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SINGAPORE'S Smart Nation initiative seems to have gotten a boost, thanks to the SkillsFuture Digital Workplace Program, a course aimed at helping professionals embrace the opportunities that come with information technology.

SkillsFuture's latest program was officially launched by Singapore Minister for Higher Education and Skills Ong Ye Kung this Thursday, October 5, 2017.

SkillsFuture Singapore, also known as SSG in the Asian city-state, launched the Digital Workplace Program as a means to introduce and familiarize the country's entrepreneurs with the latest developments in the IT business sphere. At its core, the program offers an intensive two-day course that covers the advantages of information technology and how it benefits businesses of all sizes, from humble SMEs to massive conglomerates.

The program was developed through the joint efforts of SSG and a number of Asia's biggest tech firms, such as Samsung, Lazada and Microsoft. NTUC LearningHub, Nanyang Polytechnic, Singapore Management University, Singapore University of Social Sciences, Rohei Corporation, Capelle Academy, and Training Vision Institute also signed up to deliver the program.

With valuable input from formidable tech partners, SSG's latest initiative has enjoyed widespread approval from Singapore's business community.

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Fullhouse Home Furnishings owner Elton Pan told The Straits Times that he decided to embrace the new wave of enterprise-driven technologies to aid his company. According to the business owner, the SkillsFuture Digital Workplace Program ultimately convinced him that to succeed in today's information-driven age, his company needs to be as flexible and as open-minded as possible, enabling his enterprise to work with both traditional and emerging business models.

"It can be quite challenging to change business practices, and workers are also uncomfortable with new demands," he said.

"Many people now use smartphones to shop, so we hope to attract them to our online platform and then our showrooms. When people buy furniture, they still want to feel and touch what they're buying."

Overall, the program allows Singapore to take a definitive step forward in its Smart Nation initiative. Since launching in late 2014, the Smart Nation program aims to empower the Asian city-state's citizens through the adoption of technology. So far, the initiative has been quite successful, with the Singaporean government granting US\$2.4 billion to the program for the 2017 fiscal year.

The program plays directly into the nation's Smart Nation plans, an initiative by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to boost the country's connectivity and bring their economy into the digital age. One of the big issues within the Smart Nation framework is an effort to build up its workforce's IT skillset and experience in order to remain competitive in the future.

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If any, SSG chief executive Ng Cher Pong is confident that the new SkillsFuture course would be a success, especially since the pilot run, which involved 330 participants from Singtel, Maybank and SIA Engineering, has been immensely successful.

"The digital transformation of the economy brings about new opportunities, and acquiring digital skills is essential for them to tap on these," he said, according to a Channel News Asia report.