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Engaging Public Officers in a Hybrid Workplace

By Amos Law



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Good Governance Is Built on Capabilities, Not Ideology

Editorial

by **Alvin Pang**
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The work of the Public Service is, at heart, about the betterment of people's lives. Science, technology and economic progress are promising means to that end and have undergone tremendous advances in our lifetimes. However, we are still learning about the impact these systems have on the human beings they are intended to serve. While such concerns have long been with us, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought them sharply to the fore. This edition of ETHOS Digital features contributions reflecting on the human side of the Public Service as a workplace.

For instance, the need for government services does not cease in a pandemic. Technology does allow public officers to continue working from the safety of home, but we are still reckoning with the organisational effects of doing so. We must keep finding ways to master digital technology rather than be mastered by it. [Digital platforms, used skilfully, can bridge rather than breed social alienation](#), and strengthen the human bonds that make for a healthy workplace culture, even when co-workers cannot share the same physical location.

Thoughtful leaders understand that their teams are more than just productive work units connected on a network. Fears of a Great Resignation—a pandemic-initiated tsunami of disaffected and burnt-out employees leaving work—may be exaggerated, but people do need to feel safe, engaged and fulfilled to do

their best at work. Research into [‘humanistic’ approaches to staff management](#) suggest ways in the long term to improve staff engagement and organisational health, and thereby work outcomes.

In the spirit of [making our workplaces more generative and inclusive communities](#), organisations can also be more deliberate in pursuing practices to reap the gains of an increasingly diverse workplace, and more fully harness the inherent strengths of Singapore's multicultural society.

When times become challenging, as they must in a crisis, a wise manager must understand [how to support their staff while keeping work goals in view](#), so that we do right by all our people: the ones we work with, and the ones we serve.

The articles in this issue remind us that in the age of machine learning, the vital work of government is still carried out not by automatons but by people—who deserve the support and nurturing necessary for them to give their best efforts. Aligned with this aspiration, we also hear from two former Singaporean public officers who now lead a non-governmental outfit helping to [strengthen governance capabilities for governments around the world](#).

I wish you an engaging read. Stay safe and stay well.