SILVER INDUSTRY OFFERS GOLDEN OPPORTUNITIES

OPINION
MR ROBERT CHEW
UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SILVER MARKET

MR YASUYUKI HOSHIKAWA
THINK ACCESSIBLE, DESIGNED FOR ALL

SHOWCASE
FEI YUE FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE
RAISING THE BAR FOR ELDERCARE SERVICES

A*STAR
TECHNOLOGY – KEY TO ACTIVE AGEING

COVER
GOLDEN YEARS: THE COMING BOOM FOR THE SILVER INDUSTRY
Bringing access for all

By 2030, we expect that the number of seniors above 65 years old will nearly triple to reach over 900,000 in Singapore. By then, one in five residents will be over 65 years old, compared to one in ten today. Correspondingly, the needs of seniors in terms of healthcare and aged care, will increase significantly.

As the government strives to facilitate ageing-in-place such as making our physical environment more “age-friendly”, ramping up aged care services and infrastructure, and promoting active ageing, it is also critical that businesses continue to stay ahead of the curve, so that we can better meet the needs and demands of our older Singaporeans.

In this issue, learn about business opportunities in the silver industry. Leading Japanese brands Panasonic and Daiwa House share in the cover story how they actively customise their offerings for the older generation and the role of standards in building trust in their products. Our experts from Accessible Design Foundation of Japan and Singapore’s Silver Industry Standards Committee share how Japan and Singapore are developing standards to support the growth of the market for elder consumers and national initiatives in active ageing. Standards can be a strategic enabler for businesses to further boost consumer confidence with greater assurance on quality, safety and reliability of products and services.

Good to Go keeps you informed of the ways you can give your business that added advantage to thrive and stay ahead of the times.

Enjoy this issue and learn how your business can tap on this enormous market added advantage to thrive and stay ahead of the times.

Good To Go
JUN-JUL/2015

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SPRING Singapore

ARE YOU GOOD TO GO?

Workshop to enhance participation in international standards

SPRING Singapore, in collaboration with the Japanese Industrial Standards Committee (JISC) and the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) Regional Office, held a joint workshop for national standards bodies from ASEAN in Singapore from 9-10 April 2015. Centered on “Enhancing Participation in International Standards”, the workshop attracted 33 participants from all 10 ASEAN Member States (AMS).

Through a series of activities and exchanges, AMS gained insights on effective participation in international standards development, as well as strengthening advocacy for the adoption of international standards. Stakeholder engagement was a key feature of the programme, with industry stakeholders from JISC and SPRING sharing their perspectives on the importance of participation in ISO, in terms of facilitating trade, supporting economic growth and meeting social and environmental objectives.

Reducing costs through effective energy management

For many businesses, the cost of energy is high and hiking. One of the keys to sharpen business competitiveness is to improve energy efficiency. An effective energy management system can help reduce energy costs and environmental impact. To address this need, a series of standards in support of SS ISO 50001 on Energy Management Systems was launched. The seminar held on 22 May 2015, provided participants with an overview of the energy management systems standards which will guide organisations through the various stages to set up an energy management system. Best practices and benefits of implementing energy management systems were shared. Speakers, including Prof Teh Kok Chuan, Principal Research Scientist for Temasek Labs, Nanyang Technological University, also discussed the preparatory steps for the adoption of energy management standards and how companies may establish the processes necessary to improve energy efficiency.

Senior Citizens get a L.I.F.E.

Hosted by Council for Third Age (C3A), 50plus EXPO is the largest and most comprehensive event for baby boomers and seniors. The event took place from 15-17 May 2015 and attracted over 60,000 participants. The theme of this year’s edition was Get a L.I.F.E. – Live, Inspire, Fulfil, Enjoy. During the event, participants enjoyed activities such as hands-on workshops and educational forum talks on health and wellness tips.

