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Headline: Big push to equip workers with basic digital skills

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Largest national training programme in a decade to get 100,000 trained over 3 years

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A major initiative to ensure that Singaporeans keep pace with the digital economy, at work and in everyday life, was launched yesterday.

Over the next three years, the SkillsFuture for Digital Workplace –

the largest national training programme in a decade – aims to get 100,000 people equipped with basic digital skills that suit them, from the use of e-payments and e-commerce platforms, to data analytics and automation.

This will be done through two-day customised courses, developed with tech giants IBM, Lazada, Mi-

crosoft and Samsung. Courses cost \$50 each, which can be paid using the \$500 SkillsFuture credits given to all Singaporeans aged 25 and above.

SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) said the aim is to instil digital confidence and a positive attitude towards digital disruptions – a point which Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) Ong Ye Kung stressed yesterday when launching the initiative. “Every workplace that we go to – regardless of industry – we have to know IT, we have to know robotics,

digital technology. We don’t have to be experts, we don’t all have to be coders but we must know that these are our friends,” he said.

He recalled the sense of unease among certain segments of the population when Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, at this year’s National Day Rally, highlighted the need to adopt cashless payments as key to Singapore’s vision of becoming a Smart Nation. “The recent feedback we got when e-payment came on-stream was a sign of this (fear),” said Mr Ong. “There are people who are

not familiar with technology and they are afraid, concerned.”

He described the digital workplace initiative as a “friendly way” to overcome this. He hopes that “more and more workers can be familiarised with digital technologies and that will help Singapore in our economic restructuring.”

The courses, which SSG chief executive Ng Cher Pong said have already drawn strong interest from the public and small and medium-sized enterprises, will introduce participants to how technology can uplift jobs and personal lives.

Recognising that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work, SSG has appointed seven training partners, including Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP), NTUC LearningHub and Singapore Management University, to deliver customised courses.

For example, though they will share a common syllabus, one course explores the use of 3D-printing, while another shows how digital ordering and kitchen automation can improve productivity

in the food and beverage industry.

Participants can also learn how to search for information online and harness digital data, use e-commerce platforms to start an online business, or even how to shop online and compare prices.

Ms Megan Ong, director of NYP’s Singapore Institute of Retail Studies, one of the training providers, said some people, “especially from the bricks-and-mortar generation”, see the adoption of tech as a hurdle.

“But we want to let the public know that tech can actually help them in their day-to-day living.”

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