

10
YEARS
OF BEING
VITAL

shared services

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
SPECIALLY TO THE PIONEERS OF VITAL,
WHO HAVE PAVED THE WAY FOR US TO GROW
AND BECOME WHAT WE ARE TODAY.

PHOTOGRAPH/ARTICLE SOURCES
Vital Publications
Official Releases, www.vital.gov.sg

10 Years Of Being VITAL
Copyright© Vital
Printed in 2016
Designed by Supermarket Creatives

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may
be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any
means, or stored in a database or retrieval system,
without the prior written permission of the publisher.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD		6
CHAPTER 1	DEVOT10N TO OUR BELIEFS	12
CHAPTER 2	PASS10N TO OVERCOME	26
CHAPTER 3	CONNECT10NS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE	38
CHAPTER 4	DEDICAT10N FOR EXCELLENCE	52
CHAPTER 5	VIS10N TO FORGE AHEAD	66
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		80

PERMANENT SECRETARY'S MESSAGE



I wish to congratulate Vital on its 10th anniversary!

Vital has played a very significant role in our continual efforts at driving efficiency across the whole of government.

Vital began in 2006 as a shared services centre for 18 agencies. It had the unenviable task to simultaneously bring together hundreds of unique processes across these agencies, unify its initial team of 350 staff members who had left those agencies to join Vital, and uphold its service quality. Overcoming these early challenges together as a team helped forged a strong

camaraderie – now fondly known as Family@Work – among its pioneer officers.

Today, Vital has about 460 officers who serve over 100 agencies and process nearly two million transactions annually. Over the years, customer satisfaction has climbed steadily whilst error rates have declined.

Vital's achievements are undoubtedly a product of its unrelenting focus on people, and devotion to process and service excellence. Much emphasis is put on having a well-trained team. Vital is also continually streamlining and simplifying numerous processes in consultation with

partner agencies, so that it can better serve its customers.

Today, with an increasing aging population and the onset of digital disruption, the demands of the agencies that Vital is serving will inevitably change. It is therefore critical for Vital to ensure that its staff are ready to meet the challenges ahead so that Vital can remain relevant. As an example, in recent years, Vital has invested considerable efforts to streamline and automate work processes as it expands existing services and explores new ones such as data analytics and digitisation. It is also working with relevant agencies

to standardise administrative policies and processes in Finance and HR as much as possible so as to better realise the potential of a shared services centre.

To every Vital officer, I am confident that your innovativeness and resilience will enable you to fulfil your vision to be a world class shared services partner and a vital catalyst for change.

Happy 10th Anniversary!



“VITAL’S ACHIEVEMENTS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY A PRODUCT OF ITS UNRELENTING FOCUS ON PEOPLE, AND DEVOTION TO PROCESS AND SERVICE EXCELLENCE. MUCH EMPHASIS IS PUT ON HAVING A WELL-TRAINED TEAM.

VITAL IS ALSO CONTINUALLY STREAMLINING AND SIMPLIFYING NUMEROUS PROCESSES IN CONSULTATION WITH PARTNER AGENCIES, SO THAT IT CAN BETTER SERVE ITS CUSTOMERS.”

Lim Soo Hoon
Permanent Secretary (Finance) (Performance)
Ministry of Finance

DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MESSAGE



Singapore celebrated its Jubilee last year. I am heartened to learn that Vital has come of age as well, as it proudly marks its 10th year milestone on 5th July this year.

Vital was created with the single aim of aggregating the common administrative services of the public sector into a single centre to reap savings through leveraging economies of scale.

Prevalently found within the business sector, especially multinational companies, this idea of shared services is not uncommon in public sectors around the world. Governments in the United States, Norway and the Netherlands have established similar centres of varying models to optimise the use of public funds and stretch every dollar to maximise the

social and economic benefit for its citizens. Australia has also re-introduced shared services about two years ago.

In the past decade, Vital has achieved significantly in eliminating waste and realising cost savings for the government. Be it partnering agencies and billing organisations to eliminate hardcopy invoices and payment transactions to save thousands of man-hours, implementing a vetting system to halve turnaround time for security screening, or reviewing and simplifying longstanding policies in close collaboration with agencies, no effort was spared in streamlining or even removing cumbersome processes.

As a government shared services centre that handles highly sensitive HR

and financial transactions, Vital had also established robust process controls within each department, at the organisational level and even beyond, to safeguard against not only fraudulent transactions but also the misuse and leakage of confidential information to ensure that the public service is not found wanting.

Our agencies who have partnered Vital would have found their back-office functions enhanced, thus allowing them to wholly focus on engaging citizens and formulating citizen-centric policies that benefit our nation.

“10 Years of Being Vital” outlines the importance of the work that Vital does. Vital officers do not seek the limelight, but simply endeavour quietly in the

background to make sure that every public officer and contractor is paid on time and on target, working hard to earn the trust of public agencies, one at a time. This commemorative book documents the triumphs and trials of Vital over the years and is testament to the deep commitment of its people towards service and excellence.

I wish to thank all staff who made Vital what it is today. Please join me in wishing Vital a very happy 10th birthday!



“‘10 YEARS OF BEING VITAL’ OUTLINES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK THAT VITAL DOES. VITAL OFFICERS DO NOT SEEK THE LIMELIGHT, BUT SIMPLY ENDEAVOUR QUIETLY IN THE BACKGROUND TO MAKE SURE THAT EVERY PUBLIC OFFICER AND CONTRACTOR IS PAID ON TIME AND ON TARGET, WORKING HARD TO EARN THE TRUST OF PUBLIC AGENCIES, ONE AT A TIME.

THIS COMMEMORATIVE BOOK DOCUMENTS THE TRIUMPHS AND TRIALS OF VITAL OVER THE YEARS AND IS TESTAMENT TO THE DEEP COMMITMENT OF ITS PEOPLE TOWARDS SERVICE AND EXCELLENCE.”

Ngien Hoon Ping
Deputy Secretary (Performance)
Ministry of Finance

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S MESSAGE



When Vital was formed in 2006, the single question on our minds was “How could we create value for the public service?” Over the course of a decade, we have worked hard and watched the seeds of our labour bear fruit. We have tightened process controls and raised our service levels and quality of work. Our services have grown and evolved and our people have matured. 10 years on, Vital is at the point of inflection. Nevertheless, we continue to ask ourselves the same question. Value creation remains at the heart of our existence.

Like other shared services centres around the world, Vital faces the same challenge: How can we do more with less? Although we have clocked substantial mileage in improvement efforts, much of our work still requires manual intervention. Voluminous transactions rob us of valuable time needed to explore innovation and value-added

services. Coupled with the increased adoption of technology and the shifting needs of the public service, the threat of work obsolescence was very real.

Two years ago, Vital embarked on a transformational journey to take us to the next frontier. We drew up a 5-year road map named Vital 2020 that outlined the “what” and the “how” for Vital’s next phase of transformation. Our key focus was to build strong and collaborative partnerships with agencies, adopt best practices and foster an innovation culture within Vital, adapt to stay relevant and create the capacity to be future-ready as well as strengthen corporate governance.

In the last two years, we have closely collaborated with the Ministry of Finance Transformation Office, Public Service Division, Accountant-General’s Department

(AGD), Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Environment Agency and other agencies to identify and simplify processes and policies that will reap significant benefits. In line with ongoing efforts to develop a Digital Government, Vital is building an electronic document and knowledge management system that will roll out at the end of this year. This system will transform existing operations and bring about a truly paperless experience.

While optimising efficiency remains a key imperative, Vital had constantly tried to move up the value chain. We are actively expanding our procurement services through establishing contracts that aggregate demand across the government. We are also delving into mobile applications, business analytics and grant claim verification to create

greater value-add. Vital will also establish a scanning hub to help fellow agencies digitise their records.

Internally, we have established an Innovation Hub and Centres of Excellence dedicated to champion the implementation of best-in-class practices. Vital has also strengthened its Compliance eco-system in conjunction with its value added growth to ensure that systems and processes are not only efficient but also robust. In this regard, besides enhancing its strength and enforcing stringent internal and access control, Vital has also engaged AGD as its internal auditor to provide a third-party assessment.

Key to Vital’s success is our people. The commitment and professionalism of our staff that have gone the extra mile to get a job done well is what makes Vital

special. It is therefore imperative for Vital Leadership to continue to engage its people and to address their aspirations and concerns to the best of our ability. We must also ensure that our staff continue to be well-trained as we embrace change. This year, we will develop an electronic training system that will significantly reduce the time needed for staff to acquire skills and knowledge.

As we celebrate our 10th year in operation, I am certain with these efforts, Vital will be better and stronger in the years to come, and a critical horizontal integrator for the whole of government.



“KEY TO VITAL’S SUCCESS IS OUR PEOPLE. THE COMMITMENT AND PROFESSIONALISM OF OUR STAFF THAT HAVE GONE THE EXTRA MILE TO GET A JOB DONE WELL IS WHAT MAKES VITAL SPECIAL.”

Tan Chor Kiat
Chief Executive
Vital

CHAPTER 1

DEVOT10N TO OUR BELIEFS

We celebrate a decade of achievements and accolades, all made possible by a united Team Vital with an unwavering commitment to our core values.



THE VITAL

VIS10N

A World Class Shared
Services Partner. A Vital
Catalyst for Change.

MISS10N

We deliver quality shared
services solutions and create
value as a trusted partner.

We strive to achieve our
mission through our

CORE VALUES

PASSION FOR EXCELLENCE
PROFESSIONALISM WITH INTEGRITY
CARING TEAM
CATALYST FOR CHANGE

OUR MANAGEMENT TEAM



Tan Chor Kiat
Chief Executive



Chua Mui Yim
Deputy Chief Executive



Ho Geok Pack
Director
(Finance, Compliance & Procurement)



Ong Poh Poh
Director
(Service & Innovation)



Wong Wai Mun
Director, Centre of Excellence
(Finance & ACE Services)



Lee Boon Kim
Director, Centre of Excellence
(Human Resource Services)



Selvarani T. Pillai
Director, Centre of Excellence
(MOE HR and Payroll Office)



Kavitha Subash
Director, Centre of Excellence
(Payroll & Claims)



Front Row : Ho Geok Pack | Ong Poh Poh | Tan Chor Kiat | Chua Mui Yim | Wong Wai Mun
2nd Row : Angeline Lau | Stephanie Kwok | Lee Boon Kim | Selvarani T. Pillai | Kavitha Subash | Teo Lay Lian
3rd Row : Aw Choon Ghee | Yeo Theong Wei | Chew Lip Whee | Dylah Harharah | Margareta Ee
4th Row : Alan Tay | Steven Lee | Jason Toh | Chim Geok Ping | Katherine Chong
(In Absence : Regina Raja | Adeline Ng | Koh-Tham Kah Wai | Susan Koh | Raine Yeo)

OUR SERVICES

OUR SERVICE COMMITMENT

At Vital, we are committed to helping you concentrate on your core business by taking care of your corporate services. We measure our performance against the standards that our service partners expect. We value your feedback and follow up

on suggestions. We see complaints as opportunities for learning and improvement. We want to work with you to develop new ways to improve our services in future. Through our comprehensive approach in partnering and supporting service partners, Vital demonstrates that we value our relations with our service partners.

