ENTERPRISE SPRINGnews August 2011

Serving Up Customer-Centric Service

In today's competitive business environment, good marketing may attract customers but quality service keeps them coming back.



A FIRM COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

Commitment to ISO 13485 standards has resulted in improvements in managing and tracing documents and lower operational costs for Minntech.

BRINGING REHABILITATION MEDICINE TO THE REGION

With a unique technology offering and a clear growth strategy, V2U Healthcare is setting its sights on regional expansion.

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Toys found to be unsafe

SPRING joins hands with CASE, retailers and suppliers to ensure safer toys

SPRING announced the setting up of a joint working group to look into ways to further improve the safety of toys in Singapore at a media conference on toy safety on 13 July. The working group comprises representatives from SPRING, Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE), Singapore Toy & Confectionery Dealers' Association, Federation of Merchants' Associations, Singapore, and Singapore Retailers Association. This is to raise awareness and educate businesses and consumers, as well as to propose further measures to enhance toy safety. The move is part of actions that SPRING, as the safety authority of the Consumer Goods Safety Requirements (CGSR) Regulations, is taking to make consumer goods sold in Singapore safer.



Mr Tan Kai Hoe (centre), Deputy Chief Executive, SPRING Singapore and Mr Yeo Guat Kwang, President, CASE co-chairing the press conference

\$84 Million to boost service excellence

Enterprises in the service sector will be getting a boost for their service excellence efforts. An additional \$84 million has been committed by the GEMS (Go-the-Extra-Mile-for-Service) Up committee for service capability. This was announced by Mr Lim Swee Say (right), Minister, Prime Minister's Office at the fifth anniversary of Singapore's service excellence movement at the CCI Symposium on 11 July. At the symposium, Mr Lee Yi Shyan, Minister of State for Trade & Industry and National Development, also shared the achievements of the service excellence movement over the last five years. Some 7,800 establishments and 183,000 workers have benefited from CCI, which is about 50 per cent of establishments.





Young entrepreneurs encouraged to venture overseas

The new Chairman of the Action Community for Entrepreneurship (ACE), Minister of State for Trade & Industry, Mr Teo Ser Luck encouraged start-ups to look at uncertainty as an opportunity and to take their businesses beyond Singapore. He was speaking at the 50th Action Community for Entrepreneurship (ACE) BlueSky Exchange networking session for entrepreneurs and professionals on 20 July. The right business environment needs to be cultivated to encourage companies to be more entrepreneurial and introduce more capability-building measures to get entrepreneurs to scale up their businesses.

From left: Ms Elim Chew, President & Founder, 77th Street (S) Pte Ltd, Mr Kenny Yap, Executive Chairman & Managing Director, Qian Hu Corporation Limited, Mr Teo Ser Luck, Minister of State, Ministry of Trade and Industry & Chairman of ACE, Mr Lee Yi Shyan, Minister of State, Ministry of Trade and Industry & National Development and Mr Tan Kai Hoe, Deputy Chief Executive, SPRING Singapore



In today's competitive business environment, good marketing may attract customers but quality service keeps them coming back.

o help companies achieve service excellence, a total of \$84 million has been set aside by the Go-the-Extra-Mile-for-Service GEMS Up committee for service capability development efforts over the next five years. The funds, which will be in the form of grants, will benefit companies that embark on Customer-Centric Initiative (CCI) projects and service staff training. The CCI is part of the GEMS movement to overhaul Singapore's service quality in the retail, food and beverage, hospitality, healthcare, transport and travel sectors.

"With the changing demands of customers, achieving high customer satisfaction is no longer just linked to providing high service quality. Customer satisfaction constitutes high product quality, as well as exceeding customer expectations," says Mr Yeo Guat Kwang, co-chairper-

son of the GEMS Up Committee and NTUC director (Quality Worklife).

New CCI developments

At the recent CCI Symposium which celebrated five years of Singapore's service excellence movement, Mr Lim Swee Say, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, announced a series of service innovation training programmes will be introduced later this year. These programmes will enable organisations to adopt a 'whole company' approach in transforming the customer experience. Companies can expect to receive up to 50% funding to develop service strategies, set service standards or conduct service audits for the qualification of the Singapore Service Class certification.

To strengthen service standards in Singapore, three new Service Excellence Icons will be identified in the years ahead. Currently, four Service Excellence Icons – Changi Airport, Ion Orchard, Sentosa and Wing Tai Retail – have been unveiled over the past year to share service breakthroughs with their counterparts. Businesses can glean ideas from the experiences shared by the CCI icons and benchmark themselves against the best practices.

Service breakthroughs

The CCI has shown positive results since its inception in 2005. To date, it has assisted some 7,800 establishments and 183,000 workers across six sectors. A study conducted by the National University of Singapore in 2009 reported that CCI companies in the retail and F&B industries have overtaken their counterparts by an average of 45% in terms of sales growth. In addition, results from the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore showed that perceived service quality improved from 70.4 in 2007 to 71.3 in 2010.





















CCI assisted some 7,800 establishments and 183,000 workers across six sectors.



CCI companies in the retail and F&B industries have overtaken their counterparts by an average of 45% in terms of sales growth.



Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore showed that perceived service quality improved from 70.4 in 2007 to 71.3 in 2010.

"More companies have realised the importance of service excellence and have embarked on CCI. We see companies investing in technology to improve their processes to better serve customers. Training of service staff also goes beyond SOPs and focuses more on the softer skills of engaging the customers," says Ms Choy Sauw Kook, co-chairperson of the GEMS Up Committee and Assistant Chief Executive of SPRING Singapore.

