PEOPLE POWER

Strengthening HR capabilities is critical to the growth and success of SMEs

THE IMPORTANCE OF HR
Mothercare’s efforts to improve its HR systems and processes support its continued growth.

DEVELOPING A TALENT PIPELINE
Zingrill takes a proactive approach towards attracting and grooming talent for management roles.
SPRING Singapore is an agency under the Ministry of Trade and Industry responsible for helping Singapore enterprises grow and build trust in Singapore products and services. As the enterprise development agency, SPRING works with partners to help enterprises in financing, capability and management development, technology and innovation, and access to markets. As the national standards and accreditation body, SPRING develops and promotes an internationally-recognised standards and quality assurance infrastructure. SPRING also oversees the safety of general consumer goods in Singapore.

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The Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (ASME) and the South East Community Development Council jointly launched the SME Centre@SouthEast on 1 August. Located at the Singapore Post Centre in Eunos, the SME Centre@SouthEast will provide free business advisory services to heartland and small businesses in the South East District. The new centre was unveiled by Dr Mohamad Maliki Osman, Mayor of the South East District and Mr Chan Chong Beng, President of ASME. This centre is the latest addition to the network of SME Centres (an initiative by SPRING Singapore) comprising the SME Centres located at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, ASME and Singapore Manufacturing Federation and the satellite SME Centre@SouthWest and SME Centre@NorthEast.

On 2 August, SPRING Singapore awarded 36 Executive Development scholarships (EDs) at a ceremony officiated by Mr Philip Yeo, Chairman of SPRING. Of the 36 EDs awards, 10 were SME-SPRING Joint EDs scholarships, more than double the five awarded in 2012. These scholars will join leading local SMEs to help spearhead their business growth and development upon their graduation. Eight SMEs across the F&B, healthcare, retail and manufacturing sectors participated this year, compared to three in 2011, the first year of the SME-SPRING Joint EDs. Co-sponsored by SPRING, the Joint EDs scholarship has helped to attract top young talents into SMEs.

Third-party assurance of the integrity and credibility of personnel certification programmes will now be available with a new Accreditation Scheme for Personnel Certification, launched by Mr Renny Yeo, Chairman of the Singapore Accreditation Council (SAC), at the Accreditation & Conformance 2013 on 14 August. It will be administered by SAC, which is managed under the aegis of SPRING Singapore. At the event, Temasek Polytechnic and SPRING signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the co-development of a Part-time Specialist Diploma Course in Laboratory Management and Instrumentation. This initiative seeks to address the educational and training needs of existing and prospective employees of laboratories in Singapore.
$10 Million to Help Medical and Clean Technology SMEs Commercialise Intellectual Property

SPRING Singapore has set aside $10 million to help SMEs in the medical and clean technology sectors identify, develop and commercialise Intellectual Property (IP) into products and services through the appointment of three private sector translators (PSTs). Two PSTs, AITbiotech and Sys-Mac Automation Engineering, were appointed for the medical technology sector, while a collaboration between 360iP and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) will be servicing the clean technology sector. The PSTs will offer SMEs a pay-per-use model so SMEs will have access to their services without having to set up their own in-house research facility or spend on manpower or equipment. Besides the translation of IP, the PSTs will provide R&D services such as validation and feasibility studies.

Productivity Toolkit to Help SMEs Raise Productivity

Senior Minister of State for Trade & Industry and National Development, Mr Lee Yi Shyan [fourth from right], launched SPRING Singapore’s Productivity Toolkit at the HDB Heartland Retail Seminar on 15 August. It comprises nine simple and easy-to-use tools that SMEs can either download from the Way To Go website [www.waytogo.sg] or implement with assistance from advisors at any of the SME Centres. Besides the general tools that are applicable for all SMEs, there are specific tools tailored for retail and food services businesses. With this user-friendly Toolkit, retailers can easily use the productivity tools to manage inventory and redesign their business processes to increase effectiveness and efficiency in their operations.

