Impact Report 2023 *Making Waves*



Written by: Wei Jie Co-founder and Director

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Founders' Note

2023 started off on a rocky path. Between December 2022 to February 2023, we closed four locations and had to relocate our staff to other outlets. Not everyone can adapt to the changes and the increased customer flow at the cafes. As a result, we let go of a handful of our staff.

The difficult decision made in QI 2023 was paid off in Q2, as our energies were rebalanced and our team morale picked up. We continued to hire new people, and we saw the highest number of new hires in a year.

Small wins: Mount Elizabeth Hospital engaged us for their in-house cafe, and we opened at 64 Club Street, a shophouse owned by JL Family Office.



Mini heartbreak: the temporary closure of Temasek Shophouse (TSH) in December for renovations to make way for a bigger and better TSH. Our cafe staff have to be relocated and we lost a central space where people could find us easily. We are grateful though, that the people at TSH continue to engage us for their events today and we look forward to our return to TSH in 2025.

Towards the end of the year, the major highlight was certainly being recognized as Social Enterprise of the Year in the biannual President's Social Enterprise Awards (PCSEA) 2023. This award gave us the encouragement that we are indeed doing some good work and we hope to continue making waves to change perceptions towards disability and work towards a more inclusive Singapore. Thank you everyone for the support thus far and we hope to continue having your support as we navigate a more challenging 2024.

Nadi and Wei Jie, Co-founders & Directors



Why We Exist

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) and mental health needs face significant social stigma and many are excluded from participating meaningfully in mainstream society.

In the most recent <u>Enabling Masterplan 2030</u>, one of the stretch goals is to increase the employment rate of PWDs from <u>30% to 40%</u>. This equates to enabling an estimated 10,000 PWDs into the workforce. According to the Ministry of Manpower's (MOM) statistics, the employment rate of persons with disabilities in Singapore currently stands at <u>32.7% in 2022-2023</u>.

Over the past 3 years since Covid-19, mental health issues are increasingly talked about.

A <u>research study</u> published in 2023 revealed that absenteeism, loss in productivity, and medical costs of anxiety and depression could amount to nearly <u>\$16 billion a year</u>. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has also published a <u>national mental</u> <u>health and well-being strategy</u> and the government addressed that <u>mental health is a</u> <u>national priority</u>.

Inclusivity disregards any social labels. To support the communities we seek to serve, the idea of "work" needs to be reimagined and redesigned to accommodate for the spectrum of abilities. We believe that inclusion comprises three main aspects: respect, participation, and belonging (inspired by Dr. Delina Swee's sharing during the <u>Empowering Inclusivity Conference</u> <u>2023</u>).

Defining Inclusion

We are defining inclusion by three basic tenets: Respect, Participation, and Belonging.

With this model of inclusion, we seek to provide a nurturing work environment with a growth mindset for people with disabilities, mental health needs and people from other challenging backgrounds.

Our employees are not treated as beneficiaries, and are required to contribute meaningfully in their own ways to the success of the company.

While we are not a perfect organization, we hope to build meaningful partnerships with other businesses who would like to walk this journey to become inclusive organizations and create a welcoming society for all. **Respect** means to show regard for an individual's worth, valuing feelings and views even if we don't agree with them, and *accepting them on an equal basis* on how we would expect for ourselves.

Participation means to be *meaningfully engaged* and have some *influence* over decision-making in a group of people.

Belonging means feeling *psychologically safe* to be in a space with others where you can show up with your *authentic self.*

Mission

To inspire the can-do spirit to realize the potential in every individual.

Vision

To achieve an equitable and sustainable value chain that empowers stakeholders from farmers to consumers.

Values

Improving the self Meaningful engagement Person-centred Action-oriented Courage to try Trusted relationships

Recognized for being a Business as a Force for Good









SOCIAL ENTERPRISE GRANT PROGRAMME





Corporate Strategies

In December 2023 as we recount our past six years, we find patterns in the things that we did, and things that we chose not to do.

Our team came up with six strategies to guide our decisions in the company which will bring us forward in the years to come.

These strategies are aligned with our company's values and the three impact pillars of our company: People, Coffee, and Environment.





Social Enterprise of the Year 2023

We are grateful and honoured to be recognized as **Social Enterprise of the Year** in the biannual President's Challenge Social Enterprise Awards (PCSEA) 2023.

