

## **Singaporean SMEs and Swedish multinationals join hands in partner initiative to create business**

**Launch update: Less than 48 hours into the campaign, the initiative has quickly sparked attention across Singapore for its unusual approach, including being celebrated by Prime Minister Lee himself on both his Twitter and LinkedIn. Other prominent figures including Minister for Trade and Industry, Chan Chun Sing, have shared the campaign on their platforms, alongside showings of support from EDB, ESG and NEA. The initiative has gained coverage in Singapore's leading newspaper - The Straits Times; the leading business publication - Business Times; and the leading Tamil publication - Mediacorp Tamil News.**

As many of Singapore's enterprises, big and small, have seen their business decline as a result of the global pandemic, a new initiative is now aiming to change that. Together with Swedish multinational companies based in Singapore, local small and medium-sized enterprises have recently started a hands-on partnership program, the SESG Initiative, to exchange experiences and develop their respective businesses.

The program is initiated by SwedCham, the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Singapore, together with the creative collective Forsman & Bodenfors in Singapore. The program so far holds a dozen local SMEs, who have teamed up with major Swedish companies in Singapore. The initiative to date incorporates an island-wide advertising campaign and regular partner meetings, labelled "Fika4Good".

**Ms Lisa Ferraton, General Manager at SwedCham in Singapore,** says, "For these Swedish companies, Singapore is a home away from home, and has been so for decades. Joining hands with smaller, Singaporean entrepreneurs offers a unique opportunity to get to know each other's challenges better and provide mutual help when it's needed the most. We are only at the beginning of this initiative, and as we move forward I encourage more companies to participate."

**Ms Susanna Fagring, CEO and Co-Founder of Forsman & Bodenfors Singapore,** says, "We believe creativity is a transformative tool that enables companies to power through any crisis. With this initiative, we are orchestrating new, unexpected meetings and conversations, that result in creative ideas which will unlock business growth."

Founded almost 40 years ago, SwedCham's objectives extend beyond representing and promoting Swedish companies established in Singapore. An important part has long been to facilitate the exchange of views and information between Swedish and Singaporean companies, also including both governmental and non-governmental organisations. The SESG initiative takes the exchange to a new level.

The Singaporean SMEs involved operate within a wide variety of areas, ranging from local hawkers and bakers, to watch shops and tailors – in all parts of the city. The participating SMEs were selected in close cooperation with Enterprise Singapore and the National Environment Agency, NEA.

The regular partner meetings are called Fika4Good, referencing the Swedish tradition of “fika”, in which friends and coworkers gather to have a coffee, chat, and solve problems. Each partner duo determines what issues should be brought up and how best to solve them. This involves everything from business strategy and joint CSR projects to customer support and communication tactics.

Furthermore, the Swedish companies have sponsored an islandwide advertising campaign, promoting the local entrepreneurs on billboards and buses. The campaign went live on November 12th and has sparked attention across Singapore for its unusual approach.

The Swedish companies involved in the program are Anticimex, Astrazeneca, Atlas Copco, Axis, Camfil, Electrolux, Ericsson, Hexagon, H&M, Saab, Stena and Trelleborg.

As global demand has dropped during the pandemic, even the multinationals operating in Singapore are struggling to deal with the new normal.

**Enrique Patrickson, CFO of Electrolux APAC & MEA, says,** “Electrolux has been present in Singapore since 1970, and we feel very much part of the local community. The SESG initiative is all about further strengthening our relations with local entrepreneurs, providing advice from our perspective as multinationals, but also getting valuable input from them on how to develop our own businesses. Our local partners are demonstrating every day that agility and simplicity of execution are key to overcome the current economic challenges. The experience has been the most rewarding so far.”

**Sonia Aplin, VP, Marketing & Communications, Sustainability & Corporate Responsibility at Ericsson SEA, Oceania & India, says:** “It’s an honour to partner with an iconic Singapore business such as Leong Hainanese Chicken Rice at Shunfu Food Market as we both have a common purpose of connecting people within our communities. We have great respect for the owner Mr Neo, who has been running his stall through many different business cycles, always with great tenacity and conviction in his service. At Ericsson we believe digital inclusion empowers people and as such, we are looking to set up a company volunteer program to help hawkers at Shunfu market develop an online presence on social media platforms and expand their business opportunities.”

