**
- Lack of support **31%**
- Lack of clarity concerning my goals and objectives **30%**
- Job insecurity **23%**

Base Size (N) = 671

HONG KONG

Percentage of managers who indicated ...

- Organisational politics **41%**
- Poor strategic direction from the top **38%**
- Lack of support **26%**
- Lack of clarity concerning my goals and objectives **25%**
- Lack of satisfactory balance between work and personal life **23%**

Base Size (N) = 322

CHINA

Percentage of managers who indicated ...

- Poor strategic direction from the top **44%**
- Organisational politics **35%**
- Lack of satisfactory balance between work and personal life **27%**
- Lack of support **27%**
- Lack of clarity concerning my goals and objectives **18%**

Base Size (N) = 159

Managers leave organisations because of reasons of leadership and culture

Whilst managers' report insufficient financial rewards as a reason for leaving their organisations, it is not the most common reason given. There also appear a set of inter-linked reasons relating to leadership and culture. When leaving an organisation, managers appear to be asking themselves: 'Do I have the opportunity to do my best here and make a difference?' 'Am I growing and developing here?' and 'Am I appreciated and recognised for what I do?'. If the answers to these self-directed questions are not positive, managers will walk. The action for organisations then is to focus on developing a style of leadership that gives people space to grow and learn, challenging them to stretch themselves whilst providing support along the way.

Why are you considering leaving your current organisation?



Base size (n) = 502



Base size (n) = 223



Base size (n) = 120

HUMAN POTENTIAL AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN A SNAPSHOT (SINGAPORE)

ATTRACTION



What do you look for in an organisation?

- Good leadership **57%**
- Culture that embraces professional development and continuous learning **54%**
- Financial stability **45%**
- Flexible work policies **39%**
- Culture that is non-political **33%**

Base size (n) = 671

MOTIVATION



What motivates you at work?

- The opportunity to make a difference **66%**
- Good leadership **64%**
- Achieving results **63%**
- Financial rewards **61%**
- The opportunity to develop new skills **59%**

Base size (n) = 671

EXIT



Why are you considering leaving your organisation?

- Lack of career growth and developmental opportunities **52%**
- Lack of appreciation/recognition **38%**
- Organisational politics **38%**
- Insufficient financial rewards **30%**
- Lack of opportunity to make a difference **30%**

Base size (n) = 502

Managers need to better equip themselves to manage the micro-politics of organisational life



Appendix 1: Respondent profile

This year's Workplace in Asia 2017 survey is based off the responses of 915 Singapore, 486 Hong Kong and 279 China managers and non-managers from organisations of a range of sectors and sizes. The characteristics of the respondents who completed the survey and the type of organisation they work for are presented here.

Singapore

Respondent Characteristics

Figure 1 shows the profile of survey respondents by level of seniority. Figure 2 shows the profile of survey respondents by age.

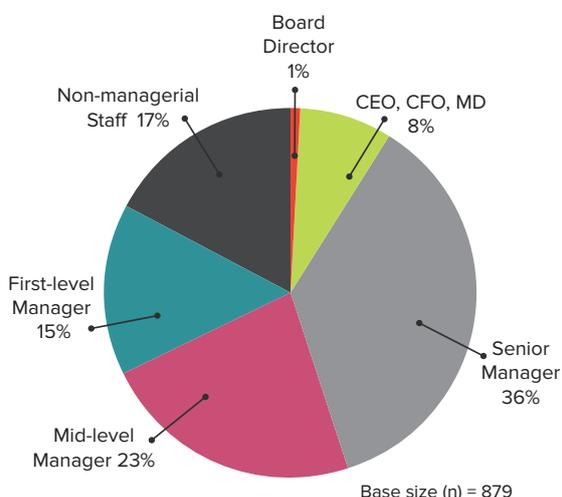


Figure 1: Survey respondent by seniority

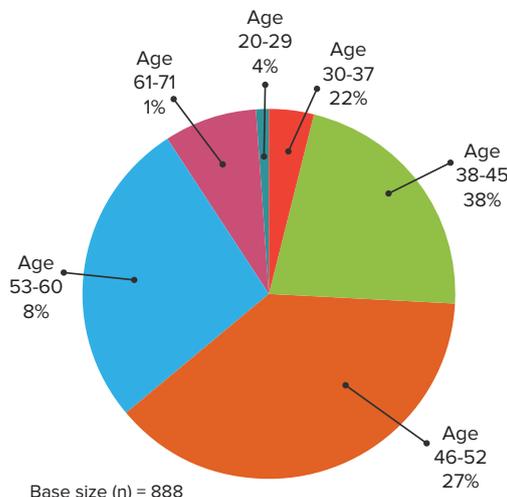


Figure 2: Survey respondent by age group

53 per cent of respondents were male. 44 per cent were female. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of seniority within each gender.