This recognition brings great joy and motivation to our team, reminding us that our efforts over the past years do not go unnoticed and encourages us to continue with our daily grind, advocating for a more inclusive society.







We opened First Story cafe

In January 2023, we created a new brand, <u>First Story</u>, to play on the pun that we are at the first storey of the HDB block and also to differentiate it from our existing outlets.

First Story cafe serves rice bowls, breakfast toast, gelato, and waffles. It is also where our coffee roaster is located in.

Because of this new concept, Joshua now works in our back-of-house, preparing and serving up food to our customers.

We are thankful for the patience which our customers have shown, and we are sorry for the times when we had fell short in our service.

Do visit us when you are in the hood!



We purchased a coffee roaster

We finally purchased our very own coffee roaster, Stronghold S8X, located at First Story cafe.

Over the past 6 years, we have been roasting at a co-roasting facility. With the opening of First Story, we decided that having an in-house roaster would make operations more convenient and efficient.

The Stronghold S8X provides an auto-replication mode which allows for our roasting process to be automated once it is created manually.

Today, James is our coffee roaster, with Wei Jie overseeing his work in our weekly coffee roasting sessions.



Tatler Gen.T List 2023

Wei Jie was recognized as a Leader of Tomorrow in the annual <u>Tatler's</u> <u>Gen.T List 2023</u>!

This was an unexpected nomination as <u>Wei Jie</u> did not expect that he would be associated with a luxury media brand for his work in Foreword

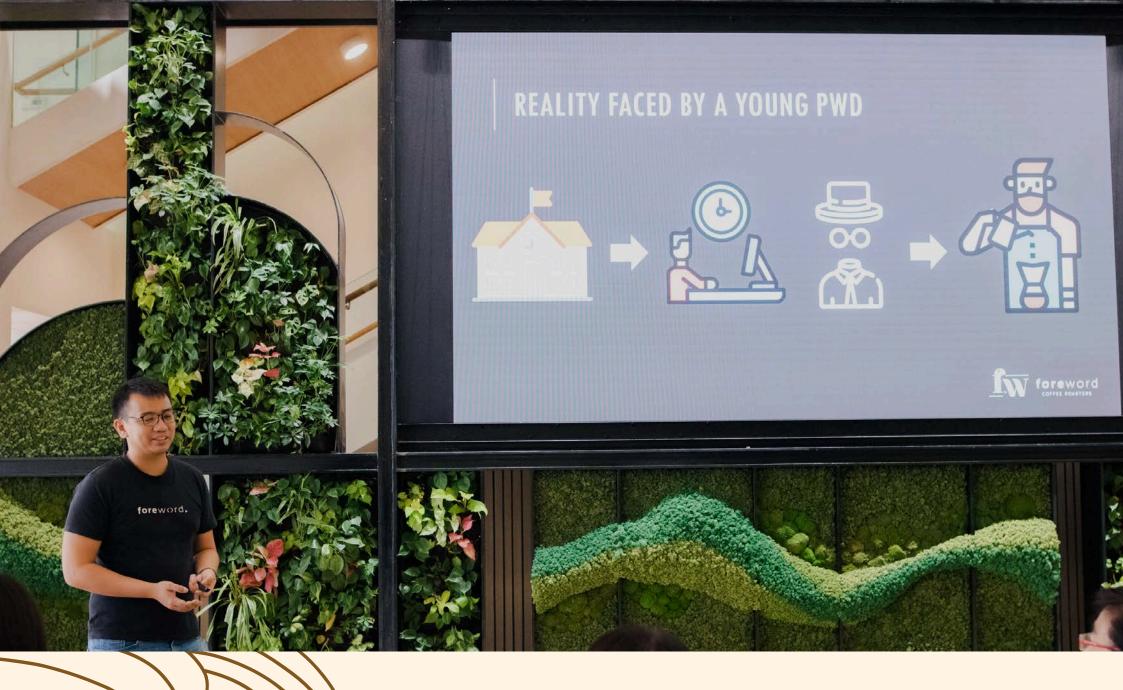
We are thankful and grateful for this nomination which brings mention and awareness to Foreword and the work we are doing towards a more inclusive Singapore.

