

Changi taking service to new heights

12 initiatives, including instant feedback system, rolled out to improve passenger experience

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CHANGI Airport has embarked on a \$4 million journey to boost service standards throughout its facility - from the counters and taxi queues to the shops and restaurants, and even in the toilets.

Already a national icon for many Singaporeans, the airport is now aiming to be a service icon - one of four organisations selected under Spring Singapore's Customer-Centric Initiative (CCI) programme to lead the way. The others are Sentosa Development Corporation, Ion Orchard and Wing Tai Clothing.

The CCI is part of the Go the Extra Mile for Service (Gems) movement to overhaul Singapore's service quality in the retail, food and beverage, hospitality, health-care and transport sectors.

In a major drive that kicked off about a year ago, Changi Airport Group is rolling out 12 new initiatives, all aimed at improving the passenger experience.

Among them is an instant feedback system that allows travellers and visitors to rate counter staff, immigration officers, retailers and cleaners using interactive touch screen devices that are being installed progressively.

A few buttons pressed and a cleaning supervisor is immediately alerted that a particular toilet needs cleaning or maintenance.

Mr Ken T'se, managing director of cosmetics and perfume chain Nuance-Watson, said the new system will greatly facilitate collation of feedback.

"We are able to receive thousands of responses to better understand where we are doing well and where we must improve."

Yesterday, the airport provided a glimpse of its new suite of service offerings to Mr Lim Swee Say, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, who oversees the Gems movement.

Speaking to reporters after a 90-minute tour, Mr Lim said that while Singapore has made good progress in improving service standards, more remains to be done.



Mr Lim Swee Say checking out one of the interactive touch-screen devices being installed at the airport which allow travellers and visitors to give instant feedback. ST PHOTO: BRYAN VAN DER BEEK

He noted that this year, Singapore slipped from the 10th to 18th position in the ranking for service orientation in the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report.

He said the Government is disappointed but not disheartened.

"On the whole, we feel that we have made progress. Unfortunately, having stayed two years among the top 10, this year we dropped out of the top 10 again..."

"The target now is not just to make progress but to make progress faster than the rest of the world."

On its part, the Government will continue to push for improvements and support companies with co-funding for training and other initiatives. So far, 55 per cent of a \$100 million kitty set up under the Gems movement has already been used up.

For Changi Airport, the new initiatives are part of an ongoing effort, building on what is already in place, to be even better than before.

Chief executive Lee Seow Hiang told *The Straits Times*: "This time round, before we even looked at the customers, we said 'let's look at the people working here at Changi, the employees themselves'. And I don't mean the 1,300 at Changi Airport Group alone, but the 28,000 people who work here. Because that is the real driving force of service transformation for us."

When awarding contracts in future, the airport will not only look at price and quality of services, but also assess the job satisfaction levels of employees in an organisation, Mr Lee added.

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Staying in touch

■ By the end of next year, 1,800 touch-screen terminals will allow travellers and visitors to give instant feedback on service standards.

The terminals will be located mainly at check-in and immigration counters as well as in the toilets.

■ Maintenance officers armed with smartphones will have direct communication with contractors so that any faults, for example a leaking pipe in a toilet, can be fixed immediately.

■ Customers at The Pasta Shop By Sakae, located at Terminal 3, can vote, based on their dining experience, on whether staff should get to keep a portion of the 10 per cent service charge.

■ iPhone and iPad users can now download iChangi, which provides the latest flight and other airport information.

■ In a tie-up with the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore, Singapore Customs and major retailers, Changi will soon introduce a hassle-free system for travellers seeking GST refunds. The new system will capture all details at the point of purchase so that travellers need not fill in a form each for every purchase made and then join several queues at the airport.

At the airport, the traveller prints out the details at a self-service kiosk and can opt for a refund by credit card, which means no queueing.