



By **Shona Tan-James**

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To Throw A Brick Or Send A Bouquet

For most of us, when we have a bad experience in a restaurant or a shop, we tend to blame the service staff that made our experience one which we would rather forget. Perhaps it is not really the staff's fault. Perhaps as a Chief Executive Officer, manager or supervisor – or even a customer – we have a role to play.

As I sat listening to the Q&A session at a seminar this week, the issue of service came up and many of the participants complained that Singaporeans are just not service oriented and that guest workers have language problems and therefore, it's a tough job finding good staff in Singapore. It got me thinking, who really is to be blamed when we receive poor service? Ultimately, the conclusion was that for service to improve, it needs to be a collective effort – from management to staff and even the customer.

Many of us are more likely to complain when something goes wrong but how often do we write

a letter of compliment when something goes right? Surely our companies and unions can do our part in advocating training, upgrading and incentives to improve the service performance of our workers.

But if we expect our frontline staff to deliver good service, do we internally mirror that practice by ensuring we deliver good service to our staff as well? Do we treat them with respect as we would expect them to treat the customer? Ultimately, as a customer, do we treat that frontline service staff the same way we expect to be treated? So as a customer, we too can play a role by taking an interest in the service staff attending to our needs.

As our industries become more service oriented, perhaps the approach to adopt is "service must begin with me". If we all start by taking the effort to thank frontline staff or making the effort to write a compliment letter instead of sending a complaint, we can make a difference. And many small differences can make a big difference.

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TAFEP's Achievements In Three Key Areas

1 Higher levels of awareness of fair employment among employers; increasing awareness among the public.

- Employer feedback indicating that more than 1 in 2 are aware of TAFEP; and more than 4 in 10 are aware of the Tripartite Guidelines for Fair Employment Practices.
- A significant 230 per cent increase in the number of unique web visitors to TAFEP's website in 2009.
- Initiatives introduced to raise awareness of fair employment in Singapore include launch of the Chinese edition of TAFEP's Fair Recruitment and Selection handbook and the "What does Fair Employment Mean to Me?" photo competition.

2 Positive response from employers on implementing fair employment practices.

- Employer feedback indicating close to 7 in 10 employers have implemented merit-based employment practices; 8 in 10 indicate their understanding that attracting and recruiting talent is the key reason for adopting such practices.
- A significant drop in the number of discriminatory job advertisements from 19.7 per cent (2006) to 1 per cent (2009).
- More than 1,200 employers have signed the Employers' Pledge of Fair Employment Practices.
- Over 7,000 HR practitioners and line managers have benefited from TAFEP's training workshops and seminars.

3 Improving fair employment practices.

- Establishment of a physical centre in 2007 to facilitate, receive and handle feedback from employers and workers on workplace discrimination.
- 130 workplace discrimination cases were handled and all the companies involved have accepted TAFEP's advice and assistance.

Going Forward

In 2010, TAFEP will also embark on:

- Educating the public and co-workers on their role in supporting fair employment practices.
- Adopting a more holistic approach in promoting responsible employment practices, eg, Employment Act and Responsible Outsourcing.
- Going beyond pre-employment to develop relevant resources to assist employers in adopting fair and responsible in-employment practices as well, such as effective grievance handling.