

## Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second issue of our newsletter.

The past three months were very exciting for us. The Technology Adoption Programme (TAP) was officially launched in November 2013, with Guest-of-Honour Mr S. Iswaran, Minister, Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Home Affairs and Second Minister for Trade and Industry, as well as many industry players in attendance. To the 600 participants who were with us at the event – a big thank you.

We have also rolled out several new Ready-To-Go (RTG) technology packages such as Snap2Tell, Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and RFID-based Field Worker Identification and Tracking System. Do drop by our website ([www.a-star.edu.sg/SME](http://www.a-star.edu.sg/SME)) to understand how these RTGs can help your businesses improve productivity.

Let's work together to gear Singapore toward higher productivity through technology.

Mr. LIAU Eng Soon  
Director, Technology Adoption Programme (TAP)  
Director, Growing Enterprises through Technology Upgrade (GET-Up) Programme

## Mr James Ling The Advocate for Automation

Mr James Ling, a consultant from the National Productivity Board and a TAP intermediary, has worked with numerous small and medium enterprises (SMEs) since 2004, to promote the use of automation technologies. As an advocate for automation, he spearheaded the forming of Singapore Industrial Automation Association (SIAA) in 1982 to help companies better understand and adopt appropriate technologies to improve operations and bottom lines.

A typical work day for James is spent – not in the comfort of an air-conditioned office – but on the ground where the industries are. This allows him to gain first hand insights into the day-to-day challenges faced by SMEs. His entire morning for example, could be spent at a shipyard visit. With his safety helmet and goggles on, undaunted by the heat and the dust, he would walk around the docks to see how the increase in foreign worker levy has impacted the manpower crunch, while looking for ways to improve various workflows.

After a quick lunch in a coffee shop nearby, he would set off to check out a completely different industry in the afternoon – a bee hoon manufacturer for example. Here, he would be looking at the manual process of packing the dried rice noodles into plastic packages, and how this operation could be automated effectively.

James believes that in his capacity as a TAP intermediary, he can help improve the accessibility of such technologies, allowing SMEs to enhance their productivity.

"Through this programme, our TAP intermediaries will provide advice and link up the technology needs of these companies to suitable solution providers," he said.



## OMNI Programme

### Kong Guan Dumpling (Pau) Manufacturing Pte Ltd



A major manufacturer and distributor of dumplings and bao snacks in Singapore, Kong Guan's retail network spans across all corners of the country. As part of the project work in the OMNI@APEX course, participants from Kong Guan leveraged on Lean concepts learnt in the course to implement a simplified production process via a series of focused sessions of brainstorming, standardization and eliminating redundant activities. This resulted in a reduction of setup time from 22 minutes to 14 minutes, representing a 36% improvement. This accounts for an estimated 24 man hours a month in savings or a potential 582,000 extra baos produced in a year!

### A Special Highlight on OMNI Programme

The Operations Management Innovation (OMNI) Programme is a Workforce Skills Qualification (WSQ) under a joint initiative by the Singapore Institute of Manufacturing Technology (SIMTech), a research institute of A\*STAR, and the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA).

This programme provides training for key personnel – engineers, managers and senior staff members – to implement the proven Operations Management Innovation Methodology (OmniMethodology™) in their respective companies. In addition to classroom learning, they would also have on-site mentorship by SIMTech's trainers when applying this knowledge in their organisations, helping their companies make strategic and effective productivity improvements and achieve operational excellence.

### Congratulations!

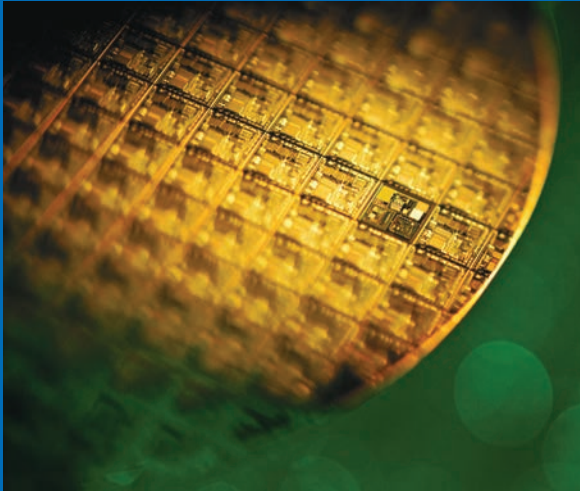


Congratulations to the participants of OMNI Batch 12 who graduated in March 2013. Trained by our dedicated mentors, they are now productivity champions poised to bring tons of benefits back to their respective companies, namely Abbott Manufacturing Singapore Pte Ltd, CAST Laboratories Pte Ltd, FARO Singapore Pte Ltd, Fong Lee Metal Industries Pte Ltd, Keppel FELS Limited, Sunny Instruments Singapore Pte Ltd and Wah Son Engineering Ptd Ltd.

Till date, 268 participants from 101 companies have benefited from the OMNI programme.