For local F&B company The Soup Spoon, staff training is an important aspect of its business operations. The company established a detailed service blueprint consisting of a structured training programme and empowerment guidelines to ensure consistency in the staff delivery of customer service. As a result of the defined service blueprint, staff members were able to recommend soups based on customer preferences and engage in follow-up conversation. This led to a

21.8% improvement in customer satisfaction levels and an increase of 24.8% in revenue.

A holistic approach

Yet, despite the increase in service quality across all sectors, the national customer satisfaction score decreased from 68.7 to 67.2 in 2010. Mr Lee Yi Shyan, Minister of State, Ministry of Trade and Industry and National Development, explains why: "Service quality is but one of the three drivers of customer satisfaction. The other two drivers of customer satisfaction are perceived product quality and customer expectations."

While service quality directly impacts customer satisfaction, training the frontline service staff is not enough. To raise customer satisfaction, companies must take a holistic approach by improving product quality, branding and positioning. This means that

companies will have to think outside the box to engage their customers, says Mr Lee. "Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter will increasingly be a popular tool to enable service workers to engage and delight their customers round the clock."

Besides investing in mechanisms to gather in-depth customer insights, companies will also need to continuously review their current service systems and processes and be willing to innovate to improve their service and product quality.

Be the next success story

Read on to find out how companies such as Courts, the Jumbo Group of Restaurants and Soo Kee Jewellery Group have taken their service to the next level after embarking on the CCI. If you would like to transform your company's service standards, please visit www.spring.gov.sg for more information.







Courting customer-centric success

For Courts, excellence in customer service is about staying a step ahead of ever-changing expectations.

s one of Singapore's leading consumer Aelectronics and household furnishings retailers, Courts has come to understand that the customer must always come first in everything it does. Courts started its journey to become a customer-centric organisation around 2003, when it moved away from a more traditional productcentric approach. Thus when SPRING first introduced the CCI programme in 2005, it was a natural fit for Courts to be one of the first companies to sign up. Later that year, it hosted the very first CCI Learning Journey, and has led from the front ever since - setting a clear example for the movement to improve customer service in Singapore.

Mr Terry O'Connor (above left), CEO of Courts Asia, is quick to point out that the journey is far from over, and that in fact, there is no end. "The consumer is always evolving, so while you may be shooting for a particular customer service target, you have to make sure that the target is in line with, or preferably ahead of, customer expectations, which are in themselves rising."

From product-centric to customer-centric

At the heart of the company's transition is a transformation of its processes – everything from customer contact to the supply chain to staff training. "The first phase of the transition was about re-engineering the customer experience," says Mr O'Connor. "We also invested in the necessary infrastructure, including our call centre and a new ERP system."

Recognising that its suppliers play a key role in the customer experience, Courts engaged them to enhance coordination and streamline interactions. "We involved our key suppliers in forecasting, sharing data and information so we can understand the roadmaps for transitioning product ranges and be sure that we're getting products to customers on a timely basis," explains Mr O'Connor. "Then, there are some suppliers that are more like a 'cottage industry', and it may be more of a case of placing our own people in their environment, or educating them on best practice delivery processes."

The second phase focused on engaging the hearts and minds of Courts staff in order to truly embed the customer-centric mindset. "It was about going deeper into the training, coaching and really re-inventing the HR process," says Mr O'Connor. Over 1,000 people were put through service training programmes like "Retail Selling Skills" and "The Art of WOW!". Others went through an "Optimising Performance through Coaching" programme, where internal coaches share their experiences, recommend areas for improvement and generate solutions.

Mr O'Connor describes the third, and current, phase as working to extend and build future service capabilities. This includes upgrading IT systems, enhancing supply chain processes, and going for Service Class awards. In building for the future, Mr O'Connor acknowledges that it's really a moving target, which can be a challenge for staff who are more comfortable working towards clearly defined end goals. "There's a heavy burden on communications to ensure that everyone in the organisation understands why we're doing what we're doing."

Reaping the benefits

As a result of its efforts, Courts has seen

performance improve significantly. It has built up a very strong repeat customer base, and its card-carrying loyalty base is growing steadily. Mystery shopping scores are up, the compliments to complaints ratio has dropped from 1:11 to 1:2, and the number of written endorsements from customers has risen encouragingly. And while Mr O'Connor is pleased with the improved performance, he is not about to get complacent.

"All the statistical and anecdotal indicators of improvement are there. But if we slack for a year, we can fall back five years. So these measurements are really about keeping all of us on our toes," explains Mr O'Connor.

The road ahead

To enhance its measurement capabilities, Courts is introducing a Quantitative Customer Feedback system at each cashier point in all stores, in addition to customer satisfaction survey conducted outside its stores every eight weeks, and shop floor spot checks of individual staff's product knowledge and service levels.

"We are conscious of not operating in a vacuum and thinking that we're doing well, when maybe other people are doing two or three times as much," says Mr O'Connor. "So we also look externally to other markets, other companies and best practices to try to make sure that we stay ahead of the game."

And with its commitment to being a customer-centric company, that's exactly where Courts is likely to find itself for many years to come.

A recipe for success

Passion, Respect, Integrity, Diligence and Excellence (PRIDE) are key values in the Jumbo Seafood Group.

To Mr Ang Kiam Meng (right in black jacket), General Manager of the JUMBO Group of Restaurants, the success of their restaurants hinges on one critical factor—the employees who make it special.