SERVICE ATTRIBUTES

Customer-Centric
Quality
Rapport
Responsive
Reliable



PAYROLL & CLAIMS

- Salary Revisions and Adjustments
- Promotion and Merit Increments Variations
- Processing Payroll Deductions
- Initiation of Allowances and Awards via Payroll
- Payroll transactions for Officers Leaving Service
- Administration of Transport, Medical, Dental, General, LDS and Overseas Claims and Claims Site Administration
- First Appointment and Posting Payroll Processes
- Mid-of-Year, End-of-Year Bonus and ad-hoc Bonus Processes
- Secondment, Posting and Hospital Billings
- Processing of Salary Recoveries
- Relief Staff Management System
- ePaysheet Administration
- Income Tax Matters



HUMAN RESOURCE

- Scholarship Payments
- Deed Signing
- Allowances/Benefits/Study Loan
- Long Service Award
- Leave/Medical Administration
- Annual Declaration of Indebtedness/ Interest in Investments and Properties
- Appointments
- Deployment
- Promotions
- Medical/Security Screening
- Resignation
- Computation of Liquidated Damages
- Contract Expiry
- Retirement
- Pension Processing
- Recruitment



LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

- Withdrawal/Replacement
- Post-Class Administration
- Collate Course Evaluation
- Pre/Post-Course Review
- Enrolment Programme
- SDF Grant Application
- Examination Results Management
- Pre-Class Administration
- Pre-Class Logistics
- Class Administration
- Invoice Management
- Deliver Training
- Administration of Mentoring Programme
- Training Records Management
- Department Learning Plan
- External Course Administration
- Training Reports
- Training Provider Management



FINANCE

- Vendor Record Creation/Update
- Management of Revenue/Deposit Accounts
- Management of Inmates' Property Account
- Audit Schedule Preparation
- Management of Overseas Mission Account
- Asset Tagging and Stocktaking
- Journal Processing
- Asset Accounting
- Deposit Record Creation
- Payment Processing
- Imprest Account Management



TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

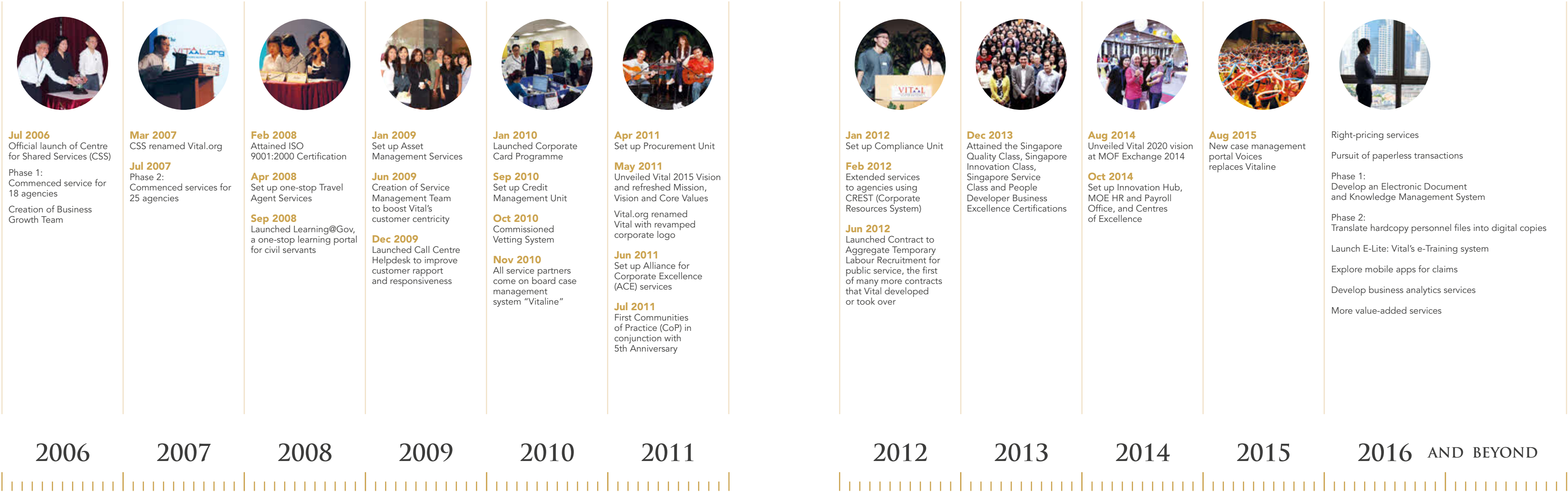
- Travel Users Education
- Travel Information Portal
- One-Stop Travel Agency Services
- Airlines Corporate Rates
- Hotels Corporate Rates
- Travel Insurance Services
- Corporate Card Services
- Taxi Cabcharge Services
- Event Venues Package Rates
- Travel Data Analysis and Reporting
- Lead Agency for Demand Aggregation Contracts
- Vendor Service Management



PROCUREMENT

- End-to-End Process for Invitation to Quote and Invitation to Tender
- Procurement Advisory/Training
- Requirement Rationalisation and Specification
- Market Research and Analysis
- Establishment and Management of Demand Aggregation Contracts (e.g. Postage Paid Envelope, Contingent Labour, Electronics and Electrical Appliances)

MILESTONES



AWARDS



2007

Annual Asia Pacific Shared Services & Outsourcing Awards
- (Honourable Mention) Best New Shared Services Organisation

2010

Ministry of Finance (MOF) High Impact Award
- Vital Managed Travel Programme

2011

14th Annual Asian Shared Services & Outsourcing Excellence Awards
- (Winner) Excellence in People and Communications

14th Annual Asian Shared Services & Outsourcing Excellence Awards
- (Honourable Mention) Excellence in Customer Service

MOF Best Project Award
- The Vetting System Project

2nd Pacific-Asia Tourism Association's Productivity Challenge
- Other Services Category for Vital Centralised Travel Insurance Programme

2012

Excellence in Public Service Awards
- Best Practice (Resource Management) Award for Vital Managed Travel Programme

PS21 Star Service Award
- Salamah Yusop (HR Services)

The Singapore HR Awards
- (Special Mention) Leading HR Practices in HR Communications & Branding Award

The Singapore HR Awards
- Leading CEO Award

15th Annual Asian Shared Services & Outsourcing Excellence Awards
- (Honourable Mention) Excellence in Culture Creation

MOF Best Project Award
- The Vital Driver in HRMS Transformation

2013

The Singapore HR Awards
- Leading HR Practices in Fair Employment Practices

The Singapore HR Awards
- Leading HR Practices in HR Communications & Branding

The Singapore HR Awards
- Leading HR Practices in Learning & Human Capital Development

16th Asia Pacific Shared Services & Outsourcing Awards
- (First Runner-Up) Excellence Award in Talent Management & Leadership Development

Attained
Singapore Quality Class (SQC), People Developer (PD), Singapore Innovation Class (I-Class), and Singapore Service Class (S-Class) Business Excellence Certifications

2014

17th Asia Pacific SSON Excellence Awards
- (Runner-Up) Excellence in Creating a Customer-Centric Organization

MOF Productivity Day Learning Errward Winner
- Improve Checks and Reduce Duplicate Payments through the use of ACL

Human Resources Vendors of the Year
- (7th Place) Preferred HR Outsourcing Provider

Public Service Achievement Award

PS21 Distinguished Star Service Award
- Hashima Bte Ariffin (HR Services)

2015

The Asset Treasury, Trade and Risk Management Awards
- Best Cash Management Solution in Singapore

18th Asia Pacific SSON Excellence Awards
- (Honourable Mention) Best Process Innovation

18th Asia Pacific SSON Excellence Awards
- (Honourable Mention) Excellence in Customer Service

PS21 Star Service Team Award
- HRS/PAC

PS21 Star Service Award
- Lee Peng Yin (MOE HPO)

MOF Most Innovative Project/Policy Award
- (Consolation) Review on LDS existing training report generation process

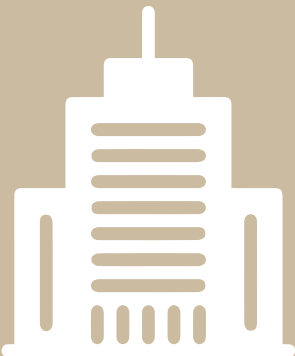
MOF Most Innovative Project/Policy Award
- (Consolation) Specific Instructions Template for Overseas Missions

THE
VITAL
STATISTICS



460
Employees

Serving
80,000
Public Servants across more than
100 Government Agencies



14
Whole-of-Government
Demand Aggregation Contracts



\$65 Million Annual Air Spend
Corporate Rates with
25 Airlines & 800 Hotel Properties



1,000,000
Payroll & Claims Transactions

280,000
Vendor Payments

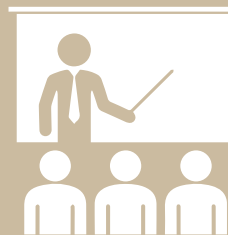


125,000

Service Requests Annually
3,900
GeBIZ Transactions Annually

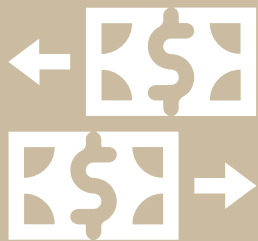


45,000
Trips Arranged



24
Training
Providers

2,000,000
Transactions Annually in total



500
Procurement
Documents
Reviewed
Annually



99.8%
Accuracy &
On-Time Rate



CHAPTER 2

PASS10N TO OVERCOME

The perseverance and resilience of Vitalites were more than a match for our early challenges. We emerged with a renewed identity forged through shared vision and purpose.

OUR STORY, OUR BEGINNING

On 18th of February 2005, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong delivered a speech in Parliament that would have a powerful impact on the lives of over 400 civil servants, and more than 100 government agencies over the course of the next decade.

In his speech, the Prime Minister had commended MINDEF's shared services centre, set up in April 2003, which he said had both saved money and improved service quality.

He remarked, "The shared services centre has transformed the way MINDEF performs common administrative services, and created new value and convenience for its customers. By bringing together the various

services into a single centre, MINDEF has improved service standards, and saved or avoided \$4 million in costs in the first one and a half years."

He added, "We plan to roll out to the rest of the public sector this idea of aggregating common services. We should centralise the common administrative support services of different ministries."

With that, the government would begin its move towards the creation of a shared services centre – one that would centralise the administrative support services of Singapore's different ministries, as part of the Economy Drive to derive savings through economies of scale.



"IN PROMOTING ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TAKING CARE OF OUR SOCIAL NEEDS, GOVERNMENT PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE, BY BEING SMALL BUT ACTIVE, LEAN BUT CAPABLE. THE PUBLIC SECTOR NEEDS TO BE TRIM, IN ORDER TO KEEP OUR TAX BURDEN LIGHT AND FREE UP RESOURCES FOR THE ECONOMY."

