

Innovative ideas score for quality service

Record 16 firms, individuals to be honoured, held up as role models

By **JESSICA LIM**
CONSUMER CORRESPONDENT

MANY businesses in the service industry have been hit by the manpower crunch, but a number of them are refusing to let that drag down the quality of their customer service.

Sixteen companies and individuals – a record number – were held up as role models at the Singapore Service Excellence Medallion 2015 Awards media briefing yesterday. The award ceremony will be held on Monday.

At Canon Singapore, for example, an innovative idea means every technician will get a tablet PC by the middle of this year.

This will give them real-time information on the glitches they are fixing, enabling them to bring the right tools and parts to their clients.

“This helps them cut down multiple trips, respond quicker and finish up their jobs more efficiently,” said Mr Melvyn Ho, Canon Singapore’s senior vice-president.

The company, which hires more than 500 staff here, also holds at least one dialogue a month between staff and the company’s chief executive.

The firm tracks response time and customer satisfaction levels religiously. Sixty-four per cent of its service staff, said Mr Ho, have been with the firm for more than a decade.

Canon Singapore won the Service Excellence Medallion for its strong service leadership and workforce cultures, and for its innovative service systems.

Other winners include cooking school Food Playground and the National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS).

The awards are part of Gems

Up, a service drive supported by multiple agencies: the Institute of Service Excellence at Singapore Management University, National Trades Union Congress, Spring Singapore, Singapore Tourism Board and Singapore Workforce Development Agency.

It is also the first time that small and medium-sized enterprises were among the organisation winners since the awards were introduced in 2011.

At Food Playground, which has 11 staff, customers can book and pay for their cooking classes online.

To improve service, NCCS, part of SingHealth’s cluster of healthcare services, created the role of patient relation officer.

The officers are stationed at the six NCCS clinics and treatment departments to welcome and guide patients through registration and other procedures.

They also take care of the patients while they wait in line.

NCCS also launched a system that sends patients SMS reminders 30 minutes

before their chemotherapy appointments.

Among the winners were four individuals who went the extra mile for customers: senior library officer Idah Mariyani from the National Library Board; chief bus captain D. Suppiramaniam from SMRT Corporation; deputy service manager Tan Bee Leng from POSB Woodlands branch; and senior manager Lynette Low from Canon Singapore.

Professor Cham Tao Soon, chairman of the award’s judging panel, said that many service staff here lack knowledge on how to deliver good service, such as giving food recommendations to diners.

Wages, he said, also need to go up, and companies must invest in staff training.

“We hope to see more businesses and organisations adopting these ideas and concepts into their own service practices and systems,” he said, referring to the initiatives taken by the award winners.

✉ limjess@sph.com.sg