

LEVEL 7 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		

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1. Introduction

According to a study in 2016, there will be around 5 billion people would be affected by myopia, which is about half of the whole population in the world (Holden et al, 2016). Nowadays, 75% of adults are using different methods for vision correction, the most common one is wearing eyeglasses, which was chosen by 65% of them (Castloo, 2020).

Not only for vision correction, somehow eyeglasses have become as fashion accessories in the fashion industry, more luxury brands have launched their own frames lately, such as Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Dior etc. However, those frames usually cost so much higher and not many people could afford, especially teenage group. Therefore, they would seek for a stylish design of those frames with affordable price in the market.



Figure 1.1: GUCCI eyeglasses
Source: Gucci, 2022

With the needs of vision correction and the desire of good quality and designs frames, eyewear industries have a high potential to expand their business all over the world. In this study, there are two eyewear companies, Optical 88 and OWNDAYS, were chosen to be analysed about what kind of human resource challenges they had faced while they were expanding their business overseas. Surprisingly, both of them has chosen Singapore as their top three choices as their very first oversea business spot.

1.1 Optical 88 Limited

Optical 88 Limited is launched since 1988, and it has become the largest eyewear retail chain stores in Hong Kong (Optical 88, 2022). With more than 30 years history in the local market, the team has developed more further, for providing a more proper service to the public in Hong Kong. Optical 88 has their own two ophthalmology centres and able to give elderly people a detail sight checking service, especially cataract, by ophthalmologists (Optical 88 Ophthalmology Centre, 2021). Also, the centres could provide myopia control treatment for children, which would be taken care by Part I optometrists, since only Part I optometrists could provide treatment to patients in Hong Kong (please refer to Appendix). Therefore, Optical 88 is aimed to provide a family eye care service for all-aged group customers with professional training and up to date technologies.

Optical 88 has developed their international business during early 90s, and the results are successfully in expending their network throughout Southeast Asia. Nowadays, other than China and Macau, Optical 88 also having their stores in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.



Figure 1.2: OPTICAL 88 Clementi Mall store
Source: Optical 88 Singapore, 2022

1.2 OWNDAYS Inc.

OWNDAYS is one of the largest eyewear retail chain stores in Japan, it has been launched since 1989, and having their very first overseas store in Singapore in 2013 (OWNDAYS, 2022). Successfully, with their unique branding and marketing strategies, OWNDAYS have more than 30 stores in Singapore and expanded their network to other regions and countries, such as: Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Australia etc.

OWNDAYS actually has brought up another trend of eyewear retail industry, by allowing their customers to collect the eyeglasses at the same day, even in 20 minutes (SCMP, 2018).

With sample and clear pricing, value customers' time, higher customers' satisfaction and their own brands and manufactured frames (Malhotra, 2021), OWNDAYS has succeed to build their very own unique retail style.



Figure 1.3: OWNDAYS AMK Hub store
Source: OWNDAYS Singapore, 2022

2. Challenges

There are two main international human resource management (IHRM) challenges for these two companies that need to take care while they expanding their business network to Singapore. First is about talent management, second is to work across cultures, ensure the corporate culture and workflow would align the same as the origin to get them managed and observed easily even oversea.

2.1 Talent Management

For running an optical retail chain store, most common task and challenge is to hire professional well-trained optometrists to provide sight checking service to customers. Basically, human resource (HR) team would easily to find the optometrists in local area with related experience and local law. However, once the business turned into international level, it has become an international human resource challenge, to hire the qualified optometrists which recognised with the region law overseas. Before launching the hiring ad online or the announcement, HR team should have studied well about the recognitions and the requirements of becoming an optometrist or ophthalmologist in Singapore, such as certifications and related education qualifications. Of course, the salary level and benefits in that region should be studied by HR team to assist the general manager (GM) setting up budgets of expanding business overseas before launching the projects.

Moreover, if head quarter is sending workers to work overseas, HR team will need to arrange support of accommodation and other resources to help workers settle down as soon as possible, which would allow workers to focus on work and raise up the productivities faster.

