

Better tech adoption by SMEs urged to help their businesses

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“THE SME landscape is not a uniform one, and each industry has its own unique characteristics and challenges,” Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Sim Ann said on Thursday.

“The Industry Transformation Maps are thus intended to provide customised strategies to facilitate our businesses in their respective transformation journeys by raising productivity, accelerating innovation, diversifying and expanding overseas, and upskilling our workers,” said Ms Sim, who is also Senior Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth, in a keynote address at the “Transformation Now” seminar organised by *The Business Times* and supported by Canon.

Held at the Marina Mandarin Hotel, the seminar discussed digitalisation of businesses. It also highlighted the need for business owners to change their mindsets and improve technology adoption that can help their businesses.

SMEs (small and medium enterprise) play a substantial role in shaping the future economic development trajectory of Singapore and sustaining the country’s competitiveness as global competition intensifies.

SMEs account for 99 per cent of the enterprises in Singapore and contribute nearly half of the gross domestic product while employing 70 per cent of the workforce.

Multinational corporations and government-linked companies employ the majority of high-quality labour force, leading to lack of high-quality labour for SMEs.

Tan Khee Giap, associate professor and co-director of the Asia Competitiveness Institute at Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, emphasised the importance of

developing local networks and understanding local practices.

Speaking on competitiveness of Singapore businesses in the region, Prof Tan announced the Enterprise Future Initiative (EFI), an effort by the Asia Competitiveness Institute to work in conjunction with trade associations and business chambers, which was also welcomed by the government.

EFI serves to help strengthen enterprises and build strong digital capabilities to innovate and to scale up, taking full advantage of the resources provided under the seven broad strategies advocated by the Committee on the Future Economy report.

The panel discussion, which was moderated by *Business Times’* senior correspondent R Sivanithy, covered what it takes to change businesses.

Derrick Kon, regional director of The Conference Board, said: “The seminar shed light on an issue that is very relevant to businesses today, and shows the importance of keeping up with the times.

“Businesses need to get themselves ready for the changing landscape, and start using technology to better their businesses.”

Government initiatives to help SMEs were also highlighted at the seminar. They included the Industry Transformation Maps (ITMs) currently being developed, as well as the SMEs Go Digital programme which will be implemented by the Info-communications Media Development Authority of Singapore in partnership with ITM sector lead agencies such as Spring Singapore to help SMEs build digital capabilities.

An SME Digital Tech Hub will also open in the third quarter of 2017, which will offer specialist advice to SMEs for new areas such as cybersecurity and data analytics.



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