Figure 3: Survey respondent by seniority within gender

28 per cent of the managers who responded to the survey worked in a role dedicated to people management and development (e.g. HR generalist or specialist, OD, L&D, Talent Management etc). The majority of HR respondents were female (57 per cent female; 43 per cent male).

Which position title or function broadly matches your current (or most recent) position?	Percentage
HR Director	29
HR Manager	11
HR Business Partner	9
Recruitment/Resourcing	8
Organisational Development	8
Learning & Development	8
Talent Management	8
Compensation & Benefits	6
HR Consultants	6
Health, Safety & Environment	2
Diversity	2
HR Information Systems	1
Relocation/Mobility	1
Employee Relations	1
Base size (n) = 192	

Table 1: Profile of HR respondents by role

Respondent Organisation Characteristics

Respondents to the survey worked for a range of organisations of different sizes and sectors. Figure 4 shows a breakdown of respondents' organisations by employee size. Table 2 shows a detailed breakdown by industrial sector.

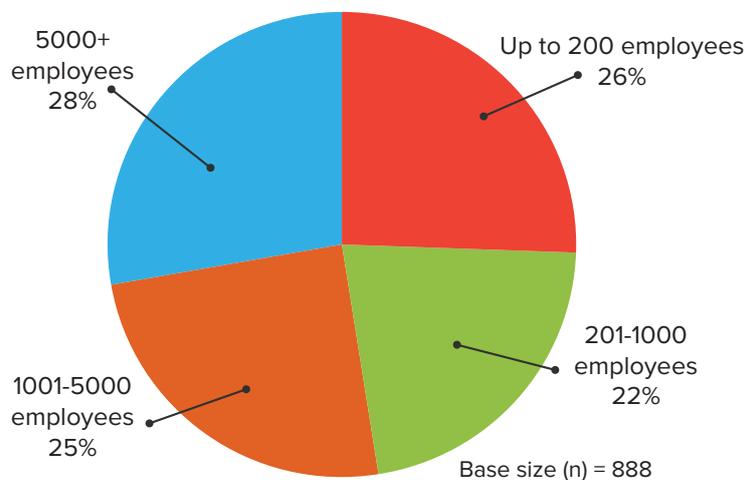


Figure 4: Number of employees in Asia-Pacific

Industry	Percentage	Number
Advertising/Arts/Entertainment/Media/Publishing	2	15
Agriculture/Animals	1	6
Building/Construction/Engineering	3	24
Charity/Not for Profit sector	1	8
Education	1	9
Energy/Water/Waste/Environment	3	24
Financial Services (Banking/Insurance/Asset Management)	29	262
F&B/Catering	1	8
Healthcare	5	44
Hospitality/Travel/Tourism	1	10
HR Consulting/Training	2	22
IT and Telecommunications	9	81
Manufacturing (Light, Fast Moving Consumer Goods)	8	74
Manufacturing (Heavy)	3	23
Mining/Resources	1	6
Pharmaceuticals/Biotechnology	5	46
Professional Services	3	28
Public Sector	1	10
Real estate/property	2	16
Retail/Wholesale	4	38
Transport/Distribution/Supply chain/Logistics	5	44

Table 2: Respondent profile by detailed industry

Hong Kong

Respondent Characteristics

Figure 5 shows the profile of survey respondents by level of seniority. Figure 6 shows the profile of survey respondents by age.