2.2 Work Across Cultures

Another challenge for IHRM of both companies would be working across cultures, mainly because the corporate culture from overseas companies would be different from the other local parties even in the same industry. The cultures that created by the company could be unique, and local customers group and even employees may not accept right away. HR team will need to make sure that overseas employees would value the culture same as from head quarter (or origin country), so internal will have a positive environment with great attitude. When workers and company share the common set of values, this would help to unite everyone together and helping employees to transcend their culture's borders (Rhoades, 2017).

Moreover, if the workflow and processes are huge different to the local industry, HR team will need to take time to handle the issues that the workers may not get use with it. Therefore, these kind of questions and issues needs to be solved smoothly and quick by HR team, so that the organisation could enhance the workers' performance and utilise with their abilities, easier for management team to manage the frontline work force and meet company's expectations.



Figure 2.1: Work Across Culture
Source: Medium, 2017

3 Analysis

Facing these two challenges, both Optical 88 and OWNDAYS have used different methods to handle the issues. In this section, their actions and plans would be analysed separately, based with their own company and original region background, they have acted differently.

3.1 Analysis of Optical 88's IHRM

For Talent Management, Optical 88 as a leader of eyewear retail chain industry in Hong Kong, they have successfully to manage to have their optometrists remain a professional image, and sure they would like to have all of their overseas staffs have the same standard as in Hong Kong. According to a research report that launched by HKTDC in 2013, it has clearly stated that Optical 88 actually has their own system on training and recruiting their staff in China. The same system and rules are assumed to be applied in talent management in Singapore as well, which also assuming that they would request their staffs all over the world to provide professional optometric services to customers, in a Hong Kong style (HKTDC, 2013).

First, there is an assessing system in Optical 88 for all of their optometrists, in their point of view, those optometrists who only hold domestic qualifications are not hireable, they must pass their internal assessment based on optometrists' international qualifications time by time, to ensure their optometrists would have the latest knowledge about optometry and devices information in the market. With implanting trainings and development, HR team has a standard to follow up with their performance in region by region easily, and able to observe if there is any demand of extra training.

The advantage of this method is that it is straight forward, all the standards and company's expectations have been stated clearly. HR team could gather the results as appraisal review, also having such a "golden standard" for every optometrist to enter this company should having the

same vision with Optical 88 as expanding their skills and standard to international level before they apply for the job interview. Providing international level trainings for staffs, which is investing on them, could be an attractive factor to trigger those fresh graduated from optometry school to apply for the job under Optical 88, to well prepare themselves for future career path and may getting more opportunities to work overseas with the skills that trained from there.

The disadvantage of this method is that may cause stressful working environment to their optometrists. Comparing with other chain stores, not only in Hong Kong or Singapore, there are many optical stores would not request their optometrists to take assessments, or not necessary to meet with optometrists' international qualifications. Therefore, the employee turnover rate may increase due to this system. Moreover, the results could not show the staffs' performance in detail, it is for referencing only. On the other hand, currently other competitors would also provide device trainings to their optometrists as they would prefer to giving the professional service with the latest technologies in the market, so Optical 88 is not the only chain stores could provide trainings to employers in the market.

For working across culture, as Hong Kong and Singapore have similar languages and culture, it is not a big challenge for Optical 88 to expand their business in Singapore. By aiming to provide "Hong Kong shopping style" in Singapore, the training of sales technique and verbal expression would be needed at the beginning. Since it would be different in between Singapore local optical stores, Optical 88's style is unique in there in early 90s. Showing an optometrist could help ophthalmologists to do the early screening service on patients, with giving out professional medical advices. Finally, the public education has be completed and accepted by their workers, Optical 88's style has influenced to the local optical stores as well.

The advantage of providing training for frontline staffs to create a "Hong Kong shopping style" for customers is the quality would be easier to manage as same as Hong Kong, giving public a bright and professional brand image.

The disadvantage is that may not be accepted by part of Singapore people, especially elderly

customers. With the tone in “professional”, it may make customers feel like having distance with optometrists, not close with them, which is the biggest different with the local optical stores. Some of the staffs may think that would affect their relationships with customers, would impact with their career after leaving this company.

