

Improve manpower planning with technology



Attendance and temperatures are recorded using a software program. PHOTOS: KOH MUI FONG

Technology can help businesses streamline processes and improve manpower efficiency

From staffing issues to operational bottlenecks and increasing costs, owners of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have a lot to contend with to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of their businesses. This is especially true in today's economy, where companies need to increase productivity to stay competitive.

This is where information technology (IT) comes in. The common misconception is that IT solutions are for big corporations and require huge outlays. In actual fact, SMEs can benefit greatly from technology and dramatically improve their productivity.

With various schemes and initiatives offered by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) and SPRING Singapore (SPRING) to encourage IT adoption, it is now easier and more convenient for SMEs to find the right IT tools for the size and scale of their business.

There are also sector-wide IT solutions designed to boost not just an individual company's productivity but also the industry's competitiveness. Here, we look at how the early childhood education and food and beverage (F&B) sectors can successfully reap the benefits of technology.

CHILDCARE CENTRES AND KINDERGARTENS BENEFIT FROM BETTER MANPOWER MANAGEMENT

At Twinkle Kidz Rainbow Kindergarten, attendance and the students' temperatures are recorded using a software programme, saving the teachers time and allowing them to concentrate on providing better teaching content. Through the use of technology, teachers maintain good communications with parents, who will then be better able to monitor their children's progress.

The early childhood education sector is

a challenging one. Not only are teachers responsible for the curriculum, they also have to handle plenty of non-teaching duties concerning the students' health and safety. The taking of attendance and recording of body temperature, for instance, are straightforward but time-consuming tasks that have to be done daily.

At Twinkle Kidz Rainbow Kindergarten, this used to be done twice a day. There are currently 53 students in the school but even with this relatively small number, it used to require at least two teachers to manage the attendance and temperature-taking processes. The task, while important, was



The IT software makes it easier for teachers to keep parents updated on their children.

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Adopting IT solutions for administrative tasks gives teachers more time for lesson planning.

tedious and took the teachers away from other crucial duties.

Computerising processes to save time

In July, things improved after Twinkle Kidz implemented a new software system partially funded by the IDA. With the system, students take their attendance themselves on an iPad upon arriving at the school.

At the same time, they use the tablet to take a picture with their parents or caregivers. The photo-taking is a safety feature that also has to be done at the end of the school day. Should a stranger come to pick up the child, his or her photo will immediately be sent to the parents for confirmation, adding a layer of security.

What's more, with this system, the school now takes the children's attendance and temperatures four times a day for additional peace of mind. Now, only one teacher is required to manage this process, freeing up manpower for other tasks.

Better communication between parents and the school

The new software improves more than just the efficiency of administrative duties. While there are no tests or examinations at preschool level, the system is able to analyse the progress of each child using

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six different scores. It also makes it easier for teachers to keep parents updated on their children.

Teachers can upload photos and notes tagged to the students onto an e-portfolio, which can then be easily printed out for parent-teacher meetings. This saves them from having to spend a large amount of time preparing physical reports by manually compiling students' works, activity photos and daily notes on the students' performances.

In the upcoming school term, parents will also be able to log in to an online portal to get regular updates on their children's performance and general well-being.

With the Little Lives software, teachers at Twinkle Kidz take up to 70 per cent less time to complete non-teaching duties. It relieves their workload, giving them more time to focus on the children's development and well-being. It also improves communication between the school and parents.

Industries benefit from Government investment in IT

The early childhood sector is identified by the Government as one of the many that can benefit significantly from IT adoption. The School Management System falls under the IDA-led multi-agency Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) Call for Collaboration (CFC), which is designed to seek sector-specific IT solutions that can help to reduce operational overheads and enhance productivity gains in various sectors.

The SaaS CFC essentially makes it easier and more affordable for companies to adopt IT solutions specific to their sector, thereby also improving the overall performance of the industry. Other sectors to benefit from the CFC include real estate, travel, private education, retail and F&B.



At Jack's Place, customers benefit from improved staff morale and consistent service standards.

BETTER STAFF PLANNING AND SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT IN F&B

At Jack's Place, a manpower scheduling system is used to predict and plan staff timetables based on historical sales and employee availability. Management is thus able to spend their time on more important matters and focus on customers. At Han's, procurement is managed with the help of technology, leading to smoother and more efficient operations.

