

Grooming managerial talent at an eco-friendly SME

IT HAS BEEN AN EVENTFUL YEAR for Zhang Disong, who graduated in 2004 from Nanyang Technological University (NTU) with a background in environmental as well as civil & structural engineering.

A permanent resident here since 2002, he has opted to become a Singapore citizen in September and has been recently promoted by his employer – ecoWise Holdings, which is a listed local environmental solutions provider – from a senior engineer to a manager. He has also recently become the father of a baby girl in July.



"An MBA programme will help me to upgrade and acquire the knowledge and management skills in areas like marketing, finance, accounting and business strategy formulation. SPRING's Management Development Scholarship made this possible," Mr Zhang added.

On top of all these changes, he decided to enrol in the Nanyang MBA part-time programme at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), with the blessings of the management at ecoWise. His studies is co-funded by SPRING Singapore as part of the Management Development Scholarship (MDS) programme aimed at developing a talent pool that will help strengthen the management capabilities within the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) sector in Singapore.

Mr Zhang, 31, has been employed by ecoWise since he was out of university, and has been involved in several waste recycle and renewable energy projects since he joined the company. Explaining his rationale for pursuing a post-graduate degree in business, he said, "While I am familiar with the engineering aspects such as the technical feasibility of a project and can always pick up various business skills along the way, I felt that I need to have a more comprehensive set of skills in order to better understand the financial aspects of a project, like how to determine the rate of returns, raise investment funds and convincing investors of its commercial viability."

Dr Jitendra Singh, Dean of the Business School at NTU agrees. "At Nanyang Business School, we are grooming leaders for tomorrow's SMEs who will be skilled at nimbly seizing business opportunities in a dynamic environment. Our students will also benefit from NTU's strong strategic engagement with India and China."



ecoWise executive director, Teoh Teik Kee said that Mr Zhang's decision to take up a business course at NTU dovetails with the company's future plans to expand in its operations to countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, and especially China where the authorities are placing greater emphasis on environmental friendly technology.

"Disong not only comes from an engineering background but is also bilingual. He understands Chinese culture and having been in Singapore for many years is also well immersed in the Singapore culture. That makes him well qualified to meet our objective of grooming the next generation of managers at ecoWise."

Mr Teoh added, "We feel that the MBA course will suit him well to acquire skills that will enable him to also look at things from an investment or financial angle. He will also be able to make an impression with our clients and show that ecoWise staff are not just well-versed in the technology aspects of a job but also have a good business sense."

Mr Teoh noted, "As an SME, we can leverage on MDS to provide Disong with the right platform to capitalise on his potential."

"Being lean, ecoWise has a flat management hierarchy that allows him to participate in the management's business discussions. In a big company, he may be confined to an engineering role providing only input on what sort of processes or technology to implement."

The company already has plans in store for Mr Zhang to eventually play a leading role when it ventures into the China market. With his promotion, he will be able to participate in future in ecoWise's performance share scheme reserved for those in the managerial grade, said Mr Teoh.

AT A GLANCE

Management Development Scholarship

Co-funded by SPRING Singapore as part of its Business Leaders Initiative (BLI), the Management Development Scholarship (MDS) aims to nurture a new generation of leaders among fast-growing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Singapore.

Its goal is to help promising young executives and managers ramp up their leadership skills and competencies through either full-time or part-time MBA programmes at leading local universities.

SPRING Singapore will provide funding support of up to 90% for expenses, including tuition fees, & related costs for those pursuing a part-time programme; and up to 70% for full-time programme. The remaining cost is borne by the sponsoring SME.

For more details, visit <http://www.spring.gov.sg/mds>