

## Amazon fined \$5.9 million due to California warehouse worker quotas

AMAZON.COM has been fined \$5.9 million by a California labor regulator who says the online retailer failed to properly inform workers of productivity quotas at two warehouses, including one where some workers are trying to unionize.

The office of California Labor Commissioner Lilia Garcia-Brower announced the fines, which were issued in May, this week.

A 2022 California law requires employers to provide written descriptions of quotas to workers if they can be disciplined for failing to complete jobs at a specified speed.

The commissioner said Amazon violated that law nearly 60,000 times in a five-month period ending in March at warehouses in Moreno Valley and Redlands, outside of Los Angeles.

Amazon spokesperson Maureen Lynch Vogel said the company is appealing the citations and denied that warehouse workers have fixed quotas.

“At Amazon, individual performance is evaluated over a long period of time, in relation to how the entire site’s team is performing. Employees can and are encouraged to review their performance whenever they wish,” Lynch Vogel said in a statement.

Criticism of Amazon’s alleged quota system have been a focal point of a nationwide campaign to unionize its warehouses. Workers at a New York City warehouse voted to join a union in 2022, while others at two facilities in New York and Alabama have since spurned unions. — **Reuters**

# AI exposure among HR staff limited, Sprout study finds

SOFTWARE company Sprout Solutions said on Wednesday that 88% human resources (HR) professionals in the Philippines have minimal to moderate exposure to artificial intelligence (AI).

The report added that Philippine companies are slow to adopt AI in their operations, leaving much upside for AI penetration.

It found that only 12% of companies have high exposure to AI, 27% moderate exposure, 33% low exposure, and 28% minimal exposure.

“It’s clear that embracing technology and AI is critical for organizational success by embracing digital transformation, prioritizing employee well-being, and ensuring government compliance,”

Sprout Solutions CEO Patrick Gentry said in a statement.

Changing the perception of AI usage in HR practice is key to bridging the gap, according to Arlene C. de Castro, chief people and customer officer of Sprout Solutions, at a briefing accompanying the State of HR report launch.

The 2024 study found that firms are investing in HR technology and that 65% of organizations are using human resource information systems. The uses of online learning platforms is also at 65%.

Applicant tracking systems are used by 43% of companies, to streamline recruitment and candidate management, the study found.

Tools like Slack or Microsoft Teams to improve collaboration and communication in remote or hybrid work setups are used by 53% of firms, while 57% use payroll software to automate and simplify payroll processing.

The study found that security concerns are an issue in AI adoption in HR. Only 30% of firms are extremely ready and ready to adopt AI, followed by 31% unready and extremely unready, while 39% of firms say they are moderately ready.

Accuracy of data and AI governance are also among the ethical concerns revealed by the study when using AI in HR. — **Chloe Mari A. Hufana**

### OPINION

## How to take pride in your work

**I’ve been in this job for more than five years without a promotion but have received an average of 4% in merit increases each year. Three days ago, my boss asked me if I’m enjoying my job. I said “yes,” and he smiled. Is he serious? What’s going on? — Blue Sky.**

### IN THE WORKPLACE REY ELBO

**ELBONOMICS:** If you’re not enjoying your work, then that’s self-flagellation.

Don’t be fooled. The boss’s smile can mean many things. It could be a rictus or a fake smile that does not translate to genuine delight, but a horrified, involuntary grin that we see from like, an embarrassed stage actor who forgets his lines while performing. If that’s the case, then start worrying about your future in that organization.

Understand that having a good time at work and enjoying an annual pay increase are two different things. They are always a welcome development. Enjoying a job means you’re taking pride in what you’re doing even if there are occasional bad times, which are unavoidable.

This is best seen when you look forward to each day with genuine optimism and enthusiasm despite the rigors of daily commuting. A good sign of con-

tentment is when you’re considered a candidate for a perfect attendance award, though there may have been some lapses due to circumstances beyond your control.

For some workers, having a good time means performing the minimum requirements of the job while spending much time doing unproductive things, engaging in office gossip or updating social media accounts during work hours. On the other hand, there are high achievers who are not happy doing the bare minimum, knowing that this does not serve their long-term career aspirations.

### FIVE SOLUTIONS

So, which do you think is better? Having a good time doing the minimum requirements or exceeding expectations? At the

end of each day, you’ll find out that doing the average thing is not sustainable. Sooner than later, your boss will make a decision that will make or break your career, and ultimately, your job security.

The basis of everything will be work performance. Therefore, if you’re enjoying your job for the wrong reasons, then think again. Repent right away. There are hundreds of solutions that you can consider. I’m listing here some of the most basic and practical approaches you can take right away:

**One, have a reasonable performance plan and target.** It must be consistent with your job description and performance standards agreed with the boss. Know your job well. Do it better than your colleagues. If necessary, or if you’re confused, better that you discuss things with your boss, who should be glad to assist you.

