TAPPING INTO THE GOLD MINE OF MATURE PMES

+ UNVEILING THE SMC AWARDS FINALISTS

EXPAND YOUR NETWORKING CIRCLE THROUGH SMC AWARDS
All economies run like roller-coasters with their ups and downs, some steeper than others – and Singapore is no different. We are very fortunate that Singapore performs well most of the time with robust figures and a promising outlook. However there are also times when the economy slows down and faces challenges, uncertainties and even structural problems. In such instances, Management Consultants can play an important role in helping the businesses on their road to recovery with changes in policies, strategies and processes.

Many times, businesses need to put their houses in order before embarking on exciting transformations. And often, the journey begins with human resource planning. SBACC’s new Human Resources Domain Certification is an added-value certification for PMCs to become formally certified and recognized in this area. Adding this credential to your profile will elevate your status in the eyes of businesses looking for assistance in charting their human resource strategies. Do find out more about our new Human Resources Domain which comes with an attractive launch offer.

The Straits Times reported on 26 September 2015 that there is a perceived preference for businesses to hire younger workers over mature job-seekers and that, as of June 2015 and according to the Ministry of Manpower, close to seven in ten long-term unemployed residents were aged 40 and above. SBACC, together with Caliberlink, recently co-organised another industry overview cum networking session, focusing on the Training and Management Consultancy Industries. Mature PMEs who were considering a career switch or who had been displaced, can leverage their many years of experience and possibly offer management consultancy services. These PMEs can do so either by starting their own consultancy businesses, or be linked up with existing management consultancy companies. In the process, they should get themselves certified to gain credibility and be recognized for their professionalism. At the same time, PMCs can also advise their clients that there is a rich pool of mature, competent and experienced PMEs that they can draw upon for their transformation journeys. See the article “PMEs can be a gold mine for companies.”

The Gala Event for the SMC Awards is drawing near. Don’t miss out on being part of this prestigious event - reserve seats for yourselves and your colleagues today, and get to network with hundreds of senior business executives and officials from government agencies.

We look forward to seeing you at the Gala Event on the 28 October at Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

Lau Chuen Wei (Miss)
Executive Director
NEED TO KNOW / PAST EVENT

Expand Your Networking Circle through SMC Awards

S BACC’s inaugural SMC Awards Gala Dinner will be held on Wednesday, 28 October 2015, at Mandarin Oriental Hotel and will be officiated by our Guest-of Honour, the Minister for Manpower, Mr. Lim Swee Say. The SMC Awards will be presented together with the International Management Action Awards (IMAA), conferred by the Chartered Management Institute, to outstanding managers in Singapore.

This prestigious event presents a valuable opportunity for organisations such as yours to be profiled in front of hundreds of senior managers and executives, including many government officials and industry representatives. It is also an ideal occasion for you to expand your networking and business circles.

We invite you to be part of this event by being one of our esteemed sponsors. Sponsorship benefits include publicity in the mass media and key business publication, as well as participation and recognition at the Awards Gala Dinner.

Be part of this exciting event by signing up as a sponsor today! Click here to find out more.

For more information on Sponsorship and Dinner Tickets Sale, please contact either Monica, Reed, Sandy
Phone: 6272 3238
Email: secretariat@sbacc.org.sg
Website: www.sbacc.org.sg/smca

SBACC Encourages Mature PMEs to Consider Management Consultancy

On 25 September 2015, SBACC and Caliberlink (a unit set up by the Workforce Development Agency to assist local professionals to be more career resilient) jointly organised a second Industry Overview cum Networking Session that focused on the Training and Management Consultancy industries. The event created an opportunity for mid-career PMEs (Professionals, Managers and Executives) to share and network with each other.

The close to 100 PMEs who attended the event were largely above 40 years of age with at least 15 years of working experience under their belts. Most of them were there to explore the possibilities of a career switch and to find out more about the Management Consultancy industry.

SBACC invited Senior Practising Management Consultant Dr Sandy Chong to share her experiences as a management consultancy and Dr Chong emphasized that one must identify one’s passion and talents before setting out to do anything as this would become the driving force that will see one through any challenges and difficulties. As a SPMC who consults across borders, Dr Chong also highlighted that it was critical for management consultants to be culturally sensitive and to build up one’s profile and network.