Launch of Singapore Standard on Food Safety Management for Food Service Establishments

Jointly developed by the National Environment Agency (NEA) and the Singapore Standards Council, the Singapore Standard SS 583:2013 Guidelines on Food Safety Management for Food Service Establishments was launched on 16 August. The standard will provide comprehensive guidance to caterers on how to put in place a Food Safety Management System (FSMS) in a cost-effective manner. A properly implemented FSMS can help caterers to systematically identify, prevent and reduce food-borne hazards at every stage of the food storage, preparation, cooking, and delivery process. Hygiene lapses and non-compliance with food safety practices can be easily identified and corrected as the system requires documentation of processes during operations and regular auditing by supervisory staff.
Raise productivity with the right tools

**GENERAL**
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  Assess productivity performance
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  Practise good housekeeping
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- **Manpower Scheduling**
  Design efficient work schedule

**RETAIL**
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- **SKU Analysis**
  Determine the right product mix
- **Stock Control**
  Manage inventory

**FOOD SERVICES**
- **Menu Analysis**
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Download the productivity tools online at [www.waytogo.sg](http://www.waytogo.sg) or approach advisors for assistance at any of the SME Centres.

Satellite SME Centres are located at the Community Development Councils (CDCs).
Strengthening HR capabilities is critical to the growth and success of SMEs.

SPRING’s Capability Development Grant offers support to companies in four key areas:

- Leadership
- Strong HR Capabilities
- Talent Attraction
- Talent Development
In today’s fast-moving knowledge economy, people are often seen as a company’s most valuable asset. Their skills, knowledge and relationships are what allow a business to succeed and grow. And as with any asset, effective management of human resources (HR) will help to maximise their value to the company.

For SMEs in particular, building up strong HR capabilities is critical to their future success. This allows them to attract and retain the people needed to drive growth and helps them to compete against larger, more established companies in the war for talent.

Recognising the importance of a strong HR function, SPRING Singapore offers a range of support under the Capability Development Grant (CDG), as well as a free Human Resource Capability Toolkit, to assist companies in developing their HR capabilities. More specifically, the CDG helps companies strengthen their HR capabilities in four key areas – leadership, effective HR practices, talent attraction and talent development.

Leading by example

While good HR practices should permeate all areas of a business, the impetus for this must come from the top. Strong leadership is critical, not just to steer a company towards success, but also to ensure that HR practices are aligned with the company’s overall strategy. For these reasons, investing in leadership development is something that should not be ignored.

As a business grows, it must be better organised. This includes having a well-structured human resource strategy with smart processes and systems in place.”

Mr Thomas Chua
Chairman and Managing Director
Teckwah

“The leader sets the tone for the organisation, so it is important for the leader to have vision,” says Mr Thomas Chua, Chairman and Managing Director of Teckwah. “Vision is what will enable an SME to think big and make the leap to the next level.”

Putting this into practice, Mr Chua – the son of one of Teckwah’s founders and an aspiring second-generation leader of the business – made a conscious effort to upgrade his own skills. In his first few years with the company, he took business courses, attended seminars and was actively involved in business chambers. “I was eager to learn what it takes to be an effective and inspiring leader,” he says.

Ms Susan Chong, CEO of Greenpac, shares similar beliefs. With the support of SPRING, she embarked on a two-year executive MBA programme at the National University of Singapore in 2009.

“While I often relied on gut feel early in my career, I recognised the need for a more strategic approach as the business grew. Therefore, I made the decision to upgrade myself by going back to school to sharpen my management skills,” says Ms Chong, who previously held O-level qualifications. “I enrolled in the NUS EMBA programme and found it to be a valuable source of new business perspectives and strategic thinking.”

Strengthening HR capabilities

Having the processes and systems in place to implement the strategies and vision of a strong leader is a logical next step for companies to maximise their human capital potential. By strengthening their HR capabilities, companies can transform HR from what has traditionally been an administrative function to one that plays a strategic role in the success of the business.

The CDG provides companies with financial support to take a bigger stride in developing their HR capabilities, while the HR Capability Toolkit supports the practical implementation of strong HR practices to strengthen HR management and development.

Areas covered in the toolkit include manpower planning, recruitment and selection, compensation and benefits, performance management, learning and development, career management, talent management and succession planning, and employee relations.

An example of a company that has strengthened its HR capabilities is Feinmetall, a company that designs and manufactures probe cards for the semiconductor industry. The
SME-SPRING Executive Development Scholarship has enabled Sakae Holdings to source for talented young graduates like Fiona Lee (above) with excellent academic qualifications and an entrepreneurial mindset who believe in the potential of local SMEs.

SPRING’s leadership development initiatives have allowed Atlas Sound and Vision to further the education of its staff and members of its leadership team, enabling them to contribute even more to the success of the business.

