



## AYALA LAND INC.: EMBRACING DIGITALIZATION FOR EMPLOYEE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



PBCWE Founding Member



6,133



48%



52%

### Challenge

Philippine Business Coalition for Women Empowerment (PBCWE) founding member Ayala Land, Inc. (ALI) provides all employees equal access to learning and development programs to build the competencies required to deliver quality products and services to clients. When quarantine protocols in response to the COVID-19 pandemic restricted business operations, ALI moved quickly to protect its workforce by implementing health and safety measures, enhancing healthcare services, and shifting to Work from home (WFH) and other flexible work arrangements. To cope with the adverse financial impact of the pandemic, many businesses have resorted to cutting costs in non-essential activities, which typically include training and development. ALI, however, is taking advantage of digital platforms to sustain its learning and development programs and enable employees to adapt to the times.

### Strategy

ALI recognizes the need to develop and support employees through opportunities for professional and personal development. *“For employees to be able to perform at the highest levels, the company should also equip them with the opportunities to learn and develop their skills,”* says Leah of the ALI Talent Management Team. She describes the ALI learning and development programs as holistic. ALI offers level-based programs to prepare employees for their next role

at a certain level of their career. Managerial boot camp and associate manager programs, for example, are conducted to help new or budding managers develop the qualities and skills necessary to fulfill new responsibilities. There are also function-based programs to develop technical knowledge and skills, as well as other offerings on soft skills, sustainability, volunteerism, health, and wellness. Programs are customized to the business to make them more relatable and valuable to employees.

During their onboarding, new hires are introduced to company values and policies, such as the non-discrimination policy on professional development. Learning and development programs are generally open to all while level- or function-based programs are targeted to specific participants. During feedback sessions and performance evaluation conversations, learning and development needs of the employees are discussed with their managers. To meet the diverse training needs identified in these discussions, ALI runs various training modalities - in-house developed courses, self-paced learning or through third-party providers and educational institutions.

In response to the pandemic, ALI pivoted to virtual learning and development programs. It not only shifted existing programs online but also introduced new modules relevant to the current situation. Aside from giving a sense of normalcy, such programs are necessary to upskill, reskill, and

retool employees to be able to overcome the challenges brought about by the pandemic and successfully transition to the new normal.

## Actions

ALI maximized existing platforms and tools in organizing online programs for employees. Programs are communicated through multiple channels such as email and messaging apps. The ALI learning development network composed of Human Resources (HR) professionals across subsidiaries also helps to cascade information on company-wide activities to the various groups.

At ALI, the shift from face-to-face to online learning brought its own set of challenges and opportunities. In the past, logistics for face-to-face events ate up a lot of time and resources. ALI provided participants with practically everything they needed for the training – resource persons, materials, food, transportation, and sometimes even lodging when necessary. Some of these preparations are no longer necessary at present, so ALI is focusing on trying to give employees a similar learning experience from their online programs as in face-to-face programs.

### Optimizing the e-learning experience

ALI adjusted its programs to be conducted more effectively online. The programs are not purely lecture-type and involve role playing, presentations, games, and breakout groups. The company opts for shorter programs to retain the attention of attendees and sometimes even limits the number of slots to ensure quality interaction among resource persons and attendees. Several runs of these limited-slot sessions are held to ensure employees can attend.

ALI schedules programs during regular office hours so that employees can dedicate time within their work schedule for learning and inform their managers accordingly. Most programs are also scheduled in the first three quarters of the year in consideration of the deadlines and targets of business groups in the fourth quarter.

### Expanding offerings

ALI has launched more programs, particularly those in relation to health and safety. Project Development Manager Hannah expressed her appreciation for new topics like mental health and homeschooling for parents which she considers highly relevant. The company also saw it fit to provide training on virtual leadership and communication to help employees adjust to the change in work setup

### Promoting self-paced learning.

In case employees are unable to attend a webinar, recordings are made available so they can be viewed at a later time. The webinars are complemented by self-paced online learning platforms (like Degreed or Coursera) wherein employees have the flexibility to choose from a variety of course options and study in their own time.

### Leveraging on executives and experts

Although lower fees for online programs have allowed ALI to explore more options for external speakers, the company is tapping its own executives and subject matter experts as teachers and facilitators. Aside from helping to manage costs, this strategy leads to better sharing drawn from personal experience. ALI also encourages participants to echo sessions in their respective groups to reinforce application of learning.



