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Retailers can get help for digital makeovers under Retail Job Redesign Framework



Manpower Minister Josephine Teo said that brick-and-mortar stores cannot compete on cost alone and must reinvent themselves, thanks to the digital economy. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

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SINGAPORE - Singapore retailers can now get help from the Government to redesign operations to increase productivity and keep up with online retailers.

The Retail Job Redesign Framework launched on Friday (June 29) provides businesses with access to consultants who can advise them on matters such as how to improve workers' productivity and how to run a brick-and-mortar shop alongside an online store.

The framework also offers businesses an online do-it-yourself (DIY) guide. Companies can download a template that shows them how to redesign their operations, and look at new business models and a summary of best practices for those who want digital makeovers.

At the launch of the framework at DBS Asia Central Auditorium, Minister for Manpower Josephine Teo said the digital economy has made it impossible for brick-and-mortar stores to compete on cost alone, which is why they must reinvent themselves.

"Everywhere, retailers are under pressure to reinvent themselves. Retailers in Singapore too, are responding," she said.

Mrs Teo cited the example of Swee Lee, a retailer and distributor of musical instruments which has integrated e-commerce and its physical store, and also provides cafes and performing spaces for people to create and enjoy music.

She urged businesses "to be bold in adopting new technologies, to be able to quickly redesign jobs to support shifts in business strategies, and help workers adapt to the changing operating environment".

She said job redesign is tied to business strategy and growth and can help boost the pay of workers.

At furniture company Star International, for example, customer service executives used to call and remind their customers on delivery orders seven days before a delivery, and again a day before. This took three workers up to three hours a day, she said.

But they now use an automated SMS system to generate delivery reminders, saving the time spent on calls by 80 per cent.

Customer executives have thus freed up time to perform more value-added tasks, she said.

The job redesign framework was launched by Enterprise Singapore, Workforce Singapore and the Singapore Retailers Association.

Workforce Singapore chief executive Tan Choon Shian said: “Job redesign provides retail companies the opportunity to update their business model to stay relevant and to alleviate their manpower crunch.”

President of the Singapore Retailers Association R. Dhinakaran said: “It is crucial to recognise the value of technology, and predict the skills and capabilities needed in a future retail workforce.”

Those who are interested can access the framework at <http://jobredesign.sra.org.sg>

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