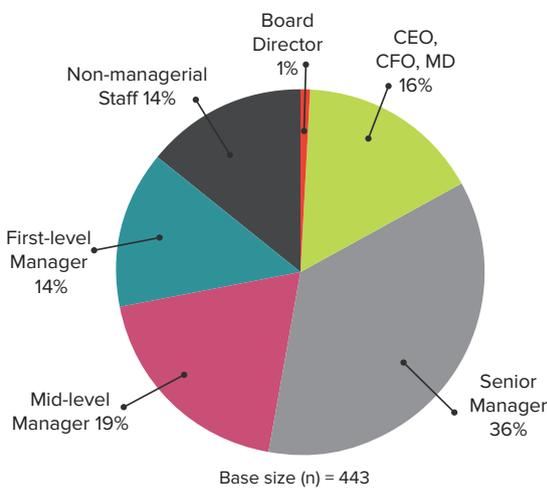


Figure 5: Survey respondent by seniority

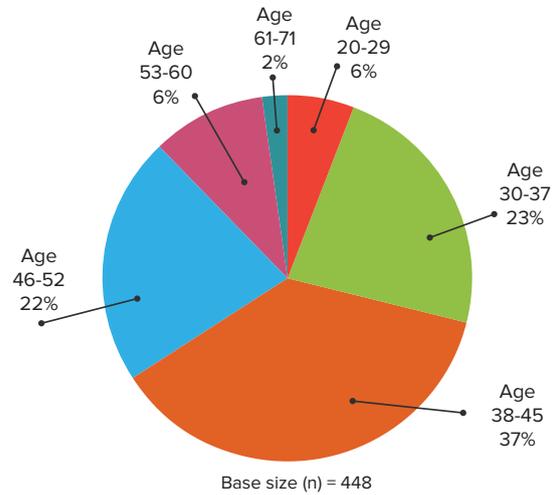


Figure 6: Survey respondent by age group

49 per cent of respondents were male. 51 per cent were female. Figure 7 shows the breakdown of seniority within each gender

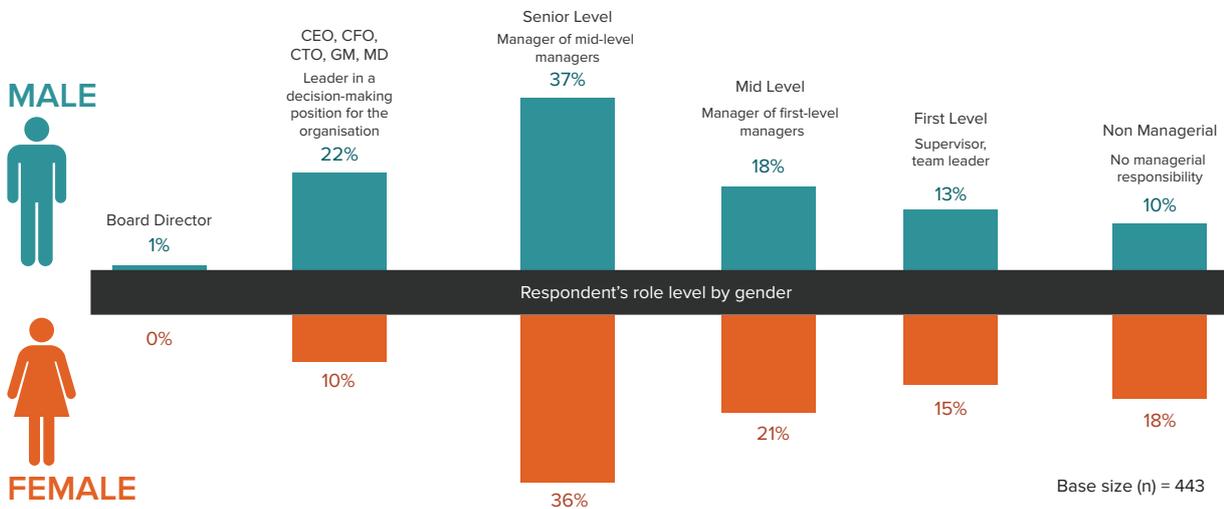


Figure 7: Survey respondent by seniority within gender

40 per cent of the managers responded to the survey worked in a role dedicated to people management and development (e.g. HR generalist or specialist, OD, L&D, Talent Management etc). The majority of HR respondents were female (61 per cent female; 39 per cent male).

