

SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:
2019 COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION AWARDS

ADVERTORIAL

Powerful Mix of Customised Technology, Open Mind Leads to Best Green Collaboration Award

A special needs school that was in need of renovation. A global material science and technology company looking to deploy its state-of-the-art environmentally friendly waterbased binder technology. One of Singapore's largest sports facilities and management companies with strong local know-how.

This was the potent combination that topped other submissions to clinch the 2019 Best Green Collaboration Award at the annual Singapore International Chamber of Commerce's (SICC) Collaborative Innovation Awards.

As a result of this collaboration, three partners benefitted immensely through the installation of more environmentally friendly facilities in a school environment.

Prior to this, Grace Orchard School, which caters to students with mild intellectual disabilities and autism between the ages of 7 to 18 years, was a school in need of repair and renovation. The school, supported by the Ministry of Education and the National Council of Social Services, had much to deal with – a run-down basketball court, an uninteresting bare playground and a therapy room and classrooms that needed a makeover.

There was also a lack of proper running tracks for their student athletes who frequently participate at the Paralympic Games.

In September 2017, Fortune 500 technology giant Dow was actively looking for partners to deploy its ground-breaking, environmentally friendly ECOGROUND™ Waterborne Acrylic Binder System. This is no ordinary technology as it is able to fully replace the conventional solvent-based adhesives used in making rubberised surfaces for running tracks, playgrounds and walkways for schools and athletic and recreational facilities.

Simultaneously, homegrown B.T. Sports Pte Ltd was exploring ways to adopt environmentally sustainable solutions. B.T. Sports, which had a strong track record in implementing solutions for customers in Singapore, stood ready to further push its expertise in design, construction, surfacing, and maintenance of sports facilities.

What emerged as a result was a creation of a symbiotic relationship where best practices of market leaders like Dow and B.T. Sports converged to deliver on a solution which grabbed the attention of the judges of the prestigious SICC 2019 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



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



Grace Orchard School students enjoying the revamped track

a learning and 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.

On winning the award, Mr. Paul Fong, Dow Country Manager (Singapore & Malaysia), shared that his company, a leader in the world of material science, is committed to providing innovative, sustainable sports and surface solutions like ECOGROUND™.

Mr. Fong scouted around for experts in Singapore to collaborate on delivering the green solution. Dow did not have to run a long distance because it found a like-minded partner in B.T. Sports.

Mr. Hayden Hoon, B.T. Sports Director, said his company has been around since 1990 and had a strong track record in designing, overhauling and retrofitting indoor sports halls, running tracks, golf driving ranges, club houses and supplies a large variety of sports equipment, among others.

"At B.T. Sports, we have an ingrained culture and mindset of innovation with the goal of systematically delivering the best value-solutions for our customers in Singapore and the region. When we started discussing with Dow, it seemed like a meeting of minds," said Mr. Hoon.

Given B.T. Sports pole position in its market segment Singapore, the collaboration between the two parties became a natural fit.

The Challenge

Given the experience of the respective companies, they realised that there were two fundamentally pressing problems in the market place.

First, infrastructure owners and service providers were too comfortable in using the conventional solvent-based adhesive technology in the fabrication of all-weather track and field environments.

Second, there were significant amounts of organic solvents, processing additives and heavy metal catalysts that were being used in jobsites, resulting in the discharge of large amounts of volatile organic compounds and harmful substances to the environment. These also caused health hazards to workers.

Out of this grew the need to deliver an environmentally sustainable solution.

The timing and the opportunity worked through the needs of Grace Orchard School. Dow has supported the autism community in Singapore for six years under its corporate social responsibility initiative, hence helping a special needs organization like Grace Orchard School

gels well with its focus.

Dow brought its chemistry and formulation know-how to the table. And B.T. Sport injected its application, installation expertise and regional experience with a willingness to work on a game-changing technology.

Both parties defined test systems to show Grace Orchard School what the running track, playground and the shock absorbing sports court would look and feel like upon implementation.

More rigour followed in terms of the formulation and system configuration adjustments to match the field conditions of the school as well as the Singapore climate. As the saying goes, not all is smooth sailing in a journey. Work on the implementing the new technology solution began in earnest in the final quarter of 2017, with the intention of completing the installation before the new school term in 2018.

However, the heavy rains at the year end of 2017 were unforgiving and beset the progress of the project. Project delay and cost overruns

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Sustainable Solutions

Not long after the opening of the new school year at Grace Orchard School, the project was completed.

As both parties look back at this flagship project, they share a sense of satisfaction.

At the highest level, there is a joint sense of accomplishment for introducing an environmentally and safe user-friendly solution. Students at Grace Orchard can now use the facilities knowing very well that they are safe from hazardous substances.

Grace Orchard also benefits from having a playground which is more ultra-violet resistant that enables long lasting colour and aesthetics and permeable courts allowing for increased use.

For workers deployed to implement the project, there was a significant comfort to them as they did not have to deal with harmful adhesives and the clean-up process was relatively easy since it was water based.

Mr Hoon looks back with this thought, "We have been looking for a solution to move away from mainstream solvent-based products for some time. Working on this project has been gratifying because it gave us the opportunity to customise and implement a long-lasting solution."

"B.T. Sports can look ahead to changing the mind-set and the marketplace with this new environmentally friendly and sustainable solution," said Mr Hoon.

To Dow, winning the SICC Award for this project is expected to open new doors and markets. "Dow sees the opportunity to use this environmentally friendly solution to scale up into new market segments like public housing estates which have running tracks, basketball courts, playgrounds as well as other schools," said Mr Fong.

The partners truly believe they have found a powerful collaborative innovation solution for a safe and sustainable living environment.

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

SICC Singapore International Chamber of Commerce

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SICC – The Voice of International Business in Singapore Since 1837

SICC was founded in Singapore in 1837 making it the city-state's longest serving voice of the private sector. Today, SICC is proud to be Singapore's most inclusive Chamber and its best platform for business networking.

The SICC engagement platform cuts across all potential silos of ethnicity, nationality, industry and business sector. The Chamber represents 600 companies, 40 nationalities and 20 business sectors. Membership is equally split between local and foreign multi-nationals and large organizations and local and foreign medium, small and start-up companies. SICC's diverse members are a truly representative slice of the Singapore business community. An independent advocate for business, SICC shares its members' views and concerns on government policy with policymakers and politicians. The Chamber focuses on 3 main pillars: human capital development and leadership, collaborative innovation and championing the circular economy.