Staff diversity gives services companies competitive edge

BY GRACE NG
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SWISS bank UBS has no doubt about the competitive benefits that a diverse workforce can bring to its business.

Promoting diversity of races, gender and age group makes “plain good business sense for a commercial entity in the service industry like UBS”, said Mr Gerald Chan, the bank’s country head in Singapore.

“By ensuring meritocracy and equal opportunity, and hiring the best people from diverse backgrounds, we can compete at the highest level,” he said.

UBS was impressed with Singapore’s achievement in the area of diversity and held its annual Asia Pacific Diversity Conference at its local office last Friday.

The Republic, with its melting-pot ethnic culture and meritocratic system, is an apt choice as a venue for an event that has always been held in Hong Kong, according to Mr Rory Tapner, the chairman and chief executive of UBS in the Asia-Pacific.

“Singapore’s model of creating a diverse culture is one that we want to build at UBS,” he said.

The conference on staff diversity gave a platform for more than 100 senior executives and human resources executives from several organisations to exchange ideas on the theme, Building The Leadership Pipeline In Asia.

The keynote speaker at the conference, Mrs Lim Hwee Hua, Senior Minister of State for Finance and Transport, noted that there was still room to improve gender diversity in the workforce.

Mrs Lim urged organisations and key decision makers to create a working environment for talented women leaders that was “open and inclusive”.

The conference on staff diversity followed a two-day Career Comeback programme held last Thursday and Friday for professionals re-entering the workforce after several years of absence.

Forty participants were selected from a pool of 170 for the programme, the first of its kind in Singapore.

Only 20 per cent of the participants were male.

The programme, which was organised jointly with the Singapore Management University, was part of UBS’ efforts to help re-equip people with skills that would allow them to re-enter the workforce.