

Challenge

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2012

Approaching the Public Service D

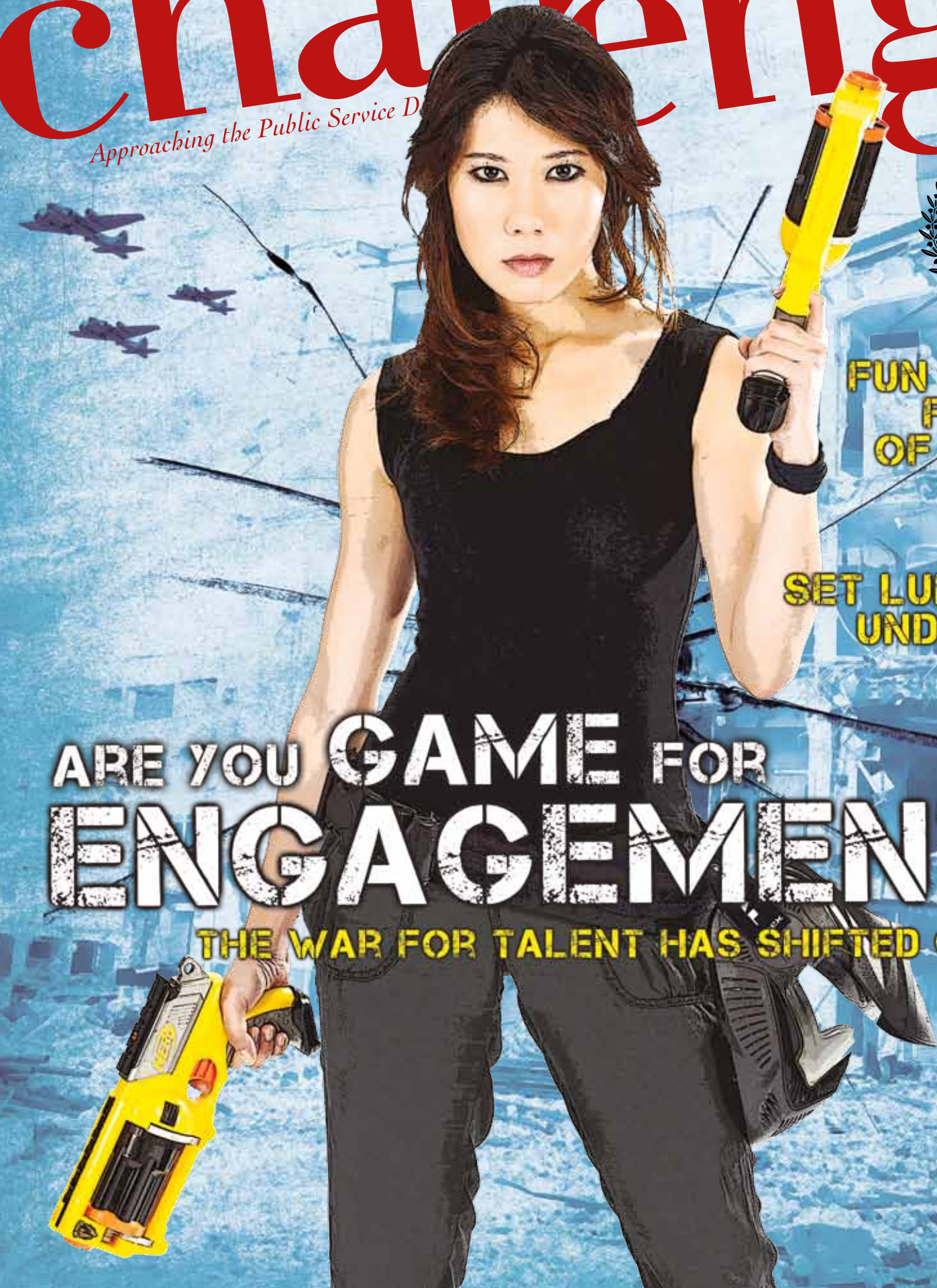


**FUN IS THE
FUTURE
OF WORK**

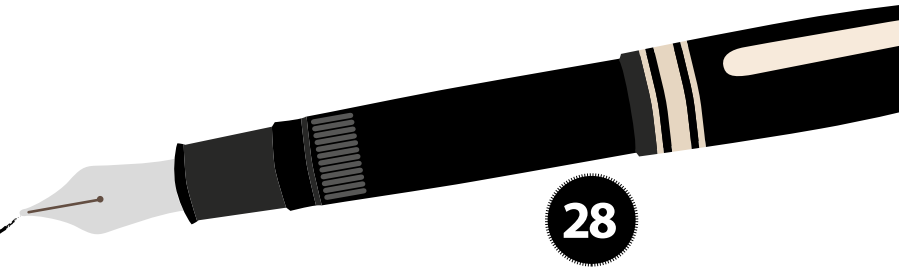
**8
SET LUNCHES
UNDER \$10**

**ARE YOU GAME FOR
ENGAGEMENT?**

THE WAR FOR TALENT HAS SHIFTED GEARS.



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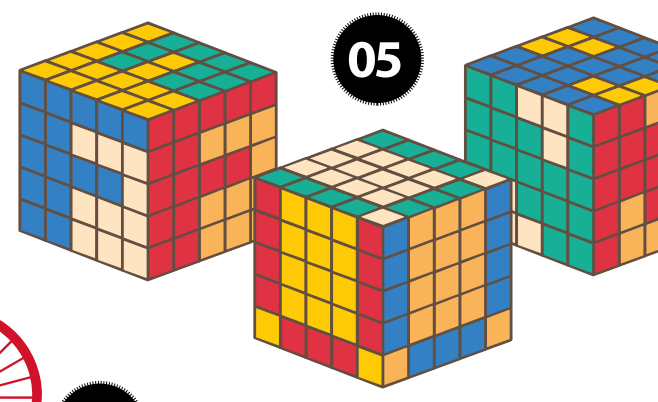
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Hello

Counting Blessings

IT SEEMS CLICHÉ TO SAY 2012 HAS JUST FLOWN BY, BUT IT really has. Looking back, amidst the year's highs and lows, what's made it meaningful – and for which I am grateful – is the people around me (cliché as well, but so true!).

At home, it's been all warm and fuzzy celebrating 10 years of marriage, and I'm thankful for hubby's companionship on this life journey. As for friends, amazingly, despite the busyness of work, I've managed to share a lot more food, laughter and stories with my regular gang of buddies, while also making a few meaningful new friendships.

At the office, it's a blessing to work with awesome people who perform magic daily, juggling multiple priorities continuously without letting any of them drop. What's more, this year, with the opportunity to work on *Challenge*, now have a deeper appreciation of our colleagues across the Public Service too. Every issue of the magazine is filled with stories of public officers passionate about what they do and this one is no different. Take Energy Market Authority's Mr Chew Gim Wah and his colleagues in *The Illuminators*, who work quietly behind the scenes to keep Singapore powered up. Or paediatric dentist, Dr Ng Jing Jing, in *She Goes the Extra Mile for Healthier Smiles*. Dr Ng goes to great lengths to ensure that her young patients who may enter her clinic crying always leave smiling.

So it's bittersweet as the *Challenge* team says goodbye and good luck to two fantastic workmates: Ruth, our Assistant Editor, and Eric, our Editorial Assistant. Ruth – who is leaving for further studies – has been the driving force behind our last four issues while Eric, a *Challenge* institution we'll sorely miss at our meetings for his wicked sense of humour, is going to another public sector agency. They gamely agreed to model for our cover story as their swansong. It's about engaged employees and they're both great examples of them.

As 2012 draws to a close, do take time to appreciate the people you've been blessed with in your life. Enjoy the journey with those still travelling with you and cheer on the ones who may be embarking on new adventures elsewhere.

Happy holidays!

Hui Min

Editor

Tan Hui Min



challenge

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On the cover:
Challenge
Assistant Editor
channelling
Resident Evil,
photographed
by John Heng on
October 4, 2012
at The Treasury.

INBOX



I chanced upon *Challenge*
as free copies were lying
around the college.
**I was really
impressed and
surprised by the
vibrant feel.**

I must say, I found it really
interesting the way the
content was presented and
given a more funky and
relevant touch!

Amanda Ng
ACJC student



Like the *No Wrong Door* picture.

Meaningful!

Goh Tsoon Kiat
IPTO



Challenge never fails to
offer refreshing angles to
public service matters.
**It is a pleasurable
read and I always
look forward to
receiving it in my
pigeon hole.**

Excellent work, *Challenge*!

Wong Xin Wei
MEWR



GO DIGITAL

Exclusively on Challenge Online at www.challenge.gov.sg



Insider's Take

Do you know how much
information there is
online about you? Find
out how to manage
your online presence,
and remove information
that should be private.

bit.ly/googleyourname



You are Creative

Got an iPad?
Use it right with these
amazing apps to boost
your creativity in and
out of the office.

bit.ly/awesomeapps



Duck and Cover

Jonson Quek, the
Public Service's
only non-human
employee, is
frustrated yet again
by his clueless boss.

bit.ly/duckcover



Perspectives

Spend a day on
St John's Island with
a bunch of scientists
who are breeding
stronger, faster-growing
Asian seabass.

bit.ly/findingpompano



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Meetings can be a yawn!

