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WE SET YOU THINKING

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For SkillsFuture to succeed, workers must see its value

FROM **KWAN JIN YAO**

Traditional approaches to boost productivity in Singapore have often focused on the employers and in particular, small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This time, Senior Minister of State (Trade and Industry, and National Development) Lee Yi Shyan has been appointed “to spearhead the effort to engage firms” (July 24).

Yet, absent in this discourse is the role of an employee, who to a large extent determines the success of the SkillsFuture initiative. If the workers are not convinced of the importance of the initiative and, as a consequence, use the credits or sign up for activities only because they are obliged to, then any undertakings, however ambitious, will come to naught.

It was also reported that the SkillsFuture movement “has gained good ground with the implementation of several initiatives”, with examples cited from the Ministry of Education and tertiary institutions.

While the ultimate indicator is whether productivity at the national level increases, it may be useful to have more indicators in the interim. Agencies, for instance, may share data about the number of multinational corporations or SMEs that have been reached and, by implication, the aggregated number of Singaporeans who have benefited.

However, these figures would mean little unless feedback is also gathered

for these endeavours. Honest perspectives improve not only how employers involve staff, but also the way programmes are conducted.

Also, the engagement of employers is convenient and, at first glance, seems to allow government agencies to influence more individuals. Yet, training and development in a company are frequently eyed with disdain when programmes are foisted upon employees.

Bosses are anxious for their subordinates to be retrained or upgraded because, in the bigger picture, they may need it. But employees may resent these additional commitments, especially if they are organised after work hours. And if these sessions are framed poorly, they will incur the wrath of disgruntled employees who may not necessarily appreciate the value.

Securing the buy-in from workers may be more demanding. Yet, the long-term gains are also more valuable. Ideally, employees should be clamouring to sign up, cognisant of how they can improve their career prospects.

Government agencies can harness the network effect — as individuals reach their colleagues or counterparts — through awareness campaigns to educate the public, from the young in schools, and perhaps even through social-media platforms, to get the message out in a sustained fashion.

S'pore can host even more large sports events

FROM **KENDRICK HO**

I agree with the letter, “S'pore capable of hosting more big sporting events”, published on July 23.

It has been a delight to see Singapore organise so many sporting events over the years, from regional ones such as the SEA Games to global spectacles such as the Formula One race and the recent WWE Live and Barclays Asia Trophy.

We have earned praise from various F1 drivers and Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger. WWE superstar John Cena has also promised that WWE will return to Singapore soon.

It is indeed impressive that plenty of passionate fans are willing to travel across the globe to Singapore to catch the various events.

This shows that this little red dot is capable of hosting many more major sporting events to draw visitors in the future.

Besides trying to host the International Champions Cup, I also hope Singapore can host the 2017 edition of the Barclays Asia Trophy.

Hopefully, the Republic will extend the contract to host the Singapore Airlines Singapore Grand Prix night race, and also host a race under the Formula E Championship — a rising F1-like contest that features cars powered by electric engines.

“Securing the buy-in from workers may be more demanding. Yet, the long-term gains are also more valuable. Ideally, employees should be clamouring to sign up, cognisant of how they can improve their career prospects.”

How to better structure football at the junior level

FROM **TONG HSIEN-HUI**

Much ink has been spilt on the challenges faced by Singapore football, and our inability to build a large and diverse pool of talent to serve the national team.

It boils down to how football at the most junior level is structured, and I have a few suggestions for the Football Association of Singapore’s (FAS) kind consideration.

First, a league should be formed based on age groups. We would need divisions, and a relegation-and-promotion mechanism.

This league should be based on merit, and players can play for only one team or school.

S-League teams should be required to contribute a team to this

“We could disband teams such as the Courts Young Lions and the LionsXII, and let good national players sign with different teams, and learn different styles and approaches.”

league as well, but can draw players only from schools in their designated vicinity or region.

In the 16-to-18 age group, teams that win their division should stand the chance to be promoted.

And we could disband teams such as the Courts Young Lions and the LionsXII, and let good national players sign with different teams and learn different styles and approaches.

We should also have a relegation-and-promotion mechanism for the S-League and the Prime League.

If league games are played on Saturdays, parents can be involved. And if the number of teams per division is kept to not more than 10, then only 18 Saturdays need to be used for games over the course of one year.

With the S-League teams involved, this may also encourage coaches to go down to scout for talent at the matches. Ultimately, winning a league is a better reflection of the true form of a team.



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