



From left: Yap Ng Seng (deputy chief executive officer, YHS (Singapore) Pte Ltd), Glennle Sim (chief executive officer, Mencast Holdings Ltd), Poh Key Boon (executive director, Poh Tiong Choon Logistics Limited), Kay Kong Swan (chief executive officer, integrated logistics, CWT Limited), Lawrence Leow (honorary treasurer, Singapore Business Federation), Lim Hng Kiang, Minister for Trade and Industry (Trade), Charles Wong (chief executive officer, Charles & Keith (Singapore) Pte Ltd), Jacqueline Tan (executive director, Jumbo Group Limited), Patrick Scodeller (chief operating officer, M1 Limited), Simon Bell (general manager, Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel)

Celebrating productivity excellence

SBF's annual productivity awards honour eight businesses for achieving significant results. **BY LARENDRA AGGARWAL**

AS Singapore's economy matures and enters a slower growth phase, future economic expansion will have to be strongly supported by productivity gains. The country faces a tight labour market and manpower costs are rising. Raising productivity is therefore critical for businesses to maintain their competitive edge.

In recent years, the government has renewed the national drive for raising productivity. The message is clear that for sustainable growth at both the national level and individual business level, all will have to join hands and work smarter. By doing so, they can reap the benefits of productivity growth through higher wages and a better living environment in the country.

Singapore Business Federation (SBF), as the national apex business chamber of 21,500 companies working for business facilitation, voice representation and capacity building, is playing a key role in promoting the productivity movement in the country.

It initiated the Singapore Productivity Awards (SPA) last year to recognise organisations that have achieved significant results in their productivity journey. The awards methodology is based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis, adopting both the Integrated Management of Productivity Activities framework and the Singapore Business Excellence framework. The inaugural SPA was unveiled during the national productivity month in October 2014.

SBF works closely with various government agencies and business associations to organise events and programmes aimed at helping companies to achieve higher productivity. This is because improved productivity leads to more efficient use of resources and helps in achieving better business results in the long run.

The Singapore Productivity Awards are presented every year to Singapore-based enter-

prises that have made strides in raising their productivity. The Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) is SBF's strategic partner in the new awards initiative launched last year.

This year, the annual productivity awards have been enhanced by adding two new sectors – manufacturing and infocomm. Both sectors are important to the Singapore economy. The manufacturing sector accounts for about a fifth of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and employs over half a million people. Faced with key challenges such as rapid changes in technology, tight domestic labour market and globalisation of supply chains, there is a critical need for the manufacturing sector to transform itself through innovation and productivity.

At the same time, bolstered by the Smart Nation 2015 plan, the fast developing infocomm sector, marked by the growth of the Internet of Things and advances in technology innovation, is poised to create new opportunities and act as an enabler to all sectors.

With the addition of the two new sectors, the SPA now cover six sectors – food and beverages, hotel, logistics, retail, manufacturing and IT. Eight winners received the awards for 2015 from the Minister for Trade and Industry (Trade) Lim Hng Kiang, at a gala dinner held on Nov 27.

"The Singapore Productivity Awards is another initiative launched by SBF to recognise the achievements of companies who exemplify productivity excellence," says Lawrence Leow, honorary treasurer of SBF, in his welcome remarks at the event.

"In this continuously changing business landscape, building a successful business takes visionary leadership and adaptability to ride on emerging trends and persevere through challenging times. The evolving economic situations require us to remain nimble and adapt effectively in order to emerge stronger.

"We must reflect on the core competencies that have differentiated us from others and enabled us to succeed, and how they could be re-

inforced or improved as we adapt to the new future.

"We see common traits and best practices among the winners and there is much we can learn from them – from effective leadership, cultivating good corporate culture and mindsets to adopting long term productivity road maps with a focus on people development, strengthening processes and embracing innovation and technology," says Mr Leow.

SS Teo, chairman of SBF, comments: "SBF, as the apex business chamber in Singapore, remains committed to working with the government to help Singapore companies transform and improve their productivity and capabilities. For example, the Federation recently launched two new programmes, namely, the Holistic Industry Productivity Scorecard Calculator and the Mentorship for Accelerating Productivity (otherwise known as HIPS Calculator and MAP in short).