So we asked readers for ideas to make meetings engaging, productive and even fun. Here are some suggestions.



Some ideas we've tried at PUB to keep participants engaged: sessions are not more than 45 minutes, meeting agenda is provided so everyone knows what to expect, and fruits like apples and bananas (so-called brain food) are provided for participants to snack on. My idea is to replace typical chairs with exercise balls so that participants have to keep themselves balanced while sitting down. So if they doze off, they fall from their seats. Another is to have meetings video-recorded because nobody would like to be captured dozing off in meetings!

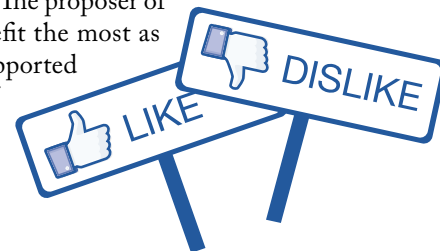
WINNING ENTRY

Eric Liau
PUB

Congratulations Eric! We're sending a big exercise ball and \$70 worth of World of Sports vouchers your way to liven up those boring meetings! Make sure you snap a picture of it being used and send it to us. P/S: Can we say the video-recording idea is a tad disturbing even if it sounds like it could be most effective...

Editor: Wow, more than 100 of you shared your ideas with us! We're sorry we couldn't print them all but we're sharing more entries online so check out www.challenge.gov.sg for more!

Meetings can be a yawn when staff are required to sit in and don't contribute. Staff don't voice their opinions due to the lack of courage or feel their views are not appreciated. To increase participation, the organisation could make placards with "Like" or "Dislike" to allow staff to voice their opinions on certain issues. The proposer of the idea and the organisation will benefit the most as they get to know how well the idea is supported and whether there are any concerns if the idea is implemented.



Tan Jun Wen Nicholas
IRAS

Recently, at a session to talk about our learning needs, the organisers imposed a "No PowerPoint" rule for presenters who had to think of new ways to present the information, using videos, role-play, quizzes and games. It was one of the most fun and engaging meetings we had. Not only did it meet the objective to encourage learning and creativity, staff were engaged and could retain all the information presented.

Charlotte Koh
NCSS

Meetings can be such a bore! But it doesn't happen that way during our staff meeting. First, no phones allowed! You surrender your mobile phones and place it in front of your superior. Once a month, we have some light refreshments. Eat as you listen. Once in a while, colleagues may crack some jokes to keep those sleepy heads awake. Best of all, after the long hours of meeting, we have a light workout. Just blast music and everyone will get on their feet.

Roslinah Rosli
PA

Have standing meetings! If laptops are needed, provide high cocktail tables for participants to place them. Discussions will be to the point as people's legs get tired! It is also harder to doze off and people will be kept alert. This is also an opportunity for physical activity. Obesity rates are increasing because we're eating more (snacks at meetings) and sitting more (at our desks and at meetings) so this is a good, cheap way to invest in employee health!

Dr Mathia Lee
HPB

our SG Special
OUR SINGAPORE

What is your vision for Singapore in **2030?**

Share one area of change you'd like to see happen by then.

Email us: psd_challenge@psd.gov.sg

The best entry will win an attractive prize worth up to **\$100!** All other published entries will win book vouchers worth **\$30** each. Please include your name, agency email address, agency and contact number.

All entries should reach us by November 23, 2012.

NEWS *from the* SERVICE



SENTOSA TURNS 40

The island was abuzz with fun and action as guests joined in Sentosa's Ruby Anniversary celebrations on September 1. The Ice Playground on Palawan beach (Asia's first ice playground on a beach) was a huge hit, as both young and old jumped at the chance to play and cool down at the same time. Meanwhile lucky passers-by were in for a sweet treat, with Sentosa dishing out 1,000 cupcakes stamped with its 40th anniversary logo.

INNOVATORS IN BLUE

The Singapore Police Force (SPF) held its annual 3I Convention on October 25 at Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP). This year's theme, "Gen I:nnovate", celebrates the generation of forward-looking officers behind the innovations in SPF. Among the projects showcased was a pole-climbing robot that can fix CCTV cameras onto any lamp post quickly, a creation of NP students, in collaboration with SPF officers. The SPF and NP also inked an agreement to collaborate on the design and development of innovation projects, which will help the SPF expand its knowledge, expertise and resources.



Police officers with their award-winning customised equipment holder for Police cars

COMING UP...



STICK WITH GOOD ENGLISH

This year's Speak Good English Movement aims to "Make Good English Stick". Colourful wall murals based on figures of speech such as "Life is a rollercoaster", were made out of sticky notes to generate public interest. Singaporeans are encouraged to write their favourite phrase, or quote on a sticky note, stick it onto an object, snap a picture of it and share it on social networks. www.goodenglish.org.sg



OUR FUTURE, OUR COUNTRY

What will Singapore be like in 10 years? The Institute of Policy Studies invites you to think about how we will govern ourselves as a people for a future we desire, through IPS Prism, an immersive arts experience comprising multimedia installations, interactive exhibits and forum theatre. Produced by Drama Box from November 8-14 at the Central National Library. Free admission. www.ips.sg/prism



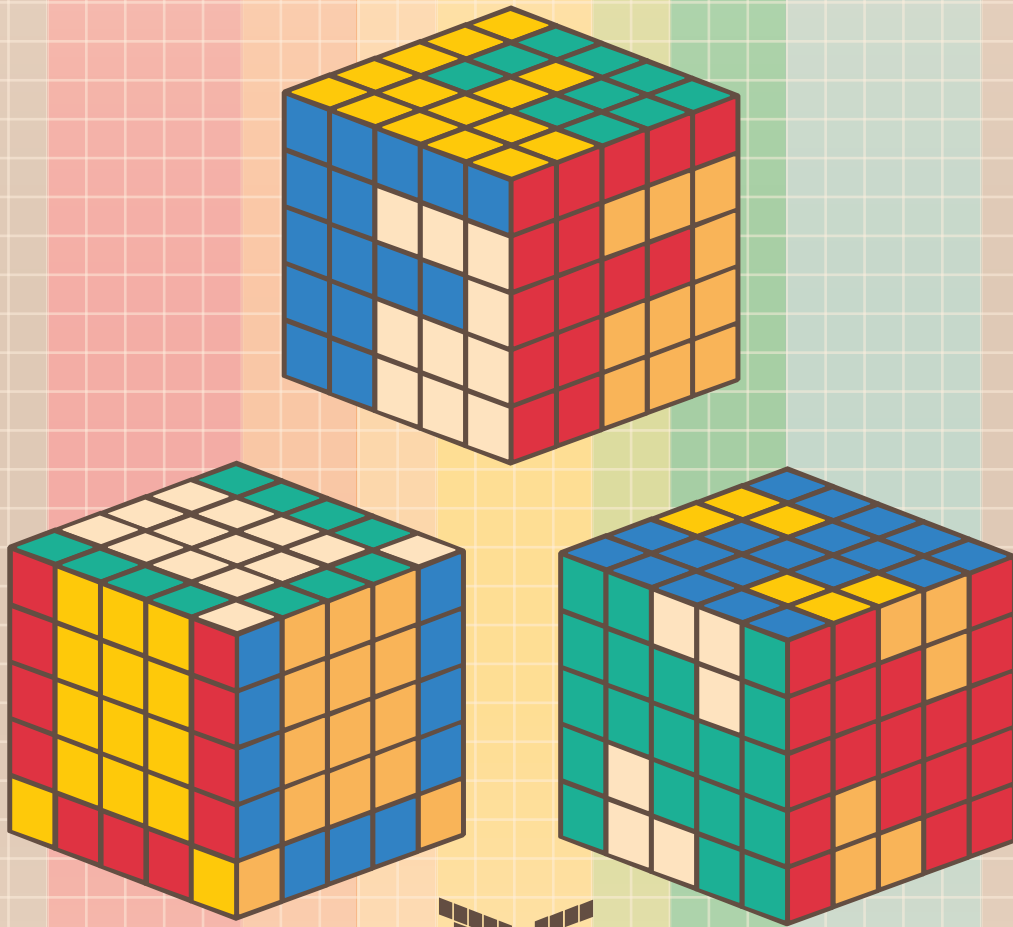
BIG SCREEN HOT SHOTS

The Media Development Authority of Singapore will host ScreenSingapore (December 4-7) at the Marina Bay Sands. The event promises to be star-studded once again. ScreenSingapore is an annual international film event dedicated to showing major studio and independent new releases in the Asia-Pacific region. www.screensingapore.com.sg


NEW!

GO CASHLESS

If your organisation often handles small-value payments, consider going cashless. The Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore is offering an attractive co-funding scheme to subsidise the adoption of CEPAS (Specification for Contactless e-Purse Application) for public agencies. For enquiries, call Eric at 6211 1768 or email Eric_Goh@ida.gov.sg. More information at www.ida.gov.sg/finance.