Improved processes, focus on transparency and communication, and the resulting staff loyalty put Feinmetall in a better position to handle growth in the business.

company tapped the CDG to address performance appraisals, compensation and benefits, and recruitment, resulting in improved communication with staff and transparency of company policies.

These changes had a clear impact on staff morale and have laid the foundation for future growth, explains Mr Sam Chee Wah, General Manager of Feinmetall Singapore. “We improved in several areas, including our processes, communication and transparency. This strengthened staff loyalty and our ability to manage growth in both the business and our workforce.”

Attracting talent

Even with strong HR practices in place, many companies – particularly SMEs – still struggle to attract the talent they need to grow. They have to fight the perception that SMEs lack career development opportunities, as well as many young graduates’ preference for joining multinational companies.

One company that demonstrates how SMEs can offer attractive career prospects is Sakae Holdings. The company is in an exciting phase of global growth, says Mr Douglas Foo, its Chief Executive. He believes that Sakae Holdings offers tremendous opportunity for fresh talent, and has reached out to university and polytechnic students through SPRING initiatives to spread this message.

Sakae actively participates in the SME-SPRING Executive Development Scholarship (EDS) to groom future leadership talent, and will be seeing the first batch graduating early next year.

“This initiative has enabled us to source for talented young graduates with excellent academic qualifications and an entrepreneurial mindset who believe in the potential of local SMEs,” explains Mr Foo.

The company has also tapped the Management Associate initiative under the CDG to offer young talents a comprehensive 12- to 18-month training programme when they join Sakae.

“Through this programme, these talented recruits gain experience both in our restaurants and in our head office. They also work on projects to help our businesses and franchisees overseas, giving them valuable exposure to international business,” notes Mr Foo.

Developing from within

In addition to attracting fresh talent, investing in the skills and capabilities of existing staff is another important facet of human capital development.

As Mr Michael Tien, Chief Executive of Atlas Sound and Vision, explains, maintaining a good team of staff is key to success. His company has achieved this by creating a structured career path for staff, which enables them to chart their career progression within the company and take up training opportunities that align with this progression.

In addition to providing a range of in-house and external training opportunities, Atlas has also taken advantage of SPRING’s leadership development initiatives, which are currently supported under the CDG. “These initiatives have allowed us to further the education of our staff and members of our leadership team, enabling them to contribute even more to the success of the business,” explains Mr Tien.

Read on to find out how four successful companies – Sheng Siong, Mothercare, Zingrill and Cordlife – approach human capital development and turn their people into their most valuable asset.
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LEADING AN EMPOWERED TEAM

Sheng Siong puts people first to build a stronger company.

From its humble roots as a family-run retail store opened in Ang Mo Kio in 1985, Sheng Siong has transformed over the past three decades into a leading local supermarket chain with about 2,500 employees and 33 stores island-wide. While the company has already come a long way, Mr Lim Hock Chee, Sheng Siong’s Chief Executive Officer, has a bold vision for the future: to make Sheng Siong the local Walmart and an innovation-led retail giant.

While many factors have contributed to Sheng Siong’s success, two key driving factors behind the company’s success are its strong leadership and astute approach to people development. These in turn are based on a few simple principles that lie at the heart of the company: lead by example, treat everyone with fairness and respect, and empower employees to succeed.

As a leader, you need to set a good example for others. There’s a Chinese saying that translates as: Before you can ask others to do the right thing, you need to do the right thing yourself.”

Mr Lim Hock Chee, CEO, Sheng Siong

The heart of the company: lead by example, treat everyone with fairness and respect, and empower employees to succeed.

“I believe a true leader should help his or her subordinate succeed. If your subordinate succeeds, you have succeeded too. Your job is to help this person grow and not point fingers at him or her when something goes wrong. If he or she is not able to complete a task, you should help the person out. When you do this, your subordinate will respect you as a leader,” explains Mr Lim.

Setting the right example

Mr Lim’s engaged leadership style has developed over the course of his 28 years of running supermarkets. Starting out working on the shop floor, he made it a point to know every single product by heart. Having such first-hand experience, Mr Lim says, is critical as it enables a leader to have a deep understanding of the business and lead by example with a hands-on approach. It is Sheng Siong’s practice for young executives who join the trade fresh from school to spend one to two years learning the basics, which include ordering, stock-taking and cashier duties.

