

A Buffet Of Skills

By **Naseema Banu Maideen**

Hilton Singapore's 200 employees have taken up 226 training places using SPUR funding.

And 54 employees have been signed up for more than one course. Since the Skills Programme for Upgrading and Resilience was introduced in December 2008, the hotel's employees in the food and beverage, housekeeping and front office departments have been systematically scheduled to attend training courses in computing, customer service, safety and security.

SPUR provided good opportunities for such a wide range of training said Mr Peter Tan, Hilton Singapore's Director of Human Resources.

"These courses primarily upgraded our employees' existing skill sets and enhanced their knowledge of the current industry trends and requirements. After re-skilling and up-skilling, and in some cases multi-skilling, our employees have become more confident in their jobs. They have also shown a stronger sense of ownership and enjoyed greater job satisfaction, as they can now adopt creative problem-solving skills and are able to better facilitate guest requests and enquiries," said Mr Tan.

Hilton Singapore was cited as an example by Mrs Lim Hwee Hua, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister for Finance,

and Transport, as a business that understands the need to be nimble and responsive in order to stay competitive.

The guest-of-honour at the Food, Drinks and Allied Workers' Union's 45th anniversary dinner at Orchid Country Club on 6 November 2009 commended the union for playing a critical role in creating opportunities for members to upgrade and helping the industry to become more competitive.

"Through re-training, employees gain from learning new skills. Employers have greater flexibility in coping with the downturn while continuing to meet business needs and customer demands and be better prepared for the upturn," said Mrs Lim.

“Technology and trade separate the economy's workforce into two camps – those with skills to participate in the new economy and those who lack them. Workers therefore need to continue to acquire new skills to compete and succeed in the new global economy.”

Tan Hock Soon, FDAWU General Secretary



In September, Singapore posted a growth in her monthly visitor arrivals for the first time this year. Food manufacturing companies and supermarkets have fared well. However, the challenges ahead are no less demanding, said Mrs Lim.

"The pace of change is quickening. The business environment has become more volatile. Our workforce is changing rapidly. With major projects such as the Integrated Resorts scheduled for completion in the coming years, the demand for skilled manpower will become more pressing," she said.

'O, Cheaper Better Faster'

The Food, Drinks and Allied Workers' Union's video production, "O, Cheaper Better Faster" was screened at its 45th anniversary dinner at the Orchid Country Club on 6 November 2009. The video was put together by the union's Industrial Relations Officers with assistance from students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Film and Media Studies.

The catchy lyrics and presentation brought across the Labour Movement's call for a "Cheaper Better Faster" economy in a light-hearted manner.

FDAWU also presented Long Service Awards to 41 members and Membership Awards to four branches - Yakult (Singapore) Private Limited, Singapore Food Industries Limited, NTUC Fairprice Co-operative Limited and SIS'88 Private Limited - with the highest number of new members this year.

Marking 28 Years Of Solidarity And Trust

By **Vanessa Teo**

Whether it was "Upturn the Downturn" or "Cut Costs, Save Jobs", the Metal Industries Workers' Union has always been quick on its feet to respond to the Labour Movement's rally cries.

At its 28th anniversary dinner on 7 November 2009, NTUC Deputy Secretary-General and Minister of State (Prime Minister's Office) Heng Chee How commended the union for its efforts for holding the ground during the downturn. He also reminded MIWU-unionised companies of the sacrifices that their employees made to help businesses survive, and urged managements to reward them appropriately.

"The economy appears to have bottomed out. With these hopeful signs, it is timely to remind companies that are doing well or are recovering strongly to remember the sacrifices made by our workers, and reward them appropriately.

"I am heartened to learn that some companies in MIWU have proactively recognised the contributions of its workers, such as Minebea Group of companies, rewarding its workers with variable bonuses and annual increment, and SMC manufacturing agreeing to a lump-sum payment for its bargainable workers," said DSG Heng.

A Time For Celebration...MIWU Toasts To Its 28th Year Together With Its Tripartite Partners.

DSG Heng highlighted that such a spirit of solidarity will strengthen trust and alignment between workers and their companies, and in turn enable companies and workers to grow the pie for mutual gain.

"They co-create a better future through better products and services, and more productive work arrangements and technology, and more adaptable and multi-skilled workers of all collars and ages, and that is the thinking behind NTUC's push for a 'Cheaper Better Faster' economy powered by an inclusive and adaptable workforce."

Also echoing this stand was MIWU's Anniversary Dinner Organising Chairman and Executive Committee Member Low Chee Wah. He said the economic landscape and business conditions are changing and will be even more markedly different post recession.

"The world will be hungrier for jobs and investments. To ensure we continue to thrive in the new economic landscape, we must go on the offensive rather than sit back, wait and relax. We call on our companies to quickly re-position themselves to be 'Cheaper Better Faster'," said Mr Low.



MIWU has also committed to continue in its pursuit to be a valued partner to its tripartite partners, as well as to be a caring union for its members.

MIWU General Secretary Tan Chai Kun said: "As we recover from the downturn, we will strive to work with employers to help companies work towards becoming 'Cheaper Better Faster', and work with the relevant agencies to help our members up-skill and re-skill so that they can stay employable. We will also reach out to keep in touch with members to extend assistance to them, and help them and their family live a better life."

“I am sure that MIWU will be at the crest of this 'Cheaper Better Faster' wave, showing the way forward to improve the lives and lot for workers and members, just as it had done so well these past 28 years.”

Heng Chee How, NTUC Deputy Secretary-General and Minister of State (Prime Minister's Office)