F&B is one of Singapore's most promising industries. It is also one that can greatly benefit from IT adoption, since technology can potentially do a lot to help streamline operational processes, manage manpower and control inventory and cost.

Roster planning at a restaurant is an important yet time-consuming affair. The management has to take into consideration the availability of full-time, part-time and temporary staff, as well as predict busy periods. When a timetable is poorly planned, employees can become overworked, and staff morale, service and the reputation of the restaurant suffer.

Automating the roster planning process at Jack's Place

With technology, Jack's Place has a simple solution to a tedious problem. The restaurant chain hires temporary staff to alleviate the workload of full-timers. Instead of verbally and individually reporting to the manager when they are available to work, the temporary staff now keys in the information online.

The IT system is able to analyse information such as employee availability and capabilities and past sales records to automatically allocate staff. Timetables can be planned with a few easy taps on the keyboard, and the managers no longer need to spend a lot of time planning staff rosters.

What's more, the use of historical data and analysis means that timetables are consistently better planned. With an efficient and organised work environment, employees have a better work-life balance, boosting staff morale.

This makes them more likely to stay



The procurement process at Han's is more efficient, thanks to an integrated online system.

on, reducing training costs and service disruptions. Customers are also more likely to return when service standards are consistent and they can see that frontline staff are happy and experienced.

E-procurement for seamless supply chain management

Procurement is another crucial aspect of an F&B business. This is especially true for restaurant chains like Han's, which has more than 20 outlets islandwide and five procurement officers to handle everything.

With the implementation of a new software system that links directly to suppliers, Han's has vastly improved its procurement process. Previously, the outlet managers faxed individual handwritten order forms to procurement officers, who then compiled them into purchase orders to be faxed to more than 1,000 suppliers.

Now, all the processes from order input to purchase order creation and delivery are handled with a seamless supply chain management system, significantly enhancing efficiency.

The outlet managers input their orders online. Once approved by the procurement officers, purchase orders are automatically generated and emailed to suppliers, who can immediately arrange for deliveries. This eliminates errors caused by bad handwriting, carelessness in multiple data entries, as well as inefficiencies that result from time lags in between processes.

Additionally, the finance department no longer has to fret over situations of lost invoices or accounts that do not tally.

Tracking of inventory is in real time and the management can easily call up transactions for checking. More importantly, procurement officers are freed from paper churning, and are able to spend more time on analytical tasks, such as sourcing for better suppliers with more competitive rates, to help the company save money. Outlet managers also have more time for customers when they are no longer spending so much time consolidating and faxing inventory orders.

With the use of IT solutions, F&B outlets can streamline operations, effectively manage costs and deliver better service.

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Rosters at Jack's Place are planned using a manpower scheduling system.

Boosting operational efficiency and customer service with technology



With the help of technology, customers enjoy faster payment and more personalised service. PHOTOS: KOH MUI FONG

Retailers gain competitive edge with the use of IT solutions

In the retail business, business owners have a lot of complex details to take care of. It is not just about the buying and selling of a commodity. Companies not only have to think about the kind of product they are putting out into the market, but also the buying experience and customer service.

In a globalised economy, retailers face a lot of competition. The Internet offers consumers more choices and with increased access to information, buyers are also more sophisticated. This means that business owners have to constantly innovate to improve the shopping experience, attract new customers and maintain consumer loyalty.

A large department store, for instance, can no longer afford to rely solely on traditional methods like going to the storeroom to rummage through stock items. That extra 10 minutes a customer has to wait may mean a lost sale.

Smaller shops, on the other hand, rely on word of mouth and regulars to thrive. But sometimes, the extra attention devoted to an existing customer may mean the loss of two new ones.

With the use of information technology

(IT), however, retail companies are able to better meet their customers' needs, improve efficiency and enhance productivity and profitability, all at the same time.

Last year, the retail and wholesale sector accounted for 18 per cent of Singapore's total gross domestic product of US\$240 billion (S\$298 billion). This indicates how important these industries are to the country's economy, which is why the

Government is driving IT adoption to enhance business performance in the retail sector, as well as sectors such as real estate, early childhood, food and beverage, travel and private education.

Here, we take a look at how IT adoption has benefitted Metro, an established department store that has been a household name since 1957.

IT solutions are not just for large



Sales representatives at Metro are able to check stock availability on tablets.