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong
18 February 2005



▲ CSS Transition Team on 16 September 2005



▲ CSS Process Mapping Workshop on 20 September 2005



▲ CSS Meeting on 8 March 2006

STARTING UP

Prior to 2005, the Ministry of Finance's Managing for Excellence (MFE) directorate had embarked on a study to identify common services across agencies which were suitable for aggregating.

This study was completed by mid-2005, with payroll and claims, finance, human resources and training administration designated as the first services for centralisation.

The man chosen to helm this nascent agency was Lim Hup Seng, who had played a pivotal role in setting up MINDEF's shared services centre, D'eXecutive Services (DES).

The new agency he headed was called **Centre for Shared Services – Vital.org (CSS)**, and formally launched on 5th of July 2006, with 18 agencies as its first clients.

Concurrently holding the position of Deputy Secretary (Performance) at the Ministry of Finance, Hup Seng's first moves as Chief Executive of CSS were to appoint a Director of Operations, Wong Wai Mun, from the Singapore Armed Forces, and a Director of Human Resources, Bernadette Sim.

To fill the agency, operations staff from the 18 client agencies were brought over on a two-year secondment or permanent transfer basis. A transition team was also put together to manage the change, comprising specialists from various ministries.



▲ Launch of CSS on 5 July 2006



THE CHANGE

The type of services CSS took over meant it had to hit the ground running. A decade later, Lim Teck Leong, the second Chief Executive of the by-then renamed Vital.org, recalling his time here, would describe the key challenge facing the transition team and CSS's new staff:

"It's like flying a plane while changing the crew. How do you fly a plane and change the whole crew, while making sure the plane still flies at the same altitude and speed; as well as offering excellent service to the passengers on-board?"

At the same time, the staff that had been transplanted to CSS were worried. Would this new organisation succeed? Would they be able to adapt to their new roles and the new work environment? If economies of scale were truly achieved, what would happen to their jobs?

Despite their misgivings, work had to come first. Salaries of public officers still needed to be paid on time, payments for vendors still needed to be promptly processed, and the personnel changes at agencies still needed the HR services which CSS had now taken over.

The new staff and management of CSS rose to the challenge.

2006 - 2007
FORMATIVE
YEARS

Under Hup Seng’s charge, staff began to fill the ranks of Vital, the first of whom arrived in May of 2006 at their freshly painted new offices in the MND Building.

The next step was to start deploying staff to deliver services to the client agencies. “They knew what work needed to be done and what they can do,” said Hup Seng. But there was also a need to start streamlining costs right away, which was Hup Seng’s overriding priority.

He said, “I was very serious about cost control; everything we had done was to keep things efficient rather than let costs escalate and end up charging the clients a large sum.”

By the time Teck Leong came on board in January 2007 to take over the reins, the year-old agency had 350 staff, all of whom had originally been given a choice to be either seconded to Vital or transferred permanently.



“THAT WAS ONE OF THE MOST
DIFFICULT THINGS TO DO. FOR THEM
TO HAVE WILLINGLY SAID YES AND
LEFT THEIR ORGANISATIONS TO
JOIN THIS NEW MOF AGENCY.
RESISTANCE WAS STRONG.”

Lim Hup Seng
Chief Executive, CSS (2006)



▲ Lim Hup Seng, Chief Executive of CSS

THE PRIMACY OF
COST SAVINGS

Like the staff, agencies too had a choice. Theirs was whether to transfer their services and respective staff to Vital or not. Stakeholder buy-in had been important for Vital, right from the very start.

Said Hup Seng, “If they were forced to

join, they would want to be exempted and the relationship would be sub-standard. It would become a system that is painful for all.”

As the buy-in for a shared services centre began spreading amongst the government’s agencies, the number of agencies served by Vital rose by 25, making up a total of 43 agencies under its care in 2007.

This period would be known in Vital’s history as the second wave. During this time, while there was potentially twice the volume of work, Vital still did not increase its staff numbers proportionately.

Said Teck Leong, Chief Executive during this period, “My goal was to become self-sustaining within the first three years. We had to revamp processes and improve productivity without affecting service standards. At the same time, we had to bring in more clients and create new services for new revenue streams. I was also careful in our expenditure.”

Also, by the time of the second wave, Vital had already learnt some lessons from their first wave of process revamps and streamlined some work processes to require less manpower.



▲ Launch of CSS on 5 July 2006

The Business Growth unit created in 2006 started looking at new businesses. “That’s the time we started travel services and some other services,” said Teck Leong. This initiative would be aimed at finding more revenue to sustain Vital’s operations, and enable them to retain their staff headcount.

NEW AGENCY,
MANY CULTURES

And staff headcount was going to be an issue in the early years. Although Vital had kicked off with a 350-strong staff, some had only two weeks or so of training in the work they would be doing in Vital.

That these staff members were identified from their parent agencies, and joined a new one also posed challenges for the new start-up, not least the difficulty of forging a common bond and identity in a workforce that was so diverse.

Despite these and other challenges, by the end of 2007, Vital had done well enough to garner attention at the Annual Asia Pacific Shared Services and Outsourcing Awards, earning an honourable mention in the category of Best New Shared Services Organisation.

It was to prove a thoroughly hard-earned honour.

TRANSITIONING
TO VITAL

Vital’s first Chief Executive, Lim Hup Seng, played an important role in laying the foundation for its future transformation. He had helped to come up with its name and logo.

“When we created our new identity, we went into deep thought before we came out with the logo. It had to capture the essence of the organisation.”

“The government needs us to survive, which is why we called it Vital. The logo is blue and red. The idea is that this organisation is a vital organisation, like an organ in the human body. Red and blue are the colours of blood and water, they are important to the body,” said Hup Seng.



▲ Vital’s early logo

EARLY CHALLENGES & HOW WE OVERCAME

OVERCOMING EARLY CHALLENGES

Vital faced a myriad of tremendous challenges during the first two years. Amongst them, six in particular stood out in the memories of those who had to manage Vital. And although it was a difficult time for the new staff of Vital,

many would later see overcoming these challenges as instrumental in helping to shape Vital's strong Family@Work culture.



"HOW MANY TIMES
DO YOU GET TO SET UP A NEW
GOVERNMENT AGENCY?"

Lim Teck Leong
Chief Executive, Vital.org (2007 - 2009)



▲ Lim Teck Leong, Chief Executive of Vital.org (Left)

VITAL HAD TO MAKE AS MUCH MONEY AS IT SPENT

First, there was limited room to increase revenue, manage operational costs, and hence fulfil the shared services centre's mandate of lowering costs for the government.

Recalled Teck Leong, "In terms of the service level agreements, how much agencies paid us was more or less fixed. We were only able to renegotiate for higher fees based on certain formulas in the third year."

He added, "But at the same time, in terms of HR policies we had our hands tied."

"For example, I could not decide on the pay structure of the team. The people who came over were kept on the civil service pay structure. We had to follow the same HR and pay schemes. Those were the boundaries we had to operate within."

However, Teck Leong said, "Our message to the staff was this: we are taking on new businesses, so whatever manpower savings we get, we're going to channel ... to the new businesses or the new clients, so as not to have any manpower cuts."

VITAL HAD YET TO DEFINE HOW A SHARED SERVICES CENTRE WORKED

Kavitha Subash, Director (Centre of Excellence, Payroll and Claims) said, "In the early days, although I was excited about coming to Vital, there were many uncertainties about what laid ahead for me as Vital was a new set up. I also had uncertainties about the work as I had to handle more than one agency's work, which I was not used to."

There was also uncertainty amongst Vital staff as to how a shared services centre was supposed to work. Overnight, the staff of Vital had gone from being clients to being service providers.

Said Kavitha, "I was no longer a part of NEA where I had spent seven years and was now in a department in MOF that provided services to NEA and many other agencies."

"I had to think and behave as a Vital officer instead of an NEA officer. So all proposed changes on SOPs had to be beneficial to all agencies under my charge instead of only taking care of NEA's needs."

Kavitha added, "Vital did a great job then in assuring the staff who joined Vital on our roles in the shared services setup, and allowed us time to transit into our new roles."



▲ First Day Briefing at MOE on 1 June 2006

VITAL WAS STILL FINDING
ITS FEET OPERATIONALLY

The initial uncertainty of the staff, coupled with uneven process mapping and scoping, unclear work direction and the lack of role clarity affected the quality of work, giving rise to concerns from the agencies.

Kavitha remembered, “Issues that were faced with the various agencies were shared among the team members and solutions discussed as a team. We tried our best to put in place practices to address the concerns raised by the agencies.”

“All these took time as we were learning from scratch how a shared services organisation should operate. However, the close bond we had helped us to face these challenges, however tough things were.”

VITAL HAD TO STANDARDISE
PROCESSES CONCURRENTLY

The amalgamation of the work of many different agencies meant first taking over many varied processes, and then standardising them to achieve optimal cost savings. However, standardising later was not a luxury Vital could afford.

Said Teck Leong, “I’d say it’s a few layers of things we had to do together within the first three years. We didn’t have the luxury to do one thing at a time.”

“In most government operations, you just have to make sure that the operation runs



▲ Shared Services Day on 23 July 2007

smoothly. Usually, you don’t have to worry about substantial cost cuts and FTE savings.”

But Vital was formed to drive cost savings. He explained, “You look at the business world, at why people do shared services, it is basically cost-driven. There’s no point doing a shared services centre unless there are cost savings.”

This would prove to be a tough balancing act.

“We set up a separate team to work with the operational branches to improve processes and drive down business costs

... The functional heads had very strong roles to play. While they had to oversee their daily operations, ensure no drop in service standards, and build up their teams’ cohesiveness, at the same time they also account to me in terms of FTE savings. So it was not an easy task,” said Teck Leong.

Adeline Ng, incoming Deputy Director (Innovation Hub), one of the members of the CSS Transition Team which led the early change management efforts, recounted how each function had to cope with the intense “pressure of managing its headcount to achieve cost efficiency while balancing its workload”.

VITAL HAD TO ENSURE HIGH
STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE
RIGHT AWAY

Teck Leong said, “During the initial years, many processes were still manually done. When you do so many transactions manually, there are bound to be one or two mistakes.”

“Bear in mind you’re dealing with HR and payroll. It’s not so much of whether it is one error per thousand or ten thousand. An individual’s personal circumstances would be affected if his or her pay or HR transaction was done incorrectly or processed late. Hence, we had to impress upon the staff that it was crucial for them to get the job done correctly and in a timely fashion.”

To increase buy-in and trust from the agencies, Teck Leong and his team met with them frequently to explain how their work processes were continually being improved.

Through these frequent meetings, additional layers of checks were added, while areas of responsibilities between agencies and Vital were clarified to raise operational standards.

VITAL HAD TO MERGE STAFF FROM
DIFFERENT AGENCIES INTO ONE

And of course, there was the challenge of having to get all of the staff, with their varied backgrounds, to come together as a team.