Photos by: <u>Tatler Asia</u>

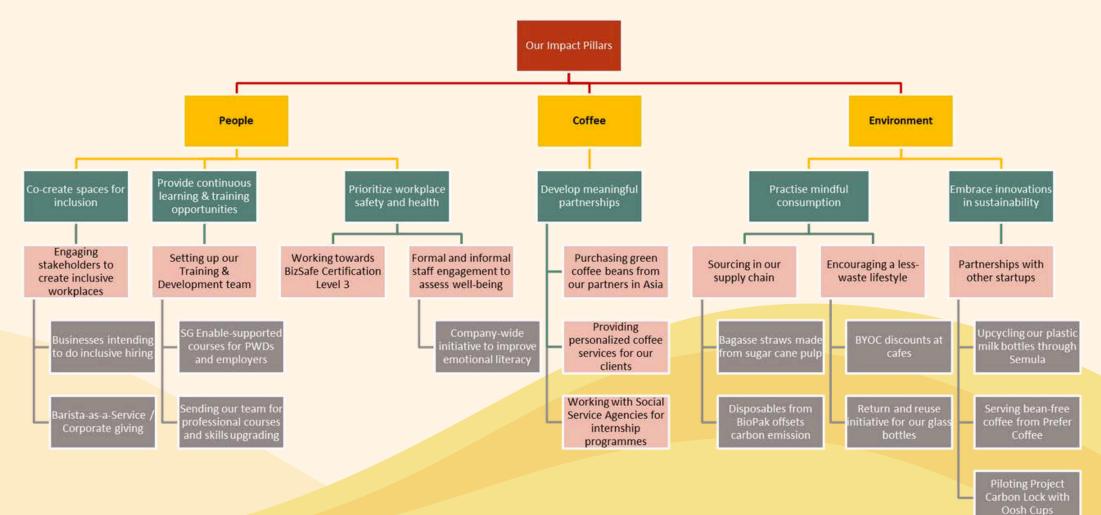








Our Impact Pillars and Strategies



Foreword Coffee Roasters Impact Report 2023

Theories of Change

Social Model of Disability

Foreword Coffee Roasters adopt the social model of disability. We believe that the disability experience is constructed by the social environment because of four main barriers: **attitudinal, physical, communication, and systemic barriers**.

Interventions to overcome these four barriers would help to eliminate the experience of disability in our society.

Attitudinal: we communicate through our social media and sharing sessions that persons with disabilities are diverse. We challenge the preconceived notion of disability in people's minds through interactions over coffee at our cafes and mobile coffee carts. **Physical:** we adopt technologies to make work easier. For example, we use calibrated tampers (e.g. Force tamper) so that each tamp on our coffee grounds is the same as the one before.

These are productivity gains experienced by any company that adopt these technologies and is not unique to us.

Communication: between the hearing and those who are deaf, we communicate via sign language, writing on tablets, or typing on our phones.

Meetings are always conducted with sign language interpretation. We adapt to individual abilities to send and receive messages, comprehend information, and emphasize on written text and visual systems.

Systemic: our company policies do not discriminate PWDs and non-PWDs.

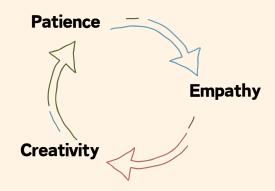
Our work policies apply to all employees, especially since our culture since day one was built for an inclusive company.

We have specific policies to provide accommodations for employees regardless of their backgrounds, and we regularly update our employee handbook to take into consideration situations which we may not have considered before. The above are just some examples of how we build an inclusive culture at work. Despite our efforts, not all new hires will lead to long-term employment and positive outcomes.

It is important to note that we are constantly learning and be in touch with ground sentiments on how we can provide reasonable accommodations for all employees to make work safe, healthy and enjoyable for us all.

Positive Upward Spiral Framework (PEC)

Every employee who joins Foreword, regardless of disability status, are required to understand our PEC framework for positive improvements in our company.



The framework starts with **Patience** – everyone in the company needs to know that we all learn and progress in different speeds. As we work in a team, we need to provide more patience to some of our teammates who require longer time and more effort to pick up the same skills as us. To support these teammates, we practise **Empathy** and put ourselves in their shoes.

Before we jump into conclusions that our teammate is "lazy" because they need to be told what to do, we seek to understand if they know what they should be doing first.

Subsequently, we put on our **Creativity** hat and come up with solutions to overcome challenges that we experienced.

For example, if it is a communication barrier, how can we find new ways to make sure the team understands itself?

By practising **PEC**, we see improvements in performance of our staff, and that encourages us to keep moving forward: increased patience, increased empathy, and the willingness to be creative to solve challenges along the way.