THE FUTURE OF WORK

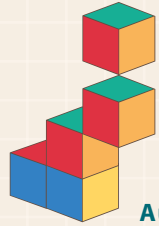
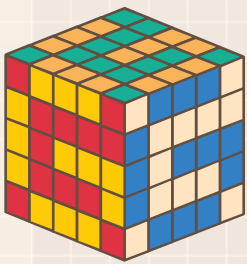
How gamification  can heighten workplace engagement.

Text by **Roan Yong**

FORMER US PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT once said, “Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.”

Many people can identify with that, and hope they can also find a job that is worth doing. When work is fun and enjoyable, people are happy, energised, creative, engaged and motivated to do their best.

According to a 2010 Gallup study, having engaged employees can result in a healthier and happier workplace, which leads to less absenteeism, less presenteeism (reduced productivity while at work due to stress and depression), a lower staff turnover rate, and higher productivity and innovation for the organisation. So there are real economic reasons to make work fun for employees.



In his bestselling book *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Malcolm Gladwell outlines three elements that make work fun:

Autonomy: you are entrusted to decide how best to achieve the required outcome. This means you are empowered to do the job.

Complexity: the job is challenging enough for you, such that you are motivated to develop or perfect the skills required to do the work.

A connection between effort and reward: your efforts get rewarded and recognised. When you see a connection between your effort and the reward, you will feel energised!



According to Mr Gladwell, when a job has these three elements, people will be motivated to perform to their best ability as work becomes less about just meeting basic needs but more about achieving personal mastery and fulfilling their life purpose.

Gamifying work

One of the latest ways to introduce fun at the workplace is gamification, the concept of applying game design techniques and game mechanics to non-game contexts to solve problems and engage people. The idea is to make real-life work as fun, addictive and engaging as the work one does while gaming.

A 2011 Gartner Research Report estimates that by 2015, more than half of the organisations that manage innovation processes will gamify their processes. So this is a concept that the Public Service should grasp if it is concerned



Gamification is the concept of applying game-design thinking to non-game applications to make them more fun and engaging.

about staying innovative and ahead of the curve.

What makes gaming fun and addictive, are the three elements that Mr Gladwell talked about. First, you have the autonomy to explore options and to accomplish your mission in any way that works. Second, you will find challenging obstacles that spur you on to find innovative ways or pick up new skills to overcome them. Third, you get rewarded whenever you defeat the enemy or accomplish the mission.

Some of the biggest companies have offered gamification as a service. Nike Plus (nikeplus.nike.com/plus), a web portal with supporting smartphone apps, gamifies running by allowing users to set personal running goals (by time or distance) and to compete with other runners in the Nike Plus online community.

The scientific community has also started to gamify scientific research. Foldit (fold.it) is an online game created by the University of Washington to recruit gamers to solve protein-folding puzzles. The aim is to understand how different proteins are structured, as this helps scientists to design new proteins to combat disease-related ones and cure diseases such as HIV/AIDS, cancer and Alzheimer's. One solution, which had stumped scientists for a decade, was found in just three weeks with the help of gamers in 2011.

In Singapore, gamification has been applied in a web application called insinc (insinc.sg), to incentivise commuters to use the Mass Rapid Transit during non-peak hours. Beyond public transportation, gamification could also be applied to some areas of public service, for example the Singapore Kindness Movement. Imagine a smartphone app that gamifies acts of kindness. This would help to promote graciousness – especially among youngsters.

Applying gamification at work
When gamifying work processes, manag-

The idea is to make real-life work as fun, addictive and engaging as the work one does while gaming.



Screen shots of the online scientific game Foldit. Gamers help to solve protein-folding puzzles to help cure diseases such as HIV/AIDS, cancer and Alzheimer's.



ers can use the three elements of making work fun as a guide.

Grant autonomy: Gamify tasks to allow workers some freedom to explore solutions. For example, tasks to innovate, solve problems or improve productivity.

Pick a complex task and make progress visible: Some organisations use scores, virtual badges and skill-level bars to chart progression. The more visible the progress is, the greater the self-motivation to complete the task. Progress visibility could even prompt workers to improve their skills or seek help when needed.

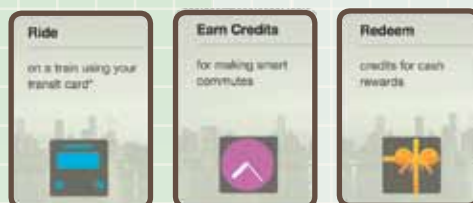
Give rewards for a job well done: In order to create a clear connection between effort and reward, a reputation system should be established. Let people gain highly visible reputations for jobs well done, such as a leaderboard system that displays their proficiency. They have to be given rapid, frequent feedback on their performance (through badges or points).

When to use gamification

While gamification makes work fun and has many benefits, it is not a panacea for all employee disengagement issues.

Gamification amplifies the love that people have for their work. So while it is suitable as a tool to re-engage and re-energise staff who are already passionate about their work, it should not be used to coax people to like the job they hate. In this case, there are more urgent issues to identify and address, such as a poor job fit, the lack of on-the-job training, or poor working relationships with coworkers.

Gamification should not be applied to all kinds of work in the organisation. Instead, it should be applied to tasks that allow people to exercise autonomy and that give enough challenge to grow their personal capacity. In the Public Service context, gamification could be applied to reinvigorate innovation initiatives. (Imagine if we could make innovating fun!)



Gamification amplifies the love that people have for their work.



As gamification relies heavily on technology, it may not appeal to technophobes. So it is important to emphasise that participation must be voluntary, just like when people play games. No one should be penalised for not taking part.

Another challenge in applying gamification is the need for novelty in the rewards system. People get bored once they know what kind of rewards to expect. Thus, constant innovation is needed to renew the reward mechanism. But this could also be a great way to spur an organisation's innovation quotient!

Making work fun requires commitment and investment on the part of the employer but it is a way for organisations to maximise their people's potential and unleash innovation. Don't get left behind. Gamify work now!

Screen shots of insinc, an online game to incentivise Singapore commuters to take the MRT during off-peak hours.



HOW TO SELF-GAMIFY YOUR WORK

- Pick a goal that you really want to accomplish. For example, giving an impactful presentation.
- Identify tasks that you need to do to achieve your goal. For example, create great presentation slides and practise 20 times in front of a mirror.
- Create a progress bar to track how many tasks you have done and how close you are to reaching your goal.
- Every time you complete a task and move closer to your goal, reward yourself. This could be a short break to listen to your favourite song, or to simply idle.
- Give yourself a big treat when you have achieved your goal, or tell yourself to try again if you have failed.

Roan Yong (@roanyong) is a Knowledge Management practitioner working at a Singapore statutory board. He is also a speaker and consultant in the area of Intranet, incentives and employee engagement. He spoke recently on Intranet citizen-developers at the inaugural Singapore Mini Maker Faire and on gamification at TEDx Suzhou. He blogs regularly at roanyong.com and can be reached at roan_yong@yahoo.com.

ARE YOU GA LENGAGI



PLAYING TO THEIR STRENGTHS: Games at work help teams to understand the strengths and vulnerabilities of each "player". Bosses can use the observation to mix players to create "balanced" teams that will work better together.

WAR FOR Talent?

THE WAR FOR TALENT HAS SHIFTED FROM RECRUITING GREAT STAFF TO ENGAGING AND RETAINING THEM. IS THE PUBLIC SERVICE PUSHING ALL THE RIGHT BUTTONS IN THE GAME OF ENGAGEMENT?

Text by **Chen Jingting** Photos by **John Heng**

IF YOU ARE IN THE OFFICE, take a look around at your colleagues now. In two years' time, one in three would likely have left their current jobs. In five years, half would probably be gone.

These figures, published in a recent global survey by management consultants Hay Group, show Singaporeans to be one of the least loyal workforces in the world. While clearly a major headache for employers, it's a trend that reflects the new reality of "the war for talent" – a phrase famously coined by McKinsey & Company to describe how companies battle for their most important resource: the best workers.

The employer today needs to understand that it is no longer about attracting the best worker, but how to keep him. And one important way to persuade staff to stay, say management experts, is to engage them.

There are varying definitions of an engaged workforce, but experts high-

light some common features. Engaged employees are enthusiastic in their work and committed to achieve organisational goals, often exceeding expectations. Fully and meaningfully utilised in their employment, they are pumped up to give their best. This is vital in building a successful organisation.

How is the Public Service, Singapore's largest employer, faring in terms of staff engagement?

Recent results of the employee engagement survey conducted by the Civil Service College show that engagement levels in the Public Service were "overall positive".

One content public officer is Ms Zoe Lim, who says she is "happy and settled" at the Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA), where she is currently Manager of Corporate Planning and Development.

Ms Lim, who has been in DSTA for 11 years, shared on Cube, the government

DISENGAGEMENT IS HARMFUL

Unhealthy workplace practices will lead to staff disengagement. Consider the blunder technology giant Microsoft made. According to a Vanity Fair report this year, Microsoft's internal ranking system, which insisted on singling out "mediocre" and "terrible" workers no matter how capable a team was, destroyed employees' drive and the company's performance. According to a report published in the Gallup Business Journal in 2010, disengaged employees experience high levels of stress at work, and are more prone to suffering from illnesses such as anxiety and depression. As a result, companies have to bear hefty medical expenses and the indirect costs of absenteeism or decreased productivity at work. Productivity loss due to bad blood between supervisors and employees costs US companies a whopping US\$360 billion every year, Gallup said.

