

# PROVIDING A 'SAFE' PLACE TO LEARN!

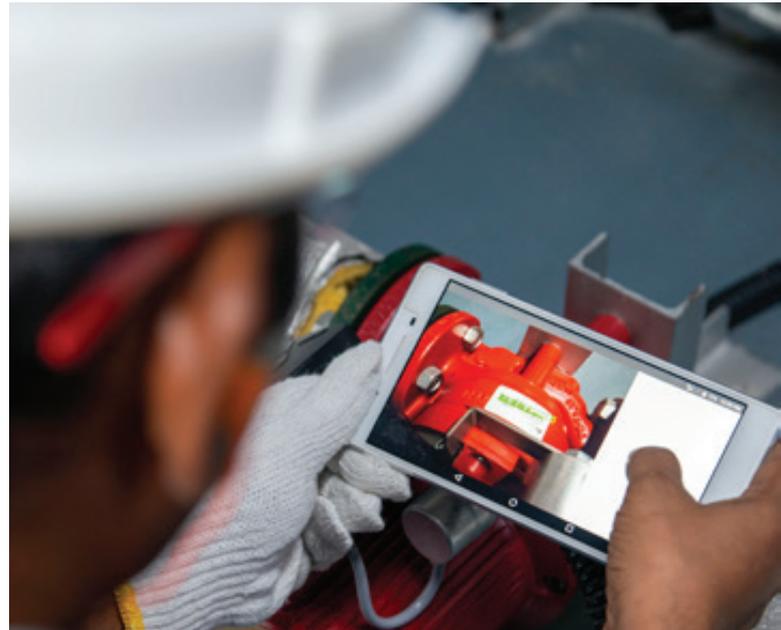
There is no doubt that training and education are key priorities for FM business leaders in the Middle East. The rapid growth of smart technology and tools – combined with evolving property development trends and stakeholder expectations – only means staff training initiatives have become more important than ever before.

Many organizations have provided adequate space for the staff to be trained. While the pandemic at first did hit a pause button, companies like AG Facilities Solutions ensured that the training continued. Talking to CM today, **Ajay Madathil – Manager HSE & Training**, gives us an insight into their training facility and adds that the approach taken by them has proven to be effective and safe for their staff.

Having established the Employee Development Center in Jebel Ali, AGFS is certified for ISO 29990 – a standard for Learning service for non-formal education and training. The facility has improved the competency of its employees by consistently providing the necessary training and awareness and to update them on the latest technologies and trends. The infrastructure is top-notch, it has an auditorium with a capacity of 40 seats, mock-training rooms covering segment-wise technical assets for demonstration, and practical training, and it even has a modular set up of mini apartment facility, etc.

### The Approach during Pandemic

The pandemic took the entire world by storm and locked down all operations. Training had to be suspended for a while. In March 2020, AGFS, as an



interim decision, suspended all the classroom sessions, third party training & on-the-job sessions in view of safeguarding the employees. However, Tool Box Talk (TBT) sessions were conducted by maintaining social distancing and adherence to PPE requirements. To create awareness on the required topics, AGFS consistently communicated the messages through an e-library, circulars, posters, and online meetings.

Lately, AGFS has reinstated the training by adopting methodologies that prevent the spread of virus infection. They conduct mandatory third party sessions at AGFS training center, ensure a safe distance between learners in the classroom and practical session, and disinfection is done before and after each session in the training facility as well. Apart from this, conducting online training for the possible topics, adherence to PPE requirements related to COVID prevention & introduced electronic picture questionnaire to create awareness.

### Safe training sessions & infrastructure

The learning never stopped, despite the pandemic. And it is thanks to the resources that were made available to the staff. To ensure safe training, the staff was provided with access to computers for site employees to deliver online sessions and with internet facility in all the camps. To make the sessions more comprehensible, the staff was provided with a pictured questionnaire in PDA.

Trainers too were given laptops and not to forget everyone had access to the exhaustive e-library.



The e-library covered all the reading materials, case studies, training modules, questionnaires, etc.

Now with the facility open, the proper PPE and disinfectants are being provided in the training centers. As a protocol, thermometers are being kept in all the classrooms to monitor the body temperature to ensure everyone is safe.

However, there are a lot of things taken into consideration while training people during these difficult times. At AGFS, the online provision is utilized to the maximum possible extent. When it comes to the on-the-job session, the learners are limited to a specific site. Mandatory screening is done to everyone entering the building to check for symptoms. And all the contact surfaces in the training facility are frequently cleaned and disinfected. They also conduct assessments and employees are encouraged to take them online to ensure one's safety.

### Overcoming Challenges

While the distance training and online sessions have been impactful, AGFS does agree that there have been few challenges. One of the key challenges is the

engagement of the learner during the session. AGFS states that while there can be a challenge in ensuring that every employee living in remote locations gets access to resources such as laptops, mobile phones, and the internet.

Another challenge was ensuring the learner stays engaged during the session taking place online. This can be resolved by frequent interaction with the learner and encouraging him/her to participate in the online assessments.

They also faced challenges in conducting practical training in the mock training rooms in their Employee Development Center, however, this was overcome by demonstrating the sessions online.

Technology has surely played a huge role in the training process at AGFS. The continuous training sessions despite the surrounding conditions have enabled growth in the skill set among the staff in turn providing better standards at their facilities and most importantly these resources and training facilities will help grow internal talent for the jobs of the future. ■

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