To accelerate the process, Vital staff themselves were involved in coming up with Vital’s vision and mission statements. Working towards these shared goals provided common ground which the staff shared.

The management team also rolled up their sleeves and persevered together with staff to resolve work issues. This accelerated the bonding of the organisation as a family unit.

Kavitha remembered, “We built up our

bond by working closely and facing our challenges together, to eventually start having a sense of belonging. The people in Vital made all the difference in overcoming the challenges I faced.”

Adeline echoed that sentiment. “What held the team together was a strong belief that shared services was the way to go and that (it) would reap long-term benefits”.

“It was a real commitment from each of them in terms of the hours they spent,” said Teck Leong of his team during those years. “None of them worked short hours and not just for short periods of time. It was almost through the whole year, so it was very difficult to sustain.”

“But thank goodness, we made it.”



▲ Mission, Vision & Values Workshop on 16 February 2006



▲ Planning Retreat on 27 April 2007



INTERVIEW WITH VETERAN STAFF
EARLY VITALITE
EXPERIENCES

Can you describe the roles you played in Vital?

When I joined Vital in October 2007, I was appointed as an officer in the HR Services (Benefits) Team at Vital@MOE (now known as Centre of Excellence, MOE HR and Payroll Office). And then there was a reorganisation in July 2008, and I joined the Appointment team at Vital@MOE until 2014. In July 2014, I was transferred to the Centre of Excellence, HR Services.

What were some of the challenges you faced then?

In the early days, there weren't proper guidelines and handovers on certain processes. I had to rely on SOPs or even the government Instruction Manuals (IM) to find out more about a particular process.

Back then, people were also reluctant to step out of their comfort zones to improve work processes.

How were these challenges overcome?

I had to constantly think about how to improve the work processes. Eventually, we came out with ideas to streamline processes through discussions with managers and officers.

I guess both Vital and the service partners did have their ups and downs understanding each other's processes. Nevertheless, we managed to put those aside and build up a stronger relationship over the past few years.



"I GUESS BOTH VITAL AND THE SERVICE PARTNERS DID HAVE THEIR UPS AND DOWNS UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER'S PROCESSES. NEVERTHELESS, WE MANAGED TO PUT THOSE ASIDE AND BUILD UP A STRONGER RELATIONSHIP OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS."

Revathy D/O Jagannathan
Senior Executive
Centre of Excellence
HR Services

INTERVIEW WITH FORMER STAFF
EARLY VITALITE
EXPERIENCES

Can you describe what you did in Vital?

I was an Assistant Head attached to the Payroll and Claims (PAC) Unit where I took care of two zones of MOE's payroll and claims. I also assisted in the operation of payroll and claims located at the MND Building. I was the main training coordinator for PAC at both the MOE and MND sites.

What were some challenges you faced in the early days?

One challenge was the training of new and existing staff. The challenge arose because the turnover of staff was a bit high.

To meet these challenges, we arranged for training sessions for staff to increase awareness of the changes in policies and procedures related to payroll and claims matters. We also had Annual Staff Proficiency Tests for staff to assess their knowledge.

The team learnt together and shared their views during training and sharing sessions.

We adopted a buddy system for staff training. An experienced senior staff will be asked to coach the new or junior staff. Hence, they worked well even though they were from different backgrounds and age groups.

We also had team bonding and staff welfare activities to bring the team together. We play, share, learn and eat together. During the selection of new staff, we informed them of the culture of the unit. Hence, they were prepared once they joined the team.

What was Vital's relationship with the agencies like?

Our relationship with service partners was mixed – some were good and some could be better.

Regardless, we met the service partners regularly if required. With their feedback, we worked closely with them to improve their requirements if the requests were reasonable.



"THE TEAM LEARNT TOGETHER AND SHARED THEIR VIEWS DURING TRAINING AND SHARING SESSIONS. WE ADOPTED A BUDDY SYSTEM FOR STAFF TRAINING. AN EXPERIENCED SENIOR STAFF WILL BE ASKED TO COACH THE NEW OR JUNIOR STAFF. HENCE THEY WORKED WELL EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS AND AGE GROUPS."

Ong-Han Boh Buay
Former Assistant Head
Payroll and Claims





CHAPTER 3

CONNECT10NS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Our innate desire to engage and connect sets us apart from others and has made all the difference in building meaningful partnerships and growing new businesses.

2008 - 2010 GROWTH PHASE

Vital got off to a rocky start in its first two years of operations, but the efforts put in to standardise its workflows and ensure consistent delivery of services were starting to bear fruit.

First, it had made steps to get the organisation ISO certified, which began in July 2007 with the selection of payroll and claims processes for MOE. From July 2007 to February 2008, Vital updated process maps and set up a quality management system.

These efforts paid off. In February 2008, Vital attained the ISO 9001:2000 certification. It would be the first of several certifications to come, which increasingly included Vital's other services, as Vital sought to raise work quality through deliberate and structured practices.

But the certification served only to clarify business processes that were found within Vital. Many shared client processes still needed to be standardised for greater efficiency. For example, a claims specialist had to learn the complicated claims processes of 11 agencies, instead of just one.

Vital partnered agencies to find ways to eliminate these variations. Teck Leong recalled, "If you don't get buy-in from them, you can't change anything. To get buy-in from our users, we decided to form inter-agency groups and get their top-level people in to drive change."

In addition to managing variations in processes, Vital's staff had to quickly learn how to handle exceptions – work which could not be processed within the systems. Exceptions required human intervention, which was labour-intensive.

Director of Vital's MOE HR and Payroll Office, Selvarani T. Pillai, who formerly headed the Payroll and Claims unit, remembered that time. "2008 was the period when (the government) had major salary revisions ... sometimes we were unable to address the different scenarios that arose due to agency-specific policies."

She added, "The entire process posed a tremendous challenge to the limited manpower resources at Vital. As a higher priority had to be accorded to this project, some of the routine non-critical payroll



**"IF YOU DON'T GET BUY-IN
FROM THEM, YOU CAN'T
CHANGE ANYTHING."**

Lim Teck Leong
Chief Executive, Vital.org (2007 – 2009)



activities were delayed despite the extremely long hours put in by staff to meet the tight timelines."

At the same time, Vital had to confront another problem that gradually crept up: staff who were slower to adapt to a shared services centre's demands.

Director of Service and Innovation Ong Poh Poh shared, "There were staff who were apprehensive about the new processes and procedures." Adeline Ng, who formerly headed HR Services, recollected that some officers felt uncomfortable with being "... seen as (a) service provider at the frontline".

In the later part of 2008, the management decided to rationalise the workforce and reform work structures for greater efficiency. But the decision to do this did not come easy. And Vital did its best to take care of those few affected.

"Among the group, we identified people who could go back to their agencies and find jobs within their agencies or within other agencies, so they could be transferred within the civil service," remembered Teck Leong.

It was a period of great uncertainty. The anxiety of wondering whether they would be next to go shook the remaining staff. Vital's attrition rate hit its highest of 28% in 2009, and many of the original staff left the organisation. This was the dimmest period in the agency's history yet. However, shortly after, Vital started to turn the corner.

RE-VITALISED

In 2008, Vital had started recruiting to replace the staff they had lost. The new staff were younger and inexperienced, so they needed more training. There was also difficulty getting them to stay, for various reasons. Experienced staff had to constantly train new staff, which left them with less time to focus on their own work and operations.

So, in 2009, Vital decided to request a transitory manpower increase to help it tide over this rough period. Said Wong Wai Mun, Director of Finance and ACE Services (formerly Director of Operations), "That really solved a lot of problems!" Selvarani echoed, "For once, we had some control. 2010 was the turning point for Vital."

With increased staff, not only did Vital stabilise its operations, it was also better able to put more resources towards looking for new businesses, which it had tried to do from the start.



▲ First Quarterly Travel Sharing Session on 21 July 2008

Indeed, in the years from 2008 to 2010, Vital would set up several new business units: One-stop Travel Agent Services was launched in April 2008, Asset Management Services in January 2009 and over the course of 2010, Vital created its Credit Management Unit and Corporate Card Programme.

With its early challenges now behind it, the stage was set for Vital to soar and take flight.

GROWING NEW BUSINESS

STRENGTHENING WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Vital had begun searching for new businesses to expand its scope and grow its customer base, right from its inception. There was much appeal to doing so: unlike the first and second waves, with new businesses, they could start with a clean slate.

Teck Leong explained, “New business was a totally different starting point as compared to existing services that we had inherited from the agencies. We could start the operations with a more effective and efficient process.”

Developing a new business at Vital would involve these essential steps: identify a business with growth potential, then recruit someone who was a domain expert in the relevant industry to develop the business, incubate it, map and scope processes, design the charging model and obtain buy-in from top management.

As always, the businesses had to toe the bottom line.

Said Teck Leong, “We had a business development team. The team needed to survey the landscape and develop business propositions for potential new services which we could deliver and create whole-of-government savings.”



▲ VoiCE 2009

Beyond growing niche services, Vital also tried to bring more agencies onto the core services it offered. By 2008, the number of agencies served by Vital had grown to 82; at the end of 2010, due to new businesses and increasing buy-in from the rest of government, that number would increase to 104.



▲ Travel Management Booth at PS21 ExCEL Convention 2010

VITAL NEW BUSINESSES



TRAVEL AGENT SERVICES

Travel was regarded as one of the easiest and most widely adopted businesses to bring aboard with Vital’s agencies. Strategic in nature, yet beneficial to the whole government, the unit took life with the hiring of an experienced consultant, Dylah Harharah, whose job it became to start and grow this business.

Today, it is a value-driven, government-wide managed travel program that generates savings as a one-stop travel agency, offering corporate rates from 25 airlines, more than 800 hotel properties, 188 serviced apartments, and covering more than 60 countries in over 150 cities. It also offers travel insurance, crisis management and other important travel services.



CORPORATE CARD PROGRAM

Nestled within the travel management unit, this business was intended as a demand-aggregated payment solution for government official overseas travel and procurement purposes.

The service allows for better forecast and management of expenditures and provides visibility on expenditures within 48 hours of transactions being charged on the card. It also enhances control and transparency over business expense activity with spending limits, raises spend visibility through the monitoring of spending habits of end-users and maintains budget compliance.



ASSET AND INVENTORY MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Tracking and accounting for assets and inventory are essential for all public agencies to ensure accountability for all items purchased with taxpayers’ money. However, such processes are often routine and tedious. Realising that there was an opportunity to free client agencies from these common and routine activities, Vital wasted no time in setting up its very own asset management unit.

Vital’s Asset and Inventory Management Services include asset accounting, asset and inventory tagging, annual stock-take, and disposal of assets services. The unit started with seven agencies and now has 11.

BUILDING EXPERTISE, FORTIFYING RELATIONSHIPS

SERVICE MANAGEMENT

In 2009, a directorate was created with Ong Poh Poh empowered to look after Service Management. Her directorship would cover three key areas: Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Process Excellence (PE) and Business Growth (BG).

