Index to measure service standards soon

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MEASURING exactly how good — or bad — service standards are in Singapore could soon be easier, if plans to set up a service standards index take off.

The newly-launched Institute of Service Excellence@SMU (ISES) hopes to roll out its Singapore Customer Satisfaction Index by next year — the first of its kind in Singapore.

“This institute and its initiative is strategic,” said Associate Professor Annie Koh, SMU’s dean of the Lee Kong Chian School of Business yesterday. “Two years from now, there will be the integrated resorts. Increasingly, our bread and butter is coming from service excellence, so if we don’t do well in service, we are going to find that we can’t compete.”

Modelled after similar institutes in America, ISES will measure customer satisfaction levels and compile the findings into a report, which it hopes to release at least twice a year.

The institute will be housed in the Singapore Management University (SMU), which partnered the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) to set it up.

“It will give us an objective and rigorous report card of our efforts every year,” said Transport Minister Raymond Lim, speaking at the launch.

The index, he said, was just one of the three objectives of the institute, which also aims to bring the Go-the-Extra-Mile-for-Service (GEMS) movement to business decision makers within companies, beyond frontline service staff.

“A recent GEMS survey showed that only 52 per cent of business decision makers were motivated by our outreach efforts to raise service standards,” he said.

This was “significantly lower” compared with the 65 per cent of service staff and 74 per cent of the general population who were surveyed, he added.

“We need to focus on engaging these senior executives, who can potentially have the biggest impact on service standards.”

To bring business leaders together, ISES plans to hold forums and conferences about service excellence, as well as organise service workshops to train senior executives.

Drawing from researchers from SMU as well other local and foreign universities, the institute will also conduct research in the areas of customer relationship management, service marketing, and brand leadership and value, amongst others.

“We want to document examples and case studies that link service excellence to the bottom line,” said Assoc Prof Koh.

“It’s going beyond academic research.

The WDA has set aside $5 million to fund the institute’s research and programmes, to be dispensed in phases over the next three years.