He believes that building a customer-centric business requires a clear vision, which must be backed by strong leadership and well-trained staff. As a result, the group underwent a "soul searching process" to define its mission statement and vision. An acronym, PRIDE, which stands for Passion, Respect, Integrity, Diligence and Excellence, was coined to inculcate these values in staff members. These values were shared in a four-session workshop for all staff

"We want our staff to display these attributes. We want our people to be proud of JUMBO, our service and food, and to be F&B professionals. Everyone must understand what they are there for – it's for the customers," says Mr Ang.

Comprehensive staff development

Getting all the employees on the same page was the first step to creating a customer-centric culture. JUMBO began by identifying service gaps and areas that needed improvement. Better staff communication was an area that was identified, so the group engaged a full-time English trainer to help staff from non-English speaking backgrounds to communicate more effectively.

JUMBO also embarked on an in-house leadership programme called LEAD (Leading Innovation, Enabling Results, Achieving Results, Driving Alignment) to equip service leaders, such as supervisors and managers, with counselling and motivational skills to boost staff morale in the restaurant.

"There is no point having only strong frontline staff. When they do the right things, nobody motivates them. When they do the wrong things, they get reprimanded. Thus the leader is very important in this area," explains Mr Ang.

Keeping the staff happy goes a long way in making sure the customers are happy as well, says Mr Ang. JUMBO organised a staff welfare committee, giving employ-





ees the opportunity to propose new ideas for staff recreational activities and to take ownership of their work space.

"We want them to feel at home and that they are part of JUMBO. When they feel like the customer is coming to their home, customer service will be different. We want to create this sense of belonging and a cohesive environment for our staff," says Mr Ang.

Strengthening customer loyalty

Apart from investing in staff development, Mr Ang keeps an ear to the ground when it comes to listening to the needs of his customers. In response to customer feedback, JUMBO has developed retail packs of their famous chilli crab paste and black pepper crab spice to allow customers to whip up these dishes easily in the comfort of their own home. "Besides fulfilling their needs, we also get to retain our market positioning in their minds. This enhances our branding," explains Mr Ang.

In a bid to reward its loyal customers, the JUMBO Rewards Card allows members to convert the money spent into loyalty points for reward redemptions. JUMBO has also organised the second Jumbo Culinary Challenge to allow chefs from its seafood outlets to showcase their skills and create new recipes. JUMBO Rewards



Card members will have the opportunity to vote for the dishes that they would like to see on the restaurant's main menu during a gala dinner, which will be held in October this year.

Positive breakthroughs

While it has been more than a year since JUMBO began implementing CCI programmes, it continues to see positive results. Productivity has increased, with the preparation of sauces and mixes done at JUMBO's central kitchen facility. This not only ensures consistency in taste, but also reduces duplication of work, allowing outlets to extend their operating hours to better serve customers.

"The staff now have more time to do productive work. Before we had a central kitchen, the staff had to come early to prepare the food, so they can be quite tired even before the restaurant opens for business. By doing away with the bulk of the preparations, they are now more energised to serve the customers better," Mr Ang says.

This boost in productivity has also delivered other benefits. "We have received a lot of compliments and the number of complaints has fallen. I think one way we can also measure customer satisfaction is through the many repeat visits of our customers," adds Mr Ang.

The personal touch

Soo Kee Jewellery saw a 169% jump in the ratio of compliments to complaints by building trust with customers



reat your customers like your friends and family – because they are. This simple principle has guided many of the business practices of the Soo Kee Jewellery Group.

"The customer relationship is very important and we want to build trust," says Mr Peter Lim (above), President of the Soo Kee Jewellery Group. "When customers trust us, they become our friends and the whole business process is transformed to being more than just a transaction."

Despite being at the helm of one of Singapore's most established jewellery brands, Mr Lim is not resting on his laurels. "Providing excellent customer service goes beyond the offering of quality products. It must become a part of the corporate culture," he explains. "This is a competitive industry and we must constantly improve to stand out. It is the level of service we provide to our customers that sets us apart from other companies in the industry."

Listening to customer needs

In a bid to strengthen its service-oriented culture, the Group has implemented a series of practical strategies under CCI, to encourage companies to be committed to service excellence. One of the key strategies is to actively listen to clients' needs and suggestions. Instead of pumping money into expensive advertising campaigns, focus group sessions are organised to collect customer feedback to tailor the Group's service and product offerings to customer preferences.

"Through the interviews that we have held, we are able to understand how the customer feels about our service. For example, we want them to tell us if there are any areas that we can improve. What do they want? Do they want lower prices or better service? We are happy to hear any kind of feedback from them as it will always improve the business," says Mr Lim.

The focus groups have allowed Soo Kee to zero in on exactly what it is that customers really want and use its resources more effectively to deliver this. "We realised that our customers want a friend who will help them select jewellery that suits their budget and needs. That personal touch goes beyond investing in television commercials," explains Mr Lim.

Positive results

As a result of the initiatives under the CCI project, the Soo Kee Jewellery Group has seen an improvement of 44% in mystery audit results and a 169% jump in the ratio of compliments to complaints. The top and bottom lines have also grown strongly, with sales transactions up 33% and overall profitability rising 59%.

"We have seen positive relationships between our clients and sales staff being formed. Sometimes, our customers will return to thank our staff for their help by inviting them to their wedding dinners and birthday parties," shares Mr Lim.

To further strengthen the relationship with customers, loyalty programmes have been

developed. In addition, thank-you cards and gifts are also sent to customers after their purchase. "We want to convert happy customers into loyal customers," says Mr Lim.

Happy employees, happy customers

While Mr Lim says that the best way to get new customers is through positive referrals from existing customers, he notes that keeping employee morale high also goes a long way in building customer satisfaction and loyalty. To achieve this, proper training and appropriate incentive programmes are key.

