### SPECIAL REPORT

# Sales stars light up the sector

Top performers in the 48th Distinguished Salesperson Award receive tributes and tell their stories of success in the industry

t gives me great pleasure to extend my warmest congratulations to the Sales and Marketing Executives Club (SME Club) under The Hong Kong Management Association (HKMA) for successfully organising the 48th Distinguished Salesperson Award (DSA) programme.

For almost half a century, the SME Club has worked tirelessly to enhance the standard of professional services of local salespersons. The award has established itself as an important annual event in the industry, bringing public recognition to outstanding sales personnel and further promoting the standard of excellence in sales and marketing.

The professional salesmanship and brilliant services offered by the awardees are much applauded. The HKSAR government has been supporting the development of the industry, and has endeavoured to provide adequate and timely support to the sector. For example, the Retail Technology Adoption Assistance Scheme for Manpower Demand Management was launched in December 2014 to support the retail industry in adopting technologies to enhance their productivity, manage manpower demands and improve work conditions.

The theme of this year's DSA is "Cultivating for Success". I believe sales personnel from different fields will continue to strive for excellence in areas including internal quality, sales and marketing, and bring a "winwin" situation for customers and

Last but not least, I would like to commend all the recipients of the 48th DSA and wish them every success in their future endeavours.

The Hon Gregory So, GBS JP Secretary for Commerce and **Economic Develonment** 



international trade have

activities. A drop in tourist

retail sales have contracted

impeded Hong Kong's business

arrivals has been recorded and

visibly. The fact that customers

about their spending seemingly

spells bad news to all businesses

on the right track, salespersons

At times, however, when the

becomes difficult to secure a

foothold in the industry, one

may easily lose faith in their

moments of challenge that

Nevertheless, it is during

enthusiasm can be tested, and

successful salespersons can be

identified. Adverse experiences

are in fact blessings in disguise,

because they help cultivate true

salesmanship that is applicable

Over the 48 years since its

trusted accolade among sales

attributed to our respected panel

committee members of the SME

Club. Their insightful judgments

and devotion to sales excellence

to all sales situations.

establishment, the DSA

elites. Such recognition is

of judges, as well as the

profession.

retail performance and it

can often work with enthusiasm.

business climate does not favour

When business is smooth and

have become more cautious

in the market, and their

salespersons in particular.



hile some may think that distinguished salespersons must be endowed with a standardised "sales personality", effective selling is in fact a skill that needs to be developed and cultivated.

Against the backdrop of massive digitalisation and the exponential growth of social media, customers receive an overwhelming amount of information from numerous sources. They have become more knowledgeable and have a wider range of options than ever.

Because of this, the sales function has become an increasingly sophisticated profession. It requires ongoing training and education, which not only assist aspiring salespersons in developing and strengthening the skills they need to excel, but also help create additional value to customers. It is a forwardlooking atmosphere in which many companies are making substantial investments.

I wish to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the award programme has developed into a winners for their remarkable performance. Undoubtedly, they are the rising stars of the industry. It is my sincere hope that our awardees will continue to achieve new heights for their companies, in their careers and the sales industry as a whole.



A special congratulation goes to each of the recipients of the DSA and Outstanding Young Salesperson Award (OYSA). Through their professionalism, determination and commitment to excellence, each one has shown the qualities of a winner.

Winning in today's competitive marketplace requires global sophistication. This ceremony honours those who recognise that their value to the marketplace is enhanced by striving to consistently perform at the high standards that are recognised and applauded around the world.

Each of the awardees has learned "Cultivating for Success", to be guided by their inner conscience in sales and marketing in order to thrive. Each awardee has proven their mettle in sales and marketing basic fundamentals, including relationship building, customercentric service, high ethical standards and by having a passion for professionalism.

I encourage each of the award recipients to continue their focus on fundamentals, balancing their business decision making with sound economic and ethical business practices and a pledge to lifelong learning.

Thank you to the HKMA and the SME Club for contributing to



SMEI's goal for a better standard of living for all through better selling.