“A true leader must take the responsibility to see plans through,” adds Mr Lim. “If you do not oversee your business, have proper checks and monitoring in place, and see through the implementation, your staff will think you are just paying lip service.”

For Mr Lim, another important part of leadership is inspiring and empowering staff to share their ideas and take initiative with the best interest of the business in mind. While staff may initially hesitate to voice their opinions – especially if they differ from what the boss is saying – Mr Lim has found that external training can help broaden their horizons and empower them to take ownership.

“In the past, I was always the one giving the answers; my staff had no objections to what I said and were not challenged to come up with better ideas. But as I sent more staff for training, some of them came back with fresh, new ideas.”

Unleashing staff potential

Sheng Siong actively encourages and provides development opportunities for its staff. Various training initiatives enable them to develop their skills, which subsequently helps them to progress to positions that add greater value within the company.

While Sheng Siong runs its own in-house training for specialised topics related to its business, such as food handling for fish and poultry, Mr Lim says that external trainers can also be a valuable resource. “There is a Chinese saying: Visiting monks give better sermons. This simply means people tend to value opinions from outsiders rather than insiders.”

Today, Sheng Siong staff regularly attend external training courses as part of the company’s HR management approach. Whenever staff attend such training, they subsequently share what they have learnt with their colleagues. “You have to allow staff to go for different courses so they can compare and learn from one another,” adds Mr Lim.

For Sheng Siong, developing a successful workforce goes hand in hand with building a successful business. The company’s progressive human capital development strategies translate into an empowered and motivated workforce and a low staff turnover rate of 4.2%, both of which are ultimately good for business. As the supermarket chain continues to grow under the passionate leadership of Mr Lim, one thing is clear: the team of staff making up the Sheng Siong family will remain a key to the company’s success.

Key takeaways

- Building an empowered workforce through good HR management policies and a supportive leadership approach helps companies grow.
- To find out how SPRING can support your leadership development and HR management & development efforts, visit www.spring.gov.sg/CDG.
Mothercare's efforts to improve its HR systems and processes support its continued growth.

Being a close-knit, family-run business, Mothercare encourages a "family-like" culture of trust, appreciation, mutuality and loyalty, explains Ms Shuxin Pang, Executive Director of Mothercare. "When there is an atmosphere of openness and trust, this brings out the best in people, and that is part of the reason for our success," she notes.

Yet up until a couple of years ago, the systems and processes to formalise this strong relationship were lacking. This shortcoming became more evident about five years ago when the company started achieving double-digit growth annually.

Since its establishment in Singapore in 1984, Mothercare, which retails infant and child products, has grown steadily. Today, it has 13 stores across the island, employs some 120 staff, and has operations in Malaysia and Hong Kong.

As the company grew, it became apparent that more attention needed to be paid to managing its human capital. To get the ball rolling on this, Ms Pang attended a five-day course in 2009 that introduced her to the building blocks of HR management. With her newfound understanding, she set about engaging consultants to improve Mothercare’s HR practices.

“That was the catalyst for the improvements to our HR management,” says Ms Pang. “The consultants were able to identify areas for improvement and help us to develop proper systems and processes.”

Improving HR systems and processes

“One of the first areas we set out to address was the performance appraisal process. This proved to be quite an extensive exercise, as we had to improve our job descriptions, definition of functional competencies and key performance indicators (KPIs), and structure the appraisal process against those KPIs,” explains Ms Pang.

The new process now includes annual appraisals and mid-year reviews, including upward and 360-degree appraisals, which allow staff to assess managers.

The new performance appraisal process has improved communication and transparency within the company. Bonuses used to be determined somewhat arbitrarily, but with clearly defined KPIs, they are now closely linked to performance. "This helps to motivate staff, because they can understand their own performance better, and also see a correlation between performance and pay," says Ms Pang.

Another area that received a lot of attention was training and development. "It helps keep our staff at the forefront of industry developments and shows that we are investing in them, which helps to reduce staff turnover," she explains. Indeed, staff turnover stands at around 10 percent, well below the industry average, which is close to 20 percent.

Mothercare invested a lot in developing a comprehensive product training plan. It also recognised the need for soft skills, such as dealing with various types of customers, and a number of external trainers have been engaged to provide such training.

The clearly defined job descriptions that resulted from the changes to the performance appraisal process have also had an impact on training. With a clear understanding of the competencies required for a position, management and staff are now able to develop clear training roadmaps.