Intranet portal, that when she began to reflect on the reasons for her commitment to the agency, she found some unexpected answers. They included the organisation's policies, work processes and culture; the mentoring she receives; and her trusted relationships with bosses and co-workers.

"I have been blessed [with] many mentors who have been great role models... What always touched me was how even when I have moved on from their lives or departments, they remain great friends and people I can always confide in when I feel stuck at work," she wrote, in a long post.

But the Public Service could certainly still do more to engage its officers. A number of public officers, both current and former, were forthcoming about

Just as an army general strategises how best to train and position soldiers on the field, leaders are responsible for unlocking the potential of employees.

their frustrations at work when interviewed by Challenge. Their unhappiness stemmed from a variety of reasons, from insensitive supervisors who phoned them incessantly during their days off, to being tangled up in red tape or not experiencing job satisfaction.

For instance, an officer said that she had taken on a job at the Education Ministry in order to work directly with children. Instead, she has been tasked with planning events so often that she has become, in her own words, an "expert in catering". She is still with the ministry but wishes she had more time to focus on the job she was hired for.



GOING BEYOND WORK:
Strengthening emotional connection
aids staff engagement. Instead of
interacting with staff during work or
at formal events, try engaging them
at more casual occasions.



Training leaders to unlock potential

When it comes to staff engagement, the importance of leaders cannot be underemphasised. Just as an army general strategises how best to train and position soldiers on the field, leaders are responsible for unlocking the potential of employees.

“Leaders play a key role in how work is organised, how jobs are designed, how officers are empowered and supported to do their best; whether the workload is well distributed and manageable, and how officers are encouraged and rewarded,” said Mr Leo Yip, Chairman of the Economic Development Board (EDB).

Leaders need to make sure that middle managers pay attention to these areas too, he added.

To help managers better guide their employees in the areas of performance and development, the Public Service Division (PSD)’s Capability Develop-

When trust exists between subordinates and their supervisors, employees do not need to ‘cover their backs’ as they know that their supervisor will support them and work with them. Hence, their resources are conserved towards doing a better job.

ment department has a “Managers as People Developers” programme that was introduced last year.

This includes a Coaching Initiative, under which middle managers receive one-on-one guidance from professional coaches and attend a two-day workshop on basic coaching skills, conducted by CSC and the globally renowned Coaches Training Institute. So far, managers from PSD and the ministries of Law, and Community Development, Youth and Sports (now known as Culture, Community and Youth) have participated in the workshop.

Feedback on the coaching workshop has been positive. Many managers have learnt that they needed to hone their listening skills and “focus on the person rather than the problem”, in the words of one participant.

Another shared: “I can have a greater impact on others by developing them than to provide solutions [for them].”

Responding to feedback

One of the key concerns voiced by a number of the officers who spoke to Challenge was how the “fast-tracking” of scholarship holders could dampen their own prospects in the government. One officer quipped that he did not see any point in giving feedback on this issue: “Most of our bosses are scholars – would things change even if we voice it out?”

Perhaps this impression will change, now that PSD has announced plans to make the career development of

non-scholarship holders a priority. Its Careers and Attraction Cluster will be reconstituted as the Career Development and Management Cluster, with a new focus on developing policies and frameworks for the job prospects of all officers.

Happily, too, a number of public service agencies have begun to make staff engagement a priority by paying close attention to feedback.

At the Central Provident Fund Board (CPF Board), for instance, there are various feedback channels that officers can use to share their thoughts and concerns. After CPF Board Chief Executive Yee Ping Yi joined the Board in late 2010, he made it a point to meet staff in small groups to get to know them better. Now, he participates actively on CPF Board’s Intranet forum where he is known to personally respond to comments and engage in conversations with officers.

Such an open and communicative environment has led to a three-point improvement in the Board’s Employee Empowerment and Involvement index, as shown in a recent Employee Opinion Survey.

At the Ministry of Health (MOH), the Corporate Human Resource Division began taking steps to improve its staff’s work-life balance, following an employee engagement survey in 2010. An example would be its “Blue Sky Friday” initiative, a monthly affair that allows staff to knock off work half an hour early to encourage them to have dinner with their loved ones.

GETTING A FULL PICTURE

At CPF Board, scholarship holders and other officers identified as possessing high potential are rotated among departments for exposure to varied work areas. This gives them a fuller picture of the Board’s work, and first-hand experience in serving CPF members.

Ms Heidi Chan, Assistant Director at the Board’s Research Department, has also worked on policy review and on the front line, where she had to enforce Medisave contributions from self-employed CPF members. “It was not easy managing upset or irate members on a regular basis, but it really, truly makes you understand how our policies impact our people,” she said.

“The opportunity to experience the different aspects of CPF work has been invaluable. Whether in policy, operations or research, it makes you think that much harder about how you can make things better.”

support them and work with them. Hence, their resources are conserved towards doing a better job.”

Emotional connection helps

Staff engagement is not only affected by work matters and practices. Understanding bosses who offer a personal touch can strengthen the emotional connection that employees have with the organisation.

A public officer related that her former supervisor was not just a boss, but also a friend: “We talked about work and personal stuff. When my grandmother fell ill, my supervisor even visited her at the hospital.”

A former officer said bosses should interact with their staff beyond “official tea sessions”. He said: “These sessions are too formal and structured. People may think, are they assessing my Current Estimated Potential based on what I’m saying?” Supervisors and leaders, he said, should try to understand who the officers are outside of work, and what motivates them.

Communication works both ways – leaders should allow their subordinates to get to know them better too.



Finding strength in comrades

DSTA’s Zoe Lim shared what motivates her at work: “Nothing makes one smile as much as a buddy smiling at you first thing in the morning, or having a coffee to brighten up your day. Knowing that people [are working] with you towards a common goal makes the tumultuous journey worthwhile – no matter how massively frustrating the situation may be.”

To read Zoe’s full note, go to: <https://cube.gov.sg/Lists/Shared%20Info/DispForm.aspx?ID=549>. You will first be prompted to log in to, or sign up for Cube.

Building trust

Trusting staff is another good way of engaging them. Senior Health Policy Analyst Lee Huanyan is glad that his superiors at MOH value his input and encourage him to make meaningful contributions at work. He also enjoys enough freedom in deciding how best to formulate and implement policies. Feeling that he can make a real difference through his work, he spends extra time outside of office hours thinking about how he can be even better at his job.

Mr Lee’s dedication highlights the benefits of establishing trust between

superiors and subordinates. Such trust could lead to “extra-role behaviours” which means employees willingly go beyond their job scope to accomplish organisational goals, said Associate Professor Tan Hwee Hoon, who teaches organisational behaviour and human resource at the Lee Kong Chian School of Business, Singapore Management University. Building trust at the workplace can also benefit the employer in other ways. A/Prof Tan explained: “When trust exists between subordinates and their supervisors, employees do not need to ‘cover their backs’ as they know that their supervisor will

“Staff will want to know their leaders, what they stand for, what they believe in, and the authentic person behind the decisions and actions. Leaders will have to make the effort to reveal this side of themselves,” said EDB’s Mr Yip.

At the end of the day, a public officer is not just a cog in the large wheel of the Public Service. Each and every one of them deserves to feel valued, and to find meaning in work. It may be a tough battle to engage every officer, but in today’s war for talent, is the Public Service willing to give it its best shot? **■**

The WHEEL *to* SUCCEED

Copenhagen is arguably the world's most bicycle-friendly city, making it one of the most liveable too. Challenge meets up with its Mayor of Culture and Leisure to find out why.

Text by Chen Jingting *Photo by* John Heng



IMAGINE YOU'RE DRIVING A car, stuck in morning traffic and late for work. Meanwhile cyclists whiz past you in a separate bike lane. Wouldn't you wish you were on a bike too?

In Copenhagen, this wish is reality: about 55% of the Danish capital's 500,000 inhabitants use cycling as the main mode of transport.

Finding the easier way out

Copenhagen succeeded in creating such a strong biking culture, says the city's Mayor of Culture and Leisure Pia Allerslev, by ensuring the safety of riders. For example, uninterrupted bike lanes are built 10-15cm above road level, which creates a physical barrier and protects cyclists from road traffic.

Trains and train stations have bicycle parking spaces that encourage rail commuters to hop on their bicycles when they alight, instead of relying on other modes of transport.

A city bike scheme now offers free bicycles at more than 100 bicycle stations in the city centre. Users pay a refundable deposit of about S\$4 daily to use them.

When the city's metro system is fully developed in 2018, 85% of citizens' homes, workplaces and educational institutions will be within 600m of a station.

Although cars are expensive in Copenhagen and it is tough to find parking spaces in some areas, punishing car owners to reduce car usage isn't the government's priority, says Mrs Allerslev.

"If we tell people 'you cannot go that way or you cannot do it like that', people will just be angry and say 'that's not up to you to decide'. [But] if we can [provide] a solution that will make it easier for people to go from point A to B, they will choose that."

A vibrant cycling culture is vital to Copenhagen's sustainable future as it braces itself for a population increase of 20% by 2020 and aims to become the first carbon-neutral Nordic city by 2025.

