



**Reaching out:** Employees are the brand ambassadors of DHL, says Mr Vongpusanachai (left). DHL, FedEx and UPS surged 5.6 points, 6.0 points and 4.4 points, respectively, in the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore. SpeedPost was for the first time placed into the courier category with a score of 68.7



# Delivering services that win accolades

Companies such as DHL, FedEx, SingPost and UPS have scored more points but they may have to refine strategies amid today's online shopping boom, reports **LYNN KAN**

**P**OSTAL and courier service companies such as DHL, FedEx, SingPost and UPS have succeeded in scoring more brownie points with customers over the past year, according to the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG).

But amid an online shopping boom, they may have to refine strategies that accommodate individuals rather than businesses to maintain their scores.

In the CSISG, couriers as a whole have been judged to be "more like the imagined ideal courier company", said academic director Marcus Lee at Institute of Service Excellence at SMU, which produces the CSISG.

The strongest improvements came from FedEx and DHL.

FedEx and DHL surged 6.0 points

and 5.6 points, respectively, and made headway in expectations and satisfaction, usually the biggest factors in the CSISG scores.

"This result is in line with our own monthly customer survey that we conduct to provide awareness to courier employees, enhance their performance and award good performers," said Karen Reddington, vice-president, FedEx Express South Pacific.

UPS also rose 4.4 points to 70.3. For the first time, SpeedPost was placed into the courier category with a score of 68.7.

Looking ahead, if courier and postal services want to keep the gains they have made, they need to pay greater attention to the needs of individuals.

A SingPost spokesperson said the volume of packets it has to deal with has grown 70 per cent from 2.3 million a month in 2007 to 3.9 million a month.

FedEx also noted a 35 per cent increase in home deliveries since 2009.

"Consumer profiles are much more varied than businesses and couriers should be aware of this," said Dr Lee. "What works for the business may not work for personal users."

Dr Lee cited the example of pick-up schedules. "Businesses may appreciate it when a package is picked up earlier than scheduled; they perceive that it's on its way and out of their to-do list. The personal user on the other hand expects the courier to adhere to his pick-up window, the narrower the better."

In SingPost's experience, convenience is king to the retail consumer.

It is spending \$50-\$70 million over the next few years to further improve accessibility. SingPost, with a network of 700 touch points, will spend part of that "looking into parcel

locker stations to further heighten customer convenience and accommodate their busy lifestyles", said a SingPost spokesperson.

DHL said it is devoting attention to more training for its employees. All its Singapore staff go through a two-day Certified International Specialist course, which helps DHL staff maintain a high level of service.

"Employees are the brand ambassadors of DHL and the first point of contact for our customers. Great customer experiences are enabled by inspirational leadership, an empowering culture as well as happy and fulfilled employees," said Herbert Vongpusanachai, managing director, DHL Express (Singapore).

Couriers should also consider external outreach to satisfy customers better.

Dr Lee suggested couriers spend more time with customers to teach



them how to correctly fill in airway bills, in order to ensure that satisfaction is not eroded down the line.

Retailers also have a vested interest in ensuring couriers' customer satisfaction. Often, couriers are the invisible partner representing the retailers' wares and brand.

"A smooth and efficient delivery from the retailer should in theory positively impact the retailer's satisfaction score. Thus, retailers should ensure that the couriers they use adhere to their service quality standards," said Dr Lee.

A satisfied customer does not just keep his or her eye fixated on postage pricing any more.

"Companies, in addition to branding and pricing promotions, should ensure high quality levels (e.g. phone orders processed quickly) and use innovative value-added services (e.g. mobile apps) to keep ahead," added Dr Lee.

SingPost spokesperson said it was rolling out a mobile app later this year that can calculate postage fees for the user, locate post offices and post boxes as well as a track and trace function.