Towards a Sustainable Foreword

Having been in the business for 7 years, we are mindful of how the company continues our growth in a sustainable manner. This means being mindful of our productivity, motivation, and energy.

	Business Considerations	People Considerations				
Productivity	How do we reduce costs, optimize resources, and increase revenues?	How do we grow our capabilities and capacities?				
Motivation	How does the company's reward structures provide motivation? E.g. compensation & benefits, welfare, career prospects, etc.	How do we manage intrinsic motivation and discover the purpose of our work?				
Energy	How have we implemented flexible work arrangements, job accommodations, and provide sufficient rest for our ground operations staff?	How do we properly disconnect from work, have a healthy mind space, and prevent burning out?				



Significance of Training

The first hypothesis which Foreword tested at the inception of the company was whether people with disabilities can pick up the skills required to work in cafes. At the same time, this was a test of how we can create a training curriculum that works for PWDs.

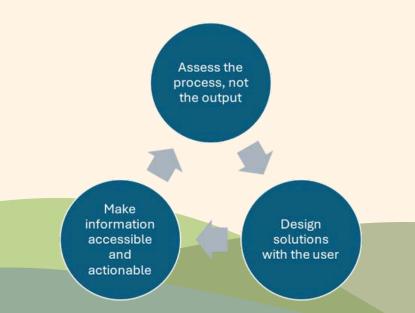
The first trainees we worked with were students from Cerebral Palsy Alliance School Singapore (CPASS) back in 2017. With the support of the job coaches, we learnt a few skills ourselves such as task analysis and <u>redesigning work</u> for our employees with disabilities. <u>Task analysis</u> is the breakdown of how a user completes a task, and involves observing how the individual learn, think, and conduct themselves to achieve a desired goal.

The principles of task analysis and a <u>human-</u> <u>centred design</u> approach towards problemsolving formed the fundamentals of how we conduct training and building our work systems.

Principles of Coaching

Assessing the process, not the output

Our trainers need to assess how our trainees get to the results, and not make a judgement based on the final output itself. Over time and multiple iterations, we discover the best practices and teach these to our trainees.



Design solutions with the user

There is no one-size-fits-all solution. By seeking inputs and feedback from the trainees themselves, we also build the sense of autonomy and ownership over their skills progression. It further encourages the trainees to think independently and play an active role in their own learning.

Make information accessible and actionable

This means to put up checklists and visuals to make information available at the space where they are required. There is no need to memorize recipes or instructions as the trainees can refer to the information when needed.

Our Trainers' Toolkit

Visu	lei	Sv	cta	mc

Visual learners can benefit from photos, images, and videos of how their tasks should be done. Visual systems provide a point of reference to check before we serve our product to customers.

Checklists

Checklists are not meant to be exhaustive but provide a reminder on things which we may miss out, ensuring we cover our blind spots during the process of completing tasks.

Workflows and Structures When we are not clear with our own instructions, we cannot expect our employees to be able to execute their tasks properly. Trainers should seek clarity in every step of the way, which provides our employees the confidence to carry out what they need to do.



Projects

SG Enable Training Grant

In 2022, we were awarded with the SG Enable training grant for the 3rd time since 2018 to conduct our Basic Barista Skills training programme. The course is 20-hours long, conducted over 5 days, and equipes trainees with the fundamental barista skills to start working in a café setting.

The funding for this programme has ended on 31 March 2024 and we had a total of 9 trainees who successfully completed the course.

Of these 9 trainees, 2 of them are already employed when they attended the course, and 3 of them were eventually hired by us to work at the cafes.







Projects

TT-CDC Barista Workshops

The <u>Temasek Trust CDC Lifelong Learning</u> <u>Enabling Fund</u> which was open for applications between 31 December 2021 to 31 December 2023 allowed us to conduct an exposure barista course (4 hours) for persons with disabilities.

We conducted the course for a total of 22 participants from 4 organizations, which include:

- IDEA Employment Development Centre
- <u>SIA-MINDS Employment Development Centre</u>
- <u>Singapore Association for the Visually</u> <u>Handicapped (SAVH)</u> and
- Basic Kneads/Hey Sprouts







Projects

Customized Training with YMCA of Singapore

We conducted 3 sessions of F&B Service Skills Training for the trainees of the YMCA Train & Place Series. Each of the 18 trainees went through 2 days (10 hours) of training with us.