Which position title or function broadly matches your current (or most recent) position?	Percentage
HR Director	35
HR Manager	17
Recruitment/Resourcing	9
Organisational Development	8
HR Business Partner	8
Talent Management	7
Learning & Development	7
HR Consultant	3
Compensation & Benefits	3
Organisational Designer	2
HR Information Systems	1
Employee Relations	1
Diversity	1
Base size (n) = 145	

Table 3: Profile of HR respondents by role

Respondent Organisation Characteristics

Respondents to the survey worked for a range of organisations of different sectors and sizes. Figure 8 shows a breakdown of respondents' organisations by employee size and Table 4 shows a detailed breakdown by industrial sector.

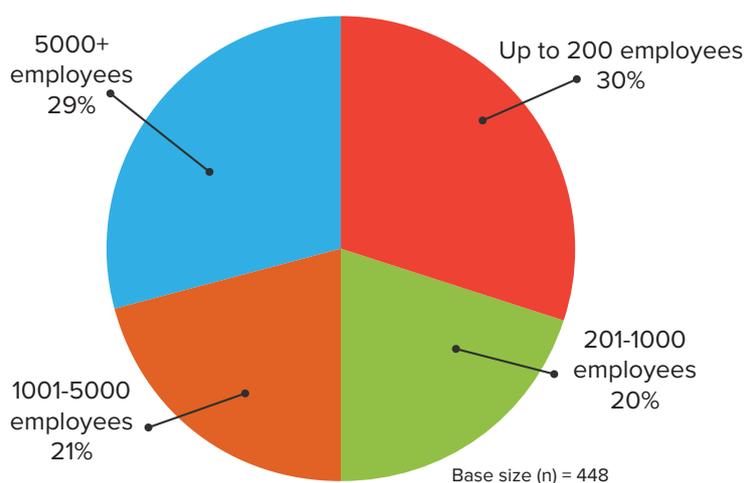


Figure 8: Number of employees in Asia-Pacific

Industry	Percentage	Number
Advertising/Arts/Entertainment/Media/Publishing	3	12
Agriculture/Animals	0	1
Building/Construction/Engineering	1	5
Charity/Not for Profit sector	1	6
Education	2	11
Energy/Water/Waste/Environment	0	2
Financial Services (Banking/Insurance/Asset Management)	49	223
Food & Beverage/Catering	0	1
Healthcare	2	7
Hospitality/Travel/Tourism	1	5
HR Consulting/Training	4	19
IT and Telecommunications	6	26
Manufacturing (Light, Fast Moving, Consumer Goods)	4	17
Manufacturing (Heavy)	0	2
Pharmaceuticals/Biotechnology	1	4
Professional Services	5	21
Public Sector	1	4
Real Estate/Property	2	8
Retail/Wholesale	6	29
Transport/Distribution/Supply Chain/Logistics	5	24

Table 4: Respondent profile by detailed industry

China

Respondent Characteristics

Figure 9 shows the profile of survey respondents by level of seniority. Figure 10 shows the profile of survey respondents by age.

