

# Unique learning experience

The SMU MBA gives Ms Angela Tan the right combination of experiential learning and soft skills



PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

## Suresh Nair

MS ANGELA Tan (left) has a simple maxim in life: Do anything, but let it produce joy.

"I'm truly excited about my work, and outside of that, I have a wonderful family. I love living my life and to me, that itself is enough to overcome all the hustle and bustle of everyday life," says the 35-year-old mother of a three-year-old boy, who is with Philips Electronics Singapore as an operations and projects manager.

Since joining Philips in February, Ms Tan has been on a high. Her job encompasses project management, supply planning, supply chain strategies as well as the peripheral activities they entail.

"The culture here is open and very people- and family-oriented. The environment is great and my colleagues are really nice," she says. "In the true scheme of things, the essence of supply chain management is the ability to deliver projects on time, on budget and to the required standard. So far, my biggest challenges in Philips have been to meet that required standard.

"However, I feel that, with adequate and the

right communication, these issues can be mitigated and minimised."

Ms Tan studied chemistry at the National University of Singapore (NUS) after completing her A levels at Catholic Junior College.

"I majored in chemistry at NUS partly due to an affinity for the subject matter, partly to satisfy my (late) father's wish to have a child follow in his footsteps," she says.

"Somewhere along the line, however, I realised that life in a laboratory might not best suit me. Hence, to stay close to the subject and its progress, on graduation, I joined the NUS Department of Chemistry, running the administrative office.

"A short stint in Germany following an invite ensued and thereafter, I spent the next several years managing my family's business which deals with machinery and components for precision engineering. Having obtained first-hand experience in all aspects of managing a business, from sales and supply chain management to accounting and HR matters, I decided to take some time off my career to pursue an MBA at Singapore Management University (SMU)."

## TOP OF MBA RANKS

ACCREDITED by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS), both international accreditation bodies, Singapore Management University (SMU) offers one of the most accelerated MBA programmes in Singapore.

The programme seeks to equip students with the vital skill sets to face the complex challenges of today's business world. It boasts a curriculum that is designed with the needs of corporate recruiters in mind, providing a potent boost to their next career move.

The SMU MBA has one of the most relevant, dynamic and exciting curriculums. It has an additional soft-skills component comprising leadership, negotiation and communication skills, in addition to the traditional hard skills MBA curriculums. Such expertise is often cited as the most valuable skill sought by companies.

She acknowledges that the MBA helped to cement her proficiencies and bolster her strengths".

"As my post-MBA career plans for the foreseeable future focus on supply chain, it was fortuitous that with the efforts of SMU's Office of Career Services (OCS), I secured a job at Philips Lighting Singapore in a supply chain vocation," she adds.

Explaining her decision to take up the MBA programme at SMU, Ms Tan says: "At this stage of my career, I wanted a programme that is truly unique, one that aptly combines pedagogy with a good dose of experiential learning, as well as the more elusive 'softer' communication and presentation skills, all in equilibrium.

"The curriculum structure ensures that fundamentals — the essential finance, accounting, global economy and business strategy — are mastered, with room for more personalised interests, marketing, human capital and management, in the electives afterwards.

"More notably — and this differentiation is key — is that the academic staff which conducts the classes, as well as invited guest lecturers, are industry leaders in their own fields. Their real-life experiences, and the exclusive and specific insight they offer, all add to make SMU's MBA a truly special and unique learning experience."

Her husband, Mr Ferris Kwan, was the one suggested that she pursue an MBA.

"If not for his encouragement and constant emotional support, between the MBA application preparation and on-going work demands, I might have given up half-way," she says. "It's comforting to know that at the end of a long day, no matter how arduous, my husband and son David will always be there to welcome me home."

She advises prospective students:

"I think it's important to remember to appreciate and be thankful for whatever we have. And never to bear grudges," she says. "Forget the affronts, but keep the learning. In supply chain, it is imperative to remain neutral to better comprehend the various processes.

"The ability to detach the person from the deed, focusing on the task, and not the person who did it, has helped me tremendously in being impartial."