There were five participating training and management consulting companies that offered entry-level jobs in training and management consulting and SBACC was on hand to answer queries from the attendees regarding the PMC Scheme.

HUMAN RESOURCES DOMAIN APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

SBACC is offering a Domain Discount of $700 for PMCs who sign up by 30 October 2015.

For enquiries, please email secretariat@sbacc.org.sg or call Marketing Department at tel: 6272 3238 to find out more.
Closed-door Dialogue Session with Minister for Manpower

More than 60 PMCs and members of SBACC’s various boards and committees enjoyed a Dialogue Session with Minister for Manpower Lim Swee Say on 20 August 2015. They had the privilege to hear Minister Lim share the government’s intention to help businesses be manpower-lean and build a stronger Singaporean core with the new Lean Enterprises Development Scheme (LEDS) and Career Support Programme (CSP). These new initiatives will help propel Singapore towards a manpower transformation that will offer better jobs and careers to all Singaporeans, thus achieving its goal of being a competitive nation that can pride itself in its human capital, innovation and productivity.

Minister Lim shared his insights on Singapore’s current and future labour market landscape, and said that more than anyone else, he was concerned about maintaining a sustainable local workforce. He recognized that there are severe manpower issues that need to be addressed, and shared the various strategies that the government is implementing to tackle these concerns. For example, many businesses have cried foul about the foreign manpower policies and how these have caused them to cut back on their operations. But Minister Lim, while recognizing the magnitude of the issue, also reiterated the importance to restrict the foreign worker quota. He said that MOM will help to ease the path for businesses that make serious attempts at being manpower-lean and growing the Singaporean core. For such companies, MOM will work with them to develop transitional measures over the next couple of years.

Being a true dialogue, Minister Lim was very eager to listen to the participants’ views and suggestions vis-à-vis Singapore’s manpower issues and has indeed made a commitment for MOM to follow-through on a couple of the suggestions made.

SBACC would like to thank Minister Lim Swee Say for sharing his time and insights with our PMCs, and to all the PMCs who attended the dialogue, thank you for making it a lively and valuable session.

Raising Awareness of PMC-IPM during IP Week@SG

SBACC participated in IP Week@SG with several PMC-IPMs who shared their views and experiences consulting in the intellectual property arena. Through this, attendees also gained knowledge of the SBACC PMC-IPM certification programme.

This annual event promotes the growth and raises awareness of the importance of intellectual property protection. While it gathered all the IP experts from the legal and franchising industries in the region at one single occasion, IPOS also aims to raise the sophistication of consumers by educate them on the fundamentals of intellectual property.

The event was organized by Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (IPOS) and was held from 25 to 26 August 2015 at Marina Bay Sands Convention Hall.
Discovering the Gold Mine in Mature PMEs

From 1 October 2015, companies looking to hire professionals, managers and executives (PMEs) with pay levels of at least $4,000 will be able to get wage subsidies of between $400 and $2,800 each month for 12 months to lower their manpower costs. The tiered subsidy aims to cover up to 40% of the employee’s gross monthly salary. Through this subsidy, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) hopes that more companies will tap on the wealth of experience that mature Singaporean PMEs can bring to the workplace.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES MID-CAREER PME’S FACE WHEN LOOKING FOR A JOB?
Mid-career PMEs, especially those in their 40s and 50s, often face challenges when looking for a new job. They have left their previous employment for various reasons, ranging from personal ones to being laid off. Some of them may have worked in the same company for many years and would not have been actively looking for alternative employment for a long time and would thus be unfamiliar with the job market and what other employers might be looking for. They would also have accumulated many years of experience and expertise, enjoyed the authority, prestige, security, recognition and pay of at least a mid-level manager.

ASPIRATIONS
To lose a job involuntarily is a painful experience, particularly for someone who has toiled many years in a company to get up to where they were. The impact of losing a job is not just financial, but more so, emotional and psychological. The sense of focus, self-worth and meaning in life, can be lost instantly when he leaves the familiar work station behind, walking out of the workplace for the last time.

Naturally, when such PMEs start seeking alternative employment, they would hope to find one that restores them in all the dimensions of wellness previously enjoyed - families have to be taken care of and bills have to be paid. But the harsh truth is that most of these displaced PMEs will not be able to fully regain what they had lost.