**Two, create and showcase your big accomplishments.** The best way to do this is by stepping outside of your work routine. Think of ways to become productive, cut costs, or be efficient all the time. Stop being a non-value proposition in your organization. If you’re

successful, your reward or recognition will come in due time.

**Three, volunteer for challenging assignments.** That’s assuming you have the spare time to do them all. Before raising your hand, ask the following questions: Would this job make my image acceptable to all? Is this a dirty, demeaning, or difficult job that no one wants to do? Am I genuinely looking for acceptance? How will others look if I do the job?

**Four, acquire a unique skill that others don’t have.** How about becoming a technology wizard in ways that make your job easy? How about analyzing the future of your industry? Could you interpret the business pages and determine how your company will be affected? You should know what’s missing in your company — that’s where you enter the picture.

**Five, show 100% commitment.** That means working a lot harder, if not smarter than the rest of your team members. Don’t lose sight of your long-term goals, even for a second. If you’re fully committed, you’ll avoid personal downtime, mistakes, or deviation from your plan.

### TAKING PRIDE

If you’re not enjoying your work, then that’s self-flagellation. If you’re not happy, then there’s no point in staying a minute longer in your job. You don’t have to be perpetually miserable trying to outdo other moaners. Conversely, if you’re happy because you’re getting paid for mediocre work, then that’s a shame.

Whatever the circumstances are, the ideal approach is to become happy with your work and make sure your boss and other people agree to that. Once you acknowledge that work is fun, you’ll find every step lighter. Having a good time at work and enjoying the pay is the ideal to shoot for in every workplace.

It means taking pride in what you do every step of the way.

Bring REY ELBO’s “Kaizen Blitz Workshop” to your organization and discover how to solve problems with low-cost, practical solutions. Contact him on Facebook, LinkedIn, X or e-mail [elbonomics@gmail.com](mailto:elbonomics@gmail.com) or via <https://reyelbo.com>



## Shakey’s Pizza sees improved performance in second half

LISTED restaurant chain and food service group Shakey’s Pizza Asia Ventures, Inc. (SPAVI) said it expects its financial performance to rebound in the second half of the year due to increased sales and lower costs.

“We see this year to be better performing in the second half where some of our key input costs is already expected to go down,” SPAVI President and Chief Executive Officer Vicente L. Gregorio said during a virtual media briefing on Thursday.

“While we have strategic investments in our organization to prepare for our growth needs, we see that improving sales will be able to offset and provide us the coverage for fixed costs and therefore the margins are expected to improve,” he added.

Mr. Gregorio said that SPAVI is still expecting its top line and bottom line to grow by “mid-teens” as initially targeted.

“We expect to get increasing leverage on our operating expenses as the percentage of sales should come down over the next quarters,” he said.

Mr. Gregorio said that SPAVI is eyeing to open at least 400 stores this year, more than the about 360 stores opened last year.

“The bulk of them (new store openings) would be Potato Corner, maybe about 70% (of the total) because these are smaller investments. There’s a lot of opportunities for shar-

ing this wonderful brand to micro, small, and medium enterprises,” he said.

“Shakey’s Pizza is also expected to open a lot of stores this year. More than ever in the entire history. At least 20 stores will be added to the Shakey’s Pizza system. We are on track, albeit the openings are back ended also in the second half,” he added.

Mr. Gregorio also said the company remains optimistic with the international expansion for its brands.

“We have opened several stores in China. We have opened new markets like Malaysia, and the first few stores in these areas have done very well. This gives us further motivation and encouragement. We continue to grow in the existing markets. I believe we’re in 14 countries right now,” he said.

SPAVI saw a 15% decline in its first-quarter net income to P171 million due to higher operating expenses. System-wide sales grew by 15% to P4.8 billion.

The company has 2,232 stores and outlets as of end-March. Its brands include Shakey’s Pizza, Potato Corner, Peri-Peri Charcoal Chicken & Sauce Bar, R&B Milk Tea, and Project Pie.

On Thursday, SPAVI shares rose by 1.35% or 13 centavos to P9.74 per share. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

## Manila Water expects to complete main line upgrade by fourth quarter

MANILA Water Co., Inc. said it targets to complete its P47-million water mainline upgrade along EDSA (Epifanio de los Santos Avenue) Guadalupe Southbound by the fourth quarter.

The project will provide “more robust water infrastructure along EDSA to minimize the risk of leakage and safeguard the construction and development” of the Department of Transportation’s (DoTr) EDSA Greenways Project, the company said in a media release on Thursday.

“Projects like the steel pipe replacement along EDSA Guadalupe are opportunities for us to improve water service for our customers while supporting government infrastructure projects such as the DoTr’s Greenways Project,” Manila Water’s Corporate Communications Affairs Group Director Jeric Sevilla said.

The company is replacing an old 500-millimeter water mainline with a 600-millimeter steel pipe under the project called the Steel Pipe Replacement Greenways Project Package 1.

DoTr’s EDSA Greenways Project aims to improve the pedestrian walkway in transit stations located at Balintawak, Cubao, Guadalupe, and Taft.

