

Great service is its own best reward

Douglas Chew finds out what makes this year's Singapore Service Excellence Medallion winners the gems of the service industry

CREATING memorable experiences, giving a personal touch and leveraging technology to deliver great customer service are the hallmarks of this year's Singapore Service Excellence Medallion winners.

The Singapore Service Excellence Medallion is the most prestigious award under the Go the Extra Mile for Service (GEMS Up) national movement aimed at cultivating a customer-centric culture among establishments and individuals in Singapore.

Top medallion organisational winner Singapore Zoo has come a long way since it first opened its gates in 1973.

"To ensure that our guests have a wonderful time every time they visit the Singapore Zoo, we commit to offering the best wildlife experience through multiple touch-points be it service, facilities, or educational programmes," says Mr Lee Meng Tat, chief executive officer of Wildlife Reserves Singapore, the holding company of Singapore Zoo.

"The Medallion is akin to a great pat on the back, and we are very honoured."

As part of service innovation, Singapore Zoo has used technology to extend its reach and better engage guests. The organisation's online ticketing portal and mobile tickets work together to offer a seamless ticketing experience, while the digital and social media channels provide valuable sources of feedback and communication. In addition, the team is committed to delight guests by providing them with WOW experiences such as birthday surprises, and is also empowered to make decisions to improve customer satisfaction.

"The greatest motivation for us is seeing our guests having a wonderful time at the Singapore Zoo," adds Mr Lee.

Commendation winners

Four other organisations received commendation awards for excelling

in respective key organisation service attributes: Wing Tai Retail for Service Leadership, DFS Galleria for People Practices, Brother International for Service Innovation, and Mount Elizabeth Hospital for Customer Experience.

"We are extremely honoured to be recognised as a Service Leader from the pool of highly acclaimed organisations and we continue to strive to be the leading fashion and lifestyle company in Asia by providing delightful experiences for all to discover," says Mrs Helen Khoo, executive director, Wing Tai Retail.

"We believe that we are the pioneer in the area of our Customer WOW Experience with our central theme of At Your Fashion Service where every staff is a fashion and brand ambassador, our complimentary style services, a hassle-free one-stop concierge which provides a wide range of services and digital engagement, all of which contributed to a total customer experience on the shop floor."

On DFS Galleria winning the Commendation (People Practices), Mr Craig McKenna, DFS Venture Singapore's Asia South managing director, says: "The award is very encouraging as it validates the emphasis that DFS places on customer service-oriented initiatives. We at DFS believe our comprehensive suite of employee development and reward and recognition programmes help to consistently deliver the high level of service that our customers have come to expect of DFS."

DFS Venture runs the DFS Galleria store on Scotts Road.

Its suite of training programmes provides a platform for its employees to develop specific leadership skills and competencies, and to better understand the many facets of operations and merchandising in an international luxury retail environment.

With service innovation as part of their DNA, it may not be a sur-



(From left) Service Professional winners Ms Agnes Dass and Ms Herdawati Mansor; chairman of the Medallion Governing Council, Professor Cham Tao Soon; Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam; CEO of Wildlife Reserves Singapore, Mr Lee Meng Tat; and Service Champion winner, Mr Milton Toh.

prise that Brother International won the Commendation (Service Innovation) award. The company provides remote online real-time support so that its customers can receive service at their convenience. Its heavy investment in a state-of-the-art Customer Relationship Management system also helps to provide proactive service to its customers.

"We are absolutely delighted and very proud to win this very prestigious Singapore Service Excellence Medallion Service Innovation award," says Mr Milton Toh, deputy general manager at Brother International Singapore. "Not resting on our achievement, we will continuously and constantly make improvement so as to further enrich the service experience for our customers."

Receiving the Commendation (Customer Experience) award, Mount Elizabeth Hospital believes that even when one needs hospitalisation, it is possible to have a great recovery experience.

"Mount Elizabeth Hospital is proud to be chosen for the Customer Ex-

perience award. Winning the award encourages us to keep providing our patients with what they have come to expect of us: fast, accurate diagnosis and the most appropriate treatment within 48 hours, in a great service environment," says its chief executive officer, Dr Kelvin Loh.

Service stars

In the individual category, two customer-facing Service Professionals and a Service Champion were awarded. The former is to recognise customer-facing staff who have demonstrated excellent service, while the latter commends someone at the management level who has led service improvement initiatives and elevated service standards to contribute to better customer satisfaction and business performance.

Brother International's Mr Milton Toh was named the inaugural Service Champion winner. He says the award motivates him to strive for even better service excellence.

"My personal philosophy to service

To exceed expectations, organisations and individuals need to think laterally and come up with new innovative business strategies that will endeavour a memorable customer experience and outstanding organisational performance. These Medallion winners will go on to set new standards and be service role models for all businesses.

- Professor Cham Tao Soon, chairman of the Medallion Governing Council

is continuous and constant improvement so that we can in turn provide excellent service and satisfaction to all our customers, and thereby be the industry leader to create service excellence," says Mr Toh. "Service excellence is all about serving genuinely from your heart and you never go wrong with this in mind. I strongly believe if I can achieve this, so can others who are passionate and determined to want to provide excellent service."

The two Service Professionals who have reached the pinnacle of service excellence are Ms Herdawati Mansor, Wing Tai Retail's shop manager and Ms Agnes Maria Dass, nursing officer at Mount Alvernia Hospital.

"Winning this award definitely motivates me to strive for even better service excellence," says Ms Herdawati. "I believe that with the ever-evolving customer expectations and increasing competition in the retail industry, it is critical for me to strive for continuous improvement to stay ahead."

Ms Dass says: "Awards are a form of acknowledgement that you are doing good work, but good service must come from the heart. Even without winning this award, serving with a sincere heart matters to me. Caring for others gives me great joy and to me, it is a blessing that completes my life."

Her sentiments are shared gener-

ally by the other winners, for whom service is no longer just a smile over the counter. For these outstanding service professionals, great service in itself is the best reward.

Mr Toh explains: "Looking from a consumer or customer standpoint, I would also be delighted if good service is provided to me. My belief is good service provided begets good treatment from customer in return."

Journey continues

Service excellence is a continuous journey of improvement, and these Medallion winners are testament to this.

"Rather than resting on our laurels, the win will inspire us to strive even harder to look at new ways to improve and better ourselves," says Mr Lee of WRS.

Mrs Khoo of Wing Tai Retail adds: "We hope to share our experiences with our partners and fellow organisations as part of our bid to transform the fashion and service workforce in Singapore, as well as learning from other successful organisations so that we can all improve together within and across industries through our sharing of best practices, especially with the winner of the SSEM this year."

For more information and photos of the award ceremony, please visit www.medallion.sg