Beyond training and appraisals, Ms Pang notes that it was critical that compensation and benefits were also included in the HR improvements. "If you want to motivate your staff, you have to ensure that you are paying market rate and compensating them well. If not, then no matter how robust your other systems are, people are going to leave."

In addition, Mothercare restructured its commission schemes and increased basic salaries. Benefits were also tiered to match various job levels.

One other initiative that is currently being rolled out is an HR information system (HRIS). The new HRIS will automate many processes that are currently manual, such as signing in and out from work. A thumbprint scanner will now feed a staff’s daily working hours directly into payroll, saving the time needed to calculate the number of hours worked by each staff. This system will also allow staff to see the training sessions that are available or coming up, and to register for them.

More to be done

While Mothercare’s efforts have resulted in significant improvements in systems and processes, Ms Pang notes that there is always more to be done. To ensure that these ongoing efforts get the attention and resources to be implemented successfully, she hired a full-time HR manager about two years ago.

In addition to overseeing the HRIS roll-out, the HR manager works closely with Ms Pang to develop and nurture a more clearly defined and holistic culture for Mothercare – one that cuts across Mothercare’s operations in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. Doing so has been made much easier by the steps that have already been taken to build strong bonds with staff, says Ms Pang.

"Putting in place better HR management systems and processes has been instrumental in propelling the business forward while building on the values and culture of the company.”

Ms Shuxin Pang, Executive Director
DEVELOPING A TALENT PIPELINE

Zingrill takes a proactive approach towards attracting and grooming talent for management roles.

Attracting young talent is a challenge for many SMEs, particularly for those in the F&B sector, says Mr Andrew Lee, Chief Executive Officer of Zingrill. He speaks from experience, as Zingrill operates 17 restaurants in Singapore under the Seoul Garden, Seoul Garden Hotpot and Breeks brands, and around 30 more in Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines.

“Many young Singaporeans do not want to work long hours and on weekends,” Mr Lee explains. “There is also a perception that multinational companies (MNCs) offer better opportunities.”

While long hours may be a reality for the industry, the lack of opportunity is not, according to Mr Lee. “I don’t think it can be categorised into SME and MNC. Rather, it is dependent on each individual company, regardless of size, and its approach towards talent and career development.”

Zingrill is a clear example of this. Despite being an SME, it has a keen focus on creating a nurturing work environment and offering attractive opportunities for career development. It also proactively reaches out to young talent through a variety of programmes, including the Core Executive Programme (CEP) offered jointly by SPRiNG Singapore and the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC).

Under the CEP, young graduates are matched with participating SMEs, with funding support provided for a comprehensive 12- to 18-month training programme that includes on-the-job training and external courses offered through NTUC and several partners.

Addressing the middle management gap

“The CEP is interesting because it gives us access to degree graduates,” says Mr Benny Lee, Zingrill’s Executive Director for Marketing and Training. “As we expand our business, we have become more aware of gaps in our middle management, which are critical to fill if we are to succeed. A lot of our hiring and development programmes, including the CEP, are focused on this.”

As part of the CEP, Zingrill provides a structured job rotation to expose new recruits to all areas of the business and to prepare them for a management role.

“We think it is important to have staff come through the operations side of the business before moving into middle management roles,” says Mr Benny Lee. “Hopefully by the end of the CEP they will have had a good taste of the F&B industry and will want to continue working with us.”

Zingrill has accepted one graduate through the CEP, and has made offers to a few more, who will be joining the company soon. The first CEP participant, Ms Agnes Neo, joined the company as a food technologist after graduating with a diploma in food science from Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP).

Since joining Zingrill, Ms Neo has gained exposure to several different aspects of the business, and has even had the opportunity to travel to Malaysia to support the opening of a central kitchen. She was tasked with carrying out feasibility studies and became a core member of the team setting up the facility.

“I was attached to an MNC in my final year at NYP and found the work to be quite mundane at times,” says Ms Neo. “Zingrill, on the other hand, offers a more flexible working environment. I get to experience processes that are not within my immediate job scope, such as observing how my colleagues produce large quantities of food items or watching the chef experiment with recipes.”

“The advantage of working for an SME is that there is opportunity for much broader, hands-on exposure. Learning is definitely accelerated, and movement up the career ladder is also generally faster,” notes Mr Andrew Lee.