## Our Success Stories

### Component Technology Pte Ltd



Many equipment manufacturers use dial gauges and calipers to measure produced parts in order to ensure dimensional accuracy. However, manual measurements and recording are time consuming and prone to error. In addition, the transfer of the measurements back to a PC for report generation or records keeping is also deemed inefficient. By having SIMTech integrate Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology with a smart webcam based caliper/gauge reader, measurements are able to be captured automatically and stored in an excel file.

With the use of OCR, Component Technology is now able to take the measurements of their equipment parts much faster. The overall time taken for one part has reduced from 11 minutes to 3 minutes and this translates into a productivity gain of more than 200%.

Click [here](#) to find out more about our OCR package.

### HistoIndex Pte Ltd

Established in 2010, HistoIndex® specialises in stain-free, 3D quantitative imaging solutions for visualising and staging fibrosis as well as cancer. HistoIndex has two core products: Genesis®200 hardware for stain-free, laser-based fluorescence imaging, and HistoHepa© software with feature recognition for diagnosis and staging of diseases.

The start-up company tapped on A\*STAR's Technology for Enterprise Capability Upgrading (T-Up) programme in 2011 to conduct clinical validation of Genesis® at their overseas multi-centre trial sites; then again in 2012 to develop an endoscope version of Genesis® for virtual biopsy. In both projects, Dr. Li Hao, a researcher from SIMTech, was seconded to the company for the duration of the projects.

The success of these innovations paved the way for continual product development and expansion, bringing HistoIndex from zero revenue in 2010 to \$1 million by end 2012.

HistoIndex has since been awarded the Winner of 2013 Red Herring 100 Global Award, BioSpectrum Asia Emerging Company of the Year 2012 Award and Winner of IBM Global Entrepreneur Program Smartcamp Asia 2012 – while Dr. Li Hao too has emerged a winner at the T-Up Excellence Award 2013.

Gideon Ho, co-founder and CEO of HistoIndex added, "The T-Up programme is not only useful for small start-up firms to hire experts to answer their immediate technological needs but also play a critical role in providing such firms with the roadmap for future products after the T-Up secondment has ended."





## Our Technology

### Virtual Try-On Display System

#### The hassle-free way to try on clothes

Apparel retailers would welcome the convenience of having Virtual Try-On (VTO) displays in their stores. This eye-catching interactive display lets users to try different clothes virtually, so busy shoppers can quickly preview available clothes and latest fashion trends without any hassle. Retailers can maximise their window display areas with a dynamic and interactive showcase of different products, while also gathering statistics on consumer habits from information logged by the system, like total try-ons and time spent on each item.

The display system is ready to use the moment it connects to the power outlet; no manual intervention is required. The "Wardrobe Manager" software, which helps make updating of the digital clothing list a breeze for any user, is included as part of the package offering.

Click [here](#) to find out more about the Virtual Try-On Display System package.



## Our Events

### TAP Launch



The launch of A\*STAR's Technology Adoption Programme (TAP) was celebrated on 12 November 2013, with Minister S. Iswaran, Minister in Prime Minister's Office, and Second Minister for Home Affairs and Trade & Industry as the Guest-of-Honour. Over 600 participants joined us for the event and local media such as Channel NewsAsia, Lianhe Zaobao and Business Times also came for the coverage.

The occasion saw A\*STAR signing two Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with Paragon Shopping Mall and the Singapore Institute of Retail Studies (SIRS), in an effort to help promote R&D collaborations by further developing technologies to increase productivity for the retail sector, and to create a technology showcase that would help retail professionals gain wider outreach.

## SME Centres' Visit to A\*STAR

Twenty five representatives from five SME Centres in Singapore gathered at A\*STAR on 23 January 2014 for an understanding of the Ready-to-Go solutions from two of our research institutes, Institute for Infocomm Research (I<sup>2</sup>R) and Singapore Institute of Manufacturing Technology (SIMTech). This allowed the advisors to have a better understanding of the solutions offered by A\*STAR and was a good start to fostering closer collaborations between A\*STAR and the SME Centres.



"My clients are mostly from the F&B and Retail Industry and the following would be useful for them: Item Management and Tracking System (IMTS), Snap2Tell Alive and Virtual Try-On mirrors" said Ms Shura, Business Advisor from SME Centre @ SMCCI.

## Productivity Seminar for Transport and Logistics Sector

A\*STAR collaborated with Employment and Employability Institute (e2i) on 23 January 2014 to organise the 'Productivity Seminar for Transport and Logistics Sector' event, which had 124 industry participants in attendance. The seminar provided insights on the latest technologies and automation products, as well as funding schemes to support their adoption and implementation; all of which are drivers needed to raise the competitive edge and productivity of the business as a whole.



## Technology Showcase for Furniture Industry



A\*STAR and the Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC) co-organised the 'Improving Productivity with Technology' event on 18 February 2014 at SIMTech. Thirty participants from 19 companies came to see how technologies could be easily implemented to achieve productivity gains, with speakers from A\*STAR's Research Institutes, SIMTech and I<sup>2</sup>R, sharing the benefits of RFID technologies and customer analytics tools respectively.

SPRING Singapore also shared on relevant government assistance schemes, including the Capabilities Development Grant and Innovation & Capability Voucher, to help companies in technology innovation.



