

Powering the Future

SP Group, with its world-class power transmission networks and services, is expanding into the region and Executive Engineer Hor Thon Hern is proud to be part of it.



Hor Thon Hern implements equipment renewal projects across Singapore in his role as Executive Engineer. He is an SP Mid-Term Scholar and he holds a Bachelor of Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical & Electronic Engineering) with First Class Honours from Nanyang Technological University.

Hor Thon Hern's love for electrical engineering since young fueled his passion to kickstart a career in the energy sector. When he interned with SP in 2015, he went behind the scenes to uncover first-hand, the importance of maintaining the reliability of the national grid so families can maintain their quality of life. His stint at the substation reaffirmed his decision to jumpstart his career with SP.

The success of SP would not have been possible without its skilled and dedicated employees like 27-year-old Hor Thon Hern. The Executive Engineer shared with *BrightSparks* his engaging work with SP, and the opportunities presented to him as a recipient of the SP Mid-Term Scholarship.

How did you get interested in power transmission?

When I was a child, I always wondered how a power outlet could power appliances plugged into it. I also enjoyed fixing home appliances like electric fan and extension cord with my father when I was in primary school. It was not until secondary school when I learned about the science behind the flow of electricity which probably laid the foundation of my pursuit of a degree in Electrical & Electronics Engineering in Nanyang Technological University (NTU). During my internship at SP in 2015, I witnessed first-hand the process of the 66kV switchgear installation. From the delivery of the switchgear equipment to the rigorous testing, I was intrigued by the complexity of our transmission system. I had to be at the substation every day during the internship but I actually found it very fulfilling!

You are a SP Mid-Term Scholar. In your opinion, why should students pursue a scholarship?

Everyone needs a goal in life to stay motivated. A scholarship is like an engine that keeps you moving and driven throughout your undergraduate studies and eventually lands you your dream job!

Rewinding a bit, how did you discover the scholarship and why did you shortlist it?

I came across the SP scholarship programme while scrolling through the BrightSparks website for career opportunities. After researching on SP, I was particularly inspired by SP's commitment in renewable energy to safeguard the environment for the future generations.

What was the defining factor that made you apply for the scholarship?

I felt that SP, as the national grid operator for Singapore, would be an excellent training ground for me to hone my technical skills to become a well-rounded engineer.

And, what led to your decision to apply for a mid-term scholarship?

It was when I was at a crossroads in my second year of undergraduate studies, uncertain on which modules to specialise in. The SP scholarship included an internship opportunity which I believed would offer a realistic insight into the workings of the energy industry which will help narrow my choice of specialisation.

What was your biggest takeaway during your university days at NTU?

Looking back, I deeply appreciate the opportunity to learn and discuss ideas with like-minded peers. I was born in a small town in Malaysia and furthered my tertiary education in NTU. University life was an eye-opener as I stepped out of my comfort zone and interacted with people from all walks of life. I slowly honed my life skills such as interpersonal, people management and

social intelligence skills. It prepared me for the different situations posed to me during the daily work life now.

How did you apply what you have learnt to your current work?

My mentor at SP once told me that “every complex system you see is built from fundamentals”. I finally understood what he meant when I saw how our network system works. Whenever I face any engineering challenges, I always return to the fundamentals I’ve learnt to troubleshoot and derive practical solutions. I am so thankful to have a mentor who helped me navigate the first leg of my career!



Tell us more about your role and responsibilities.

I currently work in the Distribution Projects section which implements equipment renewal projects across Singapore. Our work encompasses the renewal and replacement of aging equipment such as switchgear, cables and transformers ahead of time. To do this smoothly, we have to analyze network configurations for risk assessments before implementing the replacement work. The entire process is critical to ensure reliable services to our customers.

What is your most significant career achievement to date?

I attained the 22kV switching certificate in 2018 which was sponsored by SP. With the certification, it allows me to operate high tension equipment in the SP PowerGrid network. To attain such certification, we had to undergo comprehensive in-house training and one year of practical experience. This is to ensure that we are adequately trained and armed with sufficient technical knowledge before handling the equipment. The training deepened my skillsets and I was able to expand my job scope.

What is the work culture at SP?

At SP, safety is our highest priority. We are trained to keep ourselves safe at work and also ensure the safety of stakeholders whom we work closely with. SP also embraces innovation. Employees are encouraged to learn new skills such as building apps to improve productivity. One of the apps that I built is used to automate the submission of allowance claims. Now that I am more proficient in building apps, I am being tasked as a trainer for my colleagues who are keen to be app developers too!

What possibilities are there for scholars working at your organisation?

SP believes in investing in its people to help them be future-ready. Apart from our core engineering work, we are given the opportunity to attend senior management meetings to understand the strategic directives in this dynamic industry. One of SP's growth areas is in renewable energies. Fresh graduates who share the passion should consider joining SP.

What advice would you give to aspiring scholars looking to join SP?

If you are inspired to be part of the team to power the nation, SP is the organization to realise your ambition. You will play an important part to maintain a world-class power network that reaches more than 1.6 million residential and business clients in Singapore. SP's EDGE Programme, which caters to fresh graduates, aims to groom new engineers to grow with the energy utility industry with a structured multi-disciplinary training programme. Fellow engineers whom I speak to exude a sense of pride in upholding the nation's grid and I believe you will feel the same if you join SP.

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