

## COMPETENCE IS NOT A CONSTANT

### A Renewed Focus

Increasing competition. Accelerating regionalism. Heightening client savviness.

The legal profession needs now, more than ever, an action plan that equips it to meet the challenges ahead. This year, the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) function of the Law Society put in place a more proactive, demand-driven and needs-based action plan centred on the philosophy that in the swirl of constant change, constant learning helps level the playing field. In line with the theme of Council's 2003 Workplan to "anticipate, champion and help", CPD's training and development strategy focuses on the twin pillars of:

1. **Excellence** – by facilitating our members in maintaining their competence in the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to meet the current demands of the marketplace; and
2. **Growth** - by
  - a. facilitating the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and attitudes that equip our members for the challenges of a changing marketplace; and
  - b. providing opportunities to develop the standing of the legal profession within the broader Singapore community.

In line with this strategy, certain key training goals have been identified:

1. Assist our members in maintaining their competence in core practice areas;
2. Assist our members in identifying, learning about and developing competencies in new or growth practice areas;
3. Develop our members into more effective managers, leaders and business-people;
4. Offer our members a platform to network outside of the profession for the learning and work referral opportunities; and
5. Generate healthy profits that can be utilized to support the non-income generating activities of the Law Society.

Since June 2003, CPD implemented a more holistic and balanced planning training framework for its training & development activities according to 4 focal areas, each with its own training objectives:

Focus	Training Objectives
Professional Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ground members in the basics of core practice areas and professional skills so that they continue to provide adequate (or better) legal services to their client;</li><li>2. Update members on developments in core practice areas.</li><li>3. Identify and provide training in growing or emerging areas of law to retool members, restructure law practices and adequately meet growing or emerging client needs.</li></ol>
Practice Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Communicate the requirements of the Legal Profession Act and the relevant Rules to equip practitioners for continued compliance.</li><li>2. Equip practitioners with specific knowledge, skills and attitudes required in effective law practice management.</li></ol>
Business & Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Provide members with cross-disciplinary business and management skills to better manage their law practices effectively for business survival and growth.</li><li>2. Update members on developments, trends and best practices in business and management that may be distilled and applied to the business of law.</li><li>3. Provide inter-professional networking opportunities</li></ol>

Personal Development	Address the broader intellectual, emotional and psychological needs of members so as to improve their general quality of life.
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### 2003 in Review

Putting the above into practice has proved a challenging task. However, the fruits of our labour have become apparent this year, both in terms of quantity and quality of CPD programs.

On a practical level, some refinements made to the training portfolio include:

1. Renaming the Continuing Legal Education portfolio as "Continuing Professional Development" to reflect the more holistic approach to professional training & development;
2. Adopting a planning guideline which identifies and weights the distribution of training events across the four focal areas to ensure a clear and balanced approach to meeting the continuing development needs of the profession;
3. Program development and planning is done on a rolling 12 month basis, with CPD working on and from an annual planning calendar that is constantly refined and updated in the course of the planning year. This enables CPD to be proactive yet responsive.
4. Actively exploring tie-ups and collaborations with other professional bodies and training services providers; and
5. Wherever possible, cross-marketing CPD programs outside our membership and jointly organizing events.

In contrast to the 38 events organized from 2001-2002, CPD organized 38 training programs in 2003. Over [1200] participants have attended our programs since July this year<sup>1</sup>. The high participation rates can be attributed to a broader menu of training programs as well as a proactive outreach strategy to publicize the Law Society's training programs to other professionals and sectors wherever relevant. As a result, the past months have seen an increase in participation by in-house counsels, legal support staff paralegals and other professionals in CPD programs.

Some highlights of the year include:

- A "Small Firm Practice Management Series" in June-July 2003 which covered topics such as "Marketing your Practice Through Good Client Care", "Ethics for Legal Support Staff", "Improve your Bottom-line. Maximize your Profits." Small law practices were granted hefty discounts and paid \$20 to attend all 4 seminars in the series.
- A "Management Essentials for Lawyers: Finance" Workshop in August 2003 which was two-times over-subscribed. Future workshops in this series will focus on strategic planning and management, client relationship management, human resource management and technology management.
- Our 1<sup>st</sup> personal development workshop "Why Lawyers Should Eat Bananas" which addressed issues such as work-life balance, time and client management for lawyers.
- In terms of addressing new or growth areas of practice, "The Impending Competition Law in Singapore" evening seminar organized with the Ministry of Trade and Industry was attended by 100 participants and our seminar on 'The Implications of the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Bill" saw more than 50 attendees.
- Several programs jointly organized with other professional bodies/organizations, including:
  - "Private Equity in Asia" co-organized with UBS;
  - "Company Law Reform" co-organized with LexisNexis;
  - "Impact of Recent Companies Act Amendments on Directors" co-organized with Singapore Institute of Directors; and

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<sup>1</sup> Includes repeat attendees

- “Financial Services Planning: Legal Issues and Opportunities” co-organized with the Society of Finance Services Professionals.
- A full-day workshop in August on “Fraught with Fraud ... Not” that tackled issues of forensic document examination, computer and accounting forensics and the role of lawyers in fraud investigations.
- Our staple “Nuts & Bolts” series in core practice areas such as “Civil Procedure”, “Criminal Procedure” and “Probate and Administration”.

To complement the training programs the Society organizes and to provide the profession with more avenues to meet its training needs, CPD has started exploring collaborations with professional conference organizers and course providers, such as a collaboration with ConventionPro International that offered members discounted rates to business seminars on Asia. Members can look forward to more such initiatives that broaden their learning horizon.

#### Continuing to Improving

Members' feedback plays a pivotal role in shaping the development of future programs. While we are heartened to note that the feedback from participants has generally been very positive, we continue to strive to do better. Our analysis of almost 400 feedback forms received from participants has revealed areas of improvement including in event organization, speaker/chairperson selection and training effectiveness. CPD has also received suggestions as to the type of training programs that participants would like to see. CPD will continue to seek and deliberate on feedback received and, wherever relevant, will incorporate the same its training programs moving forward. One area in which CPD will be taking action in response to feedback received is in our pricing - we will reduce the standard fee for evening seminars held at the Law Society from \$60 to \$50 and, ever mindful of the economic climate, will continue to ensure that CPD programs are excellent value-for-money.

#### Towards A Learning Profession

In 2004, members can look forward to many more diverse, high quality CPD programs.

CPD will strive to refine the training & development plan that contributes positively to the legal profession at large. In this day and age where change is constant and competence is not, we believe in the greater value of *learning* people over the learned. We recognise that the critical factor towards a culture of learning and development within the profession is you and challenge you to take your destiny into your own hands by making your own learning a priority.

In turn, we welcome you to challenge us with your ideas and suggestions as to how CPD can continue to contribute towards a learning profession.

By:

Your Continuing Professional Development Team

#### **To our Journey Partners**

CPD wishes to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the many members and non-members who have contributed to its programs, whether as speakers, chairpersons, panelists or resource persons. Without the efforts of these volunteers in sharing their experience and expertise, there would be no CPD programs to speak of.

We would also like to thank the members and non-members who have supported our programs over the year with their attendance. We will continue to strive to make a difference in your learning journey.