"The HIPS Calculator allows companies to calculate their labour productivity and nine other productivity indicators, benchmark their performance against industry and track their productivity performance year-on-year via an online portal. With these data collected, companies will then be able to tap on the MAP programme to address gaps through the help of productivity mentors and advisers."

The eight new role models – all winners of this year's Singapore Productivity Awards, are:

- F&B: Jumbo Group
- Hotel: Singapore Marriott Hotel
- Logistics: CWT Limited and Poh Tiong Choon Logistics Limited
- Manufacturing: Mencast Holdings and YHS (Singapore) Pte Ltd
- Retail: Charles & Keith
- IT: M1 Limited

SBF chief operating officer Victor Tay says: "The eight winners have exhibited exemplary performance in leading a productivity led culture, embracing technology and innovation, up-skilling employees and enhancing customers' experience. We hope these winners will serve as role models to spur the wider business community to restructure and

transform towards quality driven and productivity led growth for long term business sustainability."

Highlighting a key issue facing the manufacturing sector, Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMF) president Douglas Foo says: "In the manufacturing sector, productivity growth has lagged behind the increase in labour costs. Over the longer term, the only sustainable way for the sector is to cope with the impact of rising business costs by enhancing productivity through higher skills, innovation and automation."

"SMF is happy to support the Singapore Productivity Awards in recognising local manufacturing enterprises that have forged ahead in achieving productivity excellence," he adds.

Speaking for the IT sector, Shirley Wong, chairman of the Singapore Information Technology Federation, says: "In tandem with Singapore's smart nation vision, many enterprises are starting to ride on the wave of emerging technological trends such as big data and e-commerce. ICT is a critical enabler of innovation and productivity across all sectors. In the light of this, it is encouraging to see this year's winners in the IT sector and other sectors embarking on innovative technologies."

Both Mr Foo and Ms Wong are new members of the SPA judging panel.

SBF's Mr Tay adds: "As Singapore faces a tight labour market and an ageing population, it is important to encourage consumers to use self-serving technologies. Notably, some of our 2015 award winners have successfully implemented innovative self-service business models to allow them to operate more efficiently and better serve their customers."

Importantly, the productivity awards adopt a two-pronged approach of quantitative and qualitative assessments. For the quantitative assessment, companies are evaluated based on their labour productivity and nine other productivity composite indicators using the Integrated Management of Productivity Activities (IMPACT) framework.

For the qualitative assessment, companies

are evaluated on various aspects from leadership and strategy, people management, processes and technology to customer engagement.

SBF says that with the objective to help Singapore companies better identify and resolve their productivity issues, companies could also tap the Holistic Industry Productivity Scorecard (HIPS) calculator launched in November. Using the calculator, companies can calculate their labour productivity and nine productivity composite indicators online, benchmark against industry peers and track year-on-year performance.

With the data collected through HIPS, companies can tap SBF's recently launched Mentorship for Accelerating Productivity (MAP) programme to address gaps through the help of productivity mentors and advisers.

DP Information Group is the knowledge partner for the SPA and the judging panel comprises industry leaders from organisations such as SBF, SNEF, Spring Singapore, Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, Restaurant Association of Singapore, Singapore Hotel Association, Singapore Logistics Association, Singapore Manufacturing Federation, Singapore Retail Association and the Singapore Infocomm Technology Federation.

For the second year running, SBF is represented in the National Productivity Council (NPC), which oversees and drives the national effort to boost productivity in Singapore. Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam is the chairman of the NPC, which aims to achieve national productivity growth of two to three per cent per annum.

NPC says that technically, productivity is the ratio of output to input. It is a measure of how efficiently and effectively a business or an economy uses inputs such as labour and capital to produce outputs such as goods and services.

An increase in productivity means that more goods and services are produced with the same amount of labour and capital. It is not about cutting costs but "doing things right" and "doing the right things" to achieve maximum efficiency and value.

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