SPRING Singapore participated as an exhibitor at the Singapore EXPO for the first time, and put up an interactive booth with activities, assorted souvenirs and educational materials for participants. Participants learnt how to look for the SAFETY Mark and ACCURACY Label on their products as well as weighing and measuring instruments in stores. As a result, participants learnt how to choose safer products and use products safely.
International standards bodies meet to discuss current work and future initiatives

A delegation from SPRING Singapore, led by Assistant Chief Executive Ms Choy Sauw Kook, attended the 38th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Pacific Area Standards Congress (PASC) in New Delhi, India from 4 - 8 May 2015. Themed ‘Towards a PASC Standardisation Strategy for Services: Current Work and Future Initiatives’, the AGM was attended by high-level representatives from PASC member bodies, as well as international and regional counterparts including the World Trade Organisation, International Organisation for Standardisation, International Electrotechnical Commission, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

A key highlight of the AGM was the discussion of strategies and priorities under the PASC Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020. PASC members discussed proposals put forth by three working groups established to look into 1) PASC Vision & Communication, 2) Partnership/stakeholder engagement, and 3) Capacity building and trade facilitation. Based on feedback gathered at the AGM, the working groups would propose the priority activities for PASC by the next Executive Committee Meeting in September 2015.

Agencies updated on Halal standards

The Halal Ecosystems for ASEAN Countries training programme organised by the Department of Standards Malaysia was held in Putrajaya, Malaysia from 11 – 14 May 2015. The programme was designed to develop capacity of agencies related to standards and performance in the Halal sector among the ASEAN member states. Through the event, participants were updated about trends in the development of Halal standards in ASEAN and the support infrastructure behind Halal standards adoption in the various ASEAN member states.

Celebrating World Accreditation Day

9 June 2015 marks World Accreditation Day as a global initiative, jointly established by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), to raise awareness on the importance of accreditation. This year’s theme focuses on how accreditation can support the delivery of health and social care. The primary purpose of health and social care accreditation is to ensure that users of the service receive a consistent high level of care, with quality patient outcomes at its core. This is especially important for Singapore’s silver industry and greying population. For instance, with an accredited service (like ISO 15189 accredited medical laboratory), patients can be assured of high quality care and accuracy of diagnostic outcomes.

The Singapore Accreditation Council will be celebrating the 2015 World Accreditation Day in conjunction with our annual Accreditation Event on 13 August 2015.

Upcoming events

Hackathon@SG 2015: Towards a Smart Nation

| Date: 25-26 July 2015 |
| Who should participate: Students, programmes, academics, designers and entrepreneurs interested in creating innovative Smart Nation solutions and applications |

Programme Highlights:

Jointly organised by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore, IT Standards Committee and supported by the Ministry of Finance and SPRING Singapore, Hackathon@SG will challenge participants to work on urban challenges impacting Singapore. Participants are invited to ideate, code and create solutions for Singapore’s Smart Nation building efforts.

• Pre-hackathon workshops on data use, UX design and Internet-of-Things technologies
• 24-hour coding challenge
• More than S$50,000 worth of prizes to be won

To register, please visit http://tinyurl.com/hackathong. Registration closes on 26 June 2015


| Date: 14 August 2015 |
| Who should attend: Shippers, freight forwarders, port/terminal operators, haulers, consignees/shippers, container depot operators, logistics service providers and shippers |

Programme Highlights:

This new Technical Reference provides documentation procedures to help container operators establish accountability for damages caused to the container. It will bring increased transparency and visibility to the container supply chain and benefit all stakeholders involved in the handling and taking over of containers.

• Overview of TR 39 / 2015
• Perspectives from a container operator and a haulier
• Depot operator
• Panel Discussion

To register, please email zhanganjun@fmd-ad.org, sqg@wibtek.kard@fmd-ad.org

Unlocking Opportunities in the Silver Market

The Silver Industry Standards Committee (SISC) develops and facilitates the implementation of Singapore standards to support the growth of the market for elder consumers and national initiatives in active ageing. In this talk, Chair Professor G. Chin, Mr Robert Chew, shares his views on the role of standards in supporting Singapore’s ageing population.

What are the major trends in the silver industry that companies should be aware of?