The rocky road to success

Mrs Allerslev was here as a speaker at the World Cities Summit in July. Copenhagen earned a special mention at this year's Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize, which recognises cities worldwide for their achievements in overcoming urban challenges and promoting sustainable living.

This year, the theme of sustainability centred on cycling, with cities such as New York, Malmo and Vancouver sharing their success stories of extensive bike networks and plans to further boost cycling locally.

Copenhagen arguably leads the pack in being a bike-friendly city. Bicycles have even become status symbols in Copenhagen, thanks to campaigns that promoted the trendy image of cycling, and a flourishing industry of small bike shops selling "amazing,

colourful... (and) the strangest bikes", in Mrs Allerslev's words.

But this was not always the case.

In the 1960s, the city was plagued by pollution and traffic congestion caused by cars. Some, including prominent city planner and architect Jan Gehl, were advocating a city built for pedestrians and cyclists instead of cars. The authorities soon realised they needed to plan the city not just for car-owners, but also for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport commuters.


Striking a balance between car and bike interests remains a tricky task today. "We just closed a central road in Copenhagen a few years ago and made it into a road for buses and bikes only. But it's not working well [with car owners]," says Mrs Allerslev of the continuing challenges.

An uphill battle?

Though some cities are following in the trails of Copenhagen, many more struggle (or are reluctant) to popularise cycling as a main form of transport.

Mrs Allerslev admits that it is not easy fitting in cycling facilities into a city's existing infrastructure. "It takes a lot of planning ahead and a lot of political courage to reduce roads for cars and make bike lanes. And it's a huge investment (as) we try to build 15-30km (of new bike lanes) every year."

She acknowledges that for Singapore, the humid climate is an additional challenge. In Copenhagen, men and women can cycle to work directly in their respective suits and dresses because of the cool weather. Here, cyclists may have to prepare extra sets of clothes to change into on warm days.

Still, as cycling continues to be a hot topic in sustainable living, Singapore may want to consider how it can make cycling safer and more convenient for its citizens – one pedal at a time. 



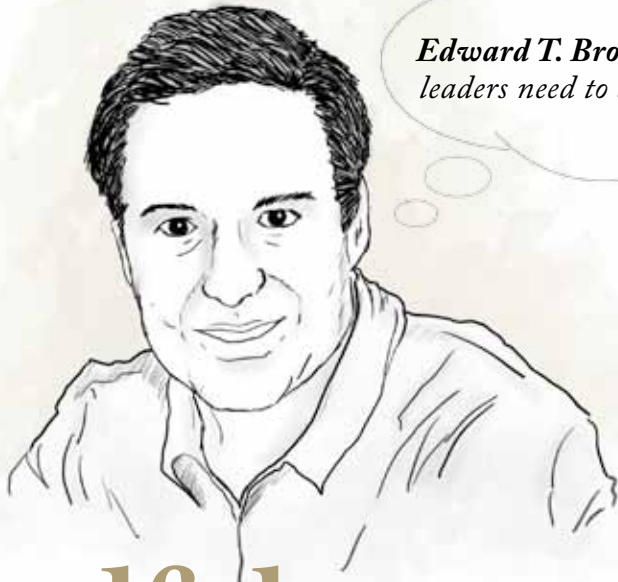
SPECIALISED BIKE LANES

Out of Copenhagen's 412km of bike lanes, some are built farther from roads so cyclists can enjoy quieter, greener surroundings. Super bike lanes (highways for cyclists) are also being constructed for quick and easy journeys between the suburbs and the city.

LATEST MILESTONES IN SINGAPORE'S JOURNEY TO BOOST CYCLING

- The recently opened North-Eastern Riverine Loop enables cyclists to visit sites such as Punggol Waterway Park, Sengkang Riverside Park and Lorong Halus Wetland. Cyclists can also enjoy water views of Sungei Dekar and the Johor Straits along the 26km loop.
- In June this year, 300 cyclists took to the roads to share the message of safe cycling.

This is the first of a three-part series on the World Cities Summit that was held in Singapore in July 2012.



Edward T. Brown on why leaders need to be mindful.

Mindfulness: A Key Element to Effective Leadership

LEADERSHIP BOOKS, SEMINARS and workshops may give a plethora of advice on leading effectively. But they all agree that “vision” is a key component of leadership.

Warren Bennis, a pioneer in the field of leadership studies, offers a useful definition: “Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.” This definition captures all acts of leadership, whether they are instantaneous, or long-term strategic endeavours of a CEO or a prime minister.

An act of leadership can take place in a few seconds or may be a planned reign. For example, it is an act of leadership if a woman sees a child sitting in the path of an oncoming car and makes a split-second decision to save the child from danger. Her vision may simply be to run out, scoop the child up, and run to the other side of the road. In that short span of time, she has taken the lead by creating a vision, and translating it into reality by saving the child.

Along with vision, mindfulness is a key element of effective leadership. The woman in the example above would have had to assess the chances

of reaching the child without killing herself before acting.

Just what is mindfulness and how does one achieve it? Mindfulness is the act of noticing new things or processes. It is being actively alert in the immediate moment and taking in and accounting for all of one’s surroundings.

Mindfulness is the act of noticing new things or processes. It is being actively alert in the immediate moment.

Mindfulness is distinguished from mindlessness. When a person is mindless, he or she is processing information according to preconceived notions.

A professor of mine used to say, “Most people would rather you hear their story than grant their wish.” I was reminded of that quote when I read about the mindful behaviour of tax officer Mohamad Fauzi Bin Mohamad in the last issue of *Challenge* (Sep/Oct 2012). Confronted with an irate taxpayer, rather than allowing himself to be angered, he listened to the complaint, empathised, and patiently

explained why the policy required the taxpayer to pay a late fee. She paid the penalty. Mr Fauzi clearly understood that a mindful public officer owes professionalism to the disgruntled as well as to the delighted.

There are many ways to develop mindfulness, but allow me to suggest a technique that you can use with your colleagues as well as in the field. Public officers in the US often rue open meetings with the public because they frequently turn into gripe sessions. Singaporean public service professionals have told me the same thing. One approach has altered the tone in many of these sessions. Before citizen complaints begin, the public officer might say, “I don’t want to assume anything on your behalf and I want to fully understand your concerns so that they are properly addressed. Please help me. When you raise an issue...I will repeat my understanding of your concern back to you and I would ask you to correct any misunderstandings on my part.” This begins a collaborative process between the citizens and the public officers.

All societies teach the golden rule of reciprocity: “Do unto others as you

would have done to you.” One of the exciting, as well as challenging, aspects of public service is that one never knows what one is going to be confronted with next. Being as mindful as public officer Fauzi – remembering that respectfulness is likely to beget respectfulness in return – is likely to garner the most positive outcomes. ■

Edd Brown is the founder of VeritasRISING International, a training and consulting company focusing on sales and leadership issues. His work on mindful leadership is available at www.mindfullleadership.com.

DARE to DISRUPT

by **Prof Lui Pao Chuen**

Senior Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2004-to date)

Advisor of National Research Foundation (2006-to date)

Chief Defence Scientist, MINDEF (1986-2008)



DEAR YOUNG OFFICER,

THE SINGAPORE PUBLIC Service has had some exceptional officers. What made them so? They had dared to break through the boundaries of systems with disruptive innovations; this requires *foresight* to anticipate future needs, and courage, to take risks in forging new paths forward.

I was an SAF engineer in my youth. I think defence engineers owe a debt of gratitude to our first Minister for Defence Dr Goh Keng Swee, for the trust he had in us. Dr Goh gave us his personal authority to conceptualise, plan, implement and deliver major projects. I remember I once timidly asked Dr Goh if he would approve the appointment of a prime contractor to develop a major system for the SAF. He replied no. He wanted us young officers to take on the project and to bear responsibility for it. Dr Goh said, "The experience gained in managing complex projects is as valuable as the project itself!"

There were few places in the world where newly graduated engineers were given such interesting projects that carried great responsibilities. With the trust placed on our shoulders, we worked our guts out not to let him down. Dr Goh wanted us to run like racehorses, and he had to rein us in from time to time, instead of having to whip us to run faster. We made mistakes and corrected them when they surfaced.


Our self-confidence grew with the completion of each project. We learned by doing, and by accepting responsibility. We bought specialist knowledge and expertise to fill the gaps, but we did not buy the responsibility. It was a privilege that had been entrusted to us, and we worked continuously to uphold that trust.

I want to encourage you to have the courage to take risks in forging a new way forward. Dare to break through the boundaries of existing systems.

NEWater is an example of having the foresight to anticipate future needs. Did you know that PUB's pilot plant to treat wastewater was built back in 1974? Then, the costs were astronomical; the plant unreliable. We had to shelve the idea, but it was not forgotten. We were waiting, for a technological breakthrough that would make water

reclamation economically viable. In 1998, this breakthrough finally arrived. Professor Andrew Benedek commercialised his invention of the low pressure membrane; our costs plunged and our treated water was excellent. So, 26 years after the pilot project, our first NEWater plant was completed in 2000. And with NEWater, we have gained our independence from Johor water.