SMEs account for 99% of Singapore’s companies, employ 70% of Singaporeans, and contribute to nearly half of the country’s GDP. But due to covid-19, many have suffered greatly. Decreased consumer consumption has led to an approximately 50% decrease in revenue for some SMEs.

Starting in August, Singaporean ramen hawker **Carmal Ahmad, founder of MAD BROS SG** has frequently met with Swedish company Electrolux. After the initial meeting, the cooperation has already resulted in several projects and hands-on exchange of experiences, including a Swedish ramen dish that will soon be on MAD BROS menu.

**Mr Chia Wei Liat, Owner of InHome, a Singapore SME partnering with Swedish pest control company Anticimex, says** “We have seen business becoming increasingly

challenging during 2020. Over the past months, we have accelerated our efforts to become more digitalized, finding more of our customers online. With the SESG initiative, we have seen how both big and small companies face the same challenges, and that we can help each other to build a stronger business community in Singapore.”

The SESG Initiative is a long term partner program. Apart from the island-wide advertising campaign and Fika4Good, SwedCham is also working with a number of its member companies to support Workforce Singapore’s SGUnited Mid-Careers Pathways Programme - Company Attachment, making even more jobs and apprenticeships available for Singaporeans during the recovery phase.

**Mrs Kee Ai Nah, Executive Director of Lifestyle & Consumer, Enterprise Singapore, says,** “COVID-19 has underscored the importance of partnerships to address some of the challenges that businesses have encountered. Despite differences in organisational structure and business scale, micro SMEs and corporates may have complementary values that could be mutually beneficial. Most micro SMEs are nimble and could commit to partnerships with Swedish corporates, and facilitate knowledge exchange and capability building, such as in digitalisation. Enterprise Singapore welcomes this initiative and we encourage more enterprises to find common grounds on which to build valuable partnerships.”

**Read more about the SESG Initiative at: [www.sesg.info](http://www.sesg.info).**

**The Singaporean SMEs in the initiative are:**

Aaria Creations - Serangoon Road, Dunlop Street Junction  
Ashes Burnnit - Alexandra Village Food Centre  
Coffee Break - Hong Lim Food Centre  
Curious Thoughts Academy - Waterloo Centre  
InHome - Ang Mo Kio Ave 6  
Leong Hainanese Chicken Rice - Shunfu Road Market and Food Centre  
MAD BROS SG - Tanjong Pagar Plaza  
Orient Jewellers Singapore - Toa Payoh Central  
SLH Fresh Fruits - Clementi West Street  
The Headless Baker - Ghim Moh Road Market and Food Centre  
Unique Vintage Watches - Smith Street  
Vega Tailoring & Dressmaking - Bukit Timah Plaza

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**The initiative is also sponsored by the following companies:**

JCDecaux  
Moove Media  
Clear Channel  
Amanaciq  
Verizon Media, Copenhagen  
Allison+Partners, Singapore

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**Download information about the initiative, including films and images from the advertising campaign:**

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sgDQ19Bybm45jCFI95f5wx0cY2b75TPS>

About SwedCham SG

The Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Singapore, SwedCham, is a non-profit, non-governmental membership-based organisation representing Swedish businesses in Singapore. SwedCham serves a broad and diverse network of member companies, ranging from large multinational corporations to SMEs and start-ups from many different industries. Through its activities, SwedCham provides a dynamic and innovative platform for knowledge-sharing, business development and networking.

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About Forsman & Bodenfors

Forsman & Bodenfors is a global creative collective, founded in Sweden in 1986. It has been present in Singapore since 2018. Our truly collaborative way of working has over the years unlocked continuous creative excellence and built brands that genuinely connect with people. The agency has launched many successful campaigns throughout the years, “The Epic Split” with Jean Claude Van Damme for Volvo Trucks, “The Marriage Market Takeover” for SKII and “Boxes” for Uber to mention a few. To know more, visit <https://forsman.co>.