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KUALA LUMPUR: As more employers shift their approach to talent development away from the traditional once-a-year performance appraisal, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Malaysia has adopted a real-time approach in engaging and giving feedback to its employees to develop PwC Professionals.

PwC people and assurance partner Pauline Ho said the consulting group places great emphasis on differentiation through five key attributes — whole leadership, business acumen, global acumen, relationships and technical competencies.

She said these are developed through PwC Malaysia's new integrated approach, the "MY Growth Journey", which aims to assist its employees in personal development and progress as PwC Professionals.

"The MY Growth Journey is about how we help our people develop to become PwC Professionals with these differentiating attributes. A key element of this approach is real-time development," said Ho in an interview with *The Edge Financial Daily*.

Previously, Ho said, PwC also used the once-a-year appraisal format, but the year-end or project-end assessment model was not very effective, as most of the process was focused on the minority at the top or bottom of the performance curve.

"If we combine a development and a performance discussions together, the only thing the person will remember at the end of the meeting is his or her performance rating because that ties in with their bonus.

"This is what we are trying to split in our new format," she said.

With its new development framework in place, PwC now conducts frequent "growth conversations" between the employee and the person's assigned career coach.

The career coach does not look at the work performance of the individual, said Ho, but at the entire career of that particular employee.

"The coach is not necessarily someone that can develop the individual; it's more of making sure that certain development actions are taken by the individual and to communicate his or her performance," she explained, adding that the coaches — usually management-level employees —

would also nudge the one being coached if the particular employee is not making headway.

“We have a total of three meetings a year which focus on development rather than performance. So at the beginning of the year, we would talk about the aspirations of the person and the learning resources required to achieve the targets.

“In the middle of the year, we have a checkpoint to see how much progress has been made based on the snapshots that have been submitted,” she said.

The snapshots provide a look at a staff member’s development and performance at a particular engagement at a particular point in time, explained Ho. She said snapshots are also taken more frequently as compared to previously, in line with the real-time development objective.

For the final engagement of the year, the employee will have a review of the past year to look at how the person’s performance stack up against the goals set at the start of the year, said Ho, emphasising that the focus is on development actions and not on the employee’s rating.

Going forward, PwC Malaysia will continue to refine the growth journey as it adjusts to the new framework in place.

“The elements are there. Of course, we will refine it as we go along; we learn from experience after all. We will continue to work on more real-time development initiatives.

“It will take some time to embed,” she said.

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