Willis Turner, CAE CME CSE President and CEO

n behalf of the SME Club of the HKMA, I would like to congratulate all the awardees for their outstanding achievements.

In the past 48 years, the DSA has gained a reputation of being the "Oscars" in the sales industry. I am glad to see that there are more and more overseas companies joining the DSA, which shows that its influence is no longer on Hong Kong and the region only.

I would like to express my heartiest gratitude to our guest of honour, The Hon Gregory So Kam-leung, for officiating the ceremony. I wish to thank the panel of judges and all members of the organising committee for committing their valuable time to this meaningful event. My thanks also go to Himothy Liu, chairman of the 48th DSA organising committee, and his able team. Without their devoted support, the DSA would not stand where it is today.



salesperson is able to find the key to success in this bustling business world.

**Himothy Liu** 

I believe the 184 DSA and 35 OYSA winners this year have made another significant step towards success. The 219 nominations from 72 companies cover a wide array of industries and sectors in Hong Kong, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to all participating companies for their dedication in nurturing these outstanding salespersons and raising the standard of excellence across industries in Hong Kong.

We are honoured to have had The Hon Gregory So Kam-leung as our guest of honour at the ceremony. I am also delighted to have had Dr Ricky Szeto, executive director of Hung Fook Tong, to conduct the presentation skills seminar and share his invaluable experience with all nominees.

Last but not least, may I express my deepest thanks to all members of the organising committee for their enthusiasm. dedication and commitment in striving for the best.

Himothy Liu Chairman 48th DSA Programme Organising Committee



Midland Holdings. Finally, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to all the award winners. I am sure their astounding performance shall inspire their peers and lead them to greater success.

t is my great honour to be the

chairman of the 48th DSA

organising committee. This

year, the organising committee

has enriched the award with the

theme "Cultivating for Success"

A prominent salesperson has to

keep abreast of the rapidly

environment and adapt their

demand. Together with a true

knowledge to meet new market

caring heart and high standard of

ethical conduct, a distinguished

changing economic

Allen Leung Chairman SME Club

enry Ford said, "You can do anything if you have enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is the yeast that makes your hopes rise to the stars."

To people from various industries, 2016 represents a challenging year. The unsteady external environment and the weakened demand of

My wholehearted congratulations go to the winners of this year's award for their splendid achievements. I wish them the passion and integrity it takes to have a prosperous career, and to be able to inspire the next generation of sales professionals. International (SMEI) and all of

Alfred WK Chan, BBS Chairman

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DI VICIOI LEE, PROA Executive Director HKMA

n behalf of the board of directors of Sales & Marketing Executives our members, I extend sincere congratulations to the SME Club on a successful 48th DSA presentation ceremony.

# Equalling excellence

atching their 2015 success with 10 winners in the this year's DSA programme, Prudential believes its award recipients reflect the company's commitment to groom professionals with a mindset for service excellence and a desire to go the extra mile.

From Prudential Hong Kong, senior unit manager Ray Cheng Kin-ho, for example, tries to improve by building long-lasting relationships with customers based on trust, integrity, sincerity and professionalism.

"Every day I meet clients that have different needs," he said. "This gives me the opportunity to help customers make the best

decisions, which makes my work rewarding and interesting."

Always keen to improve her professional skills, regional manager Fion Li Kwan-yee said joining the DSA programme enabled her to better understand her strengths and identify areas where she should further improve. "As a dedicated professional, I feel it is important to continually improve through continuous education," she said.

Regional manager Phoebe Peng Yinqiu believes that great salespeople need to relate to their clients. By demonstrating empathy and assurance, she is able to provide customer-centric advice and solutions.



Prudential's 10 winners (above, from left) Kathy Siu, Fion Li, Crystal Yang, Roy Cheng, Donald Chu; (below, from left) Brian Cheng, Katherine Lam, Phoebe Peng, Amen Chak and Dicky Chan. Photos: Prudential



She added that she picked up career-enhancing insight while participating in this year's DSA. From the conversations I had with top sales people from other industries, my understanding of the role of sales has been extended enormously.

