

**SPEECH BY MS SIM ANN, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY & MINISTRY OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH, AT THE 4<sup>TH</sup> CERTIFIED PRODUCTIVITY CONSULTANT GRADUATION CEREMONY ON MONDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2016, 5.20PM, LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE**

Mr Tan Peng Yong, Board Member and Chairman of Programme Advisory Committee, Singapore Productivity Centre,

Mr Michael Tan, CEO, Singapore Productivity Centre,

Mr Kuroda-san, Director for Consulting Department, Japan Productivity Center,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is my pleasure to join you today at the graduation of the fourth cohort of Certified Productivity Consultants.
2. This event is more than just a ceremony. It is also an occasion for us to recognise those who take ownership of their growth: employees who have taken the initiative to learn new skills to stay relevant for the future economy; and companies that are transforming the way they do business to stay competitive despite the current challenging economic conditions. My heartiest congratulations to all of you.
3. I would also like to thank the Singapore Productivity Centre (SPC), for the good work it has done in engaging more than 1,000 SMEs in the Food Services and Retail industries since 2013.

**SPC is an important partner in driving enterprise productivity and transformation**

4. The Food Services and Retail industries are an important part of Singapore's identity – Singaporeans take pride in our reputation as a food and shopping destination. At the same time, these sectors employ a significant proportion of our workforce.
5. Businesses in the Food Services and Retail industries are facing keen competition and structural challenges. Consumers are becoming more discerning and are constantly on the look-out for new experiences, as well as convenient dining and retail options. At the same time, businesses face difficulties in attracting and retaining skilled manpower, thereby limiting their ability to develop new products and better service.

6. Businesses understand the need to harness technology that enhances their operating efficiency. They are also aware of the need to build distinctive brands and develop innovative products to gain market share. However, moving from a state of awareness to action can seem overwhelming, or even daunting.
7. This is where industry partners like SPC come in. SPC has been customising bite-sized solutions for food and retail companies, and has been an important partner supporting their growth and productivity improvement.
8. A good example is Blum & Co, a local fashion label for women catering to professionals and executives. SPC and Blum & Co developed customised training and motivational workshops to help Blum & Co's employees better understand their brand philosophy. Its employees, who are now more familiar with the brand's philosophy, are better able to pitch to and engage customers. SPC will continue to work with Blum & Co to redesign its supply chain and inventory management processes, including the adoption of RFID technology in preparation for their expansion to other countries.
9. SPC has also been assisting food companies to remain relevant and competitive through the adoption of manpower-saving technologies, redesigning of kitchen menu to improve profit, improving operating workflow and financial management. A company that has benefitted from its partnership with SPC is Jew Kit Excellent Food. From a humble Hainanese chicken rice stall manned mostly by a husband and wife team 25 years ago, Jew Kit has since expanded to 2 restaurants, 4 food stalls and a central kitchen. Jew Kit recently worked with SPC on a process improvement project, which included automating the food preparation and cooking process in the central kitchen. Through this project, Jew Kit shaved 2 hours off its usual 5-hour preparation and cooking processes, without compromising on food quality nor consistency. Jew Kit is now looking to further expand its operations locally and regionally.
10. The Government will support SPC to do more with a S\$4.8 million funding injection over the next five years. This is on top of the earlier committed funding of over \$10 million. In the next phase of their work, SPC will work with companies to improve areas that drive top-line, such as concept innovation and business re-modelling. This is in addition to their current efforts to improve operational excellence through process and workflow re-design. SPC will also be developing a Productivity Analytical Tool, which will allow food and retail companies to more readily access their past productivity performance for historical and industry benchmarking.

**The Government is committed to supporting businesses and workers in their innovation, productivity and skills development efforts**

11. SPC's work complements what we are doing on Industry Transformation Maps (ITM) for the Food Services and Retail industries. Building on our existing efforts on productivity, innovation, skills development and internationalisation, the ITMs are an important blueprint for Government, industry, unions and

workers to work together in unlocking value and driving economic growth in more than 20 priority industries.

12. The ITMs also provide a structure for us to organise ourselves. The Government has always been, and remains committed to supporting businesses in their innovation and productivity efforts. But we cannot do it alone – this is a multi-year endeavour that also requires the collective effort of individual businesses, trade associations, training institutes, research institutes, unions and workers, to effect meaningful and sustained change.
13. An important aspect of the ITMs is about creating good jobs for Singaporeans. As industry trends and business models evolve, new and exciting job opportunities will emerge. In the retail space for example, we are seeing the need for more digital marketing expertise as brick-and-mortar retailers progressively move into omni-channel retailing to stay competitive. The Government will continue to support Singaporeans to seize these job opportunities through relevant skills upgrading programmes delivered in partnership with industry.
14. Employers too, play a big role. Employers need to recognise the importance of redesigning jobs with technology as a key enabler. Employees who have taken the initiative to upgrade their skills can only contribute as much as the job role and working environment allows for it. In the area of F&B operations for example, the deployment of self-service options at the front of house, such as digital ordering and e-payment, would enable staff to concentrate on engaging customers and maintaining a high standard of service.

### **Taking ownership of your growth**

15. I am heartened to see businesses and employees already taking charge of their growth and development. The 20 graduands from the fourth run of SPC's Certified Productivity Consultant (CPC) course, who are with us today, are testament to such initiative and drive. They join 70 other Productivity Consultants who have completed earlier runs of this programme jointly developed by SPC and the Japan Productivity Centre (JPC). I am encouraged by the healthy course take-up rate and the support the graduands' companies have given them to upgrade their skills.
16. To all graduands, you will be the change agents for the companies that you consult for. Some of you, like Mr Ignatius Lee, are consultants who will continue to work closely with SPC in consultancy projects. Ignatius has been in the food industry for the last 15 years and graduated in the last CPC cohort. Through the CPC course, he has picked up different business management techniques to analyse and improve a business's productivity. This will allow him to assist companies from the Food Services and Retail industries.
17. Some of you will be returning to your companies to serve as in-house consultants. The tools and experience you have gained from managing actual projects during the course, will enable you to better support your company's

transformation efforts. Ms Loreen Zhuo, a Senior Manager in business and capability development in the Select Group is one such change agent. The CPC course has equipped her with the knowledge and ideas to work on areas such as kitchen workflow optimisation, business process improvement, as well as business model innovation. Loreen is eager to share her learning experience and the additional skills she can now apply to her work context, so I will leave her to share more later.

## **Conclusion**

18. In closing, let me thank SPC and JPC for their important role in building capabilities in the Food Services and Retail industries. To the CPC graduands past and present, be the change agents you sought to be when you enrolled in the course. I urge you to apply your new skills to support the transformation efforts in the organisations you belong to, or are consulting for.
19. My heartiest congratulations once again.

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