Besides on-the-job training and mystery shopping assessments, all employees at Soo Kee are taught ways to handle customer conflicts in a positive manner. In addition, performance incentives and bonuses are also given to staff members who have consistently reached their sales targets. According to Mr Lim, connecting individual incentives with organisational objectives has led to improved job performance and productivity levels. "The best results come from employees who are engaged and motivated to go the extra mile for customers."

He adds: "Ultimately, we treat our customers like friends. Can we sell an inferior product to our friends? The answer is no. Can we provide lousy service to our friends? The answer is no. Can you delay your friend's shipment? The answer is no. Can you design bad packaging for your friend? The answer is no. Because we treat every single customer as our friend, we cannot let them down."



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Mr G. Suresh Nair **Business Leader GE Aviation Svc** Operations

A Firm Commitment to Quality

igh quality standards are an integral part of Minntech Asia/Pacific's (Minntech's) corporate identity. As part of Minntech Corporation's international operations, the company manages a network of distributors that market its globally-recognised range of medical devices and equipment in the region. Being in the business of supplying lifesaving medical equipment to hospitals and dialysis centres, Minntech is well aware of how crucial it is to have reliable, top quality products.

Minntech's competitive edge both internationally as well as locally. Being a regulatory requirement for export to many markets, it opened up new opportunities for Minntech. Mr Piontkowski remarks, "The certification may or may not be a requirement in a tender. But whatever the case, I wanted to make sure that in every situation, we would be able to supply the required standard of equipment."

With this certification, Minntech was also able to comply with local Health Sciences

service personnel more effectively. "We have better resource utilisation as the engineers can now be productive in the facility when they are not out on service calls. They are able to provide more value to the company," explains Mr Piontkowski, "and it also gives them more job satisfaction."

The entire ISO-implementation process, which involved training sessions and audit preparation work for everyone in the company, has created a noticeable uptick in awareness across all departments.



"As developing markets mature, they are going to become more demanding in terms of standards compliance. Other medical device manufacturers would do well to seriously consider obtaining ISO 13485 certification if they have not already done so."

Mr John Piontkowski, Vice President & Managing Director of Minntech

World-class standards

When the company decided to set up a new refurbishment facility for its Renatron reprocessing systems, which are used in renal dialysis, implementing ISO 13485:2003 standards for the facility was a clear and logical step. ISO 13485 provides an internationally recognised set of operating guidelines and creates a framework for monitoring and analysing company processes and customer feedback.

With support from SPRING Singapore, Minntech was able to smoothly adopt this comprehensive and proven system to ensure that every one of the Renatron machines it refurbished each year met expected standards.

Mr John Piontkowski (above), Vice President & Managing Director of Minntech, explains, "We wanted to make sure that what we sold from this refurbishing facility would meet the same quality standards that our US headquarters maintains, and that we could stand fully behind this equipment – that's why we wanted this certification."

New markets, definite gains

The ISO 13485 certification boosted

Authority licensing requirements, which meant that the company could engage in direct sales in Singapore, thus retaining sales margins that would otherwise be paid to distributors.

Over a period of three years, the company expects its financial bottom line to be boosted by seven-figure sums from higher revenue and reduced costs due to certification. Not long after Minntech obtained certification, the company clinched a lucrative multi-year deal with the National Kidney Foundation for the gradual replacement of its existing 75 Renatron machines. The company's ISO-certified refurbishing abilities "gave us more negotiating flexibility as we were able to realise some value from the old equipment," says Mr Piontkowski, and closing this deal was one of the big tangible benefits we experienced."

Improving efficiency

Besides its positive impact on revenue, the ISO system – which focuses on a systematic review of workflow – has resulted in fewer customer complaints, improvements in managing and tracing documents, and lower operational costs.

Minntech has also been able to utilise its

"Now, when a specific situation comes up, the staff will think about the implications of doing something, and whether it's in compliance with the regulations," observes Mr Piontkowski. "That's a healthy thing for everyone."

Forging new paths

Bolstered by its success, Minntech is looking into expanding its refurbishing capabilities to include other products, which will open up new revenue streams and aid regional growth. Mr Piontkowski points out that as developing markets mature, "they are going to become more demanding in terms of standards compliance." He feels that other medical device manufacturers would do well to seriously consider obtaining ISO 13485 certification if they have not already done so," so that they can compete more effectively in the future."

While the implementation project took time and effort, Mr Piontkowski is quick to acknowledge its advantages. "The whole process was very helpful in terms of dealing with many issues, such as staffing and resource issues," he says. "It was a big learning experience for all of us. It turned out being more involved than I had initially anticipated, but definitely worth it!"

Bringing Rehabilitation Medicine to the Region

With a unique technology offering and a clear growth strategy, V2U Healthcare is setting its sights on regional expansion.

t's a rare combination to find an experienced healthcare professional who also embodies the entrepreneurial spirit of a businessman. Yet it's exactly these two qualities that have allowed Dinesh Verma, a physiotherapist for 10 years and now Chairman of V2U Healthcare, to grow the business he founded as a oneman operation in 2002 to a 28-strong team with its sights set on regional mar-

Today, V2U comprises four separate businesses — RehabAsia and Rehamed, which distribute medical rehabilitation products in Singapore and Malaysia respectively, and two clinical services providers, PhysioAsia Therapy Centre and Integrated Speech and Swallow Works. Acting as an umbrella for these businesses, V2U was established in 2010 to provide a vehicle for driving international growth.

