

SME Spotlight

HR a key ingredient for SMEs' growth: Panel

The panel comprised (from left) Ms Christophane Foo, Spring Singapore's executive director for human capital; Ms Lim Hee Joo, executive director of Wah Son Engineering; Mr Sherwin Siregar, chief executive officer at Atlas Sound and Vision; Mr Alex Chua, HR executive at Atlas Sound and Vision; and Ms Bernadette Chua, SkillsFuture SME Mentor. ST PHOTO: CHEW SENG KIM

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Investing in employees can transform them into company ambassadors, says mentor

Tiffany Cheong

Cash-strapped small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often find it tough to retain good employees or invest in training.

But a focus on human resource (HR) development can pay off in the long run, according to a panel.

More than 200 SME members attended the SkillsFuture SME Mentors Seminar at Regent Singapore Hotel last Thursday.

The event, organised by Spring Singapore, aims to encourage SMEs to strengthen HR capabilities through enhancing their learning and development opportunities.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary Low Yen Ling, the guest of honour at the event, said that development of staff is not a "one-off" effort, but a long-term investment and a continuous learning journey.

The event included a panel discussion by local business owners, involving topics on what it takes to start investing in HR and the importance of staff development.

Panellist and SkillsFuture SME Mentor Bernadette Chua told The Straits Times: "From a practical perspective, spending resources and time on HR development in a holistic and systematic way is beneficial to a company."

"By investing in employees, they become company ambassadors who are genuinely enthused when speaking to others about their company."

She added: "This makes enhancing HR capabilities a form of value creation."

The SkillsFuture Mentors Programme under the SkillsFuture initiative is part of a slew of initiatives by Spring Singapore that aims to enhance SMEs' value proposition as choice employers offering good career progression pathways.

Spring Singapore matches mentors with SMEs for a nine-month mentorship to implement measures to help SMEs upgrade their employee training capabilities.

Other initiatives offered by Spring Singapore include the SME Talent Programme, which helps SMEs provide funding for student internships, and the HR Diagnostic Tool, which helps companies to diagnose HR gaps.

Last year, the agency supported more than 1,000 HR capability- building projects for 965 SMEs, a four-fold increase from 2014.

Spring Singapore's executive director for human capital, Ms Christophane Foo, told ST: "Both small and big companies can benefit from human capital development. In terms of HR, size doesn't matter."

Currently, 105 SMEs have signed up for the SkillsFuture Mentors Programme, with a pioneer group of 50 SMEs already benefiting from it.

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