My chief message to them is: “Capitalise on a growing affluent customer segment.” Demographic drivers such as increasing life expectancy, raised retirement ages and higher inheritance are boosting our ageing population’s income. According to research from Euromonitor, the global spending power of consumers aged 60 and older will hit US$15 trillion by 2020, up from US$13 trillion in 2010.

More educated, tech-savvy and affluent, these retirees are likely to demand a wider range of goods and services targeted to their needs in tandem with their improved standard of living.

In line with the Singapore government’s initiative to build a smart nation, there is also a strong demand for technology that can enhance elderly living, from home-based services to transport, healthcare and community services.

Tell us about some of the new standards that SISC has developed.

Recently, we worked closely with the Health Promotion Board and industry to develop the SS 604: 2014 Guidelines for Nutrition and Food Service for Older Adults. The guidelines provide benchmarks to assess the nutrition of meals served to older persons in intermediate and long-term care facilities, as well as social care facilities.

We’ve also developed a standard covering design guidelines for public signage, aimed at helping seniors commute confidently.

To further enhance the quality of centre-based eldercare services, SISC and SPRING have also supported the Ministry of Health and Agency for Integrated Care’s effort in the development of a centre-based care guideline. They do so by contributing inputs on the development of the framework for the guidelines.

In the pipeline is a standard that covers requirements for a safe, age-friendly built environment to enable seniors to live independently both at home and in the community. We’re also in the midst of drafting another guideline that sets out to define good practices and requirements when designing websites and e-services for seniors. This will be relevant to healthcare service providers, government agencies and hospitals – indeed, to any organisation that serves seniors.

Beyond the standards development, SISC organises outreach activities, industry dialogues and workshops to raise awareness of the SISC’s initiatives and promote the values of standardisation to the silver industry.

How can the industry get involved in the standards development process?

Under SISC’s guidance, representatives from a wide range of silver industry sector interest groups (government agencies, professional bodies, tertiary institutions, trade and manufacturing organisations) are invited to join various technical committees and working groups. The aim is to ensure a balanced representation of all relevant viewpoints.

Currently, about 1,300 standards partners are involved in standards development and about 80 are involved specifically in silver industry standards work. Organisations keen to participate are welcome to approach SPRING. We look forward to strong support and participation from the silver industry to build a society that supports successful ageing.

What are the benefits for companies in the silver industry that adopt standards?

Given the silver industry’s huge market potential, there’s a need to boost the availability and accessibility of safe, good quality products and services for seniors.

Standards encourage compatibility and ensure interoperability leading to industry development and growth. Similarly, in the silver industry sector, standards can be a strategic enabler for businesses to meet specifications leading to increased efficiency, productivity and facilitate market access for overseas markets.

What’s next for SISC in terms of new standards development?

SISC has also initiated dialogues with MOH Holdings on the development of facility guidelines for healthcare infrastructure for acute care hospitals and nursing homes. Both guidelines, under the purview of the Building and Construction Standards Committee, are in the planning and once pubished, they are expected to benefit the elderly and care-givers in Singapore.

As more seniors are working beyond their retirement age, we’re currently exploring standards for age-friendly workplaces. I also firmly believe that technologies will play a key role in supporting the silver industries in the next wave, and standards will help enable the deployment of these new technologies to support active ageing in place.
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Think Accessible, Designed for All

Mr Yasuyuki Hoshikawa is the Secretary-General of the Accessible Design Foundation of Japan (ADFJ). Through its activities, ADFJ promotes accessibility for all, including the elderly and persons with disabilities. The organisation also works closely with the Japanese government and other bodies to promote the international and domestic standardisation of accessibly designed products. Good to Go asked Mr Hoshikawa for his insights on how Japan is coping with its ageing population.

Japan leads the world in developing easy-to-use products for the elderly. What does ‘accessible design’ mean in this context and how does it help senior citizens?

The ISO/IEC Guide 71 which advises standards developers on how to address the needs of older persons and persons with disabilities was developed in 2001. We then adopted the term ‘accessible design’ as the English equivalent of the Japanese term ‘Kyoohin’, which has been used in Japan since the mid-80’s. This encompasses products and services that can be used by as many people as possible in diverse contexts. Products designed this way would typically be easy to handle and have displays that are easily understood by a wide range of people. They might also come equipped with multiple accessible methods of operation and display such as voice commands, large prints and braille markings.