JOB SKILLS MISMATCH
Since the Asian financial crisis in 1998, many multinational companies (MNCs) have exited Singapore for lower costs elsewhere. For those
who maintain their presence in Singapore, many have downsized their operations.

The evolution of infocomm technology (ICT) also saw many traditional jobs becoming obsolete as technology takes over. New jobs available may also require some degree of ICT competency that was not necessary in the past.

**MORE COMPETITION**

Younger PMEs are entering the job market more equipped with the necessary skill sets. They may also, because of their age and shortfall in experience, come at a lower cost to the prospective employers.

Some employers are ready to forego the experience because they see it as a double-edged sword. While experience can bring added value if it matches the needs of the new workplace, it could also result in a rigid working style that is not compatible with the new environment if not managed properly.

**WHAT SHOULD EMPLOYERS CONSIDER WHEN EMPLOYING MATURE PMEs?**

Companies need to appreciate the challenges that mature PMEs face, in order to design a good programme and package that will be mutually beneficial to the company as well as the mid-career PME.

Here are some tips for companies thinking of successfully employing mature PMEs:

- Develop a robust compensation and benefit package that reflects the market value of the job. This will assure the PME that he is being recognised for his experience and expertise and that he will be remunerated equitably.
- Design an onboarding programme that will induct the mature PME into the workgroup, taking into account the profile of this group of workers. The unique characteristics of this programme should be contrasted against an onboarding programme for interns or fresh school leavers. The design of the two programmes cannot possibly be the same.
- Appoint a mentor or buddy to help them adapt to the new environment, until they are accepted by fellow-workers to be “a part of them”.

Mature, mid-career PMEs can definitely be an asset to any company, given their experience and expertise. Frequently, it is just a matter of orienting them into the new culture and work groups. Companies who can successfully do so have a gold mine waiting for them to discover.

**PMEs MUST ALSO BE REALISTIC**

A mature PME must recognise the reality that once he leaves a company that he has worked in for many years, he will be competing against other PMEs in the open market place for alternative employment. While his years of experience counts, job-seeking PMEs need to showcase their “contribution value” to the job because this is what will determine his market value.

Here are some tips for the mature PME seeking alternative employment:

- Be prepared to accept a lower salary in order to secure the job;
- Once in the job, humbly learn the workplace culture, operational methods, constraints and challenges of the new workgroup. Do not assume that what “used to be” in the previous workplace should or must also be in the new workplace;
- If the new boss is a younger person, the mature PME needs to have a healthy psychological construct to accept the leadership of this younger person;
- While sharing experiences is generally helpful, do not make excessive comparisons with the previous company;
- Seize opportunities to upgrade technical skills as well as understand how and why others do things differently;
- Do not only bring up challenges and problems in team discussions. Where appropriate, give suggestions on how to resolve the problem.

The mature PME must proactively seek to be affirmed and accepted by the new colleagues as a contributing participant who is an integral part of the new work team.
AN ENRICHING AND FRUITFUL STRATEGIC JOURNEY

He initially thought that only MNCs had the resources to develop strategies for their businesses while SMEs like his had no need for strategy planning. Fortunately in 2011, with the support of SPRING Singapore, Dilong engaged the services of a management consultant to help him develop the vision and mission of the company. However, he soon realised that while it was important to have the company’s vision and mission statement clearly defined, the challenge lay in how to translate those high level ideas into daily operations.

THE BEST FIT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT FOR THE BUSINESS

In 2014, Dilong attended a public workshop on strategic thinking conducted by Decision Processes International (DPI). He was convinced that he and his management team needed to have greater clarity of their “Sandbox” and the “Driving Force” of their business, two of the key concepts within the DPI strategic review process. With the help of a grant from SPRING Singapore, Dilong engaged the services of Senior Practising Management Consultant (SPMC), David Wilkins from DPI to work with him and his management team to develop a concrete and practical strategy that would:

- Guide GIA in product development, market and customer choices, including those difficult “do not do” decisions such as exiting some product segments