"On the distribution side, we represent leading brands. But, as if often the case once you get established in a market, you want to create your own brand," explains Mr Verma. "So we are now working with overseas OEMs to create private-label

brands for products like physio tapes, supports and treatment tables, which we are selling regionally." But V2U's latest venture is taking this a step further by developing its very

own rehabilitation technology

computer-based

Biofeedback

called ACHIEVO, an audio-

System, which Mr Verma

proudly points out will be a "100% Singapore

product". By combin-

ing ACHIEVÓ with its

OEM imaging ul-

trasound product,

V2U is launching AHIEVO CST (Core

Pressure

Stability Trainer), an innovative approach to rehabilitation for sufferers of chronic back and neck pain. Put simply, it lets patients know when they are targeting the right muscles during rehabilitation exercises so that they can optimise their efforts.

Collaboration is key

To develop ACHIEVO from a basic idea to a working prototype, Mr Verma turned to external partners. "A company like ours doesn't have the resources for advanced product R&D, so we work with institutions like Singapore Polytechnic (SP), which has the facilities and know-how to get things done," says Mr Verma.

In partnership with SP and with funding support from SPRING, V2U is now further refining ACHIEVO's design, functionality and software to make it more commercially appealing. Mr Verma also points out that to go overseas, certain testing requirements and regulations have to be met - like the CE mark for Europe - another area where SPRING has been able to help, providing a grant to engage consultants to help navigate the regulatory processes.

At the same time, V2U is also nearing the conclusion of another SPRINGsupported project looking at franchising and branding. "We were evaluating what our growth direction was going to be, as a company and as a group, and started discussions with SPRING to see how they could help," says Mr Verma. The result was that SPRING funded the engagement of a consulting company, A.S. Louken, to assist with the development of a strategy for expansion through branding, licensing and franchising.

Strong growth prospects

Mr Verma believes there is significant opportunity for growth in the relatively underdeveloped physiotherapy markets in the region. He sees franchising and licensing as the path that will allow V2U to tap into this growth while avoiding the higher investment and risks of direct investment in these markets.

"We wanted to develop a model based on our name and reputation, as well as that of Singapore, which is regarded as the hub of advanced healthcare in the region," explains Mr Verma. "Our own technologies and processes give us some core competencies and lock-in features. which lend themselves to franchising."

In addition to creating a complete physiotherapy centre franchise product, V2U has also developed a proprietary back care solution programme called Scores (Spine, Core, Stability) that it is licensing to existing physiotherapy centres across the region. "The Scores Back Care Program incorporates our proprietary technologies and provides a lower-cost entry point, compared to the franchise, for practitioners in other countries to access our technology and know-how, and strengthens the V2U name in the region," says Mr Verma.





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With fingers firmly on the pulse of new technology and industry trends, the Centre of Innovation for Electronics (COIE) outlines four growth areas which present opportunities for SMEs.



Smart Energy and Green Solutions

Energy and the Environment have received rising global interest. Countries worldwide are increasingly turning to clean, renewable sources of energy and placing sustainable development high on the national agenda. Corporations and businesses are also embracing sustainability in their operations, products and services; while consumers have become more aware and conscious about buying and using energy-efficient products.

The clean energy industry in Singapore received a further boost on 12 Jul 2011 with another \$195m from the National Research Foundation. The new five-year funding will go towards boosting R&D in solar energy, and diversifying into smart grids, green buildings, and carbon capture and utilisation. A comprehensive blueprint is also in place to grow a vibrant industry ecosystem through R&D, manpower development and grooming of Singapore-based enterprises.

Further afield, many countries in Asia have rural communities that are in need of affordable off-grid power. This presents a sizeable demand for clean energy systems that Singapore companies can help meet.

There are many products and services in Smart Energy and Green Solutions that companies can offer. These include alternative energy systems such as solar or wind energy systems, high efficiency inverters, energy storage and charging solutions; energy efficient products such as smart sensors and lightings; and energy management solutions for homes and buildings.

Companies can participate in the full value chain from design, development,

distribution, installation and management.

Intelligent Enterprise and Systems

In this connected world where information and transaction cycles are getting faster and shorter, business agility and responsiveness to developments are paramount for companies to stay ahead of the competition. Companies need to sense both internal and external developments and respond accordingly, to take advantage of opportunities. There is therefore demand for intelligent enterprise systems and solutions which companies, including SMEs, can conceptualise, design, develop and deploy.

Intelligent Enterprise Systems and Solutions encompass sensor networks, pervasive location technologies and advanced analytics. They can be deployed in enterprises and industrial facilities for tracking, monitoring, decision-support and control and management operations to improve business agility, reduce business costs, as well as optimise resource management and business processes.

Healthcare, Lifestyle and Assistive Solutions

Two significant demographic factors that will shape the electronics industry over the next ten years are the aging population and growing wealth of Asian consumers. The aging baby boomers with their financial power will particularly impact the medical/healthcare/lifestyle electronics segments as they enter their golden years with expectations of long active lifestyles and the means to ensure such status.

Mr Wong Chee Chein, Development Engineer from COIE, Nanyang Polytechnic, demonstrating the use of the "Save our Souls" system.

Companies can design, develop, distribute, install or maintain smart biomedical and lifestyle solutions to meet the healthcare, lifestyle and assistive needs of people ranging from the ageing population to those concerned about their health and well-being. These solutions include distributed healthcare systems, bio-signals monitors, detection systems for behaviour and cognitive disorders, as well as self-powered wearable body sensors and networks.

Workflow and Process Automation / Optimisation

The Singapore government has identified and is incentivising productivity-led growth as a key growth strategy for Singapore-based companies. Productivity gains help companies become more competitive, offer better services, and lower operation costs. Companies can benefit from solutions that leverage electronics and infocomm to automate processes, streamline workflow, and provide real-time updates and information for decision makers.

