

Delivering a quality learning experience

Singapore Institute of Technology goes all out to attract the right students

HAZEL TAN

BEING the new kid on the block is always a challenge, but Singapore's new autonomous university, the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), has successfully anchored itself in the educational sphere with a string of strong branding initiatives.

Its efforts have earned it a Special Merit Award in this year's Singapore Prestige Brand Award (SPBA).

Says Professor Tan Thiam Soon, president of SIT: "Branding is key to our university, especially since we are such a young institution.

"As the university grows, it is important that all stakeholders — students, industry partners, alumni, staff and parents — clearly understand our vision and mission from the outset so that we attract the right students and are able to fulfil their dreams."

The university is a first-time SPBA winner and one of 53 local brands honoured this year.

Jointly organised by the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises and Lianhe Zaobao, SPBA recognises Singapore brands that have been developed and managed effectively through a variety of branding campaigns.

Outreach efforts

SIT was established in 2009 to provide better upgrading opportunities for polytechnic graduates who wish to obtain industry-focused degrees in areas such as health sciences, physical science and engineering.

It embarked on an exercise to brand itself as Singapore's "new" university early last year after being gazetted by Parliament.

This year, the university went a step further and put in place a campaign to "seed" the public mind space with SIT-DNA.

It is a new applied model of education that encourages students to become "thinking tinkerers" and act as catalysts for transformation, with the willingness to "learn, unlearn and relearn".

Over the years, SIT's admissions campaign has been the key driver for its brand.

Using a mix of online and traditional advertising, and together with a combination of outreach efforts on the ground in the polytechnics, SIT has seen steady year-on-year growth in terms of application numbers.

Clear vision

To Prof Tan, it is important for a brand to have a clear, defined vision.

"A strong brand is able to attract, influence and engage its target audience meaningfully both on a rational and emotional level," he says.

But campaigns aside, the ability to deliver on the brand promise is key for sustained success.

Says Prof Tan: "Though our brand journey has been relatively short, we have always prided ourselves on delivering a quality learning experience which integrates industry and the community for our students.

"Over the years, some of our graduates have succeeded in making their mark within the industry while some others have made waves in other areas such as sports and in the community."

This testimony of success from their pioneer graduates has, in turn, strengthened SIT's brand, and allowed it to disseminate through the grapevine.

"As our student intake grows, we are also mindful of the world-

Amid all that change and uncertainty, the various divisions have bonded together and consistently delivered on the brand promise that has set the brand on the right course.



PROFESSOR TAN THIAM SOON
 president
 Singapore Institute of Technology

of-mouth effect that branding can have through influencers such as teachers and lecturers.

"We also realise that parents are key in the decision-making process and hence, we are looking at various strategies to engage all

the different stakeholders," he says.

So far, SIT's branding efforts have paid handsome dividends, and its SIT-DNA has gone down well among students and the public.

"We believe that people who encounter SIT students will find in

them a 'can do' spirit, which translates to a willingness to try new things, adapt to new environments and to never say 'no' when faced with any challenge," he adds.

Winning the SPBA is an affirmation that SIT is on the right track.

"Overall, our success boils down to a clear sense of our mission and the teamwork to deliver it.

"As a start-up university, we have had to constantly adapt and be flexible over the years as we defined the brand and as more staff came on board," says Prof Tan.

"Amid all that change and uncertainty, the various divisions have bonded together and consistently delivered on the brand promise that has set the brand on the right course," he adds.



Delivering brand promise is key for sustained success, says Prof Tan. PHOTO: SIT

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