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With a mobile POS system, credit card payments can be made anywhere in the store.

companies. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) also have plenty to gain from how technology can improve operational efficiency and processes. No business is too small, not even a clothing store located in the market, as fashion retailer BellaEast can attest.

WITH THE HELP OF TECHNOLOGY, CUSTOMERS ENJOY A BETTER SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

At Metro, inventory can be tracked online. A mobile point of sale (POS) system allows customers to make payment anywhere in the store, cutting down waiting time. An online database keeps track of customers' buying preferences and information such as birth dates. Sales representatives can make better recommendations and shoppers are able to utilise membership privileges more easily.

Many retail companies have loyalty programmes and membership privileges to reward their customers. Metro is no exception, offering their customers perks such as birthday vouchers.

In the past, customers were required to produce physical printouts of these vouchers to enjoy the discounts. Without the printout, customers were asked to approach the customer service counter to

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request for a physical voucher before they could utilise the birthday discount.

Often, this inconvenience marred what was supposed to be something that would bring a smile to their faces. The situation worsened when they encountered long queues at the customer service and cashier counters.

There were also cases of lost sales when the sales staff had to go back and forth between customers and the storeroom to rummage for an item in a different size or colour.

Faster payment, more convenience and customised service for customers

In a bid to improve efficiency and to provide a better shopping experience, Metro, together with 10 other retailers, including footwear company Everbest, received help from SPRING Singapore's (SPRING) Capability Development Grant to develop customised IT tools specific to the industry.

The result was a new software system that resolved multiple issues. First, a mobile POS system meant that the staff could use portable machines to process credit card payments for customers anywhere in the store. This eased the queues at the cashiers, saved customers the hassle of waiting in line and payments were processed much more quickly.

With an online database, customers no longer had to produce printouts to enjoy promotions and discounts, since information about them can easily be retrieved with a few taps on a keyboard. Shoppers who want to arrange for delivery of their purchases can also do it via their mobile phones without having to fill in forms on the spot.

What's more, through the system, Metro is better able to understand the habits and preferences of shoppers. This makes it possible for the company to provide personalised service. For instance, sales representatives can make recommendations based on customers' favourite brands, and update them on new arrivals.

Retailers enjoy better sales with faster access to stock and sales information

Shoe retailer Everbest, which has a presence in different Metro outlets, has also benefitted from the Capability Development Grant. Previously, it was difficult for the sales staff to check stock availability in another Metro outlet. Because employees are not allowed to use their mobile phones when they are working, they had to rely on the land line, which was troublesome. In addition, the management only received a faxed sales report every three days. This meant that popular items often could not be restocked promptly, resulting in lost sales.

Things improved once Everbest switched to an online system. Sales representatives can now make video calls on a tablet to immediately check stock availability in other branches. Plus, it is much easier for them to keep track of daily sales.

Management no longer has to wait for delayed sales reports. With a few taps on a tablet, they can call up daily sales results and arrange for stock replenishments immediately, eliminating the loss of sales that used to result from out-of-stock situations. Because of these measures, sales revenue has increased by 10 to 15 per cent.

With a better grasp of stock availability and improved service, customers enjoy a more comfortable shopping experience, making them more likely to spend more.

SMALL RETAILERS CAN ALSO USE IT SOLUTIONS FOR BETTER INVENTORY CONTROL AND SERVICE

BellaEast may be a small shop located in a market, but that hasn't stopped it from using IT tools to enhance the business. Using sParks*,



Ms Irene Koh learnt to use a new software programme to improve her business.



Even small retail shops like BellaEast can benefit from IT adoption.

an application jointly produced by the National Parks Board (NParks) and an IT industry partner, the shop has successfully advertised itself to new customers. The 58-year-old owner, Ms Irene Koh, also learnt to use new software that allows her to post photos of new items online. Customers can check for new arrivals anywhere and even make purchases on the website.

Ms Koh used to spend money on the printing and distribution of flyers to publicise her shop, which sells women's apparel for working professionals. This was necessary as the store was located in a none too prominent spot in the market at Ang Mo Kio Ave 1. However, the method was ineffective in drawing new customers.

Ms Koh was also relying on her memory to keep track of stock movement. This meant that she sometimes forgot where certain items had been kept and what pieces she should order to replenish stock. The shop also allowed customers to reserve pieces of clothing over the phone. This resulted in missed sales opportunities when the items could not be purchased by shoppers in the store, only to have the original customers change their minds later.