The impetus to develop process expertise within Vital was clear. “A shared services centre must have standardisation and cut variation. A common way is efficient and saves money and time. People can do it well,” said Poh Poh.

But to standardise work, it was necessary to have a clear picture of what the work covered. She added, “Processes are interdependent; they cut across agencies

and we are just a part of it. We have a few hundred lines of services. We needed a process map for each line detailing how Vital works with the systems and agencies.”

The PE team took a year to clean up all the process maps. This huge effort derived benefits beyond process streamlining. “Now with the map, staff can finally understand the workflow, upstream and downstream. They can appreciate what their other colleagues do,” said Poh Poh.

Poh Poh also explained the need for service management. “The job of CRM was to work with the agencies to enhance our relationships.”

Back then, roles and responsibilities of who should do what were not so clearly defined between Vital and agencies it served. A

mechanism was needed to measure and track service performance and enable both Vital and its service partners to achieve their respective business goals.

Hence, one of the earliest tasks for CRM was to review and improve the Service Partnership Understandings or SPUs. SPUs scoped out the areas of responsibilities for both Vital and the agencies, which helped manage agency expectations.

A Service Escalation Framework was also put in place in February 2010 to coordinate and accelerate the tracking of service lapses. And to further foster a sense of customer-centricity in staff, five Vital Service Attributes were established in May 2010: Customer-centric, Quality, Rapport, Responsive and Reliable.



FEATURE STORY : CREATING BETTER TOUCH POINTS WITH SERVICE PARTNERS

In the early years, Vital's operations staff had to handle enquiries from service partners and concurrently process time-critical transactions. They found it a challenge to juggle the twin and equally important tasks. Service levels were affected and Vital decided to form more pathways to better engage its service partners.

Poh Poh saw many opportunities to create better touch points with Vital's users. One of the first things she did was to establish communication channels.

Vital launched its Call Centre Helpdesk in December 2009 and hired full-time Account Managers in 2010. They would become the friendly voices who would be the link between service partners and Vital.

"We assigned a dozen agencies to each Account Manager to bridge the gap between service partners and operations. So we can now hear them out and communicate more," said Poh Poh.

Raine Yeo, Deputy Director (Business Growth), who joined Vital as an Account Manager in August 2009 recalled, "I was the

point-of-contact for service partners when they required attention and assistance on service issues or urgent work requests. My role was to work with colleagues from other functions to resolve these issues."

She added, "Everyone recognised that it was not adequate to only correct service gaps without putting in measures to mitigate or even avoid recurrence. We had regular internal discussions with functions to review the issues and brainstorm measures."

"These measures would then be included in the responses to service partners. Functions also prepared and shared case circulars to their teams as a form of learning."

In November 2010, a case management system, Vitaline, was fully rolled out to all client agencies. This would be a significant turning point in Vital's management of service delivery as it allowed officers in agencies to submit work requests, enquiries, suggestions, compliments or even complaints, providing yet another way to reach out to Vital.

In addition, there were many programs to

maintain continual outreach. For instance, the Specialised Agencies Induction Program was an "orientation program" that provided a platform to engage new service partners.

Through the Customer Perception Program, Vital identified processes that had high touch points with service partners. Poh Poh said, "One of the two processes that we picked was medical screening because people who join (the civil service) needed to get screened. So we worked with Raffles Medical Group, our partner, to increase the quality of that experience."

These deliberate and concerted efforts at ramping up service levels have earned Vital several accolades and recognition from service partners.

Feature
Ong Poh Poh (Right)

Director
Service & Innovation

and

Raine Yeo

Deputy Director
Business Growth
Former Account Manager



FEATURE STORY : SPREADING OUR WINGS

In early 2007, Vital embarked on the implementation of the managed travel program, by acquiring corporate travel industry expertise into Vital to develop and bring to fruition the business plan.

The Vital Travel team reviewed best practices in corporate travel management of MNCs and organised a study trip to learn from the Federal Government of Canada's Shared Travel Program.

Vital then sought endorsement from the Ministry of Finance (MOF) for the appointment of Vital as the central agency responsible for strategic sourcing and service delivery of the travel function for the public sector.

With MOF's endorsement of Vital as the central agency appointed to improve the management of government travel

expenditure, Vital applied for funding for the first three years to kick-start the project and incentivise agencies to participate in the program.

Said Dylah Harharah, Deputy Director (Travel Management), "Prior to the implementation of a shared managed travel program for the public sector in April 2008, there was no centralised travel management function to oversee the overall government travel and related expenditure."

As a result, travel management activities were decentralised and fragmented. Public agencies bought travel services from a panel of a few travel agents.

Vital, being the one-stop demand-aggregate lead agency in travel-related services, has an overview of common

trends and issues faced by government travellers, with better visibility of whole-of-government travel spend patterns.

Vital also engages policy owners on staff travel guidelines to recommend improvements to current policies, share best practices and provide market trend information.

The close partnership with various stakeholders has helped Vital to continuously review the government managed travel program to ensure it evolves and develops to meet changing service partners' requirements.

Said Dylah, "We remain committed to identifying future strategies and sourcing initiatives with a strong focus in efficiency management and cost savings."

Feature
Dylah Harharah (Left)
Deputy Director
Travel Management
and
Diana Lim
Assistant Director
Travel Management



VITAL MEMORIES: STAFF REFLECTIONS OF A PIONEER



I have been with the civil service for 50 years. Shared services was something very new 10 years back. It was not a buzz word yet in the service or maybe in the whole of Singapore. So all of us did not know what expectations to have. We actually didn't know what was in store for us. No one actually knew how shared services worked.

We were quite specialised in a way, in our areas of work. And the team from MOE was largely stable, with not much change in their scope of work, when we joined Vital in 2006. So operations continued to be quite smooth when we moved over – there was no major disruption. Even the location remained the same.

A year later, I was asked to oversee the

Superannuation unit at the MND side. That was when I realised that I was in for quite a culture shock. Vital then was kind of like a UN organisation where officers came from different agencies and brought along with them varied work cultures and values. There was a lack of identity, let alone a corporate image.

Initially, there were also differences in expectations between Vital and agencies. For example, although we were working on the same set of rules, officers interpreted it a little differently. This was one of the biggest challenges that Vital had to confront – how to standardise the processes. We knew we had to work very hard if we were to continue to stay viable in the shared services business.

Those were the early years. Today, we pride ourselves as Vitalites with a 'Family@Work' ethos. I also believe that Vital is one of the very few organisations in the whole civil service that tracks and reports service lapses for operations with management supervision. This reflects Vital's strong commitment to delivering quality and value-added services.

Today, we have relieved most ministries and agencies of all their HR services and payroll and claim services. They can now concentrate on their core and strategic functions. So we liken ourselves to being their strategic partners.



"I ALSO BELIEVE THAT VITAL IS ONE OF THE VERY FEW ORGANISATIONS IN THE WHOLE CIVIL SERVICE THAT TRACKS AND REPORTS SERVICE LAPSES FOR OPERATIONS WITH MANAGEMENT SUPERVISION. THIS REFLECTS VITAL'S STRONG COMMITMENT TO DELIVERING QUALITY AND VALUE-ADDED SERVICE."

Gee Yew Kong
Assistant Director (Exit & Superannuation)
Centre of Excellence
MOE HR and Payroll Office

VITAL MEMORIES: SERVICE PARTNER

I am in charge of Accounts Payable in NEA's Finance Department, and I liaise with Vital on payment issues. I interact mostly with Nurhayati from the Finance Services function in Vital.

Vital plays an important role in our daily operations as they ensure that all invoices are promptly processed so that our vendors will receive their payments on time. Vital also ensures that all invoices and journals are accurately processed to prevent incorrect payments or accounting of expenses.

One of the improvements that Vital did for us was the introduction of a non-invoice template, which we found useful in cases where no invoice was given.

When the Accountant-General's Department (AGD) first introduced the e-invoice workflow in May 2008, we had to

work closely with Vital to implement this workflow for NEA.

During the implementation, a number of teething system issues were encountered where a substantial number of e-invoices could not be processed. Vital and NEA worked together to gather all the issues before we partnered with AGD for immediate attention and urgent resolution. At the same time, we had to manage internal users and external vendors due to the longer-than-expected payment processing timeline.

When the issues were resolved, Vital quickly processed the substantial backlog of invoices so that vendors could receive the payments which were already overdue. It was a stressful period for both Vital and NEA, but we managed to overcome it through great collaboration.

Patricia Chua
Assistant Director
Finance Department
National Environment Agency (NEA)

A photograph of three women in business attire looking at a document together in a meeting room. The image has a warm, golden-yellow tint. In the background, two more people are visible, slightly out of focus.

CHAPTER 4

DEDICAT10N FOR EXCELLENCE

With great engagement comes great dedication. The contemporary Vitalite is inspired to pursue excellence, driven to develop self and others and a constant innovator.

2011 - 2013
ACHIEVING
STABILITY

The success of the new business units and the renewed staff numbers put Vital on a more even keel from 2011 to 2013. In 2010, Clarence Ti took over from Lim Teck Leong and came on board as Vital's third chief, where he remained until 2014.

"Vital was coming out of a 'teething-issues' period common with many new shared services operations. The most pressing issues were to re-inspire each other, to re-energise ourselves and re-engage with our stakeholders," shared Clarence.

"We were being worn down and we lost a lot of experienced people in the early years. Rebuilding that experience base, rebuilding customer confidence and more importantly, our own confidence were the key realities."

He set three Corporate Goals in 2010:
(1) increase customer satisfaction by 20%,
(2) raise employee engagement score by 20%, and
(3) reduce service lapses by 50 percent every two years.

Designed to work together in a "virtuous cycle", these goals were aimed at ensuring services were delivered effectively and that all service partners were served well.

Said Deputy Chief Executive Chua Mui Yim, who joined Vital in 2010 as Director of Corporate Services, "We needed to put in place quickly a 5-year strategic plan to chart the way forward. We also needed to address the staff morale issue. In 2009, we lost half the original staff. We had to ramp up recruitment to stabilise operations and to handle the increasing service partners and services we offered."

Indeed, one of the major challenges that faced Vital then was that employee engagement was low. Said Mui Yim, "In 2010, we didn't do very well in the employee engagement survey (ESS) for the public sector."

However, by 2012, employee engagement in Vital improved significantly through the implementation of several organisational initiatives to better engage staff.



"I DID NOT HAVE A VISION
AND PERHAPS THAT WAS A
GOOD THING. IT WAS NOT ABOUT
A LEADER BEING VISIONARY BUT
ABOUT COLLECTIVELY BRINGING
OUT OUR BEST, ABOUT DOING
OUR BEST FOR THE ORGANISATION
BUT ALSO FOR EACH OTHER."

Clarence Ti
Chief Executive, Vital (2010 – 2014)



▲ National Day Celebration during VoiCE on 2 August 2013

Vital would also mark another important milestone in end 2013, having attained four Business Excellence certifications, comprising the Singapore Quality Class, the Singapore Innovation Class, the Singapore Service Class and the People Developer Standard.

