SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:
2019 COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION AWARDS

German European School Singapore Transforms Operations

A visit to the German European School Singapore (GESS) at its spanking new campus in Dairy Farm Lane is a delightful and energising experience. With programmes catered to students from aged 18 months to 18 years, the school operates in a 30,580 square-metre campus with more than 2,000 students and staff.

Just a year ago, the school had operated at two different sites on the island and had wanted to unify both campuses under one roof. After much consideration and planning, GESS finally moved to its present location in August 2018.

In preparation for the move, GESS' previous marketing and admissions strategy was revised with the objectives of enhancing both its external brand marketing and improving the school's market visibility. As a result, the bigger campus with its improved infrastructure increased the school's student intake to 1,750 students in 2018. This was a significant increase from a total of 1,500 pupils in both campuses two years ago.

However, demand for the school's internal communications increased significantly. Fulfilling these ad-hoc internal requests consumed a considerable amount of the marketing department's time and limited their ability to focus on their core functions.

GESS' Marketing Manager Kirsten Moench commented: "There was a whole range of internal communication demands, from new signage in the school to the need for name cards, collaterals, and many others. We also had to produce a yearbook annually, which took an average of four months of the team's time every year."

Simply increasing the marketing's team's headcount to manage ad-hoc internal marketing demands was not a sustainable solution. The school had to look for more efficient ways to raise their productivity and this was made possible through their collaboration with homegrown company p;log Pte Ltd (p;log), whose parent company Winson Press Pte Ltd is a print company specialising in packaging, labels, and commercial products.

It was this collaborative effort to transform existing processes that enabled GESS and p;log to emerge as the winner of the 2019 SICC Award for the Most Transformational Collaboration at the annual Singapore International Chamber of Commerce's (SICC) Collaborative Innovation Awards.

The annual SICC Awards were launched in 2015 to learn from and recognise the role collaboration has in fostering business innovation and growth. The Awards, open to SICC members and non-members, provide an inclusive platform to recognize Singapore's champions of collaborative innovation. The Chamber believes that continual innovation, or transformation, is key to the sustainability of every business and collaboration is very often the fastest way for a company to innovate. The Awards aim to provide a knowledge-sharing community for companies irrespective of sector or size.

SICC believes that in today's complex and disruptive world, collaboration is one of the best ways to leverage knowledge, to innovate, to grow and to stay relevant.

Beginnings of GESS' Shift to Cloud

Since 2016, p;log had collaborated with GESS on designing, printing and producing the school's annual 300-page yearbook.

"When p;log approached us and offered us the option to collaborate on a cloud platform to manage internal requests, we started exploring new options," said Ms Moench.

"GESS was willing to change, collaborate and explore new ways of managing business processes. We understood our own internal demands and thus, were open to improving internal processes," she added.

The move to cloud-based solutions offered by p;log seemed like a natural choice for GESS, given the modern technological environment of Singapore.

P;log's Head of Business Charmaine Toh said that the company was using a ready-made platform as part of its internal operations, which was constantly being adapted to meet its evolving business needs. This platform included automated digital solutions designed to help companies solve their inventory, work efficiency, and manpower issues.

"We saw an opportunity to take our internal solution to GESS and help them standardise their internal processes and generate efficiency," said Ms Toh.

Hence, she recommended a host of cloud solutions to solve the school's challenges such as curbing the over-production of yearbooks, streamlining the management of marketing collateral, and reforming the way printing has been done within GESS.

Managing Marketing Demands

P;log provided GESS with a cloud-based online marketplace builder that allowed its users to easily manage their business needs. With the software, GESS was able to easily set up their own digital storefront remotely, without the need for recording quantities, price quotes or delivery lead times.

In addition, designing and delivering customisable name cards for 300 staff required that each order passed GESS' branding standards, maintain sufficient card volumes, and deliver individually to each staff member.

But with p;log's cloud solutions, the process was made much easier.

P;log uploads a default template onto the GESS cloud system for its users to submit their designs for the finished product. Once finalised, each administrative staff had to individually log in, submit their details and follow up with a request for the volume desired. The print orders are then processed and executed swiftly.

Other marketing collaterals included designing and printing course programmes, signage, event-related programme pamphlets, and other materials. For each of these items, specific design templates were created, so that users would be able to log-on into the cloud system easily and submit their orders.

Through the integrated platform, users from various departments could order marketing collaterals, apparel, stationery, and even teaching materials within minutes.

As such, the implementation of the p;log cloud system allowed the marketing team to play a minimal role in the overall operations, freeing up their time and energy to work on their own department key performance indicators.

Yearbook Production and Distribution

With p;log setting up a separate digital storefront for the GESS team to handle the production of its annual yearbook, teachers, administrators and selected student leaders were able to access and receive immediate feedback on their content creation. With all members dynamically participating in the process, the lead time for collating materials for the yearbook was reduced significantly.

As a result, the school is planning to print about 730 copies of the annual yearbook in 2019, compared to the 480 copies produced through their older and more manually intensive process in previous years.

As the solution has its own password and security features, GESS was able to safeguard its online operations by remotely authenticating and approving users for access to their personalised platform.

The digital storefront enabled the marketing team to remotely monitor and control the entire production process, freeing up more time for them to work on the core task of increasing student enrolment numbers.

Additional Improvements

"We had a challenge in managing the yearbook in terms of ensuring the standardisation in design as well as producing critical volume," commented Ms Moench on the yearbook production process.

Aiming to avoid such issues, the cloud system has been further enhanced by p;log with a new inventory control system in 2019.

The system records each order for a copy of the yearbook and when a critical mass is reached, "p;log was able to proceed with printing and delivering each book to the customer who had ordered the copy," said Ms Moench.

In this way, GESS was able to enjoy savings as the system automatically tabulated the print volume required based on the requests. The system was also able to take new orders after a designated deadline, giving internal customers the option to evaluate whether they were prepared to pay a higher unit price for a copy of the book in its second print run. This enabled the school to reduce their overall inventory wastage.

In addition, p;log implemented a cloud-based print shop module within the campus where users can remotely upload their documents onto the cloud platform from their unique locations and print via the network.

Due to its ease of use, GESS' staff members quickly adjusted to the new system, benefitting from a more streamlined printing process.

P;log further aided GESS in solving additional inventory and budgeting issues, as they were able to use the cloud to monitor, track orders and adjust printing budgets. This allowed them to reap more savings from p;log's cloud solution.

GESS and p;log together enjoyed a higher return on investment by automating a system to handle both external and internal print management requests, hence enabling the staff to be more productive and efficient.

This is the second of four articles that will run every Wednesday.

A collaboration made in the Cloud. From Left-to-Right: P;log's Charmaine Toh, GESS' Kirsten Moench.

SICC AWARDS 2020
Celebrating Collaborative Innovation

SICC is now inviting parties to submit their interest in participating in the 2020 Collaborative Innovation Awards