Greater effectiveness of promotional efforts using e-commerce platforms

To improve operational processes, BellaEast participated in the iSPRINT scheme offered by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA). The scheme offers an up-to-70 per cent grant to equip businesses with IT tools.

Using the sParks* application, BellaEast successfully increased its customer base more cost-effectively. Users of the nearby Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park who browse the app's amenity listings would discover BellaEast. The shop also saw new customers who are attracted by the discount e-coupons available from the app. More importantly, the app's reach is not restricted to users in the vicinity — anyone using sParks* can find out about BellaEast.

As a result, customer traffic has increased even though the amount spent on publicity has decreased by 10 per cent.



Customers can view new arrivals from BellaEast online and make online purchases.

Accurate stock checking for increased customer satisfaction and better sales

Ms Koh used to have to attend to phone calls, and would take and send photos of items in the shop to customers. This distracted her from serving customers in the shop. With the new software, she can now snap and post pictures of fresh arrivals online. What's more, with the website, customers can make immediate payment for clothing they want to reserve. Because of this, instances of lost sales have greatly decreased.

Customers can also check for new stock online, reducing the need for Ms Koh to field calls and allowing her to concentrate on serving shoppers in the store.

More importantly, the new system allows her to have better control over her stock. Using a tablet, she can immediately find out with a few taps if an item is available in another size and where it is stored. This minimises waiting time for customers, who are then more inclined to make purchases with a more pleasant shopping experience.

With the help of technology, BellaEast has seen an increase of 10 per cent in sales revenue. **PRODUCED BY THE TODAY SPECIAL PROJECTS TEAM**



Industry efforts to boost productivity with technology



The real estate agents at Remax have information about properties and buyers at their fingertips. PHOTOS: KOH MUI FONG

Multi-agency collaborations in the real estate and travel sectors have yielded good results

In a globalised economy, the market is highly competitive, with a large number of companies vying for the same slice of pie. Large corporations and owners of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) alike have to constantly be on their toes to remain relevant. It is also important to think out of the conventional mould and innovate, so as to gain competitive edge.

This is especially true in customer-oriented industries that involve transactions of large sums of money, such as the real estate and travel industries. When customers are spending thousands of dollars on a holiday package or up to a few million on a new home, their expectations increase exponentially.

In this day and age, technology plays a large and vital role in improving operational efficiency and enhancing productivity. Large companies have the resources to customise solutions specific to their needs, but it's not true that SMEs will just have to

live with poorer operational infrastructure, especially not in Singapore, where the Government is actively driving information technology (IT) adoption in businesses to benefit the company and the industry.

Here, we look at the industry-wide efforts of the real estate and travel sectors to adopt IT solutions, and how this has improved productivity and profitability.

REAL ESTATE COMPANIES, AGENTS AND CUSTOMERS CAN ALL BENEFIT FROM IT ADOPTION

Remax is a real estate company with 40 agencies under its belt. Since it started using the Real Estate Agent Management Platform, the company has been able to better track its agents' credentials and deals. Time spent on



Employers can access the online system from anywhere and do not need to go to the office.

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With a seamless online system, time spent on administrative tasks has decreased.

administrative tasks has decreased. With a system they can log in to access from anywhere, agents are also able to work wirelessly without going into the office. Agents have information on properties and buyers' preferences at their fingertips, and can provide better service. Customers are also better protected with the use of secure electronic contracts.

In 2011, the Council for Estate Agencies (CEA), together with the Institute of Estate Agents, Singapore Institute of Surveyors and Valuers and SAEA, collaborated with the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) to come up with an IT platform specific to the needs of the real estate industry.

The CEA was established to maintain the standards of the industry. Currently, there are more than 30,000 real estate agents working with over 1,500 agencies in Singapore. The vast number of agents makes it a challenge for companies to supervise their employees, especially since there are both full-time and part-time agents.

To improve management quality, enhance the competitiveness of the agents and give customers better access

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to information, the Real Estate Agent Management Platform was developed.

The project fell under IDA's Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) Call for Collaboration (CFC) scheme, which aims to make it easier and more affordable for companies, particularly SMEs, to adopt technology. Enhancing the efficiency and productivity gains of individual companies then leads to a boost to the industry.

Apart from the real estate sector, the Government is also actively encouraging IT adoption in sectors such as travel, private education, retail, food and beverage and early childhood.

