

SPURRING SMOKERS TO LEAP OF FAITH



A smokerlyzer test is performed to determine the carbon monoxide levels from smoker's body

"Quitting smoking is not a magical event, but a process. One must be patient as it takes time," says Kelly Tan, Human Resource Senior Associate and organiser of the corporate smoking cessation programme at Systems on Silicon Manufacturing Company Pte Ltd (SSMC).

SSMC began its corporate smoking cessation efforts in 2002 when the Health Promotion Board (HPB) recommended that corporate health promotion programmes focus on the 'four areas' of smoking, healthy eating, mental health and exercise. The company chose the smoking control programme as its management felt that smoking, a key preventable cause of ill health and death, affected the employees' quality of life.

Despite the challenges in implementing effective programmes to help their smoking employees quit, the management's clear objectives paved the way for success. According to Frederick Rausch, CEO of

SSMC: "The management finds that the effort and time spent on educating and encouraging employees to quit smoking is worthwhile, considering how quitting will benefit them and their families in health and cost savings." Rausch further adds: "The company also benefits from higher productivity, reduced medical cost and sick leave absences."

The human resource (HR) department at SSMC initiated the programme by sending e-mails on the harmful effects of smoking to all employees, and set up an in-house quit smoking clinic to help those who wanted to stop smoking. Over the years, the senior management at SSMC supported by allocating funds for the corporate smoking cessation programme, and also participated and led many of the in-house initiatives.

The smoking rate at SSMC has declined from 14% in 2002 to 11% in 2005. Encouraged by this positive outcome, the company recently organised a roadshow, smokerlyzer testing (a quick method of recording the carbon monoxide levels in a smoker's body), and one-on-one quit smoking therapy provided by pharmacists from Guardian Health and Beauty. See Yen Theng, deputy pharmacy practice manager for Guardian, says: "It's exciting to see how SSMC is supporting this programme. The workplace is an ideal setting to encourage smokers to give up smoking and offers a conducive and supporting environment to spur that leap of faith."

The company's efforts are reaping rewards as more employees volunteer to join the quit smoking programme. Rausch adds: "We believe that investing in employee wellness programmes will send an important message to employees about living healthily, living happily and balancing work and life demands."

Although there is still a long way to go, SSMC is confident that their experience in the past three years will pave the way for better and more effective quit smoking initiatives. Most importantly, says Kelly Tan: "We want to be there for our employees." **HRM**

HEALTH PROMOTION BOARD

The National Smoking Control Programme of the Health Promotion Board (HPB) can assist your organisation in the design and implementation of an effective 'Corporate Quit Smoking Programme'. HPB will host a half-day seminar entitled 'Partnerships in Smoking Control at Workplaces' on 19th August 2005. This seminar will offer practical tools for the successful implementation of smoking control programmes at the workplace. It will also share case studies of smokefree workplaces and information on how to use the Workplace Health Grant to implement such a programme. To register or find out more, please contact Ms Hoong Sook Wah at 6435 3010 or email at hoong_sook_wah@hpb.gov.sg.



SSMC organisers