Opportunities exist for SMEs who can develop and customise such solutions to individual end-user needs. The solutions could span a wide spectrum, including imaging and industrial inspection systems, testing and measurement systems, scanning and screening systems, biometrics, and intelligent video surveillance systems, among others.

Find out more information about the Centre of Innovation for Electronics (COIE) Open House on 7 September 2011 (Wed) on page 18, Upcoming Events.

Delivering Customised Lighting Solutions

As he builds Screentech into a leader in the field of LED technology, Managing Director Mr Calvin Lim is driven by a clear focus on one thing – his customer's needs.

Set up in 2005, Screentech is one of the few companies in the region to design and produce light-emitting diode (LED) technology. Compared to traditional light sources such as fluorescent lamps and halogen light bulbs, LED lights are more energy efficient and durable.

As one of the pioneers in the LED industry in Singapore, Screentech has carved a niche for itself in the industry by developing customised lighting solutions for its clients. Screentech's achievements include the provision of LED technology for advertorial

light boxes in Changi Airport and the replacement of neon and fluorescent lamps with LED lighting on the OCBC Building in Singapore – a feat that was previously thought difficult.

An award-winning approach

"While most players are concerned with carrying another brand or trading from another factory, we are more concerned about trying to build reliable and effective customised solutions to satisfy our clients' needs and to figure out the existing problems that we could fix," Mr Lim explains.

Screentech's focused direction and customeroriented business strategy enabled it to win the Emerging Enterprise Award (EEA) in 2009. The company walked away with \$360,000 worth of prizes, including an interest-free loan from OCBC Bank, a grant from SPRING Singapore, an educational package from NUS Extension, and a consulting package with RSM Chio Lim.

According to Mr Lim, the award came at an opportune time, as many companies, including Screentech, were struggling to survive during the financial downturn in 2009. "We refocused our platform to sync our resources into development work," says Mr Lim. "During the time when our business was not doing well, we got a fair bit of support from SPRING, and we went on to improve our products to get them more ready and competitive in 2010."

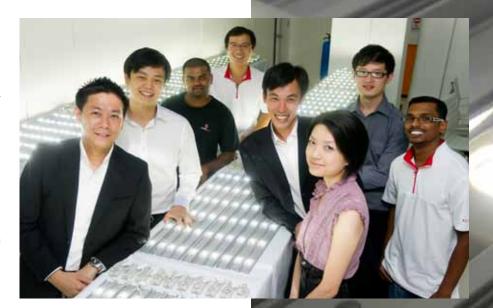
While Screentech has not used the SPRING grant yet, it plans to do so in the near future to help its employees keep up-to-date with the fast evolving technologies.

"We will channel some of that to bring the knowledge of our people to the next level, to allow them to better apply our competitive technical edge to meet our clients' needs. We've got to start to understand how fast it's moving, where it's going and what our competitors are doing. From there, we can create more winning solutions for our customers," says Mr Low See Lien, a director at Screentech.

Achieving greater heights

Winning the EE Award has increased Screentech's credibility and profile in the industry. "What the award gives is exposure that you cannot get from the usual marketing avenues. It allows a company with a story to tell to tell it louder and quicker," says Mr Lim.

Looking ahead, Screentech intends to increase its market share by focusing on improving scalability and performance capabilities. Mr Low explains: "We have prepared our unique modular methods to achieve greater scalability."



"While most players are concerned with carrying another brand or trading from another factory, we are more concerned about trying to build customised solutions to satisfy our clients' needs and to figure out the existing problems that we could fix."

Mr Calvin Lim (above extreme left) Managing Director Screentech

Serving up service excellence

These days, customers expect more than just good food at restaurants. They look forward to a great dining experience, and customer-savvy restaurants such as the Suki Group are already looking into ways to deliver just that.

The company embarked on the Customer-Centric Initiative (CCI) in June 2010 with the aim of taking customer experience to the next level.

"We want customers who dine at Suki to experience the same prompt and friendly service, comfortable ambience and value-for-money quality food at all our outlets," explained Mr Roger Soh, Group HR and Operations Manager of Suki Group.

The company currently owns six different restaurant concepts: Nihon Mura, Yuki Yaki, Sakura International Buffet, Sakura Charcoal Grilled & Shabu Shabu, Ishi Mura, and Momiji.

But with 30 outlets to manage, how does Suki Group ensure that its customers enjoy the same high level of dining experience at all its restaurants? The answer lies in having a common set of service standards and processes.

"For instance, customers will be able to experience the same warm welcome greeting at any of our restaurants. Or if we spot customers carrying heavy bags, our service staff will walk up to them and provide assistance," shared Mr Soh.

A training manual has been developed to ensure that new staff are trained in accordance to the Suki Service Standards & Service Blueprints. These include providing accurate information to customers such as the restaurant opening hours and prices, and recommending signature dishes to customers.

Mr Soh added that staff are also trained to use "service-oriented" phrases or words when interacting with customers. "Instead of saying 'There is nothing I can do to help', staff are encouraged to offer alternatives, by saying 'I'm sorry about the situation, but what I could do is this'."

Said Mr Soh, "We have also been enrolling our service managers in customer service workshops and seminars. They have attended the ACTA (Advanced Certificate in Training & Assessment) course, which enables them to conduct effective training for the frontline employees."

However, as with any new initiatives, Mr Soh pointed out that it may take a while before people can adjust to the changes, especially if it involves something outside of their comfort zone.