We welcome partnerships to co-create meaningful training programmes for exposure to F&B skills and to increase employability of persons with disabilities.

Photos by: YMCA of Singapore





Foreword Coffee Roasters Impact Report 2023

Areas to Work On

Starting in 2024, we have officially established our Training and Development team comprising five staff that would oversee the training from pre-employment to employment.

As this team is new, the staff involved are not full-time dedicated trainers. Training is our second hat in the company on top of managing other day-to-day work.

As we develop our training curriculum and apply for the SG Enable training grant to support PWDs and employers in inclusive hiring, we are currently focused on improving our employees' barista skills to provide better coffee experiences at our cafes. This is a work in progress and will take some time before we see the fruits of our labour. We also lack a dedicated facility to conduct barista training and we conduct trainings at our existing cafés, which affects our operations.

If we were to further invest resources into our training department, eventually our team of trainers need to go through further training and attain certifications to improve the way we conduct our courses for effective learning.



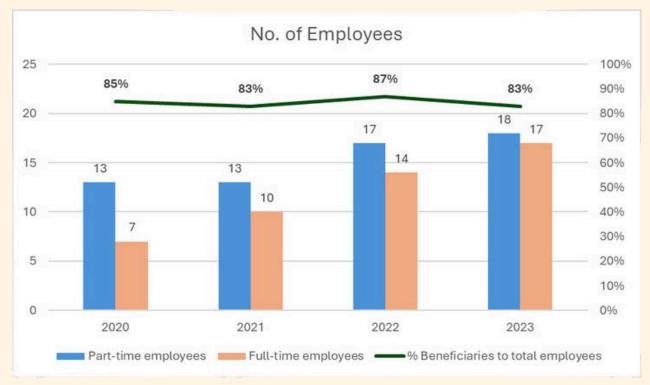


Employment

Between 2020 and 2023, there has been an increase in the number of employees.

The proportion of beneficiaries to total employees in the company has been consistently above 80% for the past four years.

'Beneficiaries' refer to employees who identify themselves as a person with disability or with mental health needs.



Graph 1: Employees breakdown from 2020 to 2023

Wages

Wages for cafe operations staff are reviewed regularly, on a monthly basis for part-time staff, and on a quarterly to yearly basis for full-time staff.

Annually, full-time staff will have increments to their basic salary, which leads to the increase in salary payouts yearly.

Over the past 4 years, more than SG\$1.1 million has been paid out as wages to our employees with disabilities and mental health needs.



Graph 2: Wages paid to beneficiaries from 2020 to 2023

Internships and Job Shadows





















Humans of Foreword

The Training & Development team is formed to cater to the training needs of our company and beyond.

Hadif and Jerome, being experienced in cafe operations, are now assigned as trainers to cater to new and existing employees. Hadif teaches milk frothing and latte art while Jerome teaches the basic barista and cafe service skills.

Grace, our Head of Marketing, now also supports training in customer experience at our cafes.



The newly-formed Training & Development Team: Jerome, Hadif, Grace, Wei Jie, and Nadi.



Hadif's latte art is second to none in our company



Hadif moves around the outlets to teach latte art



Jerome is always patient towards all team members

Humans of Foreword

Our cafes are anchored by responsible "partners" (that's how we call our cafe leaders) who ensure the day-to-day operations run smoothly and manage any unexpected situations that may occur.

Notably, Leena has become our multi-outlet supervisor and goes around outlets to make sure that cafe discipline is maintained, especially with younger team members! Our cafe leaders (Leena, Hadif, Ambika, Johnny, and Jerome) take on the responsibility of ensuring the teams are disciplined and the cafes are organized.







Leena always makes sure the cafe is in tip-top condition.



Did you know? Leena has the most F&B experience in the company!

Humans of Foreword

Most of our team members are able to work in more than one location and they enjoy the rotation.

It is a misconception that people with special needs must work under routines and do repetitive tasks.



The baristas at MHA and 64CS: Melvin, Johnny, and Ambika



The First Story cafe team, from back (left): Aldrin, Jiale, Marcus, Mark, Hadif, Rachael: from front (left): Jerome, Halimi, Joshua, Johnny.

Our team mates are adaptable and can support the cafes' operations where needed.



