



How SkillsFuture is helping SMEs scale the learning and capability development curve to improve productivity and branding



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SMEs often lament the fact that they have limited resource and talent to invest in learning and development. All these changed with the SkillsFuture initiative launched in 2015. As part of the overall SkillsFuture programme, various Industry Transformation Maps, Skills Frameworks and initiatives were progressively launched to help companies and workers upgrade their skills and improve productivity.

The case study of Shalom International Movers shows how a local company strategically leveraged the various SkillsFuture initiatives to improve the knowledge and skills of its workers to increase the productivity and image of the company.

Shalom International Movers is a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) operating in the logistics services sector with a staff strength of around 200 workers. Similar to many local SMEs, Shalom is family-run and people-oriented, and many of its workers have stayed with the company for many years. Yet Shalom struggles to attract talents and operates without a learning and development team.



In 2017, the Institute for Adult Learning (IAL) partnered with the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) to attach Certified Workplace Learning Specialist trained by IAL to participating companies to improve their On-the-Job Training (OJT) system. Shalom took advantage of this initiative to implement an OJT system and began training its supervisors to become certified OJT Trainers. As a result, Shalom was able to develop OJT blueprints and upskill the supervisors as trainers. As many of these supervisors had little formal education, they were filled with pride and were more motivated in their work when they became certified OJT Trainers. Following this successful implementation, Shalom had a formalised OJT for new hires, which improved its overall performance and assured customers of its consistent quality service.

Bolstered by the success in the OJT initiative, Shalom again participated in a programme initiated by IAL and the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) in the Lean Skills Development Programme. This programme seeks to train and help companies implement lean thinking while improving their productivity. Shalom sent its supervisors and Chief Operation Officer to attend this 6-month programme and worked intensively with consultants from SIT and IAL on-site to implement lean projects and adopt lean practices. Upon the completion of this programme, Shalom's lean project team onboarded other staff and influenced them to view productivity improvement as helping them to work more efficiently and effectively. The main takeaway of participating in these initiatives was a sense of empowerment and the ability to learn new things.

With a keen focus on continuous improvements in the workplace, Shalom then participated in the SME Mentorship Programme by Enterprise Singapore and the Sapphire programme by Singapore National Employer Federation to further enhance its learning and development practices. As a result, Shalom's staff gained the confidence and skills to conduct roadshows in schools and industry fairs organised by MOE and A*STAR. Not only did these efforts help to improve

the overall morale and branding of Shalom as a leading player in the logistics services sector, it also gave customers assurance of high performance and quality.

In a bid to constantly seek improvements, Shalom participated in IAL's Learning Enterprise Alliance (LEA) initiative in 2018 to help companies develop future skills to remain competitive. Having actively participated in all these learning initiatives, Shalom International Movers was named the *Best Workplace to Work* and *Best Workplace to Learn 2018* by the Great Place to Work Institute Singapore and IAL.

As the above-mentioned SkillsFuture initiatives have allowed Shalom to reap benefits in the area of learning and development, the company decided to participate in InnovPlus. It is an initiative by IAL to facilitate the rapid development of learning prototypes that could help companies overcome their learning and performance challenges. Shalom won the InnovPlus' Flame Award with a \$200,000 grant for its innovative learning solution prototype.

The key takeaway from this case study is to demonstrate that SMEs, just like Shalom, do possess the ability to scale the capability development curve through a firm determination to invest in learning and development and structured help from the SkillsFuture initiatives. ■