One of ADFJ’s main activities is to promote the concept of Kyoohin products and services to the general public. Our research shows that the market for such products has been steadily growing, from 460 billion yen in 1995 to 3.6 trillion yen in 2010.

What are some of the global and domestic trends for the market for products with accessible design?

ADFJ recently conducted a survey on the problems affecting older people which found that the daily challenges they’re up against are quite similar to those faced by persons with disabilities. So when we develop products or services for senior citizens, we should consider persons with disabilities and work out solutions that will benefit them as well.

We’ve also found that products labelled ‘for older people’ do not sell well. Many older people may not categorise themselves as such, and so these labels do not appeal to them. But labels such as ‘usable with one hand’ may attract a wider range of customers – not just the elderly. This demonstrates the importance of understanding your customer base and their preferences.

Which initiatives has Japan put in place to support its ageing population?

Japan has also passed a barrier-free transportation law which aims to make public transport facilities more elderly- and disabled-friendly. Here, railway stations and airports are required to install elevators and/or escalators in areas with a high volume of passengers. Many ticket-vending machines are within a suitable height range to accommodate wheelchair users and provide audio guidance for the visually impaired. Many elevators and vending machines are equipped with Braille keys, while many of our public buses are low-floor and fitted with ramps.

What are some of the important standards and guidelines that Japan has drawn up for its elderly?

Our Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS), established by the Japanese Industrial Standards Committee (JISC), cover a wide range of business areas and industrial products in Japan. ADFJ is also involved in the development of guidelines for services, which includes advice on providing assistance to the elderly and persons with disabilities during exhibitions.

Currently, there are about 40 standards involving accessible design that are related to older persons and persons with disabilities in Japan. These cover visual, auditory and tactile aspects, and are used in various industries such as consumer electronics, office equipment and information technology.

How does ADFJ go about drafting standards for the silver industry?

We conduct surveys to help us pinpoint the issues affecting the elderly and persons with disabilities. This research forms the basis for developing standards related to accessible design. Our next step is to discuss our findings with related industrial organisations – if the solutions that come out of these discussions are feasible and effective, the industrial organisations will begin developing guidelines to address these issues.

However, if a topic or problem involves multiple industries, we will seek JISC’s advice on whether there’s a need to develop a new standard. If JISC decides that there is, the development process starts. Typically, this would involve various stakeholders such as consumers, manufacturers and academic experts – and it could take between one to three years.

What do you think the silver industry in Japan will look like in the next five to ten years?

Currently, it is generally regarded that “it is better if products and services are usable by older persons.” But as the population in Japan is ageing rapidly, I assume that the trend will necessitate that products and services be elderly-friendly.
Golden Years: The Coming Boom for the Silver Industry

Japan’s booming eldercare market stems from a strong standards foundation that helps businesses build trust with customers. What lessons can Singapore businesses learn from its success?

Lessons from Japan’s eldercare market

Clearly, there’s a wealth of business opportunities in meeting the needs of this ageing demographic, and as a result, many service providers and retail brands are starting to target older people more actively. Japan—which has the highest life expectancy of any large country in the world, with men living, on average, to 80, and women to 86—currently leads the way in developing innovative eldercare products and services.

“As the baby boomer generation—people born between 1946 and 1964—begin venturing into the territory of senior citizenship, they’re creating a demand for new products and services to accommodate their changing needs,” says Ms Yoko Nakao, Panasonic’s Universal Design Development Chief. “These senior citizens have higher expectations and are looking for good quality and easy-to-use items, especially home products.”

Last year, Panasonic, Japan’s market leader in consumer appliances, rolled out a new series of appliances called J Concept, designed for a group it describes as “the discerning 50s and 60s.” The line-up includes what the company calls “the world’s lightest vacuum cleaner” along with a refrigerator, oven, and are the result of two years of intensive customer surveys. “These products, which meet Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS) ‘Guidelines for older persons and persons with disabilities’ series, are lightweight, easy to handle and come equipped with assistive technology features, such as large prints,” Ms Nakao explains.