Our "Barista-as-a-Service" team working at Mt. Elizabeth and Toyota Tsusho's offices: Mark, Jiale, Marcus, Rachael, and Jun Xian (not in photo)



The Mediacorp cafe team: Hadif, Yuni, Marcus, and Jun Xian (not in photo)



The NUS YSTCM team: Melvin, Leena, Julia and Darren (both not in photo).

Humans of Foreword

We place the most demand on our HQ team, consisting of functions such as partnerships development, marketing, human resources, finance and accounting, and the backend operations. Almost everyone in HQ can also double up as a barista when needed at the cafes. The HQ team manages everything else that the cafes don't do: online enquiries, ecommerce, social media, events operations, cafe restocks, and everything else!



Our events team comprising mainly of Victor, Carmen, and Nadi the driver.



Our HQ team comprising of: Grace, Jess, Pauline, Victor, Nadi, Wei Jie, and Don.

Our People

Areas to Work On

Turning down job applicants

We are not able to expand our cafes quick enough to take in all referrals for employment. It is costly to keep opening new cafes and there is a maximum capacity for employment at our existing locations.

We hope to work with more stakeholders who can create inclusive spaces for people with disabilities instead of always looking at opening new cafes.

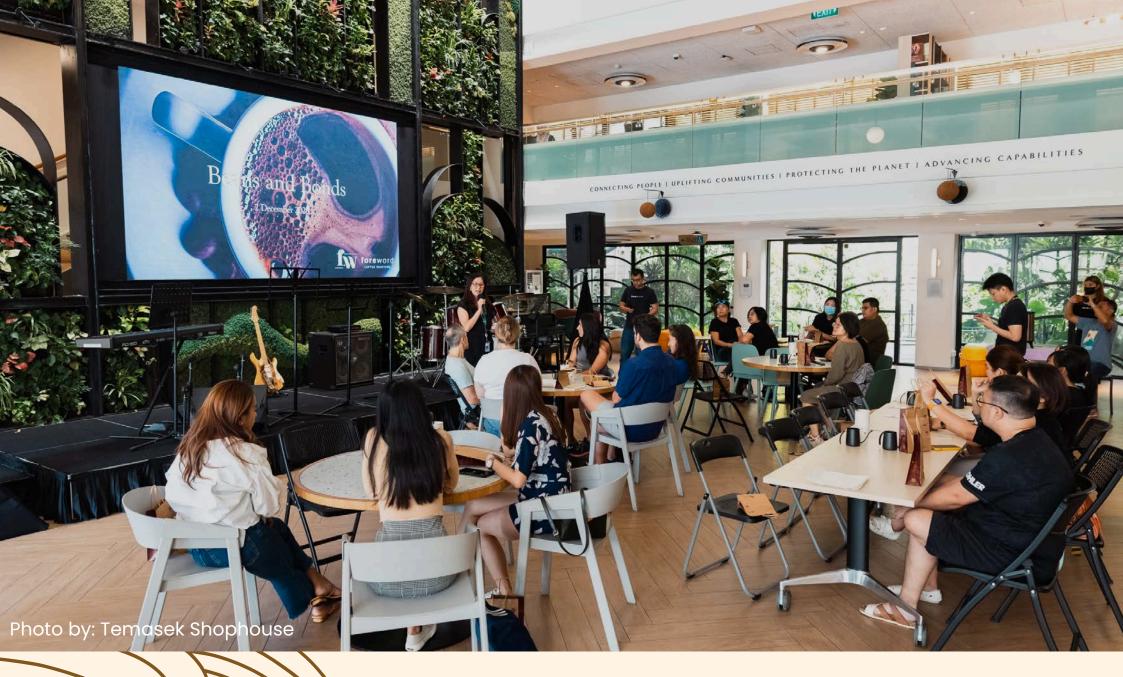
Progressive wages

We have mixed feelings about the progressive wage mark certification. As we provide a longer time for our staff with special needs to pick up the required skills, we are not able to pay them at progressive wage levels from the start. There are many factors when it comes to determining wages and in order to continue providing opportunities for those who require higher support and accommodation at work, we choose not to chase for the progressive wage mark certification.

Maintaining personal touch at scale

While Wei Jie conducts the interviews and hiring of all new employees, it is getting challenging to maintain personal touch with everyone as the company grows.

As founders, we question ourselves: how can personal touch be maintained at all levels of the company in lieu of our physical presence?



Mobile Coffee Cart

In 2023, we served **17,450** cups of coffee in **82** corporate events.

