

# EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN IS A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL

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While a factory may sometimes be thought of as a hazardous workplace, Top Glove Sdn Bhd — the world’s largest manufacturer of rubber gloves — boasts a workforce with a lower level of obesity than the national average.

According to founder and executive chairman Tan Sri Dr Lim Wee Chai, only 17% of the group’s employees have a body mass index of over 25 (an indication that a person is overweight). This is less than half of the 45% recorded for the overall Malaysian population.

Lim tells The Edge that Top Glove advocates five habits to ensure its employees work and live healthily for 100 years. These habits are clean, eat, work, exercise and sleep well.

The group’s health-focused corporate culture starts at the top — Lim himself is a firm believer of work-life balance.

“Personally, I achieve work-life balance through discipline, a well-planned schedule and investing my time wisely, and I encourage my colleagues, business partners and friends to do the same. My personal motto is, ‘Work is my hobby, exercise is my duty, health is my wealth’,” he remarks.

To encourage its employees to exercise for about 30 minutes a day, four to five times a week, Top Glove organises multiple monthly sports activities with prizes to attract staff across all its factories to participate.

“We also have a gym at our corporate tower where our staff can use the facilities free of charge. The gym also offers group

classes such as Zumba, spinning and yoga. These are some of the initiatives we have undertaken to encourage work-life balance and a healthy lifestyle among our employees,” says Lim.

In fact, the health and well-being of Top Glove’s workforce are so important to the group that one of its business rules is “Do not lose your health”, he adds.

The glove maker also pays close attention to the diet of its employees. It has in-house nutritionists who work closely with the top management to design programmes that foster good eating habits. Free fruits are also provided to all its employees at its Malaysian and Thailand offices once a month.

“We recently entered into a joint venture with Global Doctors for an ambulatory care centre with a focus on preventive healthcare. It will serve not only Top Glove’s employees but also the wider community,” Lim reveals.

In order to encourage its employees to look after their own well-being and reduce preventable illnesses, Top Glove organises health talks on topics ranging from lower back pain management and cardiovascular problems to non-communicable diseases.

Lim stresses that the cultivation of a healthy and active lifestyle requires constant encouragement and creative initiatives.

“Although some employees were initially reluctant to participate in the physical and healthier lifestyle activities as they were not part of their usual routine, our constant encouragement and emphasis on the benefits of these activities helped them accept and embrace our healthy living culture,” he says.

While Top Glove’s employees have regular working hours, the company offers flexible work arrangements as part of its ongoing initiative to support them and help them achieve better work-life balance.

“For example, in the case of new parents, they are given the option to choose flexible working hours to help them manage. In most cases, we do see productivity increase when these benefits are used correctly,” says Lim.

To help Top Glove improve its health programme, its employees volunteer to share their fitness, health and lifestyle data, allowing the company to analyse the internal data.

Lim says the group also actively participates in externally run, research-based studies to identify the gaps in its health strategies and to find ways to improve its programme. The organisations and universities that have conducted these studies include the Ministry of Health, UCSI University and AIA.

*The Edge Markets*