*"This event was indeed very insightful, providing the furniture industry players with a better understanding on how technologies could help them increase business efficiency and even expand operations," said Ms Shermaine Ong, Executive Director, SFIC. "We certainly hope that more companies can step forward to leverage on technologies (that could help them)."*

## Innovation for Scaffold Companies

On 11 February 2014, TAP organised a breakfast talk for companies in the scaffolding business. Solutions that could help reduce manpower for scaffold coupler servicing as well as those that could track scaffolds efficiently were shared. A total of 51 industry participants attended the talk, with many expressing interest in the technologies that were presented, and requesting follow-up from TAP intermediaries.



## A\*STAR SME Day 2014

Join us at A\*STAR SME Day 2014 and find out how technology enables businesses to achieve first mover advantage. You'll get to learn from industry experts and also view technology showcases from A\*STAR, so register at <http://www.sme-day.com.sg/AStar/index.php> before 16 April 2014 and gear up to grow your business with technology. Registration is complimentary!

- Listen to industry speakers from Advanpack and Feinmetall share how they tapped on A\*STAR research expertise to upgrade their technological capabilities
- Discover how to get a headstart by working with A\*STAR in your technology needs
- Visit on-site exhibition clinics from A\*STAR and participating agencies for more about Ready-to-Go technologies and initiatives to help SMEs innovate and grow
- Sign up on-site and receive a complimentary ePayslip Generator

Date	21 April 2014 (Monday)
Time	9am – 2pm
Venue	Level 4, Matrix Building, Biopolis, 30 Biopolis Street

## Upcoming Events



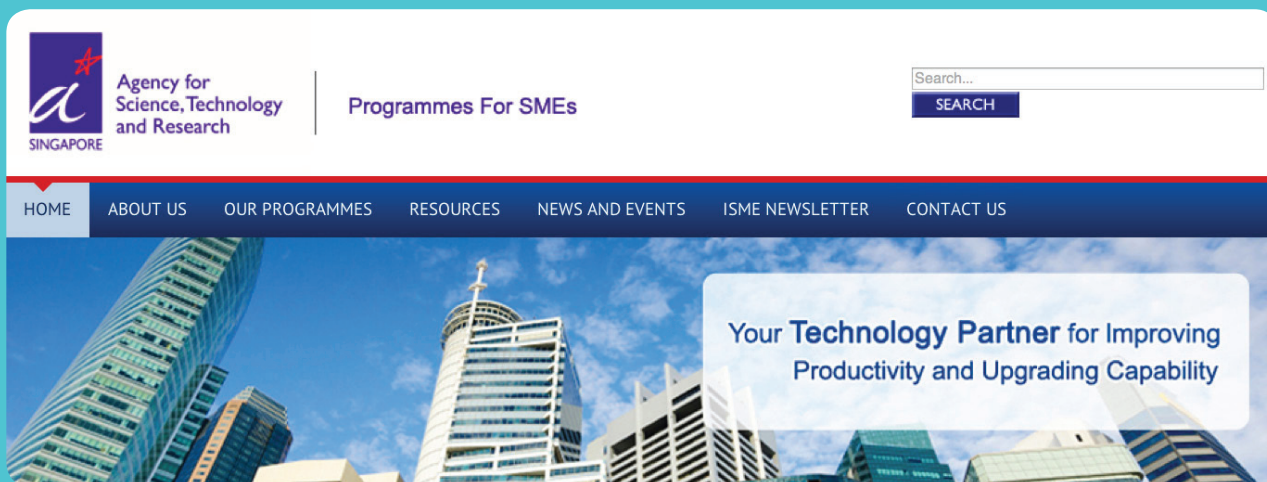
For more information, please visit us at: [www.sme-day.com.sg/AStar/Programme.php](http://www.sme-day.com.sg/AStar/Programme.php)



## A\*STAR rolls out new portal for SMEs

SMEs can now find more online information related to them easily, with the launch of [www.a-star.edu.sg/sme](http://www.a-star.edu.sg/sme).

This new website has been redesigned to include a better page layout and given a fresh interface to improve user friendliness and navigation. In addition, the content for GET-Up and TAP are now housed together.



## Licensing Made Easier for SMEs – “HEADSTART”

Headstart is a new programme from A\*STAR that enables all local SMEs that enter into a Research Collaboration Agreement (RCA) with A\*STAR to enjoy royalty-free and exclusive IP licenses for the first 18 months. The exclusive use of the IP can be further extended at business-friendly terms through Exploit Technologies Pte Ltd (ETPL), A\*STAR's technology transfer arm. SMEs will not need to participate in prolonged negotiations at this point as the terms will be fixed, based on industry sector.

This scheme is applicable to all SMEs that enter into a RCA with A\*STAR. Once there is any form of intellectual property generated from the RCAs, Headstart will take effect. All local SMEs, as defined by SPRING Singapore, can apply for Headstart.

To apply for the scheme, please contact the respective A\*STAR Research Institute for the type of technology that you are interested in. Alternatively, please refer to this link for more details: <http://www.a-star.edu.sg/sme/HOME.aspx>

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