Japan’s construction giant Daiwa House Group has also designed products and services that will work across all age groups, and especially with older people.

“Providing services that help to enhance the quality of life of the elderly and people with disabilities is a key focus area for us,” says Mr Kazumasa Tanaka, the company’s General Manager, Robotics Business Department and Human Care Division.

“These include the sale and rental of ‘lifestyle assistance robots’ that play a valuable role in nursing care and rehabilitation, and the operation of fee-based homes for the elderly. We also run programmes such as fitness clubs that can enhance the quality of life for the elderly and disabled.”

Role of standards in building trust

Standards have played an important part in the evolution of Japan’s silver industry, giving manufacturers, service providers, designers and policy makers the specifications and guidelines they need to be able to design products and services that are accessible to all.

In 2004, the Japanese government developed the JIS X 8341 based on the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)’s Guide 71. This advises standards developers on how to make sure their standards take full account of the accessibility needs of all users, including the ageing population.

“Panasonic has now put in place a Universal Design policy to ensure its products can be accessed easily by customers of all ages and abilities, especially older people,” says Ms Nakao.

“We have also adopted related standards (including ISO 24500 and others) because these act as helpful guidelines for our designs. They bring other benefits too: with standards, consumers have the security of knowing that they will be able to use the products comfortably and without troubles,” Ms Nakao says.

Daiwa House, meanwhile, says it refers to JIS X 8341 whenever it designs and constructs.

“We believe it’s very important to give our customers the assurance that our products meet the guideline’s criteria—that they are safe and reliable,” says Mr Tanaka. “This means our systems and processes can be trusted, which puts us in good stead whenever we launch new lines.”

Boosting Singapore’s silver industry

Here in Singapore, where the silver industry also has enormous market potential, there’s a similar need to boost the availability and accessibility of safe, good quality products and services for seniors.

In line with this, SPRING Singapore launched two new standards—SS 604: 2014 Guidelines for Nutrition and Food Service for Older Adults and SS 599: 2014 Guide for wayfinding signage in public areas.

SS 604 provides benchmarks to assess the nutrition of meals served to older persons in intermediate and long-term care facilities, as well as social care facilities. “These guidelines have helped reinforce the message to my food handlers that it’s very important for us to maintain continuously high standards of basic food hygiene. In this sense, they act as a very useful aid for skills training,” says Ms Mary-Ann Chia, Senior Dietician and Head of Department, Department of Dietetics & Nutrition Services, Bright Vision Hospital.

SS 599, meanwhile, aims to help seniors commute more confidently by developing generic wayfinding guidelines for common public environments, thus improving navigation in public spaces.

“As a printing business, we’ve found these guidelines invaluable as they clearly explain how to deliver wayfinding information in a way that can benefit all users—and especially seniors,” says Mr Alvin Yapp, Corporate Affairs Director, BusAds Pte Ltd.

Also in the pipeline is a guideline that sets out to define good practices and requirements when designing websites and e-services for seniors.

“Standards give greater assurance on the quality, safety and reliability of products and services,” says Mr Robert Chew, Chairperson of the Silver Industry Standards Committee (SiSC). “Businesses can also use them as an important enabler of their business strategy, allowing them to meet specifications leading to increased efficiency and productivity. As the silver industry grows in Singapore, it’s vital that businesses bear this in mind.”

Building a new standard for age-friendly homes

As Singapore’s ageing population continues to grow, age-friendly homes are becoming a necessity. These are designed to be easier for older people to move around in, enabling them to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible.

