



**Service is the key:**  
 Mr Lim at an EpiCentre outlet at ION Orchard. The reseller of Apple products embarked on an 18-month CCI project in January 2011. Since then, the firm's revenue has more than doubled to \$178.3 million in FY2013 from \$88.1 million in FY2010, with a compound annual growth rate of 19.3 per cent.

## Firms reap benefits of being consumer-centric

### Retailers adopting CCI see sales, wages rise, low attrition

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RETAIL firms which place greater focus on creating a positive consumer experience are reaping benefits such as low attrition rates and higher revenue, and this trickles down to staff who get to enjoy higher remuneration.

This is according to a study on the Consumer-Centric Initiative (CCI) programme by the National University of Singapore, which was commissioned by Spring Singapore. The CCI Impact Study looked at 142 companies in the retail and food & beverage sectors, and assessed the effectiveness and impact of CCI on a company's key service and financial performance metrics, from the year be-

fore to the year after CCI projects were implemented.

The study found that CCI retail companies made significant achievements, with staff seeing a 13.8 per cent increase in remuneration per worker compared with the industry benchmark of a 6 per cent rise, and sales per worker rising 13.6 per cent. Employee attrition rate was also at least 15.5 per cent lower than before.

Overall, companies who implemented CCI projects enjoyed a 26.4 per cent increase in revenue and 34.5 per cent increase in profit.

The CCI, an assistance package to help Singapore firms raise their service standards, is led by Spring, the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), the Singapore Workforce Development Agency, the Singapore Tourism Board and the Institute of Service Excellence at the Singapore Management University.

The results of the survey, which was commissioned last year, were released yesterday by Lim Swee Say, Minister, Prime Minister's Office, and NTUC secretary-general, during a visit to an EpiCentre outlet at ION Orchard.

The reseller of Apple products embarked on an 18-month CCI project in January 2011. Since then, the firm's revenue has more than doubled to \$178.3 million in FY2013 from \$88.1 million in FY2010, with a compound annual growth rate of 19.3 per cent.

Sales per worker has also increased 62 per cent, said the firm.

Said Jimmy Fong, executive chairman and CEO of EpiCentre: "Our CCI jour-

ney enabled us to transform our business from simply offering service transactions to delivering the 'Epic Hospitality' experience and building long-lasting relationships with our customers."

EpiCentre's CCI project focused on redesigning processes to enhance customer experience in key service touch points. It developed a Service Excellence Management System to establish service policies, procedures and standards to build a service-oriented culture among employees, and conducted mystery shopper audits to identify and address service gaps.

It also integrated its retail Point-of-Sales system to its Customer Relationship Management System, allow-

ing it to capture customer feedback more efficiently and track the purchasing patterns of customers.

Other initiatives that it introduced include enhancing its mobile presence by tying up with partners such as Paypal, Taggo, Radical Realms and DBS/MoCo, to provide customers with discounts and promotions when they make purchases from EpiCentre through their mobile devices.

It also conducts training workshops for customers to help them learn more about the products they have purchased. After-sales technical support and advice are also available to customers.

Yeo Guat Kwang, co-chairperson of the Go the Extra Mile for Service committee and NTUC Hospi-

tality and Consumer Business Cluster Lead, said: "Businesses need to understand that it is not about employing more staff to front customers, but to enhance the ability of all staff to deliver quality experiences."

"EpiCentre has successfully leveraged technology to better understand consumer buying patterns and widen its market reach. I... urge all retailers, big and small, to consider how they can creatively differentiate themselves from their competitors - be it through the use of technology or creating a community of customer advocates."

Since the launch of CCI for the retail industry, more than 3,600 retail establishments employing some 40,000 workers have benefited from the initiative.