A centralised system for improved manpower management and service

With partial subsidy from the IDA, the real estate company Remax started using the Real Estate Agent Management Platform. Within the first three months, it experienced a 20-per-cent boost in the business and a 10-per-cent decrease in the number of complaints.

With the software, all transactions are recorded and handled within the system, eliminating a messy paper trail. The system is able to ensure that the correct documents are filed, calculate the agents' commissions and even analyse sales data for long-term planning.

Information retrieval is a breeze and time spent on administrative work is reduced by as much as 20 per cent.

The software also made it easier for Remax to manage its agents. The database contains information about each agent's credentials, so the company can ensure that its agents are qualified and keep track of whether he or she has completed any training requirements for the year.

The software consolidates any consumer complaints as well and can even supervise the marketing advertisements of

the agents. With a centralised system and easily accessible data, the management has a better grasp on the calibre of its agents and is better able to improve the quality of its service.

Customised service and better protection for consumers

It's not enough for a real estate agent to know the property that is being sold. Agents also need to be informed about market and price trends in not just Singapore, but also the region. More importantly, agents need to be able to match properties to potential buyers.

The software allows agents to log in to the system from anywhere without having to go into the office. This saves time and offers flexibility — crucial for a profession that works according to their customers' schedules.

In addition, it serves as a database with updated information about the various properties for sale, as well as customer information like transaction history and buying criteria. For instance, a customer might have a preference for an apartment that faces a specific direction and has natural light. With the system, the agent can search for properties that fulfil those conditions on a tablet and immediately show the list to the customer.

The system also has an electronic contract function that offers additional security to buyers. When any amendment is made to a signed contract, the signatures are automatically removed and the agent will have to ask the client to sign it again.

A seamless system scalable to the size of the company, allowing for expansion

The Real Estate Agent Management Platform connects the management, agents and administrative tasks in one system, eliminating the need for time-consuming backend chores, increasing efficiency and allowing the company to provide more professional service.

What's more, the settings of the system can be changed according to requirements. This means that even when the company expands, there is no need to invest in a new system, thus saving the company money.



Technology gives smaller travel agencies the resources to compete online.



With real-time information, travel agents can make more personalised recommendations.

TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP SMALLER TRAVEL AGENCIES LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD

After adopting the Travel Agency Management Platform, Pinnacle Travel Services is now able to provide real-time information to customers. This has significantly increased its competitiveness and strengthened its online presence. The system also reduced human errors and improved efficiency. The company is able to take on more business without the need to hire more staff.

To prevent the marginalisation of small and mid-sized travel agencies that lack the resources to invest in IT systems, the Association of Travel Agents Singapore (NATAS) has been working together with the IDA and other organisations within the industry to develop systems suitable for the industry. With the availability of new software, NATAS hopes to encourage companies to approach the IDA to apply for grants for IT adoption.

With the popularity of online travel websites, travel agencies are facing intense pressure and competition. Yet, while there are individuals who prefer to scour the web and book their own flights, accommodation, car rentals and other items, there are those who still prefer to have a travel agency take care of all the details for them.

That said, these holidaymakers, many of them families, are no longer content with taking packages as they are and prefer to customise them to the needs of different members of the travelling party. Because of this, travel agencies need to be flexible

and be able to efficiently adjust all elements of the itinerary with no margin for error.

A monthly subscription to an IT platform minimises the outlay of investment in technology

Pinnacle Travel Services adopted the Travel Agency Management Platform with help from the IDA. Instead of devising or purchasing their own software, the agency pays a monthly subscription fee — subsidised by the IDA — to use the service, thus eliminating the need for a huge investment in IT.

Previously, the staff at Pinnacle Travel Services had to manually check and amend itineraries for customers, calculate prices, communicate changes to the staff involved, collect payment, and more. This was slow and error-prone. Things changed with the new system.

The software connects suppliers, internet transactions, internal operations, inventory management and internal audit into one system. Travel agents can make amendments to any part of an itinerary and the changes, along with the new cost, will be reflected immediately and simultaneously with all the stakeholders, such as hotels and airlines.

More importantly, because the system has real-time information from the agency's suppliers, details such as costs and availability are up-to-date. Not only is this efficient, the process is more transparent and customers can be assured that they're getting what they paid for.

Moreover, the system keeps a record of past transactions, which gives the staff valuable insight into their customers' preferences. Travel agents can make recommendations based on their likes and dislikes, and keep them informed on new promotions. This increases the likelihood of making more sales, and customers are also more satisfied with the service they get. The agency is also better able to compete with online travel websites.

