

Spritely Steven Takes The Job In His Stride



FIGHTER



By
Vanessa Teo

He often thinks out of the box, or should I say, his cubicle. When it is inconvenient for union members to see him at his office, he goes to their workplace to meet them. Based on the same concept, he brought the classroom to retail assistants who could not find a fixed time slot to attend training courses. The tripartite partners who supported this On-Site-Bite-Size initiative earned the Best PS21 Project Bronze Award last year. Singapore Industrial & Services Employees' Union Assistant Executive Secretary Steven Goh, the principle figure from SISEU to kick off the On-Site-Bite-Size initiative, said he's grateful that in his job, he is encouraged to think out of his cubicle.

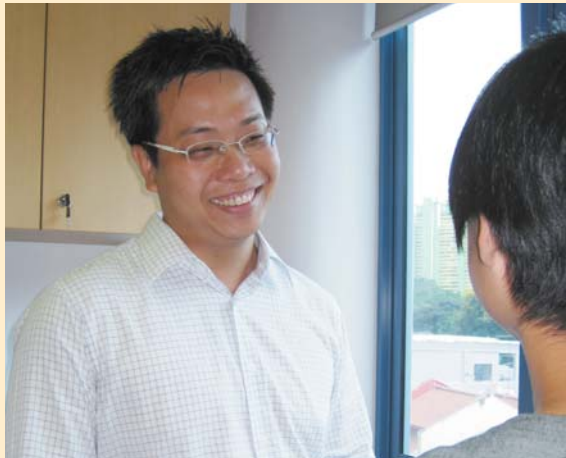
Mr Steven Goh always sounds excited whenever he calls the newsroom. He always has a programme or an activity to interest us. And he will go into such details, that even without going to the event that he is persuading us to attend, we can write the report! But of course, we cover the event he invites us to because there is this person to interview and that person to meet. In short, he knows just how to pitch to the press – even if it's an “in-house” publication like ours.

And so, one morning, he called in about the On-Site-Bite-Size initiative that his union, Singapore Industrial & Services Employees' Union, was going to introduce to tenants of CapitaLand Limited's 14 shopping malls.

“It's like, if you can't go to the mountain, we will bring the mountain to you,” said Mr Goh earnestly. “But seriously, this is the only way we can get retail staff to undergo training and upgrading as retail merchants don't hire many staff for their shops, so there is no chance that they will be excused from tending the shopfront for a whole day or even half a day.”

The On-Site-Bite-Size programme started like this: “When the government introduced SPUR (Skills Programme for Upgrading and Resilience), I talked to CapitaLand about how the company and its staff could benefit from the training funding. CapitaLand asked, what about their tenants who were affected by the downturn as well? It set me thinking that if we could go the extra mile to help more workers, why not? They may not be union members, but they are, after all, workers. And the Labour Movement helps workers of all collars, all ages, all nationalities,” said Mr Goh, SISEU's Assistant Executive Secretary.

SISEU worked with NTUC's e2i (Employment



and Employability Institute) and the Singapore Workforce Development Agency. The novelty and practicality of the On-Site-Bite-Size programme allowed 123 retail assistants under CapitaLand in 2009 to be trained. And in November 2009, the On-Site-Bite-Size programme won the Best PS21 Project Bronze Award.

Mr Goh joined NTUC in 2003. He was posted to the United Workers of Electronics and Electrical Industries union as an Industrial Relations Officer. In 2007, he was posted to SISEU. Before joining the Labour Movement, Mr Goh was a design engineer. It was at this job that he had his first brush with retrenchment. A colleague who he worked closely with was axed.

“I knew nothing about labour laws or employment rights, so I could not assist him. I could only console him. Around that time, I also learnt from a friend about the job of an Industrial Relations Officer. I was attracted to how, armed with knowledge of the Industrial Relations Act, Employment Act, and so on, I could help workers with workplace grievances.”

Indeed, last year, he had more than his fair

share of helping workers who were retrenched, had pay cuts, wage freezes, shorter work weeks, lower or zero overtime.

“Industrial Relations is a job that gives me mixed feelings. I was saddened whenever I learnt of a company retrenching or had to implement shorter work weeks to stay in business, as such moves affect not just workers but workers' families. But working with colleagues from the union, other departments of NTUC and also government agencies to uplift the lives of workers during that bleak period also gave me joy.

“There are members who appreciate what we do and they take the effort to write us ‘Thank You’ notes, and on special occasions like Christmas and New year, send us SMS greetings. People will really appreciate us if we help them with our hearts.”

After seven years in the Labour Movement, Mr Goh still looks forward to stepping into his office at Bukit Pasoh each day to see what he can do to help workers. The constant changing needs of the job is something that keeps him engaged.

“Working with so many different industries, there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution. So, we have to think up many different ways to help workers. And the Labour Movement and SISEU allows us and even encourages us to think out of the box.

“Last year we were talking about cutting cost, saving jobs. This year we are on a whole new ball game – increase workers' productivity and flexibility so that they can respond quickly to businesses' changing trends. This is what makes our job interesting. We do not always have to deal with depressing issues like grievances. We also have opportunities to spur Singapore on to a Cheaper Better Faster economy. I hope I will be able to help more workers work towards that,” said Mr Goh.

New Buzzword For MIWU Senior Management Partners Is ‘bizSAFE’



By
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New year, new beginnings, new resolutions. The dawn of 2010 is a time when companies and individuals reflect on what they had done in the past year and set goals for the new year. With the aim of reinvigorating interest and encouraging companies to renew their commitments towards Workplace Safety and Health initiatives, the Metal Industries Workers' Union and NTUC LearningHub organised an exclusive run of the bizSAFE workshop for senior management.

This collaboration brought together 12 senior management partners from companies under MIWU on 8 January 2010. During the half-day workshop, management partners were given an overview of the WSH Act and an introduction to the bizSAFE concept. Participants were also reminded of the corporate and social responsibilities of their companies and the role that they can play in cultivating a good safety culture in the workplace.

With intensified focus on safety in the metalworking industry, the bizSAFE workshop was a timely initiative for management partners as they review their WSH policy. As MIWU Executive Secretary Jessie Yeo reflected, by proactively engaging our partners and generating awareness, the union hopes to promote the

importance of WSH and provide platforms where management personnel can network and share on WSH issues.

By the end of the workshop, some management partners had already identified areas where they can strengthen. Madam Katherine Foo, Regional Managing Director of Kato Spring (S) Pte Ltd, realised and recognised that WSH initiatives have to come from the top. She plans to implement the sharing of workplace accidents and WSH issues during the communications meeting every month, in addition to the existing quarterly screening of safety videos.

Given the resolute commitment from management partners, MIWU members are off to a safe start for the new year.