Branch manager Amen Chak Ka-hang once helped a family facing difficulties by introducing them to a social worker while helping them to solve their financial problems. The recipient of an OYSA, he said the DSA programme taught him even more ways to tackle challenging situations.

For unit manager and fellow OYSA awardee Dicky Chan Hung-fei, who has been with Prudential for three years, being a distinguished salesperson not only involves selling products but providing professional opinions and options for clients according to their needs.

"Being a salesman is challenging, but exciting, because you have the opportunity to continually improve and I learn new things every day," he said.

From Prudential General Insurance Hong Kong, the five DSA recipients comprised senior unit managers Donald Chu Muichung and Crystal Yang Bing; unit manager Brian Cheng Chiwing; branch manager Katherine Lam Yin; and regional manager Kathy Siu Cheuk-ka, who has been with the company for 10

The quintet unanimously agreed that the programme helped them improve their sales skills and develop their careers, while the support they received from the Prudential training team-made up of previous DSA participants who shared their experiences and skills - was vital in helping them prepare for the programme.

# 100 years of quality customer services make American Express the brand to trust

#### **Card Service Company wins the Distinguished** Salesperson Award for seven years in a row



American Express winners of this year's Distinguished Salesperson Award include Kevin Wong (far left), Jacky Fung (middle) from Global Corporate Payments: Joe Kwan (second from left), Hugo Yan (far right) from Global Network and International Card Services; accompanied by Susanna Lee, Vice President and General Manager, Card Services, Hong Kong & Taiwan (center left), Stephen Pendergast, Vice President and General Manager, Global Corporate Payments, Hong Kong & Taiwan, (center right), and Susanna Hui, Head of Training, Acquisition and Partnerships (second from right).

American Express, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary in Hong Kong, has swept the Distinguished Salesperson Award (DSA) for seven consecutive years as its commitment to delivering premium customer experience continues to gain trust and recognition from elite customers and business leaders.

The DSA is a prestigious program organised by the Hong Kong Management Association. With 48 years of history, it is globally recognised by sales professional as the standard of excellence in sales

experience, the American Express brand is built on the strength of its customer service, which has won over the heart of the customers around the world throughout the years.

Such a strong commitment to providing quality customer service translates to constant innovations in providing the best premium products to meet the changing needs of the affluent populations across the world, a profound understanding of these affluent customers, and a strong reputation that is associated with security, trust, and outstanding customer service.

Four sales executives from American Express have won the DSA awards this year. Among them, Hugo Yan and Joe Kwan, both account managers of Premium Products. Acquisition and Partnerships. Global Network and International Card Services, said

it is a privilege to be able to listen, understand, and meet the needs of the customers.

Yan recalled an incident where he came up with a creative solution for a bride-to-be. With endless natience' he explained to her how to use the American Express Card to settle her wedding expenses in order to entitle the newly-wed couple a pair of return tickets for their honey moon.

"I still recall the overjoyed look on her face when she realized how we could make her wedding amazing. She even invited me to her wedding as Boasting 166 years of customer service a friend. I believe all these happened because of our sincerity and willingness to invest time in our relationship with our clients.'

The other two winners, Jacky Fung and Kevin Wong, are both business development managers under Global Corporate Payments. They said American Express is more than a just a company card - it is an invaluable tool in managing the corporate clients' cash flow management. Fung is responsible for middle market acquisition, while Wong is working with the centralised acquisition team.

"Sales professionals and clients are in a partnership in achieving an all-win solution," said Wong. "Consultancy is the most effective way of making inroads in sales. One should research into the company's current situation, its needs and its aspirations before suggesting a holistic solution."