COMPANY BACKGROUND

Goh IGS & Automation (GIA) Pte Ltd is an engineering company that provides aftersales servicing and spare parts for Inert Gas Systems (IGS) and other equipment used on board marine, and oil and gas ships. The firm was founded in 2001 by Dilong Goh’s father. Mr Goh Senior started the business as a sole proprietor after the Norwegian IGS maker decided to downsize the local engineering team. Tapping into his numerous years of experience and his reputation as one of the best engineers for IGS, Dilong’s father carved out a strong niche for himself. Dilong joined his father in 2004 as the second employee of the company. The initial challenge was to remove the dependency on a single maker of inert gas systems and to maintain Mr Goh Senior’s reputation as an expert engineer. Together, they expanded their business to become the official service partner for many types of IGS systems hiring and equipping new engineers along the way. They chose IGS because of Mr. Goh Senior’s deep knowledge of this specialised and complicated equipment that requires dedicated and experienced professional care.

WITHOUT AN ENGINEERING BACKGROUND NOR EXPERIENCE IN RUNNING A COMPANY, DILONG SPENT THE INITIAL YEARS IN THE COMPANY LEARNING FROM SUPPLIERS AND CUSTOMERS ABOUT THE PRODUCTS AND TECHNOLOGIES. HE ALSO PICKED UP FROM OTHER ENTREPRENEURS ON HOW TO RUN A COMPANY. ONE KEY LESSON LEARNT WAS TO SPEND TIME WORKING “ON” THE BUSINESS, AND NOT “IN” THE BUSINESS. DILONG STARTED TO WORK ON DEFINING AND CRAFTING HIS COMPANY OPERATIONS AND SALES SYSTEMS.
Clearly define how GIA will grow
Define and track leading indicators of success
Determine the strategic capabilities required
Identify and address the critical issues GIA must resolve to succeed

With this compass, GIA was more confident of its ability to fulfill the vision and mission of the company.

Over a two-month period, David facilitated a strategy formulation process which helped Dilong and his team to gain a deeper understanding of the sandbox that his company was playing in, the future business arena, and the possible Driving Forces that GIA could pursue. With David’s guidance, the team then selected the single Driving Force that determined the key strategic decisions for the business, developed a winning concept, established offensive and defensive goals and finally, put together a 5-year action plan to roll out the strategy.

TEAM WORK
Dilong learnt a lot from his management team as they worked through the strategy formulation process together. It was a fruitful team effort.

“As an SME, we do not have the luxury of having a dedicated team to work with management consultants. So DPI’s well-structured model and David’s close handholding was very crucial. My team was involved in the whole process. Other consultants’ models were abstract. DPI’s model was something more actionable and impactful. David also took the time to immerse himself in the business.” Dilong Goh

Dilong felt that he had gained a newfound clarity of his business, what he wanted to do and achieve, and how to go about it. Dilong was able to better communicate his plans to his extended team, and get the company to work towards their business goals.

Once the management team understood the vision and mission of the company, they became more committed. They felt valued and appreciated the chance to be part of the strategy planning process. The clarity of the business direction, a strategic filter to work on opportunities and a clear and measurable action plan helped the management team to understand why Dilong did what he did, instead of second guessing him.

Today, DPI’s strategic thinking process influences all the major decisions of the company. Armed with the new 5-year action plan put together by him and his management team, Dilong is excited that they are all on a continuous journey building on the strengths and competitive edges of the business.

THE GROWTH FACTORS OF GIA
Today, with a large following of customers, the company has positioned itself as a respected one-stop station assisting ship managers to take care of the maintenance of equipment on board their vessels. GIA has expanded into two business areas - firstly, a new system category such as boilers, and secondly beyond servicing just tankers to include other types of marine vessels. The company is already benefiting from the new strategy in terms of attaining new orders and partnerships.

GIA is also taking steps to codify its 30-plus years of experience in inert gas systems and generators so that the business can scale-up faster in the future.

“For SMEs to survive and thrive locally and eventually expand overseas, it must have clarity of its business surrounding and understanding of its own strengths” says Dilong Goh

CALLING ALL PMCs!
We encourage and welcome PMCs to contribute articles on management consultancy and SME success stories. Each article should be about 800 words and SBACC reserves the right to select and edit the articles. By contributing these articles, free of charge to SBACC, the author agrees to give SBACC the right to use, archive or reproduce them in any way and in any medium.

For the time and effort put into these articles, your contribution will be accorded 5 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Hours.

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