After the implementation of the software, the business volume at Pinnacle Travel Services has gone up by 20 per cent without the need for an increase in the size of the staff. **PRODUCED BY THE TODAY SPECIAL PROJECTS TEAM**



Travel agents can more easily keep up with customers' requests on itinerary changes.



Industry-specific technology to enhance competitive edge



Students at Orita Sinclair have access to an online student portal, saving the school administrative time. PHOTOS: KOH MUI FONG

Technology can greatly decrease administrative time and boost customer satisfaction

In today's marketplace, there is such easy access to information that consumers have come to expect a high level of transparency from their transactions. This is especially true when it comes to intangible services. Customers want to know what they are paying for and whether they are getting value for their money. Companies have to contend with the challenges of providing timely and accurate information at all times to ensure customer satisfaction and trustworthiness. This can also be a time-consuming affair that strains manpower.

This is where information technology (IT) comes in. The right IT tools can greatly improve operational efficiency and productivity, and enable companies to improve the quality of their services. Contrary to the belief that IT solutions can only be implemented by large corporations that have the investment outlay and resources, technology can be a highly cost-effective solution for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Here, we look at how a private education institution and a canine training and day care facility have managed to streamline

their operations with the help of technology and as a result, enhance productivity and customer satisfaction.

PROVIDING BETTER EDUCATION AND SERVICE WITH TECHNOLOGY

At Orita Sinclair School of Design, New Media & the Arts, the use of the School Management System has significantly increased administrative efficiency and improved communications between the school



Increased transparency and efficiency results in better peace of mind for the students.

and students. Students can access an online portal for course materials and to update their information. Freed up from administrative tasks, teachers have more time to focus on their students and lessons.

There are more than 300 private education institutions in Singapore, offering over 5,000 classes a year. In order to stand out in such a competitive environment, the schools not only have to offer programmes that meet the demand of the market, they

have to ensure top-notch service and teaching quality for their students.

With help from the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA), a number of private education institutions have adopted the School Management System.

The private education sector has been identified by the Government as one of many that can benefit significantly from IT adoption. The School Management System falls under the IDA-led multi-agency Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) Call for Collaboration (CFC), a scheme designed to seek sector-specific IT solutions that help to reduce operational overheads and enhance productivity gains.

The SaaS CFC makes it easier and more affordable for companies to adopt IT solutions specific to their sector, thereby also improving the overall performance of the industry. Other sectors to benefit from the CFC include early childhood, real estate, travel, retail and F&B.

Improved administrative efficiency and reliability

Orita Sinclair is one of the schools that has adopted the School Management System. The school offers part-time courses, which take one-and-a-half to two years to complete, and full-time programmes, which

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Students receive immediate SMS updates on class cancellations or rescheduling.

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take 11 months. Because the curriculum is tightly planned to maximise the students' time, the school has to be extremely efficient to ensure that everything is smoothly run and that students have no problems graduating on time.

Previously, the administrative staff would email the students when a class was cancelled or rescheduled at the last minute. This was time-consuming and not always effective, especially if students did not inform the school of changes in their contact details.

With the use of the software, however, administrative staff can promptly disseminate any updates on the student portal with a few easy clicks on a keyboard. Students will also receive emails and SMSes automatically sent out by the system. This saves the staff a great deal of time. What's more, students can update their personal details on the portal at any time. This ensures that contact information is up-to-date and students will receive important notifications promptly.

In addition, when a student is late in making payment, the system issues a reminder and notifies the administration at the same time, saving the need for the staff to manually track these processes.

With the implementation of the software, the school now spends 70 per cent less time on administrative tasks.

Improved communications with students and better quality of service

Students can also log in to the school's online portal at any time to check for updates on their classes and download course materials ahead of time. This gives them time to prepare ahead and ensures more fruitful discussions and lessons.

More importantly, they are able to check their statuses on items such as

school fees or the number of remaining modules. The transparency gives students additional peace of mind and allows them to concentrate on their studies instead of worrying about administrative matters.

Teachers have more time to focus on their students' lessons and performances

It used to be necessary for teachers to spend time on matters such as taking attendance, distributing examination results or administrative announcements. All these took time and focus away from the students.