Finally, I want to encourage you to have the courage to take risks in forging a new way forward. Dare to break through the boundaries of existing systems. In 1972, PSA introduced a berth for third-generation container vessels, becoming the first port in Southeast Asia to do so. Based on container traffic at that time, there was no economic case for this investment. PSA faced scepticism. But they had assessed that container traffic would dominate the shipping world, and went ahead with construction. Soon after, container traffic did dominate the shipping world; our port was ready for the spike in cargo vessels, and PSA was proven right.

So, young officer, uphold steadfastly the responsibilities given to you, consider the needs of the future, and have the courage to break through systemic boundaries. And you, too, can be a disruptive innovator. 

“Our HR policies need to be flexible...”

With a wealth of experience in diverse portfolios, Yong Ying-I, in her latest stint as Permanent Secretary of the Public Service Division, is looking at making HR practices more up-to-date.

Text by Wong Sher Maine Photos by Norman Ng



THE GOVERNMENT'S NEW Human Resource chief has admitted that its policies are a tad old-fashioned – and need to change. Currently, policies are based on the somewhat outdated idea that officers will stick with a civil service career for life.

But what happens if a public officer wants to work four days a week, and spend the rest of his time running a performing arts group? What if he wants to take three months' leave to help the needy in Cambodia? These are questions Ms Yong has asked herself.

“We haven't crossed that bridge yet,” says the newly minted Permanent Secretary of the Public Service Division (PSD). “At the moment our reaction would be, ‘Oh, gosh. We need to think about what the answer should be.’”

But she does add, encouragingly: “Our HR policies need to be sufficiently flexible to recognise these needs, in order to retain these people.” An example of a possible solution would be to hire on a part-time basis.

At the same time, there needs to be “greater liberalisation” in pay and benefits. “As the government becomes more complex... setting [the same] standards across the whole government probably creates unnecessary rigidity,” she explains. Hence PSD is exploring ways to give agencies greater room in tweaking policies, so they can “do what they need” to recruit, retain and motivate staff.

Ms Yong left her Permanent Secretary portfolio at the Ministry of Health in April. Now she oversees HR practices that concern the careers of 130,000 public officers

working in 15 ministries and 63 statutory boards.

At the interview at Recipes, a restaurant at The Treasury, Ms Yong is wearing her trademark bouffant and dimples. She reveals that the last six months have been about “re-visiting assumptions”.

Career development

From her experience, Ms Yong observes that the number one concern of public officers is invariably career development.

She says: “Whether you are able to retain officers is not just about whether they enjoy their current job or like their colleagues, or if they are doing meaningful work. It is also about articulating sufficiently attractive propositions in career development. Officers want more experiences, whether it is in training, job exposure or different job postings.”

When asked if she herself had ever entertained the thought of seeking out a different destiny, outside of the Public Service, she pauses, before replying: “I’ve done internships and summer jobs in private companies, both here and overseas. But I haven’t seriously thought of leaving the Public Service. I’ve changed

jobs so many times within the public sector I don’t think I ever had a chance to get bored.”

It’s not difficult to see why. In a brief summary, Ms Yong has tackled policy work at the Ministry of Trade & Industry, worked the ground at the Ministry of Home Affairs, and then ascended the leadership rung when she became CEO of the Infocomm Development Authority. She next worked with trade unions when she was at the Ministry of Manpower, before venturing into healthcare policy at the Ministry of Health.

“I’m a Jill of all trades,” she merrily declares, her dimples dancing. “I think one of the lessons as a generalist leader is that it is important to know what you don’t know. I’m not a Superwoman; I don’t pretend to be an expert in anything. When you recognise you’re not an expert, it’s about building a team where the team is stronger than the individual.”

Guarding private time

Ms Yong also had something to say about work-life balance, which she feels that leaders should respect.

If she sends her staff an email late at night, for instance, she makes sure she tells them that she doesn’t ex-

pect an instant reply. “If you don’t say it, unless there is a crisis, people second-guess.”

It is a considerate gesture, something she learnt from Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong during her appointment as his Principal Private Secretary. “He was sending emails late at night, and he was sweet enough to tell his staff at the Monetary Authority of Singapore, ‘I have a different body clock, I work late at night and I come into work late. Please don’t feel obligated if you receive this email late at night that you must reply [right away].’”

For herself, too, Ms Yong, who is single and lives with her parents, makes sure she has her own private time. “I try to block Wednesday lunch and once in the weekend,” she says, referring to her twice-a-week Pilates routine which evolved from her training in ballet (“I know you don’t believe it. I do mean ballet.”).

“My staff keep trying to steal the lunchtime slot to do other things, but that’s normal,” she concludes. “We all have to make choices about what we have to spend time on, and not let the (work) diary take control.”

For more, read *Double Shot* at www.cube.gov.sg



I don't pretend to be an expert in anything. When you recognise you're not an expert, it's about building a team where the team is stronger than the individual.



Principles for PROCUREMENT



*Feeling over-cautious because of recent developments in government purchases?
There is no need to be if you follow these key principles of procurement.*

Text by Siti Maziah Masramli Illustration by Ng Shi Wei

START

Scenario:
Your department recommends buying branded pens for gifts.

Exercise Financial Prudence

Do you really need branded pens?

\$ YES \$
They have value



Comfort



No ink leakages



Long warranty



Prestige

Be Accountable To The Public For The Use Of Taxpayers' Funds

WHY?! WHY?! WHY?!

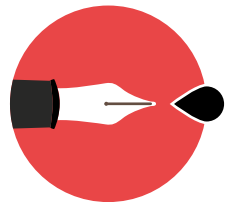
NO

We just need pens

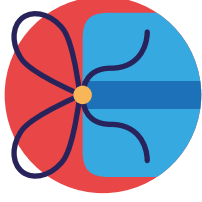
Do more market research

List Required Specifications

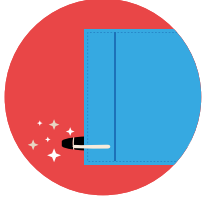
Are the following really required? Don't overspecify as doing so increases costs and limits the number of bids.



High quality?



To be used as a gift?



Looks presentable?



Long-lasting?

Post Bid on GeBIZ

Be transparent: Make objectives, criteria and procedures clear to bidders

Describe the bid with relevant **KEYWORDS**
e.g. **PEN, STATIONERY**



Categorise bid correctly in GeBIZ




Minimum opening periods

Quotation	7	working days
Tender	25	calendar days

Needs the pens sooner? Should have planned ahead!

TICK TOCK TICK TOCK



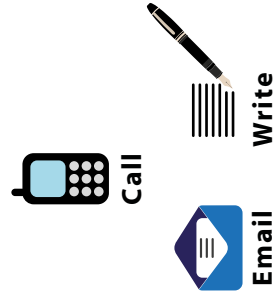
Get competitive bids: A fair, level playing field will encourage suppliers to give their best offer

Inform more than one supplier of the procurement opportunity

Remember: not all suppliers may respond

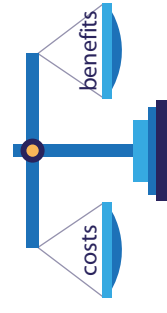


Refer suppliers to GeBIZ and ensure they all receive the same information



Evaluating Results

Look for Value for Money: Be discerning in finding the optimal balance of costs and benefits



Choose a supplier
Not necessarily the cheapest source or lowest bid

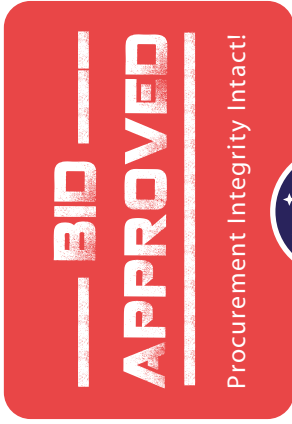
Only **ONE** bid received

MULTIPLE bids received

- Officers must further justify to the Approving Authority on why the bid is competitive or reasonable**
- Was the deadline too short?
 - Were the criteria too restrictive?
 - Are there other vendors who can supply?

The awarded bid should be **FINANCIALLY PRUDENT + NEEDS ARE JUSTIFIABLE**





Consider reviewing specifications (and cancelling procurement if needed)

Not justifiable

Still confused?

Attend the 'Managing the Purchasing Function' course at Civil Service College to learn more.

Get a star of recognition



CHARGED UP: Control Manager Chew Gim Wah (second from right) and colleagues from the Power System Operations Division work round-the-clock shifts to keep Singapore lit up.

For these unsung heroes, their goal is to avoid blackouts even during major system disturbances. When Singaporeans notice nothing amiss, it's a job well done.

The Illuminators

Meet the team that ensures Singaporeans get electricity whenever they flip the switch.

Text by Jamie Ee Photo by Justin Loh

MOST SINGAPOREANS ARE SO USED TO having a reliable supply of power that living without electricity – even for a few hours – is almost unimaginable.

But the idea hardly fazes Mr Chew Gim Wah and his colleagues who run the show at the Power System Control Centre – the nerve centre that keeps Singapore lit up.

“We have our contingency plan, standing operating procedures and training in place to prepare and train us to deal with the unexpected,” says the 42-year-old who is control manager in the Power System Operation Division of the Energy Market Authority (EMA).