“In preparation for DOTr’s project, the company started construction of the P47-million pipeline project in July 2023,” Manila Water said.

Construction works cover pavement breaking, open-cut excavation, pipe laying, valve insertion along St. Bernardino Street, and interconnection of the 600-millimeter steel pipe to the existing 500-millimeter steel pipe. — **Sheldeem Joy Talavera**

## SM Mega Tower: A premier headquarters for multinational firms

The Philippines has become an important hub for multinational companies because of its favorable business environment, which offers cultural affinity, cost efficiency, skilled talents, and a well-established infrastructure.

The rise of modern buildings and towers also meets the needs of these companies, providing high-speed internet, a redundant power supply that includes renewable energy, and enhanced security.

Among skyscrapers that define the stretches of the Ortigas Central Business District, SM Mega Tower continues to embody sustainability, convenience, and cutting-edge amenities that redefine the future of office spaces for businesses in the Philippines.

Because of these factors, the 50-storey S-shaped skyscraper has rapidly become the preferred headquarters for prominent local and multinational firms, as supported by Vertiv’s recent relocation to the building.

Vertiv, a global provider of critical digital infrastructure and continuity solutions, has announced the opening of its new offices in Manila, located at the SM Mega Tower in Mandaluyong City’s central business district.

The new Vertiv offices span over 8,000 square meters across four floors and offer modern amenities, flexible and collaborative workspaces, focus areas, wellness rooms, and an open office concept. These features are tailored to create a conducive environment that fosters productivity and collaboration among its over 1,200 employees.

Understanding how taxing the daily grind can be to its staff, Vertiv Manila has designed the offices with open and dynamic features to inspire Vertiv employees and encourage them to be at their best when at work. Overall, it is hoped the offices will give employees a positive environment where they can grow both at a professional and personal level.

Vertiv’s facility also features a Customer Experience Center (CEC) and the Vertiv Academy. These spaces provide customers with hands-on experiences using Vertiv’s products and technologies that aligns perfectly with the advanced infrastructure offered by SM Mega Tower.

Furthermore, Vertiv’s focus on establishing a multinational environment showcases the ability of the building to support the operations of global enterprises.



SM Mega Tower welcomes digital infrastructure and continuity solutions provider Vertiv. Pictured from left to right are the people behind this inspiring venture: SM Offices Regional Accounts Manager Maricris Cruz; Vertiv VP of Global Business Services Felix Bailer; Vertiv Chief Human Resources Officer Cheryl Lim; Vertiv Chief Financial Officer David Fallon; Vertiv Manila Hub General Manager David Yao; and SM Prime Holdings Vice-President and SM Offices Head Alexis Ortiga

As SM Mega Tower welcomes Vertiv, SM Prime’s Vice-President for Commercial Properties Group and SM Offices Head Alexis L. Ortiga expressed how proud SM Offices is to have Vertiv call the said tower their home.

“This new facility is a testament to our shared vision of pioneering ecosystems that are functional and conducive to the modern demands of convenience and collaboration, with a human-centric approach to workplace design,” said Mr. Ortiga.

SM Mega Tower’s advanced features, prime location, and flexible office spaces make it the ideal choice for multinational firms looking to establish a significant presence in the Philippines.

One of the key features that make SM Mega Tower an attractive headquarters option is its strategic location. Adjacent to SM Megamall, one of the largest and most popular shopping destinations in the Philippines, the tower offers unparalleled convenience with access to food options, services, retail, and, most importantly, various modes of public transport, due to the complex’s proximity to two MRT Stations.

Designed by the renowned global architectural firm Arquitectonica, the skyscraper promotes natural daylight and offers expansive 360-degree stunning view options, from a golf course, the mountain range spanning from north to east, the sunrise at Laguna de Bay, and the famous Manila sunset in the west, creating an inspiring and vibrant work environment.

SM Mega Tower’s floor plans are designed with flexibility in mind,

accommodating layouts that cater to diverse tenant requirements. Each floor spans approximately 2,000 square meters, allowing businesses to customize their office space to fit their specific needs.

Furthermore, the building is equipped with 29 elevators, divided into three zones to maximize productivity and efficiency, along with service lifts for podium and basement access.

In addition to its visual appeal, the LEED Gold-certified property incorporates various green building strategies to improve its sustainability and resilience. For instance, the building features an advanced chilled water air conditioning system, an energy recovery wheel to maximize cooling, and 100% backup power to ensure operational efficiency and reliability, which are crucial for businesses requiring uninterrupted services. Furthermore, tenants have the option to utilize renewable energy sources, contributing to a lower carbon footprint and supporting environmental stewardship.

According to Mr. Ortiga, by integrating advanced solutions within its properties, SM Offices is reimagining the development and management of office spaces. This initiative also sets new benchmarks for environmental stewardship and operational excellence.

“Our focus is on the long-term impact, setting new standards, and inspiring a shift across the industry. Through strategic proptech integration, we aim to create spaces that not only serve our current tenants but also pave the way for future generations,” he added.