In short, Vital was flourishing and was slowly but surely finding its feet. To chart the way forward, the Vital 2015 strategic plan was unveiled in May 2011. At the same time, armed with a new set of mission, vision and core values, Vital.org was re-branded as Vital to depict a refreshed organisation with renewed confidence to embrace change, sharpen its service delivery and bring about

greater productivity.

Vital 2015 was the first 5-year strategic plan which would re-energise Vital as an organisation. Said Mui Yim, "It helped to explain to our people why we were here, where we were going and what we were doing to help them transit."

Clarence remembered the "sheer commitment of its people" was what impressed him most during his time with Vital. He said, "One of the positive effects of losing a lot of people in the early years was that those that remained were a special breed.

Most could easily have found jobs in other parts of the service. They stayed because they did not want to leave their colleagues when the going got tough, and that says a lot about character.

It was a privilege and honour to have had an opportunity to serve with them."

VITAL CULTURE TRANSFORMATION

Vital's efforts and achievements at re-energising its people were significant. It went from one of the bottom three in the Employee Engagement Survey (EES) conducted by the Civil Service College to within the top quartile in merely two years from 2010 to 2012. It has successfully transformed itself from being one of the least engaged organisations in the public service to one of the most.

At the core of this success was the virtuous cycle – a systemic way of thinking about how employee engagement affected service excellence.

Clarence explained, "In terms of organisational strategy, it is perhaps the appreciation that keeping customers happy (customer satisfaction), doing the work well (operational results) and maintaining a healthy workplace (employee engagement) that forms a virtuous cycle."

"Doing the work well makes happy customers, which builds pride in work,

which encourages doing the work well. Together they form a basis for positive momentum and when deliberately pursued over time, will inevitably build a great place to work."

An employee engagement strategy was put in place from 2010. Its initiatives were three-pronged:

- Creating compelling and clear messages from the management regarding Vital's direction and identity
- Carrying out many and varied conversations regarding Vital's work, such as through CE Journals, team meetings, VoiCE (Townhall) meetings, and Crucial Conversations over Coffee
- Developing meaningful and interesting programmes.

One of the most effective, compelling and clear messages was that Vital, as an organisation, was a Family@Work.



▲ VJamers 2012



▲ ReVITALise! 2012

FAMILY@WORK

To get the virtuous cycle going, Clarence reached out to Vital staff when he joined. Said Clarence, "I set out to listen and engage our colleagues to find their hopes and dreams, to understand their fears and frustrations. It eventually became encapsulated in Family@Work."

This was Vital's staff-as-family philosophy which fostered closer ties and inspired a sense of mutual care among its staff. Mui Yim added, "We like a workplace where each of us felt like part of a family. People enjoyed that kind of environment."

"One of the stories was where one of our staff fell sick and another went to the temple to pray for him. There was also this young colleague who related that an older colleague felt like a 'second mother' to her."

She added, "A lot of people came back (to Vital) because of that. We asked them, 'Why do you want to come back?' They told us it's 'just the Family@Work environment'."



▲ Dinner and Dance 2013 - Blast from the Past



▲ Zumba class

BUILDING PRIDE WITHIN VITAL

To rebuild confidence in its people, Vital took deliberate steps to create a sense of pride in them.

“We won several awards during this period. These awards gave us recognition and showed our staff that if we work hard enough and the industry recognises our efforts, we can establish ourselves. And we can also feel proud,” said Mui Yim.

As a shared services centre, conversations frequently revolved around work quality, customer satisfaction, issue resolution and areas for improvement. “We found that we don’t celebrate success enough,” Mui Yim explained. “We then decided to make it a point to celebrate every success, regardless of the size of the achievement.”

“When service partners complimented our staff for going the extra mile, we celebrated and spread the word. When staff completed a learning program or an improvement project, we recognised them publicly. When we obtained the four Business Excellence certifications, we had a little party,” said Mui Yim.



▲ Excellence in Public Service Awards 2012



▲ Promotion Ceremony 2012



▲ Overseas Community Service in Cambodia 2013



▲ Bring Your Child to Work Day 2013

BONDING THROUGH 12 TRIBES AND COMMUNITY WORK

One of the most cited programmes for Vital’s employee engagement success was the 12 Tribes. Originating as 12 initiatives which Clarence had established to raise engagement levels in staff, Vital’s staff across the organisation eventually formed themselves into corresponding tribes.

The Tribes were named Growing, One, Active, Determined, Leading, Open, Professional, Committed, Kaizen, Happy, Celebrating and Opportunity. Each Tribe was headed by a Tribe Leader; the Tribe Leaders, in turn, were led by a Tribe Chief.

The idea of community was strongly rooted in the 12 Tribes. Said Mui Yim, “The 12 Tribes were formed ... to make each staff belong in a team that cuts across the organisation, whatever his or her job or role was.” The activities helped to strengthen the social network.

Having fun was a big part of the equation too. Members of each tribe would take part in tribal challenges organised regularly. These activities ranged from bowling competitions to tours, quizzes and even photography contests.

“We did fun things, like creating Tribe T-shirts to make them feel a sense of belonging,” said Mui Yim.

Community work also helped unite Vital staff. “We found that a lot of staff liked doing community work,” revealed Mui Yim. For instance, in 2013, several like-minded staff joined by colleagues from the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore, went overseas to a Cambodian village to build structures that made clean water available. Others took part in the annual President’s Challenge and local projects.

These initiatives not only helped bond staff but also provided well-received opportunities for them to feel that they too, could make a meaningful contribution to the wider community.

STRENGTHENING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS & INTERNAL CONTROLS

REINFORCING SYSTEMS AND INTERNAL CONTROLS

Vital, as a key processing house, handles nearly two million transactions a year. Hence, it has to ensure that it delivers error-free and timely services, constantly upgrading the skills of its staff to achieve consistently high service quality and adhere to regulatory compliance.

QUALITY ASSURED

“Vital targets to have 99.9% of its total annual transactions on time and on target. Our current performance is around 99.8%,” said Chew Lip Whee, Deputy Director (Corporate Planning), who drives and facilitates organisational excellence within Vital.

How did Vital improve its quality of work? Lip Whee explained, “It’s about managing service gaps well, deep diving to find out the real issues, so effective measures can be put in place to address the root causes.”

In addition, having a robust ISO 9001-certified Quality Management System was also another way of ensuring consistency in the quality of service rendered to Vital’s service partners.

Attaining the ISO 9001 certification laid a strong foundation for Vital to attain more milestones in its Organisational Excellence journey, with Vital achieving the Singapore Quality Class (SQC), People Developer (PD), Singapore Innovation Class (I-Class) and Singapore Service Class (S-Class) Business Excellence Certification in 2013, on the first try.

Through preparations for the 4-in-1 Business Excellence Integrated Assessment, the organisation was galvanised, with a shared goal of helping Vital achieve success in its Organisational Excellence journey. Lip Whee added, “The exercise helped to align all staff back to our organisation’s mission, vision and core values. At the same time, it provided a holistic and structured approach in strengthening the various management systems and structures within Vital.”



“IT’S ABOUT MANAGING SERVICE
GAPS WELL, DEEP DIVING TO FIND
OUT THE REAL ISSUES, SO EFFECTIVE
MEASURES CAN BE PUT IN PLACE
TO ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSES.”

Chew Lip Whee
Deputy Director
Corporate Planning



SAFEGUARDING OUR ACCOUNTABILITY

Ho Geok Pack, Director of Finance, Compliance and Procurement, put in plain words, “Compliance’s role is to work with functions to strengthen internal controls and put in place sustainable measures to address systemic gaps. It also conducts investigations to find out what went wrong, when there is any loss or suspected fraud.”

She recalled, “When I joined Vital in 2012, I needed to get Vital staff to develop the right mindset and to put strong controls in place. So I sent my Compliance team to go and learn ACL.”

Audit Command Language, or ACL, is one of several Computer Assisted Audit Techniques (CAAT) that auditors use to detect fraud or overpayments.

“And with that, we taught (ACL) to our colleagues from Finance Services and worked with them to operationalise it.”

Why is Compliance so important for Vital? Geok Pack explained, “Most of the ministries and several statutory boards have outsourced their payroll and finance services to us. So, there is what we call concentrated risk in Vital.

“Sometimes I call it a reservoir. If you don’t put in the correct filter, what you have is contaminated water.”

She added, “Compliance is an on-going work, but the foundation has to be laid

properly. If the foundation is not laid well, we always will be trying to catch up. Furthermore, the controls must be sustainable. If they are not sustainable, problems will keep recurring.”

THE LEARNING VITALITE

To keep up with evolving work requirements and maintain employability, Vital’s staff needs to continually invest in and upgrade their own skills and knowledge. Vital drew up a learning and development framework called The Learning Vitalite aimed at supporting Vital staff to take charge of their own development.

Each Vital staff is eligible for at least 100 hours of learning each year, to acquire new knowledge and skills through courses and seminars. These courses enhance professional competence in their current jobs, expose them to areas outside their immediate job scope and prepare them for other roles in the organisation or in the wider civil service.

Employees plan their learning annually via



👤 Learning Festival 2013

an Individual Development Plan through conversations with their supervisors. Apart from providing new staff with on-the-job training, Vital sponsors staff who meet certain criteria for professional and academic upgrading through a tuition reimbursement scheme. A scholarship scheme is also available for selected top performing Vital staff who have the potential to perform higher responsibilities.

Many Vital employees have benefitted from this scheme and other large-scale core programs, such as the Employability Skills WSQ program.

Believing that better leaders deliver better outcomes, Vital had gone on to create the Vital Leadership Development Framework. Targeted at managers and above (Vital Leaders), this framework provides a holistic development roadmap for each Vital Leader to enhance his or her leadership capabilities according to experience and role.

The Learning Vitalite program is a reflection of Vital’s commitment to the lifelong learning of its employees.



👤 Leadership Summit 2013

FEATURE STORY : GROWING OUR OWN

I was previously from the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (now known as the Ministry of Social and Family Development). When I moved to Vital in 2007, we brought the Payables and Receivables services along with us. In the initial stage, all the staff who joined us from different ministries continued with their respective working styles.

Subsequently, Vital came up with the standardisation of procedures which aligned with the agencies' processes, keeping in mind their expectations. This was to improve efficiency, effectiveness and promptness in delivering our services. Along the way, I was given more agencies to handle.

Continuous learning is important to build our capacity to handle higher-level work. It is the foundation for us to progress in our career.

The opportunity was given to me by Vital to pursue my Diploma in Business Practice (Business Administration) at Temasek Polytechnic through the Vital Sponsorship Scheme (Day Diploma). Upon successful completion, I was given more responsibilities.

Juggling between family, work and studies for two and a half years was a challenge. But my superiors and peers in Vital gave me encouragement and moral support during this journey. This helped to ease my mind when I had to prepare for my exams.

Being a Diploma holder now, I can say that I have gained more confidence, in addition to my sense of achievement.

The whole credit goes to Vital for giving me this golden opportunity and I am grateful to them for believing in me.