But ageing in place, as many experts call it, is made difficult by the widespread lack of age-friendly home features. To find a sustainable solution, a technical committee for liveability within homes and community, under the purview of the Silver Industry Standards Committee, is developing a standard for elderly homes. Expected to be rolled out in July, the standard will provide guidelines on how specific areas within a home should be designed to suit the needs of senior citizens, thus ensuring that they are comfortable and secure in their homes as they grow older. In particular, it addresses the design and adaptation of specific areas within the home, such as the living room and kitchen, to accommodate ageing-in-place.
Life expectancy in Singapore has increased by 11 years over the last three decades – from 72 years in 1980 to 83 in 2013. At the same time, older people in Singapore face a number of challenges. Despite the traditional Asian ideal of the multi-generational household, an increasing proportion of senior citizens aged 65 and above now live alone.

Elderly people living on their own are at greater risk of experiencing social isolation and depression, increasing their reliance on special support. At the same time, serious medical conditions are on the rise and the socioeconomic challenges of an ageing population are an increasing concern. For instance, dementia causes particular distress to many older people and their families.

Thankfully, voluntary welfare organisations like Fei Yue Family Service Centre (FYFSC) are alert to all these issues and are working to solve them. Established in 1991, FYFSC aims to transform lives by providing quality social services. The organisation became an independent society in 1994 and is now a full member of the National Council of Social Services.

Today, FYFSC manages four family service centres, two student-care centres, a retirees’ centre and three activity centres for senior citizens.

A focus on creative thinking

“Our vision at Fei Yue is to see every elderly person live a life well lived – one that’s rich in meaning and experiences, where they can remain happy, healthy and active,” says FYFSC Director, Ms Lynn Lim.

“That’s why our programmes and services promote active ageing among our elderly clients through volunteerism, education and partnership.”

At FYFSC’s Senior Activity Centres, senior citizens are encouraged to become active volunteers, helping out with simple tasks such as preparing light refreshments for yum cha sessions, or paying home visits to frail seniors.

“We encourage our elderly clients to become our volunteers because they are more familiar with the issues involved,” Ms Lim explains. “They can act as our ‘ears’ so that we better understand emerging needs in the lives of the elderly in the community.

“Volunteerism also helps seniors broaden their social networks, connect with society and improve their cognitive functions.”

Staff members at FYFSC run a series of educational courses and activities – from computer skills classes to cooking and music sessions – to promote lifelong learning. At the same time, the organisation runs a range of special projects to tackle key issues affecting the elderly, including a unique three-part programme on palliative care and life-and-death education. “Fei Yue is the first and only organisation in Singapore to organise such a programme,” says Ms Lim.

Embedding quality processes

FYFSC, which received its ISO 9001 certification in 1999, first embarked on its BE journey in 2000. “We realised that achieving certification would allow us to professionalise our management and help us include a stronger focus on customer centricity,” says Ms Lim.

The organisation achieved People Developer (PD) certification in 2005, followed by Singapore Quality Class (SQC) certification in 2006. “Our commitment to innovation has been boosted by our adoption of various business excellence (BE) standards. These have helped us establish more progressive management practices, which ensure we have the right systems in place to produce continual improvements and innovations in everything we do.”

Fit for the future

Since adopting the business excellence framework, FYFSC has put in place training procedures to equip its staff members with the skills and knowledge they need to meet the specific needs of their elderly clientele.

“Our staff have been generally supportive of our business excellence journey so far,” says Ms Lim. “We’ve tried to make it an especially rewarding process for them by giving out awards for such things as ‘Most Innovative Project,’ ‘Best Staff Suggestion’ and ‘Most Thoughtful Staff Member.’ Essentially, adhering to these high standards is helping us constantly improve the quality of FYFSC’s offerings in every department.”
**Technology – key to active ageing**

A commitment to accelerate innovation and spur enterprise growth has seen A*STAR use the Business Excellence framework to help it achieve outstanding performance.

Every year, as many as a quarter of Singaporeans over the age of 65 will have a fall, says doctors. And according to the Health Promotion Board, most of those falls will happen in the home.

Falls are by far the most common type of accident among elderly people. They can cause broken bones and head trauma, and increase the risk of early death. Many falls result in long hospital stays and expensive surgeries.

There may be social and psychological consequences too. Up to 70% of elderly people who fall develop a fear of falling again, which can make them hesitant to leave the house and lead to social isolation and even depression.