With the adoption of the new system, since students are promptly kept in the administrative loop online, classroom time can be wholly used for the purpose of the curriculum.

When it comes to the time for results, students receive an automated SMS notification and can then immediately check their grades on the online portal from anywhere. This gives them access to important information at first notice, and saves them from being distracted in class over how they have performed.

More importantly, the system is able to send notifications to teachers about students whose attendance or results are not up to par. These timely reminders allow teachers to take immediate action, such as remedial lessons, to rectify the situation.

With the use of the system, students are more assured of a better quality education.

AN IT SYSTEM FOR BETTER SERVICE, EFFICIENCY AND EARNINGS

The dogs at K9 Kulture wear near field technology (NFC) tag-embedded collars that contain all the information employees need to know about the dog, such as name, age and dietary requirements. Employees can also find out within seconds whether a dog's package is almost used up, and suggest renewals to customers. The dogs receive more personalised and better quality care, and owners are more satisfied.

To many dog owners, their pet is a family member that deserves the best care. Some owners even send their dogs to day care



The dogs at K9 Kulture wear individual collars embedded with an NFC tag that contains essential data about them.



With less time spent on administrative tasks, the dogs receive better quality of care.

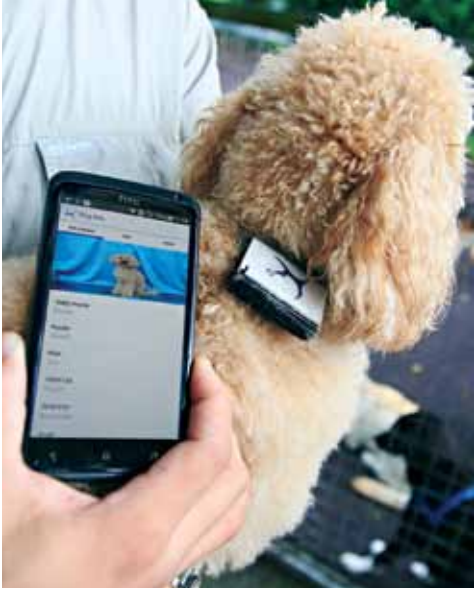
centres like K9 Kulture while they are at work, to ensure that they are well taken care of. As such, the quality of service needs to be top-notch.

To ensure bespoke service for its canine guests, the owner of K9 Kulture, Mr Josiah Gan, worked with a software company and with a grant from the IDA to develop an IT system based on NFC technology for the business. All the dogs in the centre wear individual collars with an NFC tag. Any time an NFC-enabled mobile phone is held near the tag, information would be transmitted. This information then goes into an easily accessible centralised system.

Accurate information at a glance for improved efficiency

K9 Kulture used to rely on handwritten paper records to keep track of the average of 60 to 70 dogs it takes care of daily. As some breeds tend to be more popular, it made it even harder for the staff to tell the dogs apart or keep their names straight.

The caregivers were also required to keep a record of the activities that each dog had completed. As a result, there was a tremendous amount of paperwork that had to be done for every task.



Using NFC-enabled mobile phones, the staff can easily access information about the dogs.

On top of the possibility of human errors, it was troublesome and inconvenient as the staff sometimes had to sift through papers while holding on to the dogs.

Things changed dramatically with the adoption of the new technology. Employees could record the attendance of the dogs with a few easy taps on a mobile phone. Any information keyed in is instantly transmitted to a centralised system.

By checking the system, employees can see at a glance how many dogs are present at the facility at the moment and also check what activities the different dogs have yet to complete. This significantly minimises errors caused by handwritten records and increases the efficiency of which the staff can get their jobs done.

The new system also makes it easier for employees to keep tabs on the individual needs of the dogs. Employees can check their mobile phones to determine which dogs have special dietary requirements, for instance, and then feed them accordingly. This reduces the stress of updating handwritten records accurately and ensures the health of the dogs.

Increased earnings with better grasp of customer needs

With the new system, customers can check their dogs' e-profiles to find out what activities they have done for the day. This assures them that their pets are getting the best care and the service is worth their money.

The system also allows employees to be more alert to customer needs. Previously, there were lost opportunities when customers left without renewals after their package was used up.

By checking the data on the NFC tag, employees can now find out how many sessions a dog has left and make recommendations about renewal packages or promotions to the owner when the sessions are coming to an end. By taking the initiative to ask customers if they would like to continue using their services, employees helps to increase revenue for the company.

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