

S'pore efforts to build digital talent ecosystem paying off



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WHEN social media and digital giants set up regional offices in Asia, Singapore is often their first port of call. Singapore is a popular regional business development base for global social networking businesses. Most prefer to first set up sales and administration operations, over engineering or technical support, although that is slowly changing.

Not only is the island state technologically advanced and its consumers tech savvy, but there is also a deep pool of multicultural talent here. Plus, we have top-notch advertising agency talent based in Singapore; creative and experienced executives who are familiar with tailoring online solutions for different market segments across Asia-Pacific.

The Info-communications Development Authority's (IDA) efforts to strengthen Singapore's position as an economic and information technology hub do indeed seem to be reaping dividends. The IDA aims to build a vibrant infocomm ecosystem by attracting multinational corporations and innovative foreign companies to Singapore to complement local infocomm enterprises and start-up companies. It also seeks opportunities to grow the infocomm industry by facilitating the entry of Singapore infocomm companies into the global marketplace.

In just the last few years, companies such as Google (2007), Tripadvisor (2010) and LinkedIn (2011) have all set up regional Asian headquarters in Singapore. Headhunters representing Google or LinkedIn have mandates to place senior executives in business development and sales roles at these multinational corporations. Candidates may come from the advertising, media, broadcast and telecommunications sectors - though Google also recruits a lot of former management consultants for the sheer intellectual horsepower.

There is more good news for Singapore, as the establishment of these global digital and social media giants helps lead to the development of local talent and opportunities.

Managing online and social media businesses calls for a very new set of capabilities that is centred on consumers, content and advertising. There are now more entrepreneurial and independent-minded professionals under one roof in these businesses, than what you may see assembled in other businesses. This may seed future local start-ups or allow local social networks to expand their reach by partnering with their global counterparts in interesting ways, like how hungrygowhere is now providing content for the likes of Bing or Google.

Indeed, Singaporeans do seem to already have social networking under their skin, not just in a social, but also business context. A 2011 global survey from Regus found that the majority of small to medium-sized businesses in Singapore (74 per cent) say that social networking has evolved from a nice-to-have to a necessity. Over half (59 per cent) of firms encourage their employees to join social networks such as LinkedIn, Xing and Video. Nearly half in Singapore (44 per cent) devote up to 20 per cent of their marketing budget to business social networking activity.

When it comes to social media talent, Singapore is the place to like.