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Spring Singapore, industry partners will roll out schemes to raise productivity



Melissa Lin (mailto:mellinjm@sph.com.sg)

More than 20 new food and beverage businesses open every day, but fewer than two-thirds survive the first five years.

To give new entrants a leg up - and to keep the food services industry vibrant - a new mentorship programme and workshops for F&B entrepreneurs will be available from May. Companies that want to go digital will also get help.

Business owners could get one-on-one feedback from industry experts such as 4Fingers Crispy Chicken's chief executive Steen Puggaard and The Lo & Behold Group's chief operating officer Andrew Ing.

They will also be able to sign up for workshops that will teach them how to redesign their workflow and menus and manage their finances.

The initiatives, developed by enterprise agency Spring Singapore and other stakeholders, are part of a broader \$4.5 billion nationwide programme to get firms to raise their productivity amid a tight labour market.

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The aim is to help F&B companies tackle challenges such as manpower constraints and high business costs and ensure they have staying power, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Sim Ann told 150 industry players at a networking session yesterday.

The initiatives, developed by enterprise agency Spring Singapore and other stakeholders, are part of a broader \$4.5 billion nationwide programme to get firms to raise their productivity amid a tight labour market.



She said: "This is something that's best done together as a community. Individual outlets and chains can be successful, but it's only when we have many, many successes in the F&B sector that we can create vibrancy."

More details on how businesses can sign up for these initiatives will be announced later.

About 85 per cent of the more than 5,000 F&B enterprises in Singapore are small businesses with annual revenues of less than \$1 million each.

Mentorship and the sharing of experience among companies are a "very important" part of the productivity push, said Ms Sim.

During the networking event, cafe chain Coffee Hive's co-founder Anthony Chan, 39, was one of three entrepreneurs who shared tips based on how they improved their businesses.

For instance, introducing stored value cards across Coffee Hive's 10 outlets not only promoted loyalty among customers but increased the speed of service as well, said Mr Chan.

Meanwhile, vegetarian eatery chain Greendot, which has seven outlets, managed to grow its staff strength from 20 to nearly 150 by building up a caring work culture, said co-founder Justin Chou, 27.

For Ms Diana Teo, 25, who co-founded Japanese rice bowl cafe Waa Cow! at the National University of Singapore with two friends last January, food presentation was initially very important. For instance, the wagyu beef slices on one rice dish had to be arranged to form a dome.

But the long food-preparation time led to queues for at least 45 minutes, and she even had to turn customers away because the shop could not meet the demand.

By simplifying the food presentation, the average waiting time was reduced to under 15 minutes.

A paging system, which lets customers know when their food is ready for collection, cut the number of front-line staff needed from three to one.

The changes paid off. Ms Teo said: "We managed to recoup our initial investment in six months."