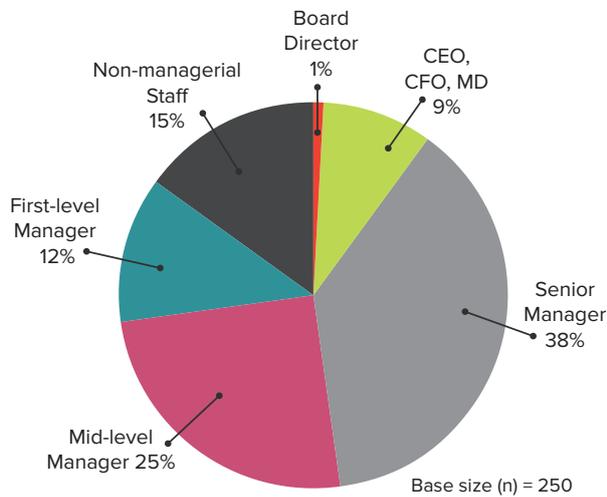


Figure 9: Survey respondent by seniority

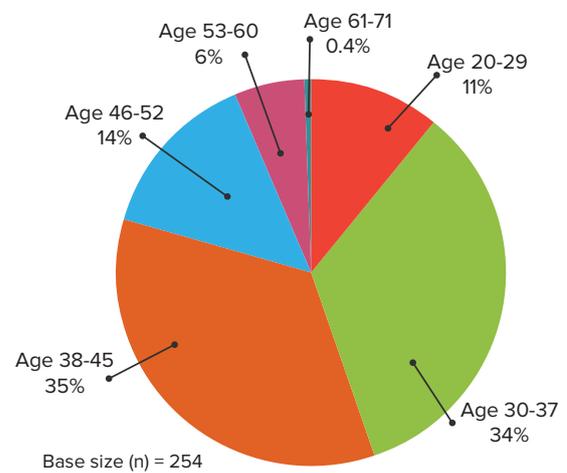


Figure 10: Survey respondent by age group

63 per cent of respondents were male. 37 per cent were female. Figure 11 shows the breakdown of seniority within each gender.

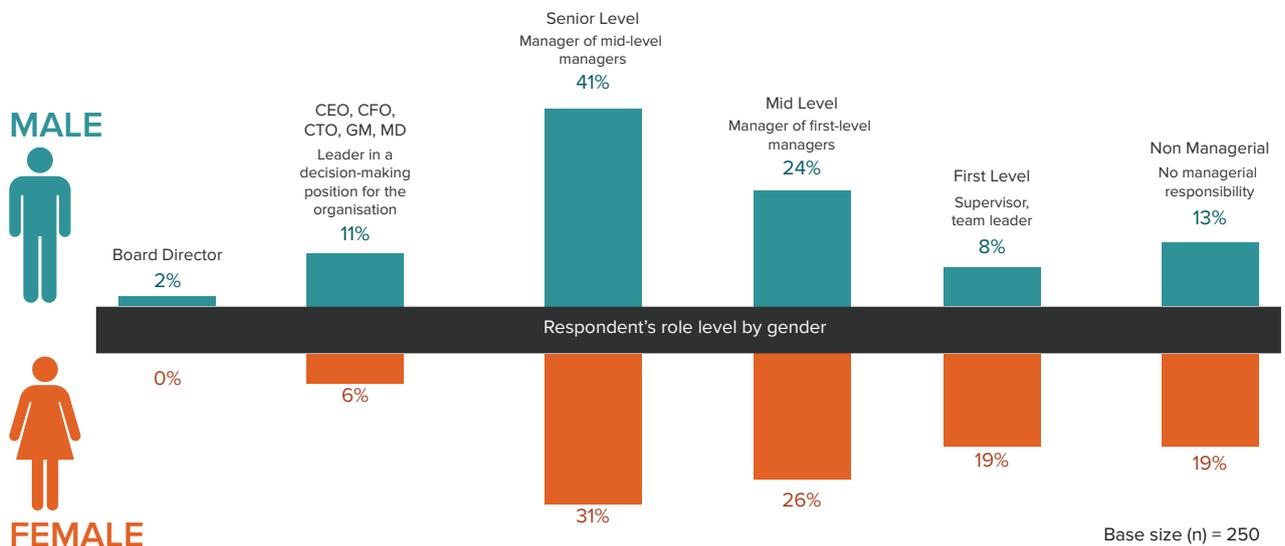


Figure 11: Survey respondent by seniority within gender

27 per cent of the managers responded to the survey worked in a role dedicated to people management and development (e.g. HR generalist or specialist, OD, L&D, Talent Management etc). The majority of HR respondents were (44 per cent female; 56 per cent male).

Which position title or function broadly matches your current (or most recent) position?	Percentage
HR Director	29
Recruitment/Resourcing	13
HR Business Partner	13
Learning & Development	10
HR Manager	8
Health, Safety & Environment	6
Compensation & Benefits	4
Industrial Relations	4
Talent Management	4
HR Consultant	4
Instructional Designer	2
HR Coordinator	2
Base size (n) = 48	

Table 5: Profile of HR respondents by role

Respondent Organisation Characteristics

Respondents to the survey worked for a range of organisations of different sectors and sizes. Figure 12 shows a breakdown of respondents' organisations by employee size and Table 6 shows a detailed breakdown by industrial sector.