Susanna Lee, Vice President & General Manager, Card Services, Hong Kong & Taiwan, said the outstanding quality of American Express' customer service is the key to the long-standing success of the

"Outstanding service has always been a critical part of our success, and it's even more important to our customers during uncertain times, when customers are looking for companies they can rely

"We have always tried to stand out from the crowd as a company that is honest and transparent in all its dealings with customers. We also want to be known as the company that will go the extra mile to help you, and so we remain dedicated to providing outstanding service."

American Express has been named Best Employer in Hong Kong by Aon-Hewitt for five consecutive times, Best Company for Women by Aon Hewitt, Best Employer for Women by the AmCham Women of Influence, and Inbound Contact Centre Award by the Hong Kong Call Centre Association for four consecutive years.

American Express has operations in more than 130 countries and regions, and is the world's single largest card issuer with more than 117 million cards in force, and worldwide billed business of more than

#### SPECIAL REPORT

### **Powering sales** staff to surpass expectations

ike many dedicated professionals, Chong Laitan, a sales representative at The Hong Kong and China Gas Company (Towngas), believes genuine customer engagement is the key to providing outstanding service.

Chong, who has been with Towngas for three years, said that, in addition to being hard working and responsible, a distinguished salesperson should be compassionate and show empathy.

"Being able to look at the world through somebody else's eyes allows you to be more aligned to customer needs, and in a better position to provide them with high-quality service," Chong said.



#### I am more aware than ever of the need to listen to the customer

STEPHEN YUEN, SENIOR SALES

By participating in the DSA programme, Chong said she learned new ways to build good relationships with customers in a short time.

"Each customer interaction I have usually takes place over a few minutes, so it is important to be able to carefully listen to customers, understand what it is they need, and provide them with quality service."

Fellow sales representative Winnie Chu Wai-yee has been with Towngas for four years and shares a similar view.

"Participating in the DSA programmé boosted my confidence, which strengthened my communication with

Putting her communication skills to good use, Chu explained how she was able to help a customer who was looking after an elderly relative replace a water heater. Under normal circumstances, a technician carries out checks before a contractor provides the replacement service.

"I managed to arrange for the technician and contractor to make a home visit on the same day, which significantly sped up the replacement process," said Chu, who received a personal thank you letter from the satisfied customer.

Having worked for Towngas for 32 years, sales representative Toby Lam Wing-fai takes pride in helping customers make the choices most suited to them. While preparing for the DSA programme, he relied on the workplace training he received and the experience he had built up over the years.

"I was able to learn more about the function of the products we offer and also made new friendships with colleagues," he said.

Lam explained that he once made a video call to a customer outside normal working hours to check the model number of a water heater that needed replacing. "The customer was surprised and grateful that the heater was replaced quickly."

Similarly dedicated, senior sales representative Stephen Yuen Kin-wai once worked with colleagues in cold weather during the lead up to the Lunar New Year holidays to replace a water heater for a mother with a

Because customers need different solutions, Yuen considers it vital to constantly enhance his product and service knowledge - a concept that was reinforced by his participation in the DSA. "I am more aware than ever of the need to listen to the customer and serve them with a positive attitude," he said.

## Committing to high-quality service



Jacko Wong says the DSA inspires individuals. Photo: Convey Advertising

sone of Hong Kong's leading outdoor media companies with more than 30 years of experience in the industry, Convey Advertising is accustomed to setting the bar high - and understands the important contribution that distinguished service makes to the Hong Kong economy.

"As a service economy, Hong Kong has nurtured a worldwide reputation for outstanding service in many different sectors ranging from tourism, hospitality and food and beverage to finance and property leasing," said Jacko Wong, chief operations officer at Convey Advertising, which was one of the main sponsors of the 48th HKMA DSA programme.

