Design thinking as a means to business success

S’pore firms are beginning to apply design principles to enact organisational change

BY AZZLI JAMAIN

Design thinking can be thought of as a protocol, a strategy or a way of thinking for solving problems and creating new opportunities. It means thinking like a designer to question the problem at hand, seeing what needs to get done, and then generating multiple perspectives to the solution.

In Singapore, competitiveness and develop sustainable growth through product and service innovation.

The DesignSingapore Council (Dsg) rose to the challenge, establishing the Design Thinking & Innovation Academy (DTIA) to infuse design thinking and develop design-driven innovation capabilities in private, public, and public sectors for productivity and innovation.

Playing an active role to boost design thinking in Singapore, DTIA in the last two years, where they were guided through the design thinking process and equipped with methods of application.

Subsequently, the two enterprises embarked on projects that used design thinking to redesign work processes, customer experiences or the way services, interactions, spaces, communications and staff training are run.

DBS Bank’s design thinking efforts involved a staff of around 2,300 employees.

There will be more avenues for enterprises to be equipped with design thinking skills. It was announced in 2013 that the DTIA would partner WDA to “expand the availability of design thinking training”, with up to S$2.5 million set aside over the next three years for this purpose.

Programme partners

As part of its mission to build a thriving Continuing Education and Training ecosystem...
Along the way, value gets added and a business gets driven forward.

In a new economy that prizes critical thinking skills such as complex problem-solving and decision-making, businesses are adopting design thinking as part of their core processes.

Schools are responding in order to supply a workforce that possesses these necessary skills. Design thinking is taught at some of the world's top design schools, among them Stanford University's d.school and Domus Academy in Milan.

Design thinking brings about business success by doing a makeover on the way organizations are run and planned, as well as on how products and services are made and sold. Such a transformation in business processes and strategy is based on design that is in turn centred on the needs of customers.

**Joint development**

Simon Ong, group managing director of Kingsmen Creatives and chairman of WDA's Manpower Skills and Training Council for the Design sector, said: “The Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) standards for design thinking are part of the national credentialing system and were jointly developed by industry.”

The Soup Spoon launched a project, “The Soup Spoon Union”, to expand its product offerings and at the same time, improve the efficiency of its employees. This was a new concept at the company’s Raf-les City branch that offered three food brands – SBA Noodle Bar, The Hamburger and The Soup Spoon – within the same space, with an innovative ordering system and patron location method. The application of design thinking resulted in a unique food and beverage experience that offered

WDA has appointed four programme partners to provide design thinking-related courses – IDIA, the Institute of Systems Science, the Institute of Technical Education and the Singapore Furniture Industries Council Institute. A total of 3,000 training places are expected to be offered over the next three years.

Jeffrey Ho, executive director of the Dsg, said: “Design thinking is a key differentiator to inspire innovation and achieve long-term sustainable growth for an organization. The DesignSingapore Council's partnership with WDA sets national standards for competency in design thinking that has been validated by both the design industry and businesses. More organizations are now able to benefit from training in design thinking that would help to improve the company’s efficiency and business performance.”