

Trophies in the bag, but other rewards too for SQA winners

NUS study finds productivity of winners to be 35% higher than their industry peers

By EMILYN YAP

ORGANISATIONS which received the Singapore Quality Award (SQA) will have more than their trophies to be proud of – a National University of Singapore (NUS) study this year found that the winners' average productivity over four years was 35 per cent higher than their industry peers'.

Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Teo Chee Hean shared this yesterday at the Business Ex-

cellence Awards gala dinner, where five organisations received the SQA for their strong management systems.

The SQA is one of several business excellence awards given out by Spring Singapore. The NUS study had gauged SQA winners' productivity from 2004 to 2007 by looking at the value-added per employee.

High productivity is critical to economic growth but labour productivity here has been lagging behind other regional economies'. According to Mr Teo, Singapore's annualised productivity growth rate from 2002 to 2007 was 3 per cent, while that for Hong Kong, South Korea and Tai-

wan over the same period was 4.6 per cent, 3.3 per cent and 3.8 per cent respectively.

"While Singapore has coped well to overcome the downturn, we still need to do more, a lot more, to ensure our longer term competitiveness and grow the economy," Mr Teo emphasised.

The five SQA winners – the highest yearly number since the award made its debut in 1995 – are Anglo-Chinese School (Independent), Immigration & Checkpoints Authority, Land Transport Authority, Tru-Marine Pte Ltd and Qian Hu Corporation.

Local turbocharger re-

pair firm Tru-Marine is said to be the world's second largest industry player. Its average valued-added per employee over the last three years was double that of the industry's.

Given the value of the business excellence framework, Mr Teo urged more organisations to adopt it to achieve higher productivity and competitiveness.

At a separate press briefing, some SQA winners explained why they applied for the award even as the recession unfolded.

"A lot of people like to be associated with winners," Tru-Marine group managing director David Loke quipped. "I believe that with the SQA, our customers – existing or potential

– would like to be associated with Tru-Marine and we hope it will be able to bring in more revenue for us."

This is the first time that two local firms – Tru-Marine and Qian Hu – have won the SQA in the same year. Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) is also the first school to receive this award.

Spring Singapore also gave out other accolades last night. Dairy Farm Singapore and Qian Hu won the People Excellence Award; Nanyang Polytechnic took home the Innovation Excellence Award; Central Provident Fund Board, National Library Board and OCBC Bank's consumer financial services division

bagged the Service Excellence Award.

The business excellence movement has been around for 15 years. To date, about 720 organisations with 550,000 employees – making up around 20 per cent of Singapore's workforce – have been certified under the business excellence framework.

Spring Singapore also achieved something for itself. The Asian Productivity Organisation (Apo) – a regional body which aims to raise productivity among its 20 member economies – has made it a centre of excellence in business excellence. Spring Singapore will assist Apo members in developing and strengthening related initiatives.