

Singapore companies should hunt in a pack: Chan Chun Sing



Mrs Grace Chong-Tan (second from left), co-founder of Smile Inc Dental Surgeons, receives her award from Minister for Social and Family Development Chan Chun Sing (second from right) at the Singapore Prestige Brand Award (SPBA) ceremony on Oct 22 at the Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore. -- PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

SINGAPORE - Trust and innovation define the Singapore brand, but unity and care are two more qualities that will stand businesses here in good stead as they face intense global competition, said Minister for Social and Family Development Chan Chun Sing.

"These are two things that we have done well - innovation and trust - but there are two more things that I think our Singapore brand can do well, and these two will require the commitment and cooperation of all of you," Mr Chan told 800 members of the Singapore business community at the 13th Singapore Prestige Brand Award (SPBA) ceremony on Wednesday night at the Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore.

Mr Chan wants to see more unity among companies big and small as they explore overseas markets, to establish the Singapore brand name as a group, rather than individually.

"We need to work together and collaborate so that when we go overseas, we hunt as a pack and bring back food for Singapore and Singaporeans," he said in a speech. Mr Chan pointed to the example of developer CapitaMalls, which has partnered with many local brands to bring them overseas as a group. The fourth quality Mr Chan emphasised was care.

"Our success is not just dependent on our talent and hard work. Our success also depends on the opportunities given to us by this society. So for those of us who are more successful, it is incumbent on us to continue to support the system," said Mr Chan in a lead up to the awards presentation.

The awards ceremony is organised annually by the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (ASME) and Lianhe Zaobao.

Last night, Smile Inc Dental Surgeons was unveiled as the overall winner for the SPBA Established Brands award, and inducted into the elite SPBA Hall of Fame.

"Dentistry is something people don't look forward to, so we've put some sexiness into it," Mrs Grace Chong-Tan, founder of the boutique dental practice, told The Straits Times.

"We play with our setting to create a feeling of space, restfulness and comfort, so that it's not so foreboding," she said, noting the brand's duplex-fronted dental practice at The Sail at Marina Bay, a first for Singapore.

Tong Garden, the household nuts brand, was the overall winner for the SPBA Heritage Brands award, for brands that have been established for more than 25 years. Chief executive Dhanate Praisiri said: "We're always concerned about our brand because we think our brand is our most valuable property. It's even more important now, as we face huge competition in the market with new players coming in."

Orange Clove Catering was the overall winner for the SPBA Promising Brands. The award is timely as the top corporate caterer had just announced a rebranding exercise earlier this month to take on a more customer-centric focus.

Executive director Elvis Lee said: "When we do a good job, we get referrals from established clients and they become our brand ambassadors. That is the secret behind our exponential growth."

Life sciences tools and medical devices business Esco, which has a presence in more than 10 countries, was the overall winner for the Maybank Regional Brands award.

Asme president Kurt Wee encouraged local businesses to build on the Singapore brand when they venture abroad.

"Businesses and consumers internationally have great confidence in the Singapore brand which has been developed along the lines quality and integrity," he said in a speech.

"Expanding companies should build on the reputation their forerunners have painfully established."