

SIAEC Takes Off On Cheaper Better Faster



By
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Pictures by **Victor Chick**

It's an already highly competitive and crowded aviation industry that can only get more intense when the global economy picks up after the downturn. Seeing the signs, SIA Engineering Company quickly latched on to the Cheaper Better Faster concept to help keep it in the top league.

With the active participation of the Singapore Airlines Staff Union, SIA Engineering Company Engineers And Executives Union and staff, SIAEC working with NTUC on 18 November 2009 launched a suite of six Cheaper Better Faster initiatives for base maintenance and line maintenance in a short space of time.

NTUC Deputy Secretary-General Heng Chee How said at the event: "The launch of the SIAEC Cheaper Better Faster initiatives is not something that is done just by the company. It is an effort of management, unions and workers coming together to understand the situation, figuring out what needs to be done, committing to doing it, then going on to get it done and seeing the results and sharing the fruits."

DSG Heng applauded the speed with which SIAEC – management, unions and staff – came together, saw the value in the initiatives and moved fast as it is an ability that works to the company's advantage.

"In those plans you have specifics. It is important because this is not a slogan. If it is just a slogan, we are in trouble because then we are in the business of kidding ourselves. But if it is not just a slogan and we can make it work, then it is a different ball game. And I saw details.

"There is also an understanding of basic human nature in those plans. There is a commitment to mutual gain. At the end of the day, if the company goes down, if the company doesn't do well, there cannot be good jobs and there cannot be good prospects

for workers and employees at any level within that company.

"But at the same time, the success of a company must be shared fairly with employees at all levels. In that way, there will be alignment of interests so that it is not a case of 'the more you win, the more I lose' but that we win together," said DSG Heng.

SIAEC Chief Executive Officer William Tan said that the Cheaper Better Faster initiatives will begin from this month: "With the successful deployment of Cheaper Better Faster, we will be able to increase revenue, lower unit costs and increase our global competitiveness. This will help us work towards ending no-pay leave and wage cuts and maximising rewards for all staff."

With regard to intensified competition, Mr Tan was confident: "Notwithstanding the new threats, I believe that with our Cheaper Better Faster culture and strong support from staff and unions we can overcome the challenges ahead."

SIAEC Chairman and Singapore National Employers Federation President Stephen Lee said that the Cheaper Better Faster initiatives have come at a very good time as they "will put the company in a more competitive position to be able to take advantage of the upturn that is coming."

Mr Lee added: "The ability of our staff to embrace and adapt to changes, and to innovate and thrive in changing environments is a differentiating factor. The dedication of each worker, the cooperation between unions and management and the synergy that comes from our

collective teamwork and individual effort is our winning card."

It's All In The Attitude

"The one thing that will distinguish a company that will succeed in Cheaper Better Faster from a company that will merely let it stay as a slogan is really the attitude. If you want to make it work, we find ways to make it work. If you want it to stay as a slogan, it will stay as a slogan. So it really is the attitude that we take and it is the human factor that we have to watch."

NTUC Deputy Secretary-General
Heng Chee How



SIAEC CEO William Tan pledges his commitment to Cheaper Better Faster, while NTUC Deputy Secretary-General Heng Chee How (far right) and SIAEC Chairman Stephen Lee wait their turn.

"The Cheaper Better Faster initiatives are important because in a highly regulated, high reliability industry we need to continuously upgrade and re-skill to keep up with changing customers' requirements, aircraft types and new technology.

We have an important role to play but we also need support and commitment from management to be fair to workers in rolling out these initiatives. As NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say mentioned during the recent NTUC Ordinary Delegates Conference, the world post-recession will be very different from the pre-recession world and the competition is going to get tougher."

Ong Hwee Liang, General Secretary, SIA Engineering Company Engineers And Executives Union

"We wholly support SIAEC's Cheaper Better Faster initiatives and are glad DSG Heng clarified the meaning of Cheaper Better Faster, especially that it is not about cheaper wages. SIAEC has survived the downturn but there are many companies challenging and we have to be very competitive. We are a service provider and cannot be complacent because airlines can choose from many other companies who provide the same services."

Bahauddin Kamaruddin, Vice-President, Singapore Airlines Staff Union