Learning to be a better boss

TO BE out of school for 27 years is far too long, even for the chief executive of a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) that employs 250 workers.

That was why Mrs Anne Joseph, who is in her mid-40s, signed up for a management programme at Singapore Management University (SMU) last year.

She runs Rutledge Group of Companies, which provides safety services at oil and gas drilling sites. Although the company was doing well at the time, she felt she could benefit from some formal instruction.

“There have been so many changes in the business world. Since I graduated from university in 1983, I’ve attended only some short courses and the last one was more than 10 years ago,” she said.

Lifelong learning for all workers, including those in senior management, was one of the recommendations laid out by the Economic Strategies Committee (ESC). Its chairman, Finance Minister Shanmugaratnam, had said on Monday that “every level, every profession, every skill can and must be upgraded”.

Mrs Joseph agrees. “This is a time of unrelenting globalisation. We need to have a culture of sustained innovation and this needs to start with the senior management,” she said.

Last July, she enrolled in a nine-week programme that aims to help SME leaders grow their businesses into multinational enterprises. The SME Leaders Advanced Management Programme is a customised course that SMU developed in partnership with government agency Spring Singapore.

Besides refreshing Mrs Joseph’s knowledge on how to run a business, it also taught her how to be a better boss. She has since made several changes to the way she works and says she is more productive now.

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Mr Ong Ye Kung, NTUC’s assistant secretary-general and member of the ESC sub-committee on fostering inclusive growth, agrees with her approach.

“Senior management plays a key role in setting the direction and leading companies towards achieving greater productivity,” he said.