A reliable emergency monitoring system, however, can make independent living safer for older adults. Enter the SoundEye, a locally-produced solution that’s designed to sit unobtrusively on a ceiling. Unlike other systems that require the user to pull an emergency cord or press a panic button – both of which may be out of reach when an accident occurs – the SoundEye is voice-activated and equipped with motion sensors to help it pick up screams and physical falls.

When an emergency is detected, the device sends alerts to an app on a caregiver’s mobile phone. The caregiver can then listen to an audio playback of the triggering sound to help them verify the alert and determine the most appropriate course of action. And because the device acts as an intercom system, the caregiver can also use their SoundEye mobile app to communicate directly with the elderly person involved.

“That’s why we believe it can revolutionise monitoring for elderly people living alone. We anticipate huge interest in this product globally once we have commercialised our technology.”

**Focusing on elder support technology**

Developing innovative technologies that can support Singapore’s ageing population is an important part of the A*STAR mission. Through its world-class technology and R&D expertise, the agency helps local businesses accelerate the development of capabilities and innovations for growth and internationalisation.

More recently, A*STAR has built up its capabilities in emerging areas such as smart city urban systems, where eldercare is a key focus.

“Helping the elderly age where they live is a major thrust of the Smart Nation programme, which seeks to harness ICT, networks and data to support stronger communities and better living,” says Dr Tan.

“In support of this, we also recently came up with the HuGGler, an interactive soft toy resembling a pet that can provide elderly and demented patients with a form of companionship as it responds to their actions and emotions.”

As a robot platform, the HuGGler, which is currently funded by Singapore-Massachusetts Institute of Technology Alliance for Research and Technology Innovation Centre, serves as a monitoring tool for clinicians to track patients’ mental wellbeing and behavioural patterns. Several patient trials with nursing homes and hospitals are now underway.

**Driving Innovation through Business Excellence**

Intended to be both easy to use and affordable, the SoundEye and the HuGGler are good examples of A*STAR’s strong culture of innovation.

“A*STAR constantly strives to improve its performance when it comes to innovation, which is why we chose to be certified to Singapore Innovation Class, or I-Class,” explains Dr Tan.

The I-Class is a certification for organisations that have met the requirements of SPRING Singapore’s Business Excellence Niche Standard (Innovation). It’s part of the Business Excellence (BE) framework, which helps organisations systematically develop capabilities in such areas as leadership, people, process and customer management – all key drivers of productivity.

It was in recognition of A*STAR’s pursuit of organisational excellence and the dedication of its staff that the organisation achieved the Innovation Excellence Award (I-Award) in 2014. This is the highest accolade accorded by the Singapore Quality Award (SQA) Governing Council to innovative organisations in Singapore.

At the same time, as part of its BE journey, the agency is also certified to the Singapore Quality Class (SQC) standard. SQC provides national recognition for organisations that have the management systems and processes in place to achieve all-round business excellence.

**Enhancing capabilities with International Standards**

The implementation of international standards ensures that the R&D work A*STAR does is reliable, relevant and consistent to international standards practice. It also helps ensure that the products that are developed meet international safety requirements, and are of high quality and competitiveness.

But that’s not all. BE certification and I-Award are validations of the good work that A*STAR has been doing over the years to establish its culture of innovation.

These have helped A*STAR put systems in place to promote collaboration and innovation in the organisation – such as grants and cross-council initiatives. And it’s also helped the agency develop a culture that is people-centric, where creative thinking is encouraged and good work rewarded. Ultimately, being on the business excellence journey has enabled A*STAR to build a solid base to drive innovation in everything that it does.
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Electrical, electronic and gas appliances and accessories such as microwave ovens, portable 3-pin socket outlets and hair dryers are among several categories of products that are designated as Controlled Goods under the Consumer Protection Safety Requirements Registration Scheme (CPS Scheme). Controlled Goods have to be registered with SPRING and affixed with the SAFETY Mark before they can be sold in Singapore.

Selling one of these items? Ensure that the product or packaging has the SAFETY Mark.

General Household Consumer Goods

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