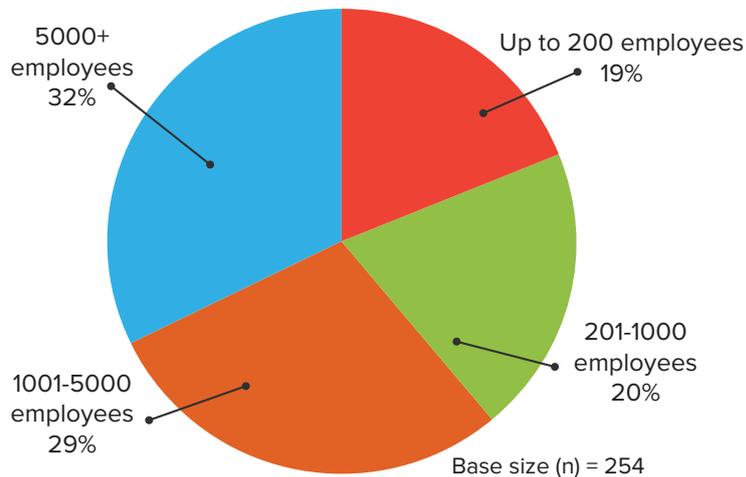


Figure 12: Number of employees in Asia-Pacific

Industry	Percentage	Number
Advertising/Arts/Entertainment/Media/Publishing	5	14
Agriculture/Animals	1	3
Building/Construction/Engineering	2	4
Education	1	3
Energy/Water/Waste/Environment	2	4
Financial Services (Banking/Insurance/Asset Management)	8	20
Food & Beverage/Catering	2	6
Healthcare	10	26
Hospitality/Travel/Tourism	1	2
HR Consulting/Training	4	10
IT and Telecommunications	8	20
Manufacturing (Light, Fast Moving, Consumer Goods)	16	42
Manufacturing (Heavy)	10	27
Pharmaceuticals/Biotechnology	5	14
Professional Services	4	10
Real Estate/Property	2	5
Retail/Wholesale	9	24
Transport/Distribution/Supply Chain/Logistics	5	14

Table 6: Respondent profile by detailed industry

Appendix 2:

How we designed and conducted the research

The Working in Asia: 2017 aims to identify current and future challenges that employees face in Singapore, Hong Kong and China. The content of the questionnaire was determined following consultation with colleagues both at Roffey Park and Profile Search & Selection. The survey is in its second year and has a mixture of questions from previous surveys conducted by Roffey Park and Profile Search & Selection. Namely, Roffey Park's Singapore Management Agenda and Profile Search and Selection's HR Viewpoint survey.

This year's survey consisted of 45 multiple choice, closed and open ended questions in five sections: HR issues and challenges, context and climate, diversity, impact of digital and the flexible workforce, and human potential and its development.

An online version of the survey was produced and the survey was live from early February to late March 2017. An email invitation with a link to the survey was sent to a list of managers known to both Roffey Park and Profile Search & Selection. The incentive for completing the survey was a free copy of the final report and entry into a competition for a gadget of their choice (out of a selection of 3), by suggesting the word which best describes Workplaces in Asia today.



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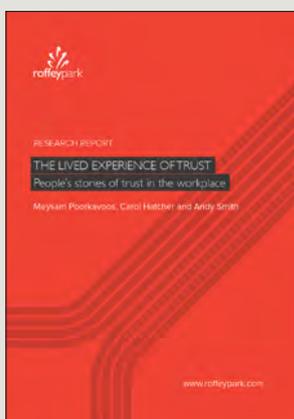
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Roffey Park and Profile Search & Selection's research - Workplace in Asia: Key HR and Leadership Priorities for 2017 - aims to highlight managers' views on organisational life in Singapore, Hong Kong and mainland China. It is based on Roffey Park's Singapore Management Agenda which has previously featured in national and trade press.

Based on the views of nearly 2000 managers and non-managers working in organisations from a wide range of sectors and different sizes, the report covers managers' views on leadership, organisational culture, change, engagement, impact of digital technology and well-being. The report presents the views of employees from all levels of seniority and those in both HR and non-HR roles.

This research should appeal to a wide audience, from board members through to HR, OD and managers in the wider business. It should also be of interest to anyone with responsibility for developing effective people management strategies, OD initiatives, and effective organisations.

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