"Because of Hong Kong's reputation for distinguished service, tourists return to shop and business people come back to do more business," Wong

As a company which has built their colleagues. extensive long-term relationships with businesses operating in many sectors, Convey Advertising believes it is important to support and

"We are very happy to be the main sponsor of the DSA programme, because it highlights the value of distinguished service and aligns closely with our own commitment to delivering

promote high-quality service

awareness in Hong Kong and

explained. Wong said the DSA does more than recognise the outstanding achievements of winners, because it inspires individuals that are new to the sales profession.

quality customer service," Wong

He added that the awards programme dispels the longheld myth that sales is a profession in which individuals are expected to compete with

"The DSA programme shows clearly that there are many skills needed to becoming a distinguished salesperson, which requires collaboration and teamwork with co-workers, team leaders and management," he said.

Wong believes the DSA programme is an excellent platform for showcasing the route and skills required to become a both successful sales professional and an inspiration

"We saw first-class examples of how this year's winners are excellent all-round sales personnel," he pointed out.

"Because of the awards programme, these winners will become motivation and skills coaches in their companies, providing encouragement and inspiration for newcomers to the sales profession."

## Banking on best sales practice

he four DSA recipients from HSBC Commercial Banking said that taking part in the programme provided an opportunity for them to show the judges their professionalism, as well as their approach to challenging situations and the various ways they earn customer recognition through providing quality customer services.

Jonathan Chao Tsun-wang, vice president, corporate, attributed his knowledge and experience to the various learning opportunities provided by HSBC within the workplace.

The recipient of an Outstanding Young Salesperson Award (OYSA), Chao added that while the bank's product offerings are diverse and abundant, his definition of a distinguished salesperson is someone who demonstrates an understanding of customer needs and provides the products to match those needs.

"By taking part in the DSA programme, I improved my sales

customer concerns effectively,' Chao said

Having learned the value of building strong relationships with customers, Jessica Wu Jianying, international relationship manager, believes salespeople need to be problem solvers who understand customer problems and find the most suitable solutions for them.

Wu, who has worked for HSBC for four years, said the DSA programme reinforced the importance of keeping up to date with market information, as well as maintaining an international vision and understanding of regulations. This is crucial for being able to quickly respond to changes in the market and seizing business opportunities.

Shirley Lai Sze-nga, vice president, corporate and OYSA recipient, said the awards programme strengthened her

belief that meeting customer needs is key to every successful sales process

"As relationship managers, we should be well-rounded, using our product knowledge and insight to enable us to satisfy the different needs from customers," Lai said.

Describing the DSA programme as a memorable and valuable experience, Yu Yathang, international relationship

manager, said the participants from HSBC were encouraged by senior managers to be themselves.

"Rather than holding intensive training sessions to mould us into a certain type of salesperson, we worked as a team with our senior management and fellow colleagues to find ways to bring out our own unique personalities," Yu said.



### Distinguishing peak performance

he defining characteristics of a distinguished salesperson, according to Jovy Lo Chun-man, a sales representative with PCCW Media - Now TV, should include being knowledgeable, positive and responsible.

The DSA recipient said he enjoys his work because it enables him to meet people from all walks of life. He also appreciates the intensive

support provided by PCCW, which helped him to strengthen his presentation skills in the DSA.

Fellow awardee and unit manager Eric Liu Wai-lun shared a similar view. "The sales industry is a profession where I can grow, unleash my talent and gain great satisfaction," said Liu, who also believes the intensive preparation for the DSA has given him the confidence to overcome future challenges.

Senior sales representative Neway Lau Wai said she enjoys the satisfaction of identifying the most suitable services for customers and providing them with advice that wins their trust and appreciation.

While preparing for the DSA, Lau said she attended numerous intensive in-house drilling sessions where she acquired useful presentation skills.

Travis Tang Chi-hang, sales

representative and OYSA recipient, believes that being a salesperson is challenging and only salespeople who serve with passion and integrity can build long-term relationships with customers.

"From the rigorous in-house training sessions I attended ... I acquired a lot of useful sales skills and gained inspiration on how to maintain a positive attitude," he explained.

# Delivering customer service to the letter

or Tam Man-chau, postmaster at the Tsim Sha Tsui Post Office, taking part in the 48th DSA programme was one of the highlights of his 25year career with Hongkong Post.