Training opportunities

Whether it is graduates joining the company through the CEP, or existing staff identified as having management potential, Zingrill places a huge emphasis on training. Its approach to staff development combines on-the-job training and sending staff for external training programmes. It also offers degree scholarships to deserving staff as part of their move into middle management.

These efforts are central to making Zingrill an attractive employer for young talent, says Mr Andrew Lee. “We need to demonstrate that there are career development opportunities available at Zingrill, and that joining us will allow staff to grow personally and professionally. Getting this message out is critical to our ability to bring in fresh talent that will sustain our future growth.”

As we expand our business, we have become more aware of gaps in our middle management, which are critical to fill if we are to succeed.”

Mr Benny Lee (left in photo), Zingrill’s Executive Director for Marketing and Training with Mr Andrew Lee, CEO and Ms Laine Tan, Marketing Manager

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• As a company expands, it needs to develop a pipeline of talent to sustain its growth and take up management positions.
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For SMEs, operating in a niche industry allows them to specialise and fend off competition from larger companies. However, this can lead to challenges such as finding industry-specific talent.

Cordlife, a cord blood bank, has experienced this challenge first hand. “Because our industry is so niche, candidates with the relevant skills are hard to find,” explains Ms Stella Lee (above), Cordlife’s Deputy General Manager.

This has led Cordlife to put a strong emphasis on developing talent within the business. It does so by offering scholarships for further education, on-the-job training, in-house and external courses, overseas learning trips, and management training.

**Starting at the top**

It is fitting that Cordlife’s focus on staff training and development really took off after its senior management – the CEO, GM for Singapore and Financial Controller – completed their MBAs with co-funding support from SPRiNG Singapore.

“One of the keys to our success is our management’s strong belief in human capital development,” says Ms Lee. “It was also the time when Ms Lee, then the head of business for sales, marketing and account management, was given the added responsibility of HR. With the goal of integrating HR more closely into the overall business plan, Cordlife’s management decided against bringing in an external HR person, which would require trying to teach them about the business. Instead, they turned to Ms Lee, with her intimate understanding of Cordlife.

“We are very dynamic in terms of career paths, adapting a person’s development to their strengths and weaknesses, and to our changing needs as the market evolves,” notes Ms Lee. “While this may be unsettling to some, what we do promise is a lot of opportunity.”

One employee who has benefitted from the opportunity Cordlife offers is Ms Janice Ong. She started at Cordlife in 2006 as a client relations executive before being promoted twice within two years, to the role of assistant sales manager in charge of a team of three sales executives. Then in 2009 she became head of department for sales, while also embarking on a part-time bachelor’s degree programme specialising in marketing, sponsored by Cordlife.

After attaining her degree, Ms Ong shifted from sales to marketing, where she held the role of consumer marketing manager. She has now moved on to do regional work, and is handling sales, marketing and account management in Indonesia.

**Developing middle management**

Ms Ong’s case is just one example of Cordlife’s efforts to develop a strong pipeline of middle management talent. The company has also sent three managers to attend MBA programmes as part of SPRiNG’s human capital development initiatives.

Learning trips are another key element of the staff training strategy. Groups of around eight staff have paid visits to cord blood banks in Europe, the United States and China to learn about new techniques and technologies, and to understand the best practices in other markets.

Besides its focus on developing talent in-house, Cordlife also believes in investing in talent at an early stage by offering scholarships to university and polytechnic students. The company has tapped the SME-SPRING Joint Executive Development Scholarship to reach out to undergraduates, and has self-funded scholarships for nine students attending polytechnic diploma courses in areas such as marketing, finance and business, as well as two scholarships for life sciences studies.

With its strong focus on talent development, Cordlife is positioning itself as an attractive employer and securing its future talent pipeline as it aims for continued growth in the years ahead.

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**TALENT DEVELOPMENT**

Cordlife strengthens its talent pool through training and development.

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**INVESTING IN PEOPLE**

Cordlife strengthens its talent pool through training and development.

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**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Investing in staff training and development can help to build a strong and dynamic workforce that is aligned with the company’s needs and objectives.
- To find out how SPRiNG can help strengthen your talent attraction and leadership development capabilities, visit www.spring.gov.sg/CDG.
In today’s technology-driven world, customers expect better, faster and more efficient service. Students of private education institutions are no different. “Today’s students expect more from their education provider: higher quality, more interactivity, and the use of modern and innovative teaching techniques, just to name a few,” says Mr Kenneth Choo, Managing Director of SAA Global Education (SAA).

