

Igniting the Spark through Infocomm Training

The NICF-Immerse, Grow, Navigate in Infocomm Technology with Eloquence (NICF-IGNITE) programme has sharpened the Infocomm Technology (ICT) competencies of organisations while opening doors to infocomm professions for aspiring individuals. The National University of Singapore – Institute of Systems Science’s (NUS-ISS) Yum Hui Yuen highlights the benefits of staff training for the industry as a whole.

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Since 2005, Singapore’s infocomm sector has been at the epicentre of a 10-year masterplan to strengthen the country’s key economic sectors, and shape an intelligent nation powered by an infocomm-savvy workforce.

sector. It enables organisations to recruit, develop and retain the right infocomm staff – whether they are new to the infocomm industry, or are experienced practitioners wishing to pick up a new infocomm skill for a different role within the infocomm sector.

Essentially an apprenticeship scheme, the NICF-IGNITE programme comprises an on-the-job training component with an employer, which allows new or inexperienced infocomm employees to benefit from the mentorship and supervision of skilled practitioners, and structured training programmes offered by WDA’s CET partners such as NUS-ISS.

The biggest value of such an initiative is that it combines identifying the right courses for candidates with providing a contextualised learning opportunity for them. The result? Employees who get up to speed quickly with the necessary knowledge and skills to do a job well.

Contributing to the industry

As the National CET Institute (NCI) for the infocomm sector, NUS-ISS has been supporting the NICF-IGNITE initiative since 2012 and has built up a strong track record in tailoring training courses that are relevant to specific infocomm roles. Being a practice-driven institute of higher learning, NUS-ISS offers 11 highly sought-after training courses that qualify for NICF-IGNITE funding and cater to a growing pool of corporate participants.

It isn’t just the large corporations that are benefiting from the initiative though. Increasingly, employees of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are also taking up NICF programmes, while sponsoring employers are adopting a more sustainable approach to talent development and retention, as well as government assistance. The programme is also useful for NSmen seeking a second career in infocomm. It offers an opportunity for former military men to transit into mainstream commercial careers in infocomm.

Today, NUS-ISS has a NICF-IGNITE clientele comprising both public and private sector companies. They include organisations such as PSA Corporation, International Skill Verification Services, CrimsonLogic, Ecquaria, GreenFossil and JustLogin (See box for how it has benefited from NICF-IGNITE).

The sector’s growth over the last decade has resonated well with this vision, with infocomm industry revenue contributions rising from S\$37.89 billion in 2005 to S\$148.1 billion in 2013, and the industry generating jobs for some 146,700 individuals last year¹.

The National Infocomm Competency Framework (NICF) has been integral to this development, having guided organisations and Continuing Education and Training (CET) providers such as NUS-ISS in aligning infocomm training programmes to industry demands.

Addressing manpower gaps

Still, feedback from a number of corporate customers shows that a niggling challenge remains. While some organisations have been lucky enough to find people with the right organisational fit, a different dilemma unfolds when these candidates lack a specific skills set or knowhow to perform a required role.

The NICF-IGNITE programme conceptualised by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) helps to address manpower gaps in the infocomm

NICF-IGNITE BENEFICIARIES

JustLogin, a local cloud-based human resource software provider, has found an excellent employee through the NICF-IGNITE programme. “It’s a good way for SMEs like us to attract new staff and tap into some government support as we equip them with the relevant skills and knowledge,” says CEO, Mr K.C. Kwa.

As for Joshua Tan, an infantry officer and an infocomm tertiary student prior to joining JustLogin, the chance to acquire new insights on Cloud Economics & Technology and Software Testing under the NICF framework has boosted his confidence in joining the competitive infocomm sector. “As a software programmer, it’s important to hone my skills and stay up-to-date with infocomm developments. The training courses at NUS-ISS have helped me to understand and apply best practices, and I can now relate on a deeper level to my role at work.”

Professional courses such as Java Development, Agile Development, Software Testing and Design Patterns have been highly popular at NUS-ISS as expertise in Project Management, Business Analysis, and Software Design & Development gain prominence in today’s business context and foster smarter communities and cities. It is an outcome that will create even more career development and advancement opportunities for the infocomm workforce.

To ease transitions into the infocomm industry, and incentivise unemployed course participants, NUS-ISS value-adds to the NICF learning framework by providing career counselling and placement services for infocomm job seekers. As a result,

both organisations and potential employees, and is able to understand and match the requirements of both parties better.

Riding the next growth wave

Employee training remains a force multiplier, sparking greater innovation for companies and the industry as a whole. Aside from enhancing the employability of industry talents, the NICF-IGNITE programme provides a pipeline of job-ready infocomm workers – the most essential element for organisations looking to ride the next wave of growth.

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