"Taking part in the DSA programme has motivated me even more to continuously look for ways to improve in my work," he said.

Tam considers a salesperson to be distinguished if he or she has good product knowledge and a clear understanding of the diverse needs of customers.

Thanks to his extensive product knowledge, coupled with his sharp eye and attention to detail, Tam once prevented a birthday gift from being posted to England instead of Canada.

"I noticed that the postcode on a Speedpost package containing a birthday gift that was being sent by an elderly lady to her grandson didn't match the address in Canada," recalled Tam, who was able to help the lady find the correct postcode.

"The customer appreciated the attentive service, and we were pleased to help ensure her grandson received his birthday gift on time."

During the lead-up to the DSA, Tam was mentored by three experienced Hongkong Post colleagues. They shared ideas and experiences, and devised a series of exercises as preparation for the judging.

During these sessions,
Hongkong Post managerial
officers played the role of the
DSA adjudicating panel,
allowing Tam to familiarise
himself with the process.

"Being a participant in the DSA programme has given me new ways to maintain a consistently high level of performance in my work and ensure I foster sales opportunities and deliver customer satisfaction." he said.



# Seeing a 360-degree customer view

The PCCW Media - Now TV awardees (from left) Jovy Lo, Eric Liu, Neway Lau and Travis Tang. Photos: PCCW



hile there are many theories about what defines a distinguished salesperson, OYSA winner Mika Ho Sze-nga, a retail sales associate at Ngong Ping 360, believes respect, patience and thoughtfulness are undoubtedly among the key attributes.

Using her core strengths,
Ho focuses on understanding
customer needs. "I always try to
serve our customers in a way that
makes them feel they have
received a memorable shopping
experience," she said.

Always prepared to help those who need extra assistance, Ho recalled helping a customer with a hearing impairment who wanted to buy souvenirs by communicating with him in writing. "He really appreciated my patience and professional attitude and wrote me a thank you message, which I treasure."

As she enjoys helping customers from all over the world, Ho also recalled meeting a Bruce Lee fan from California, and recommending that he visit the movie-themed "Stage 360" entertainment area, where he could watch films of his hero in action. "We had a good chat about martial arts," Ho said.

As part of her commitment to improving her customer service skills and product knowledge, Ho attended various in-house training sessions to prepare for the DSA. "I was able to exchange many effective selling ideas and tips with my colleagues during skills briefings and role-play sessions," she said.

She added that taking part in the DSA programme gave her the opportunity to share stories and experiences with other participants, and that her preparation paid off.

"It was challenging to take part in the DSA programme but, by presenting my sales ideas in a organised way, I was able to remain confident in front of the judges," she said.

## A complete sales package

B eing judged by a group of high-profile professionals spanning various industry sectors allowed Marco Chau Chun-wai, account manager at UPS Parcel Delivery Service, the opportunity to fine-tune his sales skills and product knowledge.

When preparing for the DSA

programme, Chau said he started by brainstorming the information he wanted to present. Later, during meetings with teammates and his training manager, he revised the material to make it more succinct.

"Finally we settled on a version which I rehearsed and



presented in front of our department head," he said.

As part of his preparation, Chau also researched historical company data in case the judges asked him specific questions about logistics.

Account manager Chris Wong Ho-hin, who achieved 150 per cent of his sales plan within three months of joining UPS four years ago, said the programme has improved his presentation skills.

"I have learned to think more broadly and deeply about selling a product and, at the same time, how to present it in an effective way," Wong said.

He added that his awareness of the importance of listening to customer questions has increased, which directly benefits his daily interactions.

"Being a distinguished salesperson, I always set a high target and push myself to achieve even more than 100 per cent of my sales plan," he said.



# Distinguished A ward Programme

















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Yu Yat Heng







Chu Pul Shan Annie





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Lam Slu Ching





#### PANEL OF JUDGES























Dr Jack Yeung Deputy Crammon Finderston of Hong Kong Industries

















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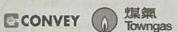
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