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The UPS Approach to Employee Relations

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Nobody likes to prolong a meeting. But at UPS, the management starts off every meeting by reciting one of the policies in the company's policy handbook that contains guidelines on how to handle employees, stakeholders and customers.

Mary Yeo, vice president of supply chain operations at UPS South District, said at a talk presented at Singapore Management University (SMU): "This is a reminder to all of us working at UPS that we cannot overlook any important matters happening in our environment by simply forgetting the good culture at UPS."

For instance, the UPS culture encourages an open-door policy towards employees. This means that all staff, regardless of position, have the opportunity to approach any of the management personnel, said Yeo who was speaking about the leadership philosophy of UPS at a seminar organised by SMU's [Wee Kim Wee Centre](#).

Yeo has worked in UPS for more than 20 years and is responsible for leading the supply chain operations in 29 countries, including the fast-growing territories of Australia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The open-door policy has created an informal working environment which allows UPS to manage and grow the potential of its employees, said Yeo. "We build an environment which is very people-oriented. We don't just talk about it...we encourage our people to grow."

In 2003, UPS Singapore won the Top 10 Best Employer award in Singapore and the company has bagged the award for two consecutive times since.

Yeo said one contributing factor to UPS's success in Asia is its trust in the locals to run the business –perhaps a testimony to UPS' people-oriented policy.

She said: "Sometime you just have to live with the fact that if you are doing business in China, you need relationships, you need to speak the language, you need to know the culture. And if you are a foreigner, you can't achieve this."

"In our China operations we have lots of Americans taking leaderships roles as well. But to achieve their success, they are complemented by many locals."

Yeo also told the audience that leadership in the work place is "not about having a nice title." Employees should never feel that they are not empowered to carry out their job because of their position, but rather do their work with passion and expand their horizons to do it better, Yeo felt. "Title isn't very important if you believe that you have that leadership quality. It all starts with you."

She said: "Do not become a victim in the workplace. Move away from that and take charge. You should say 'I want to be a leader myself and I'm going to make the change.'"

This entails stepping out of your comfort zone, said Yeo. She encouraged the audience: "You have to step out and say 'I have to do this because it adds value to the business or it adds value to my life.'"