We were also at **15** weddings, and served **2181** cups of coffee and **855** bottled lattes.







Return and Reuse

In August, we implemented our Return and Reuse program for our glass bottles for events. Glass bottles given out during events will be collected back to be washed, sanitized, and used for subsequent events!



Upcycling our used milk bottles

In 2023, we upcycled a total of **270.8kg** plastic milk bottles, which is equivalent to **4166** bottles! This is a slight increase from 2022's 4140 bottles, and 885 bottles in 2021.

Since 2021, we have been collecting our used plastic milk bottles, wash them, and handing them over to <u>Semula</u>.

These plastic are transformed into products such as counter tops, stools, trophies and more!

Used milk bottles at our cafes are washed, dried, and stickers removed We collect these bottles in our cafes and return to HQ office every week

Semula collects these plastics and bring them to their workshop!



Photos by: Semula

Community Engagement

In 2023, we hosted 5 special events.

Jan - April: our co-founders hosted 2 SMU-X modules on the topics of product development, and politics, law and economics.

Feb: SG Enable and <u>Minister Masagos</u> visited First Story cafe and learnt about our inclusive hiring journey. (Photo by: MSF)



Aug: students from Rainbow Centre visited us at Temasek Shophouse to have a peek into what cafe work is like!

Oct: In collaboration with the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC), we organized our 2nd Conversations in Good Company on the topic of inclusive hiring. (Photo by: NVPC)



Community Engagement

We were invited as guest speaker in **8** events and hosted **10** learning journeys at our cafes.



Community Engagement

In total, we had **26 events** and engaged **957 people**. Thank you for having us!

















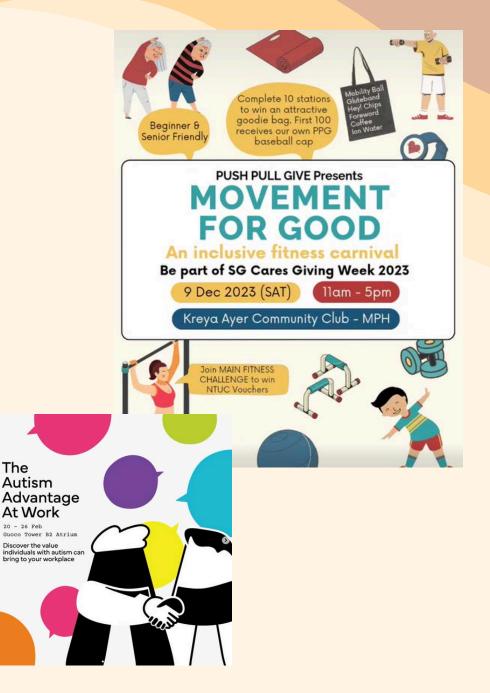
Sponsorships

We sponsored a total of **\$3600** in vouchers and in-kind items, supporting 6 projects.

These projects include student initiatives such as The Autism Advantage (by NTU), EYE-dentity (by Ngee Ann Polytechnic), as well as NUS Giving Run and Push Pull Give's Movement for Good carnival.

We welcome co-marketing and collaboration opportunities that support causes aligned with Foreword Coffee's values and the communities we work with.

Images are screenshots from <u>Push Pull Give</u> and <u>The Autism Advantage</u> social media pages.



raiSE - Photography for Good

Together with photographers from the Photographic Society of Singapore (PSS) and Fujifilm, raiSE (Singapore Centre for Social Enterprises) organized a Photography for Good photo exhibition to put spotlight on social enterprise founders working to create impact while growing their businesses.

We are thankful to be one of the few social enterprises to be part of this initiative and grateful to the photographers, **Keith and KL Chan**, for adopting Foreword Coffee Roasters as their chosen social enterprise to shadow and take photographs of!









Photo credits: Keith Goh and KL Chan

National Library Board - Book Nodes

Held from February 2023 to September 2023, we collaborated with National Library Board (NLB) to promote the love of reading at three of our cafes.

Customers can grab a book from the shelf for free at First Story Cafe, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music and Temasek Shophouse!

During this period, we also engaged some bookstagramers to drive awareness of this campaign, leading to a total of 6,300 Instagram post views and we saw an average footfall of approximately 3,200 people per month.



Staff Engagement

Everyone in the company meets during **Kopi Dates** (company-wide meetings) and our annual **Foreword Appreciation Day** (endof-year gathering).