As a private provider of accountancy, business and finance education, SAA faces the added challenge of providing good service while dealing with rising costs and the need to address the bottom line. Controlling costs while enhancing the quality of its education offering is thus of critical importance for SAA.

To achieve this, SAA has, with support from SPRING Singapore, decided to introduce a virtual learning environment (VLE) – an online platform for delivery of e-learning, administration, documentation, tracking and reporting. The VLE is in its final stages of testing and will be rolled out in the coming months. It will facilitate the delivery of bite-sized lessons, online quizzes and collaborative learning tools, in addition to acting as a common online portal for tests and learning materials.

Improved learning quality
With this new system students will be able to readily access online resources and lessons, including short video clips that focus on key concepts, allowing them to engage in learning anytime and anywhere. They will also be able to catch up on lessons they have missed and review past lessons.

“The accessibility of these lessons, course materials and discussion forums is projected to reduce response time to student questions and help increase students’ learning effectiveness,” says Mr Choo. “Moreover, the concise online lectures will help students to better grasp key concepts and develop problem-solving skills, and at the same time improve knowledge retention while reducing study time.”

Another benefit will be the ability to form teams and working groups easily for academic projects, particularly as SAA has plans to expand into overseas markets. “In order to promote the development of students, SAA will use the platform to encourage teams from different parts of the world to work together for their academic projects. The diversity of perspectives will add value to the students’ group work,” notes Mr Choo.

SAA will also be able to improve its governance by leveraging the platform to perform quality checks, gather feedback and manage day-to-day operations. The effectiveness of the VLE will be tracked to ensure that the system continues to be tweaked to best serve students’ and teachers’ needs. Furthermore, by institutionalising a knowledge management and exchange system, SAA will also be able to improve the quality of its teaching materials.

More efficient operations
While delivering a higher quality learning experience is of critical importance to SAA, the ability to do so in a more efficient manner is also important. This is another area where the VLE will add value. Indeed, SAA expects to reap a number of operational benefits.
from the new system. For example, online activities and assignments will cut down on the man-hours required to monitor student participation for events and activities. Online submission of assignments and projects will also reduce the risk of errors or loss of assignments.

Being able to disseminate information and resources through the system will reduce the reliance on the traditional method of printing notes for each class, giving teachers more flexibility, as well as cutting down on the cost of printing and the impact on the environment.

With the streamlining of a wide range of processes, school administrators will be able to focus their attention on enhancing the student experience and the development of innovative new programmes. Teachers will also be able to spend less time on administrative matters. Automated grading of digital assessments will free up their time for higher value-add activities.

“It may seem counterintuitive, but as we move more of our learning online, students will benefit from more direct interaction with teachers as their administrative burden is reduced,” explains Mr Choo. “This epitomises the value of implementing the VLE: it will enhance teachers’ productivity, allowing them to spend more time improving their teaching strategies to ensure we meet the needs of 21st century learners.”

Mr Kenneth Choo, Managing Director
SAA Global Education

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– Mr. Gan Yee Chin, General Manager, Han’s (F&B) Pte Ltd

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Why Attend
The SQA Governing Council and SPRING Singapore will be organising the 5th Business Excellence Global Conference on 30 and 31 October 2013. The Conference is an annual milestone event in SPRING’s calendar and showcases award winners both locally and globally.

The theme for this year is “Breakthrough to Excellence: Smarter, Leaner and Stronger.” The 5th Business Excellence Global Conference features world leaders in service, people and innovation. Our speakers are leaders from top business excellence initiatives around the globe, some of whom are award winners and subject matter experts. They will be sharing their journey and insights into how embarking on a Business Excellence journey helps their organisation to thrive in challenging and volatile times.

Who Should Attend
• CEOs and Senior Management
• Business Excellence Practitioners
• Business Excellence Consultants

How Much Does It Cost
• SGD 500 nett for one day of conference
• SGD 800 nett for two days of conference

Discounts for five or more participants, as well as early-bird registrations are available. In addition, you can also claim up to 400% tax deduction or up to 60% cash payout though the Productivity & Innovation Credit (PIC) scheme by IRAS. Fees include lunch and tea-breaks.

For more information on this event, please email beevent@spring.gov.sg or call +65 6279 3731.

Register by downloading the registration brochure and form at http://www.spring.gov.sg/newsevents/pages/events.aspx
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