For these unsung heroes, their goal is to avoid blackouts even during major system disturbances. When Singaporeans notice nothing amiss, it's a job well done.

To achieve that, Mr Chew and a team of some 30 System Control officers work on round-the-clock shifts to monitor and control the power system. They also oversee the operation of the natural gas transmission system, which affects power supply.

An additional 40 non-shift officers provide support. They ensure that the computer system that captures critical real-time data for monitoring and operating the power and natural gas systems is functioning reliably. They also carry out power and gas system analyses and studies to ensure the power system is stable and reliable.

Like his colleagues, Mr Chew has experienced a fair share of emergencies since joining EMA nine years ago. In December 2011, generators at a major power station tripped when a natural gas valve was shut, cutting off gas supply to the generators. Mr Chew and his team reacted swiftly, powering up standby generators and restarting the tripped ones, averting a widespread power failure in the country.

During such highly charged moments, he tries “to maintain a clear state of mind and keep... emotions in check. This helps to keep panic at bay”.

When he can, Mr Chew stops to admire the city lights; watching Singapore glow fills him with satisfaction. “I admire the hard work of all my colleagues in maintaining a secure and reliable power system.” 

She Goes the Extra Mile

Challenge *keeps up with a roving dentist as she closes the gap between school children and dental services.*

AS A CHILD, WHENEVER DR Ng Jing Jing had a loose tooth to be removed, she would linger outside the school dental clinic, struggling to bite the bullet and enter.

These days, students can worry less. Jing Jing, their dentist, coaxes them with “darling” or “sayang”, and warns them of the slightest pain. Her warmth and attention to detail – she prompts a girl to remove her scrunchie so that she can lie back more comfortably – puts the students at ease despite being in the dentist’s chair.

Jing Jing, 33, is a paediatric dentist in the Health Promotion Board (HPB) School Dental Service. Several times a week, she shuttles between school mobile dental clinics and the HPB headquarters at Outram.

While school dental therapists only check and clean teeth, Jing Jing conducts X-rays, prescribes antibiotics and performs tooth extractions. The more curious objects that have been rooted out of her patients’ mouths include mechanical pencil lead and staples, which Jing Jing says some children use to “dig at their gums” to relieve the pain from cavities.



for Healthier Smiles :)

Text by Siti Maziah Masramli Photos by Zakaria Zainal

It gives me great satisfaction when a child who comes into the clinic crying and yelling leaves with a smile.

The senior dentist, who has 10 years' experience, treats students from 40 schools in the west. She has a soft spot for younger children ("they're innocent and do what you say"), noting that older students are often trickier, ignore advice and can even get mouthy. Parents and teachers can be uncooperative too. Once, a father said to her, "Call the police, then!" when approached about his wayward son who had refused to go for treatment.

Jing Jing herself became a mother just a year ago. While keen to spend more time with her young son, she says she "can never really leave" the Public Service because of her special needs patients who come to HPB for treatments. "They get attached to their caretakers and keep coming back to the same ones, even though they may be 20 years old," she explains.

And while many of her fellow dentists have gone into more lucrative private practice, Jing Jing is happy to stay, specifically to serve less privileged children who cannot afford basic treatment. Her joy comes from seeing them leave her clinic pain- and infection-free.

But her ultimate reward is when a child no longer fears going to the dentist: "It gives me great satisfaction when a child who comes into the clinic crying and yelling leaves with a smile." 🇸🇬

For an extended story on Jing Jing's work, go to Challenge Online at www.challenge.gov.sg



1. Dr Ng Jing Jing (left) extracts a decayed tooth with support from dental assistant Mary Kaw (right).
2. Jing Jing starts this day at 8am welcoming students at the Bukit Panjang Government High School mobile dental clinic.
3 - 4. Jing Jing records her patients' details before treating them.



5. A lead apron protects students from X-ray radiation.
6. Jing Jing explains to student Cheong Gin Hao on his teeth's condition after an X-ray.
7. Jing Jing takes time to share her expertise with junior dentist Dr Seralyn Quek (left) at the HPB School Dental Centre.
8. Once or twice monthly, Jing Jing meets with her mentor, Acting Director (Policy Division) Lek Yin Yin, for advice on leadership and managing staff.
9. At the School Dental Centre, Jing Jing explains dental procedures to concerned parents accompanying their children for appointments.



HACKING YOUR WORK & TRAINING

WITH A SWIPE OF THE FINGER

Tablet devices are more than just sexy Web surfing and gaming devices. No, really. Did you know they can have serious educational applications for adults?

Text by **Tang Han Siang**

AS MORE ATTENTION IS directed towards applying technologies to enhance training effectiveness, mobile tablet computing devices like the iPad are taking centre stage for their ease of use and varied applications.

A 2011 study by the Civil Service College (CSC), *Exploring the use of iPads in a leadership training course in Singapore*, showed that the application of iPads for adult training adds value to the learning process and enlivens the learning experience. Schools and training institutions are exploring their use, and some already have them in classrooms to support multiple learning scenarios.

Since March 2011, CSC has used the iPad in many training programmes ranging from personal effectiveness to governance. iPad-supported activities include collaborative brainstorming, posting reflection messages to a shared online platform, responding instantly to Web polls and performing ad hoc research. They have also been deployed as “learning companions” so participants can refer to training materials while capturing notes, photos or videos on the go.

iPads were also used to enhance learning at the recently concluded “Leaders in Governance Programme” designed for international senior managers. Apart from containing the training materials, the handy device allowed delegates to complete online feedback at their own time throughout the duration of the programme, access a wealth of supple-

mental online multimedia resources, and leverage its many applications to take notes, photos or videos for journaling. Most of CSC’s participants have found iPads easier to use than laptop computers, while others welcomed the paperless approach of disseminating digitised training materials consisting of hundreds of slides and volumes of case studies.

If you’re an officer looking to improve your productivity at work, or a trainer seeking to spice up your courses, here are some useful free applications for iOS and Android platforms:

They have also been deployed as “learning companions” so participants can refer to training materials while capturing notes, photos or videos on the go.

Lino: Provides online graphical canvases where you can post digital sticky notes containing text or photos, and allows you to re-organise them visually. Share the same account with participants so they can use the same canvas to view and share notes. Create multiple canvases for group activities!

Popplet: Another popular alternative for offline brainstorming, mind-

mapping or small project work. This pinboard application will let you create galleries, diagrams, journals and notes using text or images.

Dropbox: Cloud storage service for you to store non-confidential training materials. Upload documents from your computer, then broadcast the account used to all participants so they can start accessing the same materials from their devices. Revised documents can be uploaded anytime and all participants receive them instantly with one tap of the refresh button.

Catch: Makes it snappy to take notes, photos and even audio recordings on the go. Use this for journaling, brainstorming, group chats or disseminating administrative notes. Very similar to the popular Evernote application, but with a simpler user interface.

Splice: Easy-to-use application for project groups to edit and package audio, video or photos into a presentation clip in a jiffy! Allows learners to be content producers instead of just content consumers.

Learning in the classroom is well and truly changing. The next time you look at a tablet device, be sure to think about its myriad training applications. And don’t forget to try out the useful applications at your fingertips! 📱

Tang Han Siang is a manager for Learning Design & Technology at the Civil Service College.

challenge's

8 BEST

SET LUNCHES UNDER \$10

Cheap chow, chop-chop!

Lunch time or crunch time, sometimes you need everything done all at once. Challenge rounds up lunch sets served speedily to fill your belly for under \$10.

featuring

- Cafe Donut Factory
- Bumbu Desa
- New Madras
- Woodlands Restaurant
- Jai-Thai
- Just Acia
- Omar Taiwanese Cafe
- Saizeriya Ristorante
- E Caffe
- Shinjuku Restaurant

test by SITI MAZIAH MASRAMLI &
BRIDGETTE SEE photos by JOHN HENG





Cafe Donut Factory

With its cheery orange decor and pretty sweets on display, this cafe will surely chase away the boardroom blahs. For \$9.10, you get to choose a main dish from a variety of Western and Asian fare, a drink and a generous serving of soup. Top up your meal with a donut for 90 cents and you get a perfect ten of a meal. While this combo option lasts all day, you can score an even better deal between 2pm and 6pm with the lunch time special that offers a main dish with a drink and a donut for just \$7.50.



Where: 10 Sinaran Drive, Novena Square 2, #02-95, S(307506) **Telephone:** 6352 2297
Opening hours: 10am – 9.30pm **Website:** www.donutfactory.com.sg



Bumbu Desa

Looking for a quiet, cosy spot for your meet-ups and discussions? Accessible yet discreetly tucked away in a corner of Novena MRT, this restaurant is a hidden gem. Feast on authentic, MSG-free Indonesian favourites like *nasi pecel* (rice with beef, mixed vegetables and peanut sauce) at \$9, and enjoy the *sayur asam* (vegetables in tamarind soup) and drink that come with every lunch set. What's more, service is swift. With at least three main dishes to choose from, available from 11am to 4pm, this lunch pick is perfect for the health- and budget-conscious.