"We asked our service team to get customer feedback on our service and food quality, but they were too shy to approach the table," he recalled.

"However, after a few role-playing sessions, they became more confident and were more willing to approach customers for feedback. They also feel more empowered because they are able to offer immediate service recovery when necessary."

By following the clearly-mapped out service processes, staff were able to have a better understanding of their work flow. As a result, the company has seen an improvement in productivity levels since the implementation of the CCI. The Group has also seen customer satisfaction levels increase by 15% and the sales per worker by 12%.

"Service excellence is definitely an ongoing journey for Suki and we want to ensure that the service culture and initiatives are sustainable," said Mr Soh.

About CUSTOMER-CENTRIC INITIATIVE (CCI)

This initiative aims to encourage companies to be committed to service excellence and to take the lead in raising service standards in their industry. It offers an assistance package to help Singapore-based companies upgrade their service standards.

Service improvement plans under the CCI may include service strategies and service blueprints, redesigning of service processes, customer service training, customer satisfaction measurement and sevice audits.

WHAT LEVEL OF SUPPORT?

Eligible companies will receive funding support of up to 50% of qualifying costs for SMEs and 30% for non-SMEs.

HOW TO QUALIFY?

The project should involve improvement in service leadership, service agility, customer experience and introduction of new service standards.

HOW TO APPLY?

Contact EnterpriseOne Tel: +65 6898 1800

Email: enterpriseone@spring.gov.sg Website: www.enterpriseone.gov.sg



By following the clearly-mapped out service processes, service staff from Suki Group were able to have a better understanding of their work flow.

TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION PROGRAMME (TIP)

WHAT IS IT?

This programme aims to strengthen the technological innovation capabilities of SMEs to help them to become more competitive. This is done by setting up Centres of Innovation (COI), enhancing capabilities with expert help and catalysing technology innovation projects

Setting up Centres of Innovation for growth

SPRING partners with the polytechnics and research institutes to establish COIs. These one-stop centres offer technology consultancy and advice to help SMEs identify practical, downstream technology platforms that can be quickly adopted.

To date, five COIs have been set up:

- Centre of Innovation for Electronics (COIE)
 Nanyang Polytechnic
- Environmental and Water Technology Centre of Innovation (EWT COI)
 - Ngee Ann Polytechnic
- Food Innovation Resource Centre (FIRC)
 - Singapore Polytechnic

- Marine and Offshore Technology Centre of Innovation (MOT COI)
 - Ngee Ann Polytechnic
- Precision Engineering Centre Of Innovation (PE COI)
 - Singapore Institute of Manufacturing Technology

Enhancing capabilities with expert help

Companies can engage an expert to help them identify critical technologies and build in-house R&D capabilities relevant to their operations. Support is provided to defray the cost of seconding an expert to the company for up to two years.

Catalysing technology innovation projects

Companies embarking on technology projects, such as developing and improving products, processes and business models, can receive funding to defray the qualifying development costs

WHAT LEVEL OF SUPPORT?

Eligible companies will receive funding support of up to 50% or 70% of qualifying costs.

HOW TO QUALIFY?

Applicants must show a commitment to technology innovation as part of their overall business strategy. Businesses with scalable business models and strong growth potential will be considered favourably. The projects must also be carried out in Singapore.

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Have at least 30% local shareholding, and
- Have group annual sales of not more than \$\$100 million, or group employment size of not more than 200 employees

HOW TO APPLY?

Contact EnterpriseOne Tel: +65 6898 1800

Email: enterpriseone@spring.gov.sg Website: www.enterpriseone.gov.sg

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME (IPM)

WHAT IS IT?

This programme helps SMEs to protect and manage their intellectual property for competitive advanage and profits.

The programme has two phases. Phase 1 assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the company's existing IPM deployment and recommends possible strategic IP options. Phase 2 develops the IPM capability by implementing the recommendations.

WHAT LEVEL OF SUPPORT?

Companies can receive up to 50% funding support of the consultancy fees in Phase 1 and up to 50% funding support of the qualifying costs for project implementation in Phase 2.

HOW TO QUALIFY?

Applicants should:

- Have at least 30% local shareholding, and
- Have group annual sales of not more than \$\$100 million, or group employment size of not more than 200 employees

HOW TO APPLY?

Contact Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (IPOS)

Tel: +65 6339 8616

Email: enterprise@ipos.gov.sg Website: www.ipos.gov.sg



BRANDPACT

WHAT IS IT?

It helps companies build and use their brand as a strategy for business competitiveness. SPRING Singapore works with business associations and brand experts to offer branding forums and workshops, brand assessment and consultancy, one-to-one brand clinics and online resources to inform and equip companies on their branding journey.

There are also platforms such as the Singapore Prestige Brand Award to recognise companies that have achieved outstanding performance through building their brands.

HOW TO QUALIFY?

SPRING Singapore offers funding support to eligible companies. Companies are required to

first undergo the SMART initiative. If branding has been identified as a priority for your company, you can proceed to apply for funding under BrandPact.

Applicants should:

- Have at least 30% local shareholding, and
- Have group annual sales of not more than \$\$100 million, or group employment size of not more than 200 employees

HOW TO APPLY?

For more information on BrandPact, visit www.spring.gov.sg/brand

Contact EnterpriseOne Tel: +65 6898 1800

Email: enterpriseone@spring.gov.sg Website: www.enterpriseone.gov.sg



CCL-SPRING SME LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Leadership Development Programme for SME Leaders is the only leadership programme in Singapore that focuses on enhancing leadership capability by addressing behaviour. The Centre for Creative Leadership's (CCL) unique approach to leadership development based on the Access-Challenge-Support Model is widely attended and recognised by leaders worldwide. The combination of assessment tools, experiential activities and one-on-one coaching to deliver impact is an unconventional approach to executive education and is not typically offered by any other management programme.

