

Service Excellence Icon Wing Tai Retail Shares Customer-Centric Initiatives: Transforming Fashion Retail through Service, Store and Staff

SINGAPORE, 23 JUNE 2011:

Wing Tai Retail has been identified as one of four Service Excellence Icons in terms of service breakthroughs. It is the only retailer selected as an Iconic Service Organisation, and is recognised for pioneering its Customer-Centric Initiatives through the transformation of the 3S – Service, Store and Staff.

Wing Tai Retail showcased its customer-centric initiatives at an event graced by Mr Lim Swee Say, Minister for Prime Minister's Office and NTUC Secretary-General, and Mr Lee Yi Shyan, Minister-of-State for Trade and Industry and National Development.

Having started its CCI journey in 2005, Wing Tai Retail has achieved important service milestones. Its focus then was to lay the foundation for service excellence. In 2008, the company embarked on its second phase of CCI. It introduced a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) programme to collect and analyse customer data, allowing the company to better understand and serve its customers.

Ms Helen Khoo, Executive Director of Wing Tai Retail, says: "In Wing Tai Retail, our business is fashion. Fashion is dynamic; it evolves, influences, and is affected by people. As a fashion authority, Wing Tai Retail must be able to inspire and engage people to live and breathe fashion, and to constantly lead the competition by transforming ourselves and achieving service excellence that will give us a business edge and strengthen our competitive positioning as a nation."

Ms Khoo adds, "CCI transformed Wing Tai Retail from offering service transactions to building lasting relationships with customers. Against a fast-changing and competitive retail landscape, customer centricity is our key to engaging and understanding our customers and their needs, enabling us to keep our lead in the industry. With the CCI Journey, we have re-focused our approach to Service, Store and Staff to transform our retail workforce, empowering our staff to pursue their passion in fashion, deliver personalized, high-touch fashion services, and provide our customers with a total customer experience at our stores."

Wing Tai Retail's Third CCI Phase

Embarking on its third CCI phase in 2009, Wing Tai Retail made a critical turn in its customer orientation. Wing Tai Retail currently operates 18 key brands with more than 130 fashion retail outlets in Singapore. It has piloted its third CCI phase across nine brands, forming three core customer segments that represent a diverse spectrum of needs and expectations. Wing Tai Retail has transformed itself from simply offering service transactions to providing service advisory to its customers.

It is focused on the 3S – Service, Store and Staff – to offer high-touch personalised service to fulfil both functional and emotional needs of its customers.

After embarking on the third phase of CCI, its service initiatives have resulted in a customer satisfaction level improvement of 5.3%, a mystery shopper audit improvement of 9.9% and impressively, a customer loyalty retention improvement of 32% based on a year-on-year improvement between Oct '09- Sep '10 versus Oct '10- Apr '11.

Transforming Service – Providing a High-Touch Personalised Service

Understanding its various customer segments was a key step towards transforming the Wing Tai retail service. Variations of its high-touch, personalised styling services were designed to fulfil the needs of different customer segments across all the brands. Styling advisors are on hand to provide advice on the latest fashion trends, and to assist customers in making the right choices. This ranges from an on-demand style coordinator service to a one-on-one private styling session with a Personal Shopper.

Innovative solutions were also developed to remove service bottlenecks and enhance the customers' overall shopping experience. Arising from feedback that numerous non-payment transactions took place at the cashier, a pilot concierge service was set up at the Topshop outlet at Knightsbridge to address these needs. The concierge provides value-added services such as couriering of items bought, booking of appointments with the Personal Shopper, rental of umbrellas, an in-store iPad, and complimentary handphone charging.

A preview card was also introduced to simplify customers' search for all their wardrobe needs. For example, a customer may be shopping with the Personal Shopper at Topshop but may need corporate wear. The service staff may then refer the customer to its sister outlet, G2000, and facilitate service arrangements with the other store on the customer's behalf.