Where: 10 Sinaran Drive, Novena Square 2, #B1-01/05, S(307506) **Telephone:** 6397 2783
Opening hours: 11am – 9.30pm **Website:** bumbudesasg.com



New Madras Woodlands Restaurant

Part of a chain of hotels and restaurants in India and Singapore, this eatery, which dates back to 1983, serves hearty North and South Indian vegetarian food. The Madras *thali* ('plate' in Hindi) set at \$6.90 comprises rice with nine side dishes of assorted curries, dhals, veggies, yogurt, and a sweet vermicelli, cardamom and milk concoction called *payasam*. Cap off your meal with milky *masala* tea (\$2.50) and still get change from \$10. Bring a friend or two to enjoy lunch in this colourful, relaxing setting, where the friendly service staff will gladly explain every dish on the menu.

Where: 12, 14 Upper Dickson Road, S(207474) **Telephone:** 6297 1594
Opening hours: 7.30am – 11.30pm

Jai-Thai

Jai-Thai has been praised for its authentic Thai cuisine and prices that don't hurt the pocket. The restaurant serves up all-time favourites such as green curry (\$5), *tom yum* soup (\$5) and *phad thai* (\$5), based on the Thai owner's family recipes. The set meals start from \$5.80, which include a main dish, a drink and a simple dessert like jelly or pudding. A must-try is the pineapple rice set meal (\$8.80), which comes with a spring roll, green curry, fish with chilli sauce and pandan chicken. Jai-Thai has four outlets at Jalan Pemimpin, East Coast Road, Purvis Street and Dhoby Ghaut MRT station.



Where: 11 Orchard Road, Dhoby Xchange, #B1-12, Dhoby Ghaut MRT Station, S(238826) **Telephone:** 6338 5766
Opening hours: 11am – 3pm, 6pm – 10pm **Website:** www.jai-thai.com



Just Acia

This eatery is a budget hunter's paradise. Conveniently located above Dhoby Ghaut MRT station, it is popular with students and young working adults as all set meals come with free-flow cappuccino, hot chocolate, sodas and ice cream. The eatery doesn't use any pork or lard to prepare the variety of Western and Asian fare which range from the spicy chicken set (\$7.90) to the sambal salmon set (\$9.90). For an even better deal, get the lunch set promotion that starts from \$5.90 for dishes such as *Tori Katsu* (fried chicken) and fish and chips. Spread over a large area, the eatery has some cosy corners suitable for post-lunch powwows.



Where: 11 Orchard Road, Dhoby Xchange, #B1-45, Dhoby Ghaut MRT Station, S(238826) **Telephone:** 6338 8071
Opening hours: 11am – 10.30pm **Website:** www.justacia.com



Osmar Taiwanese Cafe

It can be hard to spot a good deal amidst the many eateries at The Central at Clarke Quay. But the *Challenge* team found this little cafe that offers eight generously sized bento sets all below \$10. Each wooden disposable bento comes packed to the brim with star anise-flavoured rice, vegetables (corn, beans, broccoli and brinjal), half an egg and the main dish you order. (We were impressed by the entire chicken drumstick that came with the Fried Chicken Leg set!) A refreshing cup of cold Chinese tea is included. Come early before the place fills up.

Where: 6 Eu Tong Sen Street, The Central, #B1-29, S(059817) **Telephone:** 6224 0289
Opening hours: 12pm – 8pm

Saizeriya Ristorante E Caffe

This Italian-styled Japanese family restaurant is known for serving up comfort food at affordable prices. You may fancy the chicken bolognaise gratin (\$4.90), the salmon pizza (\$7.90) or oven-baked escargot (\$5.90) from the à la carte menu, but the best deal is the set lunch, which starts from \$5.90. It includes a main dish such as black pepper chicken spaghetti, a salad and free-flow drinks from the self-service station. It is no wonder the no-frills eatery is often crowded and a little noisy during peak hours. Lunch hours are from 11am to 5pm. There are four outlets at Liang Court, City Square Mall, Bukit Timah Plaza and Toa Payoh Central.



Where: Blk 190 Toa Payoh Lorong 6, #02-514, S(310190) **Telephone:** 6253 8001
Opening hours: 11am – 10pm **Website:** www.saizeriya.com.sg



Shinjuku Restaurant

Cuppage Plaza is known as Singapore's Little Tokyo for its cluster of Japanese eateries and bars. Shinjuku is a charming little place that is popular with Japanese salarymen. If you're dining solo, you'll probably be seated at the bar where you get the best view of the chefs in action. Further inside are small tatami-lined rooms where diners sit at low tables, in Japanese fashion. Be prepared to remove your shoes before entering. This *izakaya* – a typical Japanese “after-work” casual restaurant – offers different daily bento specials at \$10 nett; green tea comes at an extra \$1. A weekly menu is posted at the door. 📌

Where: 5 Koek Road, Cuppage Plaza, #01-01, S(228796) **Telephone:** 6734 8436
Opening hours: Mon to Sat 12pm – 2.30pm, 6pm – 1.30am; Sun & PH 12pm – 2.30pm, 6pm – 11pm

Editor: Have you been to these places? Tell us your experience and if you know of more affordable set lunch places, email us at psd_challenge@psd.gov.sg.

HOW TO HACK THAT PERFORMANCE REVIEW

It's that time of the year again. Will you get promoted? Will you get a raise? It all boils down to how well you've done the whole year. Still, no harm trying to 'sell' yourself a little harder on that Staff Appraisal Report. The Challenge Department of Non-Reliable Advice has some ideas!

SINGAPORE CIVIL SERVICE
WORK REVIEW

CONFIDENTIAL

Name:		Period of Assessment:	Next Review Month:
ACHIEVEMENTS & PROGRESS DURING PERIOD UNDER REVIEW			
WHAT YOU DID	WHAT YOU CAN SAY		
Made tea and coffee for visiting guests	Concocted perfectly heated energising beverages made from roasted coffee beans and fermented tea leaves to the exact taste specifications of esteemed visitants to ensure their enjoyment of hospitality.		
Participated in National Conversation	Dedicated time to participate in visioning exercise of the role of public officers in fostering better governance in Singapore. Supported discussion by suggesting landmark points such as the incentivisation of officers with intrinsic rewards like commendation plaques and skills upgrading courses.		
Took down notes of minutes for two major meetings involving other agencies	Flawlessly captured the verbatim at two important interagency meetings. The representation of multiple agencies' viewpoints in the Notes of Meeting ensures future Whole-of-Government collaboration and cooperation. Helped to foster agencies' increased ownership of issues.		
Arranged lunch for visiting public officers from other countries	Carefully researched the food preferences of overseas guests using 'Google' and 'LinkedIn'. Ensured quality of lunch by arriving early on-site before said event to supervise the set up of tables, chairs, bin bags, and to defend the security of each dish from being compromised by hungry guests until the specified lunch hour.		
Clearing security for visitors	Maintained a safe, worry-free environment for fellow officers by collating important personal details such as full alias, Identity Card and car registration numbers of visitors for cross-checking in visitor systems database.		
Booking rooms for meetings	Ensured the availability of ideal locations with ample facilities conducive for ideas-sharing assemblies. Exercised foresight by booking venues months in advance in order to guard against unforeseen room shortage.		



& PROGRESS
nts / new initiatives
b targets are met



Need We Say More?

Here's where we let the humour loose, and learn to laugh at ourselves a little more. Have ideas or jokes about the Public Service? Email us: psd_challenge@psd.gov.sg

Hat tip to Kay Chew Lin from the Health Promotion Board for suggesting this topic for *The Irreverent Last Page*.

TRIVIA QUIZ

1 From the latest Public Service Employee Engagement Survey forms collected in 2011 by the Civil Service College (CSC), the overall engagement level was _____.

- a. 53%
- b. 63%
- c. 73%
- d. 83%

2 NEWater is an example of a disruptive technology that has given Singapore greater water independence. PUB's first pilot wastewater treatment plant was built in _____.

- a. 1974
- b. 1984
- c. 1994
- d. 2004

3 The key principles governing the Government Procurement framework are _____.

- a. Transparency
- b. Open and Fair Competition
- c. Value for Money
- d. All of the above

4 According to IM guidelines, the Quotation Opening Period for Open Quotations shall not be less than _____, including the day on which the quotation is called.

- a. 3 working days
- b. 5 working days
- c. 7 working days
- d. 9 working days

5 Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced during his 2012 National Day Rally that there will be a national conversation involving Singaporeans to talk about the future of Singapore. This conversation is called _____.

- a. Singapore Talking
- b. Future Conversation
- c. Conversation about the Future of Singapore
- d. Our Singapore Conversation

5

Pairs of Movie Vouchers to be won

Submit your answers by
December 03, 2012 at:

Challenge Online
www.challenge.gov.sg

Please include your name,
email address, agency and
contact number.

All winners will be notified
by email.

CONGRATULATIONS

to the winners of the
September/October 2012

Trivia Quiz

Lee Yi Jun
NLB

Naomi Low
LTA

Bryan Chew
MHA

Chua Minrui
MCYS

Ang Ghim Chee
MOE

Together,
EXCELLING
with a Heart



EXCEL Convention
2012

Thursday & Friday | 15 & 16 November 2012
Gardens by the Bay | Flower Dome
<http://www.ps21.gov.sg/ExCEL2012/>

