

Drone pilot certification, educational sponsorships for staff: Firm gets top honours for building future-ready workforce

Continuous training and upskilling are key drivers in SP Group's strategy to prepare its employees for sustained growth and transformation in the dynamic energy industry

MAY DAY AWARDS 2024



NTUC secretary-general Ng Chee Meng (left) presenting the Plaque of Commendation (Star) to SP's group chief executive officer Stanley Huang. PHOTO: NTUC

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Since 2018, SP Group (SP) has invested \$52 million in training and development, clocking 1.1 million training hours for its 3,700 employees. These impressive figures show just how much SP is focusing on training and career development initiatives that ensure its workers are equipped for roles and opportunities to meet evolving industry needs.

For its commitment to advancing future-ready skills, career pathways and sustainable wage growth for its employees, SP has been awarded the Plaque of Commendation (Star), the highest award for organisations. This was presented at the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) May Day Awards 2024 held on May 10. The energy company was nominated by the Union of Power and Gas Employees (UPAGE).



SP Group and Union of Power and Gas Employees representatives at May Day Awards 2024. PHOTO: SP GROUP

For SP's group chief executive officer Stanley Huang, it is critical to invest in the future economy, together with a well-skilled and resilient workforce. Mr Huang says: "Our employees are instrumental in upholding Singapore's world-class energy network reliability and advancing SP's sustainable energy solutions for customers. We are honoured to receive this highest award for employers, with strong endorsement from UPAGE. It serves as a testament to our long-standing union-management partnership towards building a workforce well equipped for the diverse and evolving needs of the industry."

THE STRAITS TIMES

Technician is now a drone pilot too

Mr Muhammad Shamil Abu Bakar, a technician at SP's Electricity Operations department, is one employee who has benefited from training opportunities offered by the company. A typical workday for Mr Muhammad Shamil used to involve accessing building facades and rooftops for inspection and maintenance works at SP's electricity substations. This meant that the 43-year-old had to work at height, wearing protective gear to make sure he can carry out his job safely.



SP Group is preparing its workers, like Mr Muhammad Shamil Abu Bakar, for the future economy by training and upskilling them. PHOTO: SP GROUP

This changed when SP decided to tap on drones from 2019. Such drones, equipped with high resolution cameras and live videography capabilities, enabled building inspections to be done more quickly, safely and efficiently.

Mr Muhammad Shamil received classroom training and underwent theory and practical assessments before receiving his Drone Pilot Licence certification issued by the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore.

Now, he is one of the nine certified drone pilots at SP. "It is a special privilege to be formally recognised as a certified drone pilot. It is a big deal to me and I feel a sense of excitement each time there is a job or task in which I am deployed to fly a drone," says the father-of-one, who has been with the company for more than 15 years.

Back to school to keep pace with emerging trends

Besides skills upgrading, SP also recognises the need for professional certification for engineering staff to expand their roles and take on higher value jobs. Some employees have the opportunity to take up courses at higher learning institutions. One of them is Mr Goh Yap Meng.

The technical officer has been working at SP for eight years, maintaining the electricity transmission network. In 2023, Mr Goh took up SP's sponsorship to pursue a three-year direct honours degree programme in Electrical Power Engineering at Singapore Institute of Technology. He is learning more about sustainable power generation, renewable energy, smart grids, Electric Vehicles (EV) and EV charging infrastructure.



Mr Goh Yap Meng received a sponsorship to study Electrical Power Engineering at Singapore Institute of Technology. PHOTO: SP GROUP

The sponsorship includes an Integrated Work Study Programme, allowing Mr Goh to immediately apply what he learns to his responsibilities.

"Going back to school is indeed a new experience but it is absolutely necessary and crucial to keep up with new technologies and areas like renewable energy as Singapore and the world goes green," says the 41-year-old. "Without this opportunity to upskill myself, my capabilities would be limited. This degree has given me the confidence to tackle new challenges at work."

With emerging technologies like smart grids and artificial intelligence, mature workers may feel overwhelmed.

SP's latest effort, a joint project with UPAGE, is Project Silver+, which aims to pre-emptively address potential challenges faced by mature workers at the workplace. Key solutions include modifications to facilities at work areas, as well as age-friendly work tools and aids.

UPAGE general secretary Mr Abdul Samad Abdul Wahab notes that job transformation is a pertinent theme this year. He says: "Our journey with SP Group has resulted in joint initiatives to meet the needs and aspirations of workers across the ranks. These holistic efforts have enabled workers to level up their competencies and perform roles that are valuable for the energy sector today and in the future. Our workers are also assured of competitive wages and having their well-being cared for."

Empowering the future of energy

SP Group's growth drivers for employees:

- **Continuous skills upgrading** and structured career pathways for SP's **3,700 employees**
- Close partnership with the **Union of Power and Gas Employees (UPAGE)** to enable future-ready skills, job transformation and sustainable wage growth
- Launched **Project FUSION – Future Skills in Everyone** – in 2018
- Invested **\$52 million** in employees' training and development, with **1.1 million training hours** clocked since 2018
- **Project Silver+** facilitates **age-friendly work environments** for mature workers and boosts wellness and retirement adequacy

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