In collaboration with SPRING Singapore, CCL, ranked third worldwide as an executive education provider by the Financial Times, will offer the Leadership Development Program, specifically customised to address leadership challenges faced by SME leaders in Singapore. In addition to the application of psychometrics and 360-degree assessment tools, participants will be challenged through a series of experiential activities to enhance their learning. To support them through their developmental journey, participants will each be assigned a dedicated professional coach.

DATE: Module 1: 28 - 29 Oct 2011 (Fri & Sat) Module 2: 18 Nov 2011 (Fri) Pre & Post Programme Individual Executive Coaching (4 one-to-one sessions)

PRE-PROGRAMME BRIEFING: 25 AUG 2011 (THU)

CONTACT & REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Ms Shabnam Manan, CCL Project Manager, Email: manans@ccl.org, Contact: 6854 6032

CENTRE OF INNOVATION FOR ELECTRONICS (COIE) OPEN HOUSE

The Centre of Innovation for Electronics (COIE) was established on 1 Sep 2008 by Nanyang Polytechnic and SPRING Singapore as a one-stop centre to catalyse the growth of SMEs in the electronics cluster and provide expertise to companies keen on leveraging electronics to innovate.

The COIE has engaged more than 150 companies, developed over 90 projects and conducted over 50 courses in support of the industry to date.

As the COIE enters its next phase of supporting the industry, it will intensify engagement with companies to help them move up the innovation ladder through IP-intensive projects and key growth areas such as smart energy and green solutions, intelligent enterprise and systems, healthcare, lifestyle and assistive solutions as well as workflow and process automation.

Find out more about how your company can partner COIE at their Open House on 7 Sep 2011 (Wed).

Visit http://www.electronics-coi.sg or contact Mr Michael Cheong (Michael_CHEONG@nyp.gov.sg) to find out more.

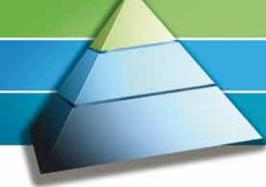


BUILDING LEADERS AT EVERY LEVEL

UPGRADE LEADERS • CEOs & Senior Management

STRENGTHEN MANAGEMENT • Middle Managers

BUILD FUTURE LEADERS • Young Graduates & Tertiary Students



SPRING Singapore's Business Leaders Initiative (BLI) aims to build leaders at every level. It is a comprehensive effort to upgrade Singapore SME bosses, strengthen middle management and build a pipeline of future leaders for SMEs. A suite of supported programmes targeted at each level of the organization is available for eligible SMEs.

Enabling Enterprise

For more information, visit www.spring.gov.sg/bl

Useful Contacts

Enterprise Development Centres (EDCs)

Enterprises (ASME)

EDC@ASME 167 Jalan Bukit Merah Tower 4 #03-13 Singapore 150167 Tel: (65) 6513 0388

Email: enquiries@edc-asme.sg Website: http://www.edc-asme.sg/

and Industry (SCCCI)

EDC@SCCCI 47 Hill Street #09-00

Singapore 179365 Tel: (65) 6337 8381 Fax: (65) 6339 0605 Email: edc@edc-sccci.sg

Website: http://www.edc-sccci.sg/

Commerce and Industry (SICCI)

EDC@SICCI SICCI Building 31 Stanley Street Singapore 068740 Tel: (65) 6508 0147 Email: edc@edc-sicci.sg

Website: http://www.edc-sicci.sg/

Commerce and Industry (SMCCI)

EDC@SMCCI 15 Jalan Pinang Singapore 199147 Tel: (65) 6293 3822 Fax: (65) 6293 3905

Email: gadvisory@edc-smcci.sg Website: http://www.edc-smcci.sg/

Singapore Manufacturers' Federation (SMa) EDC@SMa

SPRING Singapore Building 2 Bukit Merah Central

Singapore 159835 Tel: (65) 6826 3020 Fax: (65) 6826 3021 Email: edc@edc-sma.sg

Website: http://www.edc-sma.sg/

1 Fusionopolis Walk, #01-02 South Tower, Solaris Singapore 138628 Tel: (65) 6279 1855 Fax: (65) 6659 0640

Email: sac@spring.gov.sg

Website: http://www.sac-accreditation.gov.sg

Sales of Standards

Toppan Leefung Pte. Ltd. 1 Kim Seng Promenade, #18-01 Great World City East Tower Singapore 237994

Tel: (65) 6826 9691 Fax: (65) 6820 3341

Email: singaporestandardseshop@toppanleefung.com Website: http://www.singaporestandardseshop.sg

Standards Collection

National Library Board 100 Victoria Street

Lee Kong Chian Reference Library, Level 7

Singapore 188064 Hotline: (65) 6332 3255

Email: ref@nlb.gov.sg Website: http://libguides.nl.sg/standards

Standards Development Organisations

Standards Development Organisation

2 Bukit Merah Central, #03-00 SPRING Singapore Building Singapore 159835 Tel: (65) 6826 3088 Fax: (65) 6826 3113

Email: tan_jinsoon@sma-sdo.org.sg

Website: http://www.sma.sg

Singapore Chemical Industry Council Standards Development Organisation

8 Jurong Town Hall Road #25-04, The JTC Summit Singapore 609434 Tel: (65) 6267 8930

Fax: (65) 6267 8893 Email: terencekoh@scic.sg Website: http://www.scic.sg