“CONTINUOUS LEARNING IS
IMPORTANT TO BUILD OUR CAPACITY
TO HANDLE HIGHER-LEVEL WORK.
IT IS THE FOUNDATION FOR US TO
PROGRESS IN OUR CAREER.”

Feature
Subashiny D/O Kuttnayyapan
Senior Executive
Centre of Excellence
Finance Services

FEATURE STORY : LEARNING FOR LIFE

I joined a program called Employability Skills (ES WSQ) under the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) system. This program develops and assesses individuals for key competencies that the company looks for in potential employees.

Vital bore all the costs for the 60 of us who joined the program.

We had four colleagues who volunteered to teach us. They set up rosters for us, did their own homework and printed out materials. They even enrolled for the Mathematics test, to see what types of questions there were and why they were so difficult for us.

After the test, they roughly knew what questions there were, and they gave us tuition during lunch breaks and after work. Margareta, Kavitha, Jairus and Mei Gui conducted a few rounds of classes for us. For that, I must truly thank them!

I am proud to have completed the program, and it was a very wonderful feeling. I could not imagine that despite having left school for 30 years, I still get to go for classes and I got to know more people who, like me, faced the same anxieties.

The happiest part for me was that Vital recognised our efforts. They celebrated our success with an award ceremony for us to receive our certificates on stage.



“I COULD NOT IMAGINE THAT DESPITE
HAVING LEFT SCHOOL FOR 30 YEARS,
I STILL GET TO GO FOR CLASSES AND
I GOT TO KNOW MORE PEOPLE WHO,
LIKE ME, FACED THE SAME ANXIETIES.”

Feature
Teo Pek Ngoh (Betty)
Executive (Learning Services)
Organisation Development and
Learning Services

INTERVIEW WITH STAFF BUILDING A COMMUNITY



What was the goal of The 12 Tribes?
To forge a cohesive work environment and create opportunities to encourage work-life integration for all Vitalites.

What were your responsibilities as Tribe Chief ?
My role as Tribe Chief was to bring the team together to materialise the Vital Play Plan (our work plan) for the year. It was an enriching experience for me as I got to expand my contacts in Vital and mix with a group of like-minded, energetic Vitalites – how we Vital staff call ourselves.

Were Vital staff receptive to the new things you did?
Yes, definitely. Apart from the regular welfare activities (e.g. festive giveaways and events), our team came up with five “Tribe Challenges” that saw strong staff turnout and participation. It has helped to bring about friendly rivalries and a sense of competitiveness among staff.

What was unique about staff engagement at Vital?

We took into account the varied staff profile for every activity. Hence, activities were suitable for all ages to create a more inclusive environment. What was unique was that staff of all ages (ranging from 20 to 65) and all levels (rank and file to senior management) were able to get together and enjoy the activities.

How has the culture at Vital contributed to the success of The 12 Tribes?
Vital has a strong Family@Work culture. Staff were supportive of the events and were willing to spend the time to participate actively in the events.



“WHAT WAS UNIQUE WAS THAT STAFF OF ALL AGES (RANGING FROM 20 TO 65) AND ALL LEVELS (RANK AND FILE TO SENIOR MANAGEMENT) WERE ABLE TO GET TOGETHER AND ENJOY THE ACTIVITIES.”

Eugene Chew
Senior Manager
Innovation Hub
Former Tribe Chief from 2011 - 2012

In the photo:
Eugene Chew (Left) with
Jimmy Peh, current Tribe Leader

INTERVIEW WITH SERVICE PARTNER A VITAL PARTNER, A VITAL FRIEND



Tell us about working with Vital early on.
(The beginning) was a teething period. We moved boldly into uncharted territory to realise macro-efficiency, and were fully aware of the challenges and tensions we would have to address downstream.

Not all job functions were outsourced (to Vital). Typically, it was parts of specific job processes that were outsourced. So processes got truncated and Vital took over the parts that it was set up to do. Because we had no visibility of what happened to the processes thereafter, two-way communication was very important. But what to communicate, how to communicate and how often to communicate were some of the challenges that had to be sorted out on the fly.

The situation improved over time because I think there was great effort (on Vital’s part) to understand agencies’ issues. There were frequent meetings between me and the Director of Operations at Vital. And when issues were raised, Vital was quite responsive in addressing them. Today, Vital has reached a steady-state in being able to competently and confidently deliver on its mandate to the public service.

How has Vital created value for MOT?
When Clarence Ti headed Vital, he got a few of the (agency) directors to chair multi-agency project teams looking into specific corporate functions. I was asked to chair the team on claims. And that was (during the period) when all claims had to be verified and certified.

We asked, ‘Are we not unnecessarily burdening ourselves by having to verify and certify all claims?’ A new set of circumstances actually drove us to ask more fundamental questions about some of these processes. We then decided to recommend straight-through processing of claims – let the claims through but do random audits to achieve a better balance between control and customer-centricity. I think that sped things up and unburdened us quite significantly with a positive cost impact.

So it was not just streamlining processes, which were the incremental tweaks; it was asking if certain processes, even functions were still relevant that was the leap. All this could not have happened the way it did if not for Vital.



“SO IT WAS NOT JUST STREAMLINING PROCESSES, WHICH WERE THE INCREMENTAL TWEAKS; IT WAS ASKING IF CERTAIN PROCESSES, EVEN FUNCTIONS WERE STILL RELEVANT THAT WAS THE LEAP.”

Goh Teck Seng
Director
Corporate Development and Human Resource
Ministry of Transport
Vital’s Service Partner



CHAPTER 5

VIS10N
TO FORGE AHEAD

The lessons from our past have prepared Vitalites to look to the future while keeping a vigilant eye on details. Another decade of Vital excellence awaits us!

2014 AND BEYOND:
FORGING AHEAD
TOWARDS THE FUTURE

On 1st May 2014, Tan Chor Kiat, a veteran with the Singapore Armed Forces and a seasoned specialist in systems development, succeeded Clarence Ti as Vital's fourth and latest Chief Executive.

Although much had been accomplished in stabilising operations and strengthening internal structures since the turn of the decade, Vital still faced the same challenges common to any shared services centre, namely, cost and relevance.

How could Vital continually stay relevant and forward-looking to bring greater cost savings and value-add to the government? Vital took the opportunity to reassess its strategic position and value proposition in late 2014 and uncovered a few trends critical to its growth and success as the shared services centre for government.

Notwithstanding a decade of efforts aimed at achieving efficiency gains, many of Vital's processes still required manual interventions. With the aging

population and a low birth rate, it would be increasingly difficult, or expensive, to get new employees.

A shared services centre comprising mainly manual work faces irrelevance, in a progressively digital and automated world, with the government now focused on the Smart Nation vision.

In line with the Public Sector Transformation efforts, Vital had to swiftly find ways to automate manual work, streamline processes and move up the value chain to continue supporting the government in delivering better policies and services to the public.

Chor Kiat understood these pressures keenly. But to concurrently explore work improvement and value creation while maintaining service standards proved a demanding task. "Vital is caught in the daily grind of carrying out transactions, so even when our light bulbs light up, we have no time to look deeper," said Chor Kiat.



"VITAL WILL BE MORE DELIBERATE AND FOCUSED ON PROCESS IMPROVEMENT AND BEING A TRAILBLAZER FOR OUR SERVICE PARTNERS TO JOIN US IN BEST PRACTICES, AS WELL AS BEING THE BEST HORIZONTAL INTEGRATOR FOR THE WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT."

Tan Chor Kiat
Chief Executive, Vital (2014 – Present)



PLANNING FOR
THE FUTURE

In October 2014, at a management retreat, the Vital Management team discussed the realities facing the organisation and forged the way forward for Vital. The Vital 2020 roadmap, a 5-year roadmap which laid out how Vital would be transformed by 2020, was drawn up. This roadmap would eventually evolve to identify four key, interconnected strategic outcomes.

First, to be an evermore essential strategic partner to the agencies it supports. Second, to adopt and deliver best practices and foster innovation internally. Third, to stay relevant and develop the capacity to be

future-ready. And fourth, to strengthen its corporate governance to better uphold the integrity of the public service.

To achieve these strategic outcomes, Vital has to concurrently keep these tasks in sight:

- Drive Innovation, by streamlining and automating processes
- Develop New Businesses
- Keep Operations Going, at the same level or better

Chor Kiat summed up, "Vital will be more deliberate and focused on process improvement and being a trailblazer for our service partners to join us in best practices,

as well as being the best Horizontal Integrator for the whole of government."

Now, like before, innovation would free up capacity in terms of headcount, which Vital could divert to grow new or value-added services. Now, as before, new businesses would provide sustainable growth for Vital. Now, as before, innovation and new business development have to be performed without causing dips in operational standards.

But now, unlike before, Vital was able to bring a new set of game-changing tools to the table.



Management Retreat 2015



▲ Innovation & Learning Festival 2015

BETTER MINISTRY
-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT

To further its goals, Vital needed to engage and leverage the top level support of the various ministries it supported. To drive substantial change, it needed to get a seat at the table.

One concrete result was the inclusion of Vital in the Systems Oversight Committee (SOC) chaired by Deputy Secretaries from different ministries and the Accountant-General, and comprising representatives from key users of central systems, owners of systems, policies and processes as well as the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore.

The SOC was formed to look at central systems holistically, address pain points

and inter-system issues, and set strategic directions. Vital, as one of the biggest users of several systems such as PaC@Gov, NFS@Gov and HRMS, could contribute important insights on how to improve systems productivity.

During this period, Vital also worked with Goh Mien Zo, then Director (Special Projects) at the Ministry of Finance (MOF), and the MOF Transformation Office (MOF-TO), to help spearhead policy and process reviews from 2014 to 2015. Collaborating directly with MOF-TO meant Vital had a direct line to communicate with MOF as well as its other stakeholders, the intricate issues faced by Vital.

This would bring about cost-benefit analyses, consensus and endorsements at the ministry level for changes to processes

or even policies involving the whole of government.

INTERNALISING
INNOVATION;
INCREASING
FUTURE-READINESS

Internally, Vital entered an experimental phase. In October 2014, Chor Kiat set up the Innovation Hub to “hothouse, seed, coordinate, broker and hybridise projects and initiatives which will make our work in Vital more enjoyable, higher-valued, respected and value-creating”.

He also designated Finance Services, HR Services and Payroll and Claims as Centres of Excellence (COEs), and gave each of these functions a process excellence expert so that they could own and drive innovation at the



▲ Procurement & Finance Workshop 2015

functional level.

Senior Manager (Innovation) of HR Services, Jennifer Wong, who facilitates innovation within HR Services, said of her new role, “Being a part of a function has allowed what I do to be more organic. I feel privileged to be able to dive deeper into understanding the processes and facilitating improvements, and to foster stronger collaborative bonds.”

The HR and Pay functions at Vital’s MOE site were further combined into a single entity called MOE HR and Payroll Office, which has today become the fourth Centre of Excellence.

These changes signaled a radical shift in driving innovation more visibly, and with greater momentum.