## Outcomes

ALI's Training Statistics	2019	2020
Total Employee Count	6,180	6,133
Employee Count – Male	2,985	2,963
Employee Count - Female	3,195	3,170
Total Training Hours	204,755	184,431
Total Training Hours – Male	115,265	94,913
Total Training Hours – Female	89,490	89,518
Average Training Hours per Employee	33.13	30.07
Average Training Hours - Male	38.61	32.03
Average Training Hours - Female	28.01	28.24

Source: ALI's Annual Report 2020

Partly due to the shorter duration of online training compared to face-to-face, there was a slight decrease in the average training hours per employee in 2020 as compared to 2019. However, HR observed that generally, the number of participants in ALI learning and development programs has increased with greater access to virtual platforms. On the average, there are about 200 participants per webinar.

Despite the reported decrease in training hours, HR observed that generally, the number of participants in ALI learning and development programs has increased. 47 live online programs were conducted from April through December 2020 with 17,000+ attendees or an average of 369/webinar. Such numbers would have been difficult to achieve with in-person programs constrained by venue capacity.

The HR Group also continues to receive positive feedback and testimonials not only from training participants but their managers, too. This suggests that both management and staff still find value in the company learning and development programs.

## Employee Experience



### **Building a Self-Directed Culture**

In March 2018, ALI, the largest property developer in the Philippines, became the first real estate firm in the world to receive the EDGE certification for gender equality in the workplace. EDGE, or Economic Dividends for Gender Equality, is the leading global assessment methodology and business certification standard for gender equality. In the assessment, which involved an employee survey, 77% of female and male respondents considered themselves being given the training opportunities they need to grow in the company.

Such thinking seems to have persisted even through the pandemic.

***“Training is about how to make you more efficient and effective at your job. It is not a prerequisite for a promotion, but it can help you improve your performance. I have finished six online courses that I myself picked because I found them relevant to my job. There is a wide range of courses in the online platforms set up by ALI.”***

**Menard Project Development Manager**

Other ALI employees shared similar thoughts on how the company is supportive of their professional growth. ALI Sustainability Manager Anna spoke highly of the self-directed culture in the company.

***“The opportunity to learn is there all the time. Even if you have attended training in the past or are already a manager, you are encouraged to go back to school and learn something that is not in your arsenal of knowledge or skill set. My background is in architecture, but when I expressed interest to hone my financial management skills, ALI looked for an institution where I could enroll.”***

## ***Incorporating Gender and Diversity considerations***

The programs of PBCWE have helped HR representatives of ALI and its subsidiaries look beyond non-discrimination and headcount in practicing workplace gender equality. Members of HR shared how they are now more conscious of inclusion and the importance of diversity in their training programs. Though the primary criterion is qualification, ALI considers gender balance not only among program participants but also in speakers and facilitators. This allows for richer discussions and different perspectives to be heard.

***“As HR, we jumpstart the conversations and facilitate the discussions, but the learning comes from the participants. We recognize that the experiences and insights of a male may be different from a female. We value each opinion,”***

***HR Manager Chris***

ALI has even come up with webinars catering to the specific health needs of women.

Outside of training, the company utilizes employee engagement programs and awarding ceremonies as venues for women empowerment. The construction arm of ALI, for example, tries to feature women in their activities. Such initiatives can set the tone for the male-dominated industry that is sometimes reluctant to put qualified female engineers in the field.

As the world reels from the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses looking to bounce back need to ensure that their employees have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to take on unprecedented challenges. At ALI, a self-directed work culture that promotes learning and development is helping its workforce adapt to the new normal and deliver results. By continuing to invest in the growth of its people, ALI is building a strong foundation for the future.



The Philippine Business Coalition for Women Empowerment (PBCWE) was launched in March 2017 through Investing in Women, an initiative of the Australian Government. In the Philippines, IW has partnered with the Philippine Women's Economic Network (PhilWEN) to create a business coalition to pursue Gender Equality (GE) in the workplace and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) nationwide.

PBCWE is made up of influential businesses that are large employers who will take the appropriate steps to improve gender equity in their own workplaces and to influence businesses, both in their supply chains and other large businesses, and to also become better employers of women.



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# **AyalaLand**

Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) is one of the first Philippine companies and the first real estate company in the world to receive the EDGE (Economic Dividends for Gender Equality) Assess Certification

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