

One-Stop Training Solution For Hotels

NTUC LearningHub And FDAWU Package SPUR Training For 8,000 Workers From 32 Hotels

By **Naseema Banu Maideen**



employment in this economic downturn did not come by chance. As they have learnt good lessons from the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in 2003, hoteliers now adopt a flexible manpower management model. He also acknowledged that as every hotel strives to train its employees to some degree, it's also important to ensure that the whole industry progresses efficiently to be at the forefront. Thus, hotels should focus on developing their manpower aptly for the economic recovery and this initiative by FDAWU and NTUC LearningHub will create a hassle-free platform to work towards it.

The initiative, supported by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency, Singapore Hotel Association and Singapore National Employers Federation, targets to train staff of all levels in the hotels in two phases: Phase One focuses on generic skills and employability training largely for rank-and-file workers; Phase Two focuses on vocational skills and courses for PMETs (Professionals, Managers, Engineers and Technical People).

Working together with FDAWU and NTUC LearningHub on this initiative has triggered multiple benefits for his staff and company alike said, Mr Steven Long, General Manager of Sheraton Towers Singapore.

"Since SPUR was announced, we have been looking at all angles of operations in terms of staff needs. With the softening of room occupancies, we have identified certain areas of opportunities to send our staff for training. Coupled with the value-add from NTUC

Education and Training Centres affirmed their commitment to SPUR training as they penned a Memorandum of Understanding on 1 June 2009.

NTUC Deputy Secretary-General and FDAWU Executive Secretary Heng Chee How was the Guest-of-Honour with NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say as special guest.

About 8,000 workers are expected to be trained from this platform of one-stop training coordination.

Said DSG Heng: "In this collaboration, the union acts as the aggregator of hotel demand and NTUC LearningHub acts as the aggregator of training supply. The coming together of these two aggregated networks to connect and matchmake creates the value and enables hassle-free upgrading for the hotel industry. Get this right, and we will streak ahead of the competition when the recovery comes."

He also added that the fact that the hotel industry is able to keep its workers in

Hoteliers are constantly exploring ways to train their workforce for their wide spectrum of training needs. And there is also a vast supply to meet their demands with aplenty training providers offering aplenty training courses in the market. The next question is – What is the best matching fit for their needs?

This is a complex process which has proven to take a toll on human resource practitioners. But not anymore for employers in the hotel industry as the Food, Drinks and Allied Workers' Union and NTUC LearningHub Private Limited have come together to deliver and package a comprehensive training solution for the industry which will tap on SPUR (Skills Programme for Training and Upgrading). 32 hotels and nine approved Continuing

// This new FDAWU-led platform creates a platform to consolidate demand and supply for SPUR training. NTUC LearningHub has assembled a team of like-minded SPUR providers to give a complete training solution to the hotels. We offer the widest possible range of courses, and will put in place the necessary capacity, to meet all the needs of the hotels. NTUC LearningHub will coordinate training requests from hotels and pass them through to our partners to serve our customers in a seamless way."

Zee Yoong Kang, NTUC LearningHub Chief Executive Officer

LearningHub, we have been able to send 260 of our associates for training on both SPUR and in-house programmes with more ease."

With this timely initiative, the hotel is able to cross-train and re-deploy its staff to other areas of work to meet its business needs.

"We sent our bell hops for training on Workforce Skills Qualifications in Security. During lull periods when we may not need our full force of bell hops, they are re-deployed to deliver security services. Room attendants are also cross-trained in food and beverage operations and work in our restaurants and bars when the need arises," said Mr Long.

It is promising that workers and participating employers will stand to gain largely from this initiative. Workers will pick up more skills that equip them with mobility to move across various departments in the company while employers will enjoy improved productivity with such flexibility.

Opening The Door Of Choice And Chance

By **Jansen Yeo**

A very young Samantha Lim used to tell her friends: "My dad is an engineer." Sometimes, she would say: "My dad is a union leader."

So is your dad an engineer or a whatever leader? her friends would ask.

Miss Lim then had to explain that he is an engineer with ST Aerospace and he is also a leader in an organisation called union.

So he holds two jobs? her friends would continue to ask.

"This union job is a voluntary job but he's not a volunteer. He has to be elected to become a volunteer," she tried explaining.

Most of her friends had no clue what a union is. Very quickly, they lost interest in the subject and stopped asking questions.

But Miss Lim grew even more curious about unions and decided to find out for herself what exactly they do.

"I decided that I wanted to understand what exactly a union is and what it does. I made the first step in opening this door by taking up an internship with NTUC. There was no vacancy in the Industrial Relations Department, so I was placed in the Human Resource Department.