3.2 Analysis of OWNDAYS's IHRM

OWNDAYS has chosen their first overseas store in Singapore in 2013, before opening the store, the management team has so much conflict about this project, especially because of language issues. Mr. Shuji Tanaka, the president of OWNDAYS, had written the whole process and all of the process in his blog. This shows a very common problem of Japanese company culture, preserve in the comfort zone and try to minimise the risk before any change.

For talent management, after screening their staffs' background and skills, OWNDAYS had chosen some of them internally and work abroad for managing the business and store in Singapore. Just two months before the opening day of the Singapore store, Mr. Tanaka has assigned a part time optometrist, who has optical field working experience in Canada with Canadian optician license, and willing to work abroad, to be the store manager in Singapore (Tanaka, 2018).

The advantage of this method is that the worker already understands about the corporate value and culture, less training is needed for the workers and it would be easier for other teams to communicate with for further development.

The disadvantage is maybe the staff may not have enough experience about management, and if the assigned employee resigns suddenly, it is harder for the HR team to hire another having similar background and qualifications with good understanding about the company to take this role.

As mentioned, OWNDAYS has their unique fast service to their customers, to apply this culture in overseas store, the trainings would be the same as in Japan with same devices. It is great to

have training as a chance for different regions leaders to communicate and share market information during training, and to align the service standard. However, it is hard to arrange in pandemic and it would be easy for competitors to copy style once they get the same devices. With related experience, optometrists would be easily leaving the company and works for competitors if they offer a higher salary and better benefits to them.

4 Conclusion and Recommendation

As the leaders of this industry, Optical 88 and OWNDAYS have developed their international business very well and their HR management teams have clearly solved so much issues at the very beginning, all the methods they have used actually helped companies to build up a strong base and made a good start.

Based on above analysis, following are few recommendations for both Optical 88 and OWNDAYS.

4.1 Short term action plan

Company could provide an open communication environment as a new corporate culture. As the store managers may need to work with local workers with different race, background and cultures, it is very important to have a fair and open mind culture for them to communicate with each other, to shows company would value everyone the same level, and help them to understand each other.

Listening and remain a transparent workplace would build up employees' loyalty to the company as they would feel comfortable to work in here.

4.2 Mid-term action plan

To ensure the staffs' skills meet with company's expectation, assessment system of Optical 88 would be helpful. However, to reduce the stressful feeling, they may request to have the assessment quarterly and optometrists could take turns. Rearrange the assessment system may take half to one year to see if it would have a better outcome.

On the other hands, OWNDAYS could also take the assessment system as reference, and apply in the job interview as the optician qualifications are not restrict in Japan, not like in Singapore

or other regions. OWNDAYS should also align their service and professional levels in every store all over the world. This would take one to two years for them to build up a custom system which suitable with their fast service culture.

4.3 Long term action plan

Optical 88 could also consider to have trainings about medical screening with latest devices for their optometrists in Singapore, for developing their ophthalmology centre in overseas to work with local ophthalmologists. This could further expand their eyecare business to a much proper level in overseas, which will be similar with Hong Kong. The project would take more than 5 years.

OWNDAYS may set up their very own school in the region office, to gather all of their optometrists in the same region for trainings and it would be great if they could shift their workers in different places if they are willing to work abroad. As a new benefit, allowing workers to shift their work base or such as “exchange” plan to share different culture internally.

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Appendices

6. **Restrictions on the practice of Part II, Part III and Part IV optometrists**
- (1) An optometrist whose name has been entered in Part II of the register shall not in the course of practising his profession use any diagnostic agent other than staining agents.
 - (2) An optometrist whose name has been entered in Part III of the register shall not in the course of practising his profession perform any function or engage in any activity other than work relating to refraction.
 - (3) An optometrist whose name has been entered in Part IV of the register shall not in the course of practising his profession perform any function or engage in any activity other than work relating to refraction or refraction and contact lenses, as appropriate.

Source: Hong Kong legislation (2016)

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