

# Making a case for green business practices

By HAFIDH ZULKARNAEN

**A** HIGH profit alone is insufficient to make an impact in today's business scene. Most consumers now demand that companies develop their own green practices. Together with the financial benefits it offers, sustainable business practice has now become a strategic decision.

In recognition of this development in the business world, we from Business Solutions – the business case club of Nanyang Business School (NBS) – chose to incorporate the sustainability theme into our annual international undergraduate case competition.

Known as Asian Business Case Competition at Nanyang (ABCC@Nanyang), the annual case competition has been attracting undergraduate teams from all over the world since its launch in 2007. To show our strong commitment to sustainability, we decided to make ABCC@Nanyang this year totally carbon-neutral.

To reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we conducted the preliminary round of the case competition over the Internet. Competing teams were judged based on their video presentations submitted online.

Subsequently, only the top nine teams travelled to Singapore last month. Previously, all participating teams from the top business school worldwide had to fly across the globe to compete here.

The huge cut in the number of participants travelling by air to Singapore alone reduced CO2 emissions by about 36 tonnes. At the same time, the online preliminary round also allowed the ABCC organising committee to invite more business schools to participate. It is the only such competition organised by a Singapore business school.

Another green initiative by the ABCC was the use of public transport locally. In a departure from the usual way of ferrying international guests to Singapore's various tourist attractions by chartered buses, we favoured the environmentally friendlier mode of public transportation. By doing so we wanted our guests to enjoy "Xperience Singapore" by travelling like us, Singaporeans.

On the logistics side, we decided to print only what was really necessary using recycled paper and opted



**All for a green cause:** ABCC@Nanyang ambassadors and international participants enjoying themselves in Little India, travelling across the island on environmentally friendlier public transport

for a caterer within walking distance from the accommodation venues and even asked for biodegradable cutlery.

However, it was inevitable that CO2 was emitted during the course of the competition. Thus, in order to achieve carbon-neutrality, we purchased the carbon credits to offset the unavoidable emissions. We are truly delighted to announce that our green efforts to achieve zero carbon emission came to fruition as ABCC@Nanyang 2010 has been certified carbon neutral by The Carbon-Neutral Company, the world's leading independent verifier of carbon-neutrality.

ABCC's efforts were not only limited to achieving zero carbon emissions, but it also promoted sustainable business practices throughout the course of events.

Firstly, sustainability was a resounding theme in the case competition. According to Jen Chong, a par-

ticipant from our NBS home team, "A business case that revolves around the sustainability topic would not be a surprise and still posed a challenge to my team, just like any other case".

At the same time, the ABCC committee also felt strongly about spreading the case culture further and decided to introduce the concept to pre-university students and the online community.

## Spreading the case culture

Currently, we have more than 1,700 followers in our ABCC@Nanyang Facebook page who had participated actively by voting for the best video and kept in touch with the developments in the sustainability issue.

We also invited polytechnic students to catch a glimpse of the business world through a Pre-University Case Programme. Students from Nanyang Polytechnic, Ngee Ann Polytechnic and Singapore Polytechnic

attended an interactive tutorial session on the art of business case analysis prior to the grand finals.

Ursula Tang and Xu Wei – two of our Business Solutions members who had previously represented NBS in the finals of international case competitions in the Netherlands, Thailand and New Zealand – introduced the polytechnic students to the essentials of solving a business case. They guided the polytechnic students to systematically answer a business ethics case in education using the case method.

Ivy Lim Ai Mun, a lecturer from Nanyang Polytechnic, agreed that her students gained a good exposure from the programmes prepared, with the Pre-University Case Programme acting as a bridge for the students to better understand the complexities of the business case presented in ABCC grand finals. She also noted that the standard of the presentations by our fi-

nalists was high, making the ABCC@Nanyang a good learning experience for her students.

Of the nine teams invited to Singapore, only the teams from Maastricht University, Auckland University of Technology and Nanyang Business School managed to reach the grand finals held on Oct 14.

These three competing squads presented their solutions on the triple bottom line of profit, people and planet management and post-acquisition integration issues faced by a South-east Asian agri-business firm to the panel of judges, the business case creators, academics and students.

With their sound recommendations focusing on Asia as well as their perceptive plan to assimilate the operations and cultures of the parent and the acquired company overseas, Maastricht University emerged as the champion of our ABCC@Nanyang 2010.

Despite the huge efforts required to fulfil ABCC's new initiatives, the organising committee remained enthusiastic throughout the series of events.

Said Wang Chunhui, the operations and logistic director of ABCC: "Organising events of this scale is always a challenge but doing so with a sustainability focus made it more meaningful. By taking the initiative to organise what was probably the world's first green case competition, I think that our focus on sustainability practices will be a good example to follow for other case competitions around the world."

In addition, the sustainability theme was a strong differentiating factor when we sought sponsorship. Rachel Chin, the chairwoman of ABCC, said that the focus on the environment helped attract generous funding from organisations such as Patni Computer Systems that value sustainability.

The third year marketing student added: "Sustainability is the key issue of our time. Through ABCC we hope to influence the next generation of business leaders to live by the principles of sustainability."

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