HP fires training salvo to boost SOE bid

The HP-led group is confident training programmes will add its chances

By WINSTON CHAI

Within two months to go before the government issues its largest IT tender to date, computer giant Hewlett-Packard is pulling out all the stops to bolster its hopes of clinching the mammoth deal.

On top of supplying hardware, software and services, the successful bidder will be required to harmonise computer systems across the entire public service—a key condition insisted on by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) and fulfilled the Standard ICT Operating Environment (SoE).

HP’s latest salvo comes in the form of specially tailored training programmes to familiarise some 160,000 civil servants with the SOE. HP is overwhelming the “N-gops” team, one of the four consortiums vying for the tender worth some $3 billion over an eight-year period.

The others are One Team, led by NCS and IBM; One Meridian, chaired by EDS International; and a group headed by NMC Solutions Asia-Pacific. HP has already signed an exclusive partnership with the Singapore Management University (SMU) and the Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) to offer courses to both government officials as well as consultants who are involved in the SOE initiative.

“Training will take centre stage rather than be an afterthought. We’re talking about changing mindset of people and developing a framework and roadmap that will help transition into the SOE,” said Tan Lee Chew, HP’s managing director for South-east Asia.

“This is different from what you get the bid then think about training. We are looking at it upfront. The training will help make the bid successful,” added Choo Yew Meng, director of NYP’s school of electronic engineering.

Under HP’s proposed training regime, the two schools will cater to different aspects of SOE-related education. SMU will offer programmes that are geared towards government officials and those courses will not dwell on the nuts and bolts of the technologies used in the massive exercise.

Instead, SMU will provide the public sector’s top brass with the know-how to develop executive education. SMU will offer advisory services to assist members of SOE, a second contract for companies to develop technology platform, focusing on areas like understanding the changes to their departments’ business processes, along with the impact on human resources and outcomes, according to Annie Koh, dean of the university’s office of executive education.

“The others will think it’s just technical, but that’s really just part of the whole picture. The alignment of business and IT is critical,” she stressed.

NYP on the other hand, will undertake the more technical aspects of SOE training. Specialised technology training will help certify technology professionals from the consortium and the government in the area of ITSM (IT Service Management) a set of industry best practices for delivering technology services as an organisation.

The polytechnic will also offer courses on the various IT solutions used such as security, messaging and collaboration technologies, network management and desktop management. All staff working on the SOE from the HP-led team will undergo a familiarisation readiness training at NYP. In addition, there are tailored programmes to economic aspects to their new technology tools.

All the courses at SMU and NYP will be delivered through a combination of conventional classroom learning, seminars as well as Internet-based modules, said HP’s Ms Tan. For example, the technology initiatives to win the SOE contract, HP’s Ms Tan said the partnership with SMU and NYP will ensure that they could potentially market their training insights to other governments in houses around the region.

The addition of the two schools to the N-gops team comes barely a week after IDA finally put pen to paper on the detailed requirements at the end this year.

“I think this will differentiate the consortium (N-gops) from everyone else. You will be wondering why the other consortiums haven’t thought about IT education so far,” Ms Tan said, adding that they hoped the group could help extend the training effort to the rest of Asia.

SMU’s top brass will be available through a correspondence with the Singapore e-Filing Authority. IDA’s upcoming tender is split into two phases and could affect 160,000 users upon full implementation. The first phase involves 60,000 PCs in most government buildings while the remainder is incorporated in a second contract for civil servants belonging to the ministry and education and local schools. Benchmarked departments are said to have bid from this effort.

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