Wing Tai Retail has also reviewed its internal processes to increase customer satisfaction through its service productivity. For example, it has revised its delivery schedule and streamlined stocking processes to allow completion of store-keeping before operating hours. This way, all its service staff are able to focus their attention on the individuals and their needs, creating happier and more satisfied customers.

Transforming Store – Delivering a Total Customer Experience

To complement the high touch, personalised services, Wing Tai Retail has reviewed its customers' shopping experience at key touch points. It envisioned the store to deliver a total customer shopping experience involving sight, touch, smell

and sound to achieve sensory delights. Thematically-designed visual merchandising was displayed for ease in selection of outfits while a customised scent was created at the reception area of G2000. Fitting rooms at selected brands were revamped to make it more luxurious, fitted with adjustable mirrors, call buzzers, and mobile browsing racks of the latest collections.

Digital engagement is another strategy in Wing Tai Retail's store transformation. Through its in-store Wifi, Facebook page and mobile website, customers can now get connected and be engaged on the latest product and service offerings. Social commerce applications were also introduced for customers' payment convenience.

Transforming Staff – Professionalising the Fashion Retail Industry Workforce

Wing Tai Retail believes that excellent service in the industry is dependent on the people employed. Its Wing Tai Retail Fashion Professional represents what it believes to be the new retail workforce, where the retail sales job has been transformed from purely transactional (e.g. stock check, cashiering) to advisory (providing fashion and styling advice) roles.

To transform its people's professionalism, Wing Tai Retail identified the desired competencies needed in the service staff's mindset, attitude and skills. These included enhanced job roles, nomenclature and career paths.

A strong emphasis was placed on professionalising the industry through staff's learning and development. Career pathways were charted out for the different tracks such as operations, styling and visual merchandising. This ensured that every service staff got the opportunity to move vertically and laterally, and gained recognition for their professional competencies. For example, a Fashion Coordinator can be groomed to become a Visual Merchandising Specialist, Style Coordinator or Stylist, depending on his or her passion.

Wing Tai Retail also developed its very own WSQ Provide Advice on Fashion Apparel (PAFA) training course for its service staff. Since Sep 2009, 55 staff have been trained and certified. A series of training initiatives were also customised to change staff's mindsets and establish service processes and protocols. Overseas learning opportunities were provided to service staff with those from G2000 and Topshop being sent to Hong Kong and the UK respectively. Wing Tai Retail is also the first in the industry to provide an internationally accredited programme by the Fashion Institute of Technology (New York) for its service staff. A pilot group of 70 staff will be certified through this programme.

A culture of ownership and independence was created in the shop floor team. Instead of relying on the Head Office for the latest fashion updates, service staff are encouraged to monitor the trends on their own. They were educated on the

sources of fashion information. This included participating in fashion competitions, product seminars and style workshops. Wing Tai Retail partnered internationally renowned fashion authorities and commissioned customised webinars for its service staff, with a senior fashion editor flown in bi-annually to present the latest fashion trends to staff.

Accolades

With a portfolio of international and renowned brands, coupled with its customer centricity vision, CCI proved to be a key impetus to fast-track Wing Tai Retail in pioneering excellent customer service initiatives.

Mr Yeo Guat Kwang, Co-Chairperson of the CCI Committee and NTUC Director (Quality Worklife), said: "Wing Tai Retail is one of the pioneer participants of the Customer-Centric Initiative and has gone through a remarkable journey in achieving service excellence. It has built up momentum every step of the way, working to be even better each time. Through its six-year CCI journey, Wing Tai has definitely gained a wealth of experience, which other industry players can learn from."

"We applaud Wing Tai Retail for its vision of being the leading fashion authority and its strategies in articulating this vision to its service staff," said Ms Choy Sauw Kook, Co-Chairperson of the CCI Committee and SPRING Assistant Chief Executive. "It has made everyone a part of the learning journey and created a pro-service culture across all its brands. By professionalising retail service, Wing Tai Retail has given its commitment not just to its customers, but also to staff who can look forward to more opportunities for career development."