

Trained To Be Rapidly Better

Newly Launched SMRT Institute Aims To Build World Class Public Transport Workforce

By Nicolette Yeo

Workers in the rail industry have been put on the fast track to better skills. SMRT Institute, an accredited educational institute for the public transport industry was launched by SMRT Corporation Limited on 25 November 2009 to re-skill and up-skill workers in an effort to raise the competency standards of the rail industry.

Besides existing rail industry employees, the multi-disciplinary training programmes offered at SMRT Institute, in partnership with Singapore Workforce Development Agency, Institute of Technical Education, and Land Transport Authority Academy will benefit Singaporeans who are keen to enter the public transport industry, as well as workers switching from another industry.

Guest-of-honour, NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say, welcomed the move to set up SMRT Institute as it would firmly guarantee the public transport industry's place on the “Cheaper Better Faster” route.

“This partnership between SMRT, WDA and training institutions will upgrade the employability of our workers; enhance their productivity, and the professionalism of the entire workforce. More importantly, it will strengthen our competitiveness and competency, and the quality of the public transport system in Singapore,” he said.

SG Lim added that such collaborations between private and public sectors will “ensure that the Singapore economy not only will have



“SMRT has accumulated a wealth of experience in operating and maintaining the rail network. This is knowledge which we can share for the development of a pool of rail industry professionals both locally and overseas, particularly in Asia, Middle East and China, where infrastructural developments for transport are taking shape. As Singapore's rail network doubles by 2020, these professionals will form the backbone of our rail industry.”

Saw Phaik Hwa, SMRT Corporation Limited President and Chief Executive Officer

competitive and sustainable growth, but that this growth will be accompanied by inclusive growth and ensure that every Singapore worker can enjoy better career prospects, better career progression so that as many of our workers can work as old as possible, as long as possible beyond their actual retirement at 62.”

SMRT Institute also took the opportunity of its launch to ink Memorandums of Understanding with WDA, ITE, and LTA Academy.

What Workers Want

Best For SMRT Employees

3,000 frontline and support employees from SMRT look set to be more productive in their jobs. They are due to undergo the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualification Certified Operations Specialist and Certified Operations Professional training courses, jointly developed by SMRT Institute and Singapore Workforce Development Agency. Both COS and COP are certifications under the Generic Manufacturing Skills WSQ framework which provides vital industry skills and knowledge, as well as foundational, supervisory and managerial skills that are portable across a wide range of industries.

Best For New Entrants, Industry Switchers

Singaporeans hoping to land a technical position in the railway industry can improve their chances by signing up for the newly established National ITE Certificate in Rapid Transit Technology course from SMRT Institute. Developed in collaboration with the Institute of Technical Education, it will serve to arm workers with the necessary skills and knowledge for technical jobs.

Best For Existing Transport Industry Workers

Existing public transport industry workers who want to try their hand at train, bus or taxi operation and management or even environmentally sustainable transport can look out for the new courses offered by SMRT Institute, in partnership with Land Transport Authority Academy.

Train Up To Step Up

By Naseema Banu Maideen

There is much optimism in the building and construction sector with the Government's increase in land sales recently. This increase will trigger a hike in construction-related activities which augurs well for the growth of the industry.

While the Building Construction and Timber Industries Employees' Union welcomes these opportunities, it is well aware that there is some legwork to be done before workers in Singapore can get a fair share of the cake.

Said BATU Deputy Executive Secretary Jennie Yeo: “There is always a lack of local skilled workforce in our building sectors. This is why non-traditional sectors' workers take up these positions. BATU, in line with the Labour Movement's call for a ‘Cheaper Better Faster’ workforce, will drive on with efforts to up-skill and multi-skill our local workers in the sector.”

The union has been actively partnering NTUC LearningHub Private Limited over the past two years to train up its members on workplace health and safety, occupational First Aid training, risk management and communication skills.

“We are constantly engaging management



partners to look at various ways of customising course materials to suit the operational needs of the businesses, as well as training needs of the workers. These courses are tailored to fill the skills gap to help improve their productivity and gain more flexibility on their jobs.

“ISS Group, a leading commercial provider of facility services organised by BATU, jointly developed an Integration Skills Development Programme with NTUC LearningHub to provide a holistic training platform that will lead its employees, right from those at the operational levels to the PMETs (Professionals, Managers, Executives and Technical People), through a career path that focuses on lifelong competence development and career progression this year. These are multi-model training strategies that the union encourages companies to embark on.”

While training is the union's main direction for its construction and related sectors, the way to go for facilities management and cleaning services' sectors is to advocate best sourcing practices, said Madam Yeo.

“With our perseverance in these areas, many



The Building Construction and Timber Industries Employees' Union was formed in 1982. It represents employees in construction, real estate and facilities management, as well as waste management and cleaning industries. It has currently 16,000 general branch and 8,000 ordinary branches in its care.

employers have opened their doors to adopt BSI when embarking on new contracts. But there are many still with a mindset to bid at low prices for contracts and in the process, affect the pay packets of low-wage workers. We will have to keep engaging and educating this pool of employers and bring across the win-win benefits of adopting the BSI culture.

“On the re-employment front, BATU's branches have done well; about two-thirds of them have already adopted some form of re-employment practice. Those which fall out of this band are small-and-medium sized businesses with a young workforce.

“Many of our branches value their mature workers and take measures to retain them in their companies. BATU will continue to encourage these companies to implement scalable and sustainable re-employment policies to benefit the workers in the long run.”