To complement its external improvement efforts, Vital has embarked on its paperless journey, and is currently developing an electronic document and knowledge management system, which would significantly reduce hardcopy documents generated in daily transactions, documentation-related service lapses, and manual work, and institutionalise the knowledge of its staff onto a digital platform.

This is being developed in parallel with an e-learning system designed to speed up training of new staff, retain knowledge and train existing staff for new roles.

With better engagement with agencies and other stakeholders, and by congregating the streamlining of processes into centres

of excellence, Vital has changed the way it approached innovation.

Today, innovation momentum is maintained through monthly Innovation Hub and COE Meetings, chaired by the Chief Executive, to track and steer the progress of innovation projects driven by Vital’s various functions.

CAPTURING NEW
OPPORTUNITIES

Other than pursuing process streamlining, Vital’s functions had another mission: to grow new or value-added businesses.

Over the last two years, Vital has expanded its procurement services, and developed or took over several whole-of-government contracts to manage. These are Demand Aggregation (DA) contracts – collective purchases of common goods and services that yield value for money through economies of scale, and greater efficiencies in procurement, made available for any ministry or statutory board.

Vital is playing an active role in the development of an integrated HR and Payroll system, a new central system that will revolutionise HR, payroll and claims services by making them end-to-end and seamless.

Said Section Manager of HR Services, Lim Hui Ting, who represents Vital in the development of this system, “I’m positive that with the integrated system, we would be able to remove system interface issues and enhance productivity and efficiency as

a whole.”

With its voluminous transactions, Vital has also built up its business analytics capabilities, offering even more value-add with whole-of-government insights into cost trends and savings opportunities, and sharing these insights with agencies to guide policy reviews.

In 2015, Vital engaged an external consultant to conduct a Value-for-Money audit on its services. The outcomes from the study allowed Vital to right-price its services and ensure equitable resource allocation within, thereby assuring service partners of the value it provided them.

With these and other value-enhancing and cost-saving measures, Vital will continue to aim for sustainable growth and fulfil its vision to be a world class shared services partner.



INTERVIEW WITH POLICY PARTNER BLAZING THE TRAIL



What was the nature of your collaboration with Vital?

I was seconded to the Ministry of Finance from the Accountant-General's Department (AGD) two years back.

The collaboration with Vital was part of a study of a larger context. The Programme Review Committee was set up to take stock of all programmes and policies at the whole-of-government (WOG) level and aimed at creating capacity for Public Sector Transformation, with particular focus to raise performance across WOG, achieving productivity gains and efficiency savings. It also aimed to examine how we could optimise our current resources and how our officers could be more meaningfully engaged in their work.

Within that context, I worked with Vital and MOF Transformation Office (MOF-TO) to form a project team to study and map out each of Vital's work processes in its shared services areas – finance, HR, payroll and claims. Not only did the project team engage Vital management, it also engaged the ground staff who processed

the work. The team asked fundamental questions about these work processes to identify areas of process improvement or changes to policies to reduce downstream processing effort.

We made recommendations and came up with proposals highlighting several key areas before surfacing them to MOF's management to seek endorsement. Some enhancements like allowing secondees to claim through PaC@Gov or raising the small value payment limit to \$5,000 in NFS@Gov to allow more straight-through processing of payments had been implemented subsequently, through further collaboration with AGD. As a result, Vital was able to achieve some efficiency savings which could be redeployed to other areas to create more value.

This study took about a year and was a long-drawn process. I was glad that some of the project team's recommendations came into fruition and benefitted Vital's ground staff. All these would not have been possible without the partnership with MOF-TO and the involvement of many Vital officers!



"I WAS GLAD THAT SOME OF THE PROJECT TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS CAME INTO FRUITION AND BENEFITTED VITAL'S GROUND STAFF. ALL THESE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE PARTNERSHIP WITH MOF-TO AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF MANY VITAL OFFICERS!"

Goh Mien Zo
Group Director
Finance Transformation & Technology
Accountant-General's Department
Former Director (Special Projects)
at the Ministry of Finance

INTERVIEW WITH STAFF A PAPERLESS FUTURE



Why and how was the Electronic Document and Knowledge Management System (eDKMs) conceived?

The eDKMs started off as an idea to scan hardcopy original transactional documents to be parked in a central repository. The initial concept was more of a scanning hub, i.e. within an environment which provides Evidence Act-certified document imaging.

This idea was in line with the whole-of-government vision to build a Smart Nation. Through discussions, research and iterations, we discovered that the documents could not only be stored digitally but also be incorporated into digital workflows that are built around our processes.

Currently, when service lapses occur, preventive measures would be put in place.

While existing staff would learn from and look out for these lapses, new staff who might not be as familiar with the processes could slip up. This workflow function would solve the recurring service lapse issues that we face with staff turnover.

With eDKMs, the system would guide and prompt staff for the necessary checks, and automatically send emails to the right people for review or approval. This is translating the current manual workflow into an automated one. In essence, we are also translating our institutional knowledge into information technology.

Workflows create opportunities for business process re-engineering or re-design and with the implementation of eDKMs, we can expect a major transformation in the way we work. We believe this is the future.



"WORKFLOWS CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS PROCESS RE-ENGINEERING OR RE-DESIGN AND WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDKMS, WE CAN EXPECT A MAJOR TRANSFORMATION IN THE WAY WE WORK."

Selvarani T. Pillai
Director
Centre of Excellence
MOE HR and Payroll Office



INTERVIEW WITH SYSTEM PARTNER CO-CREATING BETTER OUTCOMES

Could you describe the significance of Vital's collaboration with AGD in reviewing policies and processes?

Being the government's shared services centre, Vital is the key user of AGD's central systems. Any policy or process changes to these central systems (e.g. NFS@Gov, PaC@Gov) will impact Vital's operations and internal processes.

Hence, we value Vital's feedback and inputs when AGD reviews our policies, processes and systems.

We understand that policy and process reviews usually address "common situations". When it comes to execution, there are always bound to be exceptions. It is important that the exceptions are identified upfront so that the exception handling processes are thought through for proper execution. Being on the ground, Vital would be able to share the impact to

users and help to identify exceptions to ensure that exception handling processes are taken care of.

We are also starting to involve Vital in system testing prior to the implementation of policy or process changes. This is to allow Vital to have a better understanding of the changes involved and ensure more robust testing of the system on exception handling.

Vital would also be able to provide inputs on the state of readiness on the ground and allow us to adjust the implementation schedule accordingly.

Tell us about something that would have been impossible to achieve without the work of the team at Vital.

One example was the collaboration with Vital in the Systems Oversight Committee. The government financial

system (NFS@Gov) has strived to automate processes while balancing internal controls.

While most of the processes have been automated, such as the submission of electronic invoices (e-invoices) by vendors, or straight-through processing for small value payments, there are still processes or exception handling which require manual intervention by Vital.

Hence, Vital's inputs on potential areas for further streamlining is valuable in the business process reviews. With Vital's inputs, we have streamlined the payment process and extended the straight-through processing for non-PO e-invoices below \$5,000 with effect from April 2016.



"BEING ON THE GROUND, VITAL WOULD BE ABLE TO SHARE THE IMPACT TO USERS AND HELP TO IDENTIFY EXCEPTIONS TO ENSURE THAT EXCEPTION HANDLING PROCESSES ARE TAKEN CARE OF."

Cher Ming Hui
Director
Financial Operations
Accountant-General's Department

INTERVIEW WITH POLICY PARTNER

Could you describe the significance of Vital's collaboration with PSD in reviewing policies and processes?

Vital shares with us the operational implications that PSD's policies may have on the users. The feedback helps us to review our policies and processes for a more lean and productive workforce.

Tell us about a challenge that has been overcome during PSD's partnership with Vital.

Vital has acceded to PSD's request to accommodate the agencies' electronic Personnel File (ePfile) requirements within its electronic Document and Knowledge Management system (eDKMs). This initiative will help ministries save the cost of implementation as opposed to having PSD build a system from scratch.

As part of the ePfile project, Vital will scan hardcopy personnel files for agencies. This partnership is also a stepping stone in moving towards more paperless processes.

Elizabeth Ho
Director, Corporate Services &
Director, HR Management Information & Systems
Public Service Division (PSD)
Prime Minister's Office

VITAL 2020 STRATEGIC OUTCOMES AND FOCUS AREAS

The Vital 2020 roadmap outlined four strategic outcomes, and five strategic focus areas.

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES



We are a strategic partner to the agencies we serve and support with whom we have shared accountability in delivering outcomes.



We adopt best practices and foster an innovative culture to be the centre of excellence.



We adapt to stay relevant and create the capacity to be future-ready.



We strengthen corporate governance to uphold the integrity of the public service.



“LET US CONCENTRATE ON THIS TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEY TOGETHER, AND MAKE THE DESIRED OUTCOME INEVITABLE. TOGETHER, WE CAN.”

Tan Chor Kiat
Chief Executive, Vital (2014 – present)

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

A BUILD STRONG AND COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTNERS



Vital aims to build strong relationships with service and system partners towards advancing whole-of-government (WOG) integration efforts in shared services through seeking collaborative issue resolution, solutions and approaches, as well as developing shared goals.

By continually refining its business model to ensure that it remains viable, robust yet flexible to meet the different expectations of service partners, Vital hopes to brand itself as a strong and reliable partner to stakeholders, and a reputable and innovative organisation to deliver positive experiences.

B CUT MANUAL WORK



Vital aims to transform its existing services by leveraging technology to bring about automation and paperless operations, which in turn derives greater value for WOG. Vital also aims to achieve its mission to reap economies of scale for WOG through the standardisation and streamlining of processes.

C POSITION VITAL FOR THE FUTURE



Vital strives to be a best-in-class organisation and centre of excellence that not only excels in current operations and services, but also continually stays relevant and forward-looking to meet the changing needs of WOG and position itself as a respected partner of choice.

To do this effectively, Vital constantly looks out for and capitalises on new technology that could potentially transform its services, and watches out for emerging trends and environmental forces to tweak its course where necessary. Internally, Vital finds innovative ways to free up the capacity needed to drive new and expanded services.

D STRENGTHEN INTERNAL CONTROLS



As a shared service centre for managing WOG financial and HR transactions, Vital is committed to safeguard against not only erroneous or fraudulent transactions but also misuse or leakage of sensitive personal data. The reputé of public service will be jeopardised if such risks are not properly managed.

Strong corporate governance, internal controls, strict compliance and audits will be emphasised and reinforced enterprise-wide.

E EMPOWER OUR PEOPLE



People are the key to Vital's success. Leadership and learning will be strengthened to unlock the capacity of Vital staff and deepen their sense of pride, commitment and professionalism.

Systems will be developed to enhance knowledge retention and transfer and effectively equip new staff with knowledge and skills and to prepare existing staff for new roles. There will also be more efforts to enhance staff engagement and recognition and to empower them to excel in the change ahead.

THANK YOU TO ALL

WHO HAVE MADE 10 YEARS OF VITAL POSSIBLE