"While on attachment, I decided that I liked what I saw and was comfortable with my surroundings. Hence, I decided to join NTUC after graduating and I chose Industrial



Relations because this is the core business of NTUC. So, joining NTUC was akin to opening a door and unraveling the mystery."

Miss Lim is a business graduate from Nanyang Technological University, specialising in Human Resource. It was a mixture of choice and chance that she is able to apply what she had learnt into her work today.

"By choice, I chose HR among the six specialisations in the NTU Business course due to interests. By chance, having HR knowledge is certainly useful for IR practitioners when it comes to knowing the Employment Act and understanding the HR perspective."

Having chosen this path, Miss Lim has not looked back since.

"In HR, you formulate policies to better the workers' welfare. In IR, you will need to go beyond policies and structures in order to touch others' lives. Our actions may be small but it certainly creates a ripple effect in our members' lives," said Miss Lim, a Senior Industrial Relations Officer with the Chemical Industries Employees' Union.

Old Friends, A New Understanding

By **Timothy Fernandez**

New terms and benefits are the biggest reasons to celebrate for staff of the National University Health System as NUHS signed a momentous new Collective Agreement with the Healthcare Services Employees' Union. While previous agreements were signed as part of the National Healthcare Group, this is the first CA signed independently by the NUHS cluster with the union and consists of new employment terms negotiated by the union for the greater benefit of their workers.

NUHS is made up of the National University Hospital and National University of Singapore's Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and Faculty of Dentistry, while the NHG cluster, which it previously belonged to, includes other healthcare organisations such as the Tan Tock Seng Hospital and Institute of Mental Health.

Under this new agreement, there will be five major highlights that benefit both nursing and non-nursing staff. These provide a comprehensive set of improvements that facilitate in greater benefits to the career growth, salary ranges and the general welfare of NUHS staff.

Miss K Thanaletchimi, HSEU Vice-President, felt that the CA signed by the NUHS cluster and her union was a big step forward for labour relations.

"The union is very heartened that the latest CA signed is a very progressive one that takes into account the current industry trends as well as the needs, demands and expectations of our workers."

"Some of the new provisions made, such as enhancements in salary ranges, were very much welcomed by our staff and gives them renewed confidence in the partnership between their company and our union and this CA serves as a testimony."

Better Terms

Healthchoice
This provides \$130 worth of "cafeteria benefits" per employee every year. The money can be used to reimburse the price of a range of activities and services ranging from medical checkups to overseas holidays. This replaces the previous dental benefit plan.



Enhanced Career Growth

Dental Surgery Assistants and Patient Service Associates will benefit from this. Under the new agreement, these NUH staff will now have additional levels added to their career path. According to Mr Joe Sim, Chief Executive Officer of NUH, this provides a chance for more senior staff to be re-employed and remain with the company as mentors.

"We recognise that there is a lot of domain knowledge in healthcare which is not just about customer service. In the past, even our most experienced Patient Service Associates will usually stop at grade 10. The Associates also need to have product knowledge which can be quite a challenge.

With added grades, our more experienced Associates can mentor the younger ones."

Enhanced Salary Ranges

The third highlight provides similar benefits to non-nursing staff on the Administration, Service and Health Sciences career paths. With enhanced salary ranges and new job grades, this helps provide current staff more room for career progression.

Alignment with Tripartite Guidelines

This ensures that employment practices at NUHS are kept in line with all government legislation like the Employment Act and tripartite guidelines such as providing re-employment opportunities for staff, updating the retirement age and providing fair retrenchment benefits.

Holiday Provisions

A fifth highlight of the CA provides funds for the recreational and leisure needs of employees including the possibility of reimbursements for a greater number of chalets locally and overseas. Staff were previously entitled only to chalets at Downtown East.

A Guide To Handling Emotions

As Senior Industrial Relations Officer with the Chemical Industries Employees' Union, Miss Lim has been kept busy recently as a result of the current economic downturn. Many companies in her industry faced shorter work weeks, temporary layoffs, wage cuts and retrenchment. She shared how one particular company handled its retrenchment exercise in a poorly managed manner and upset many members.

"The company conducted its first retrenchment in 30 years. But it was badly managed. The union tried to make the best out of a bad situation by assisting the workers in training and job placement but the emotional hurt on the workers was too great to be repaired in the short term.

"I remember spending several nights talking to the members on the phone and listening to them as they cried, poured out their woes and expressed their anger towards the company. I also had to persuade a few to go for training which was arranged by the union, to encourage them to overcome their fear of being rejected and to move on.

"Of course, there were a few who needed more attention as they were getting emotionally unstable. I even had to meet a member at her place late at night to explain the situation and soothe her anger towards the company.

"On a brighter note, our relationship with these members grew stronger and till today, I am still in touch with them. A few of them continue to contact me via SMS. I am glad that most of them have found jobs and moved on," said Miss Lim.