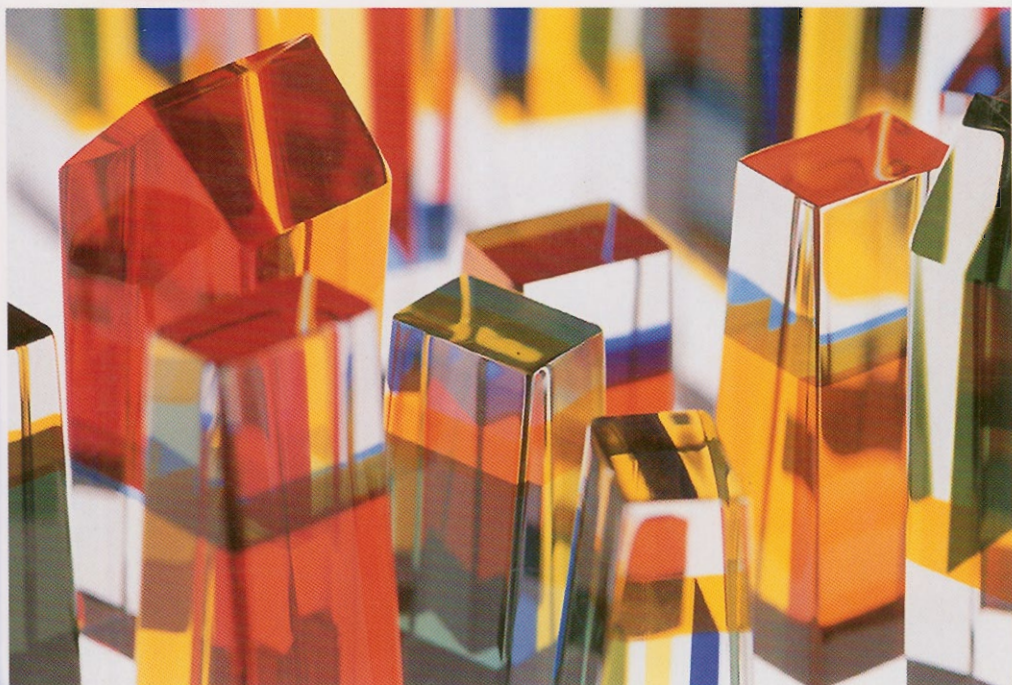


# *Leadership & Talent in Asia*

*How the Best Employers  
Deliver Extraordinary Performance*



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# Introduction

**T**his is another book about people in organizations: how to manage them, motivate them, and inspire them to produce extraordinary results. It will compete for space on bookstore shelves with a myriad of other books on leadership, pay, development, human resources, and motivation; not to mention self-awareness, organizational culture, and developing influencing skills.

There are two reasons why this book is different. First, on the foundation of the extensive research base we will describe throughout the book, it is very clear that it is possible to give compelling guidance to companies and their leaders who want to turn the common “people are our most valuable asset” rhetoric into reality. What we hope you will find refreshing about this book is the good news that driving high performance in your organization is based on nothing more than common sense.

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Our research consistently tells us the same thing—there is no simple solution, and no quick fix, to being a Best Employer. It is clear that yoga classes, free beer, and interactive “fun at work” training programs can never compensate for poor leadership, boring work, and no career development. But then,

this shouldn't surprise us—we've known this for a hundred years, since people first started studying organizations.

Many organizations seem to believe that lashing the human resources department to develop a new employee program is all it takes to unleash the potential of their people. Certainly, many of the Best Employers described throughout this book offer free yoga classes and many elaborate benefits to their employees. The difference is that these things are not the core strategy; they are the deliberate icing on the cake, a small part of the overall recipe, not the only ingredient.

With all our research, it is possible that we haven't learnt anything new. We keep being reminded of these common-sense truths. The reality is that one out of every two employees throughout Asia-Pacific aren't excited about getting out of bed in the morning and heading off to work. Their leaders don't give them a sense of excitement and hope. They feel stuck and constrained in jobs that don't stretch or challenge them, and where they see organizational values written in two-foot-high letters on the meeting room walls—but people actually behaving very differently.

If you were to ask the average employee in the average organization what makes their organization exciting and special and their job interesting, as we often do, far too many people will just laugh at you. Surely the goal of every leader in every business should be to create an exciting and successful organization where interesting work is done, or do you just not care?

More organizations get it wrong than right. Many more. So, as you read through this book, take some time to ponder this. Why is it that when we already know what to do, we spend so much time doing something else? Is it really so hard to build passion, pride, and commitment in your organization?

That is what makes this study so exciting. Through researching and understanding Best Employers, we have a window into the world of what is possible and that, of course, is part of Hewitt's mission—to *help organizations and their people succeed together*. So, throughout this book, we are not going to advise you to invest in new fads or gimmicky programs.

Your organization can achieve extraordinary results simply by harnessing the talent and commitment of your people, without an elaborate strategy or complex systems. The best organizations focus on doing a few things extremely well, things that focus on connecting their employees to their business, and giving them a passion to achieve amazing results.

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**The best organizations focus on doing a few things extremely well...**

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The second reason why this book is different is because this study is a BIG DEAL.

### **WHY IS THIS STUDY A BIG DEAL?**

Think for a moment about all the psychological theories we have about what motivates people—both at work and in life in general. Most of these theories have been built on experiments that use university students as subjects (usually white, middle-class, American college students).

Now think about the millions of people who go to work each day across the diverse countries and cultures that make up the Asia-Pacific region. They work in a wide range of industries, from manufacturing to retail; from restaurants and hotels to financial services. They fulfill a variety of jobs, from operating machinery to selling goods to customers; from offering financial management services to making beds and driving buses. They work for large multinational companies, small, local family businesses, and major conglomerates. They vary in age, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, length of service, seniority, and educational level. Until recently, the link between the psychological research above and employees in Asia-Pacific was likely to be tenuous at best.

In 2000, a group of us at Hewitt Associates decided to address this issue. We believed that there were a sufficient number of companies in Asia-Pacific who were passionate enough about their people that they would be prepared to participate in independent studies to determine how they stacked up against their own aspirations as well as other