For the first time ever, our HQ team went for a day-trip to Johor Bahru last November where we cafe-hopped for fresh ideas and team bonding.

As the company grows larger, the quest to keep up with a united spirit also becomes more challenging.



Hello Neighbour Blend

We created the Hello Neighbour blend in celebration of our flagship cafe, First Story, now also available in coffee capsules form.

Hello Neighbour is a blend of Brazil and Papua New Guinea (PNG) coffee beans, roasted to medium-dark, giving it a smooth, chocolatey and nutty profile. These beans are sourced from local importer, <u>ofi</u> (pka. Olam Coffee).

While this is a move away from our Asian-only sourcing practice, purchasing coffees from a local importer helps us with a steady supply of small-batch coffee to customizing coffee blends for our clients and providing greater variety for our customers.



We opened at 64 Club Street

We opened doors to the public in September 2023 at <u>64 Club Street</u> - an initiative by JL Family Office to provide a "purposeful and versatile space for creativity, community engagement and cultural experiences".

This space provides us with a central location for learning journeys and meetings. We hope for more community organizations to visit us and make use of this space here!









Temasek Shophouse Closure

Temasek Shophouse (TSH) closed its doors from 4 December as they renovate in the next 1.5 years for a bigger and better experience.

TSH holds a special place in Foreword's journey as there was a backstory to how we were given this opportunity to operate a cafe even though we had little track record back then.

We grew our capacity to serve larger audiences through experience and time, and are grateful for the patience and support which TSH has given us.

We look forward to coming back to TSH in 2025 - fingers crossed!





Founders' Trip to India

In January 2024, our founders (Nadi and Wei Jie) visited Coorg, Bengaluru, India. There, we met up with Komal and Akshay, 5th generation coffee producers and the founders of <u>South India Coffee</u> <u>Company</u> (SICC).

We have been serving coffee from SICC (i.e. Mooleh Manay Honey Sundried) since 2022 as we share their belief in giving back to the community through our businesses.

During our visit, we saw their farms and we were highly impressed by their coffee labs project in particular. They had a nursery with many coffee varietals, focusing on research in lowintervention Coffea species for the future.

We are grateful for the warm hospitality and look forward to many years of partnership ahead!







Foreword Coffee Roasters Impact Report 2023



Towards a Sustainable Foreword

These are actual feedback and comments from panel judges and an ex-employee when they see or experience the work that we do in Foreword.

These words are definitely imprinted in our minds and we are conscious of how we run our unique business model, navigating through a complex ecosystem of impact organizations, funders, the communities we serve, government and legislation and more.

Within Foreword, we have set goals to work towards financial sustainability. Profit is not a dirty word. We are not chasing profit at all costs, but we need to relook into our model to make profits more efficiently.

There's no fixed journey in this path towards profitability, and this is what keeps us founders awake, every night. I AM NOT SURE IF YOU ARE RUNNING A CHARITY OR A BUSINESS.

ARE WE RUNNING A SCHOOL, OR A COMPANY?

Foreword Coffee Roasters Impact Report 2023

New Flagship @ Esplanade Mall

Here's a sneak peek into our upcoming new cafe at Esplanade Mall. We are taking a 1,500sqft space at the level 3 of Esplanade Mall which was previously the library.

We are really excited about this space as it will become our new flagship outlet where we will have new food and drink items (to be kept secret for now!)

In addition to the opening of our new outlet, we will also be launching a new look to our brand. More details to come!



Employment Placement Programme

We are looking to support companies and organizations who want to hire inclusively.

We have come up with training programmes to achieve the objectives of the SG Enable training grant:

- Increase employability and employment rate of persons with disabilities (PWDs)
- Upgrade capabilities of persons with disabilities
- Promote inclusiveness in employers and integrate persons with disabilities in the workforce

For more details, drop us an email at hello@forewordcoffee.com!

For PWD trainees: Holistic Cafe Skills Training Programme (110hrs) For Employers: Changing Mindsets: Social Inclusion for a Stronger Workforce (2 days)

For PWD trainees: Navigating Workplace Emotions (6 sessions)



Media Mentions

Media Mentions

hongry go where















Thank you for the support in 2023!

DBS Foundation





Inclusive society. Enabled lives.

TEMASEK SHOPHOUSE







Foreword Coffee Roasters Impact Report 2023