SAS in tie-up with educational institutions

It aims to grow business analytics skill sets here

By VICTORIA HO

SAS, the largest independent vendor in the business intelligence market, has signed a partnership with four tertiary institutions in Singapore. This is expected to benefit some 2,000 students over the next few years.

The business analytics software vendor will provide its technologies and training resources to the schools, with the aim of growing business analytics skill sets in the country.

The four institutions are Singapore Management University, National University of Singapore Business School, Nanyang Polytechnic, and Republic Polytechnic.

Andrew Khaw, senior director of industry development group at the InfoComm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA), said business analytics has been selected as one of the technology focus areas by the government.

The global business intelligence and business analytics market is forecast to hit US$10.8 billion this year, he said, quoting Gartner statistics.

Business analytics is a fast-growing sector of technology that aims to present insight into raw data.

Mr Khaw said it is also becoming a crucial part of the business process, so that decision makers can make sense of the streams of information that are coming in, delivered by the business as well as partners and clients.

“CIOs used to make do with the lack of market insight. Today, they are instead faced with having to make better sense of a tremendous amount of information,” he said.

Yet, despite the growing demand for business analytics, there is apparently a shortage of skilled personnel in the region.

Bill Lee, SAS Singapore’s managing director, said he has trouble hiring suitable technical experts himself.

While Singapore touts a strong educational foundation in mathematics, finding skilled statisticians is a challenge for the business analytics sector, he said.

Part of the collaboration will see SAS set up a lab within the Singapore Management University for students and faculty, offering access to SAS specialists and its technologies. The facility will also provide training and internships.

He added that the four schools signed are part of the first phase of collaboration with educational institutions, and that there are plans to bring onboard Temasek Polytechnic and Nanyang Technological University in the next phase.

Mr Khaw said industry tie-ups are a building block to ensuring a thriving business analytics sector, both in the provision of services as well as the adoption within enterprises.

“Adopting business analytics needs justification for the investment at each of the stages of information gathering, making sense of the data and predicting outcomes,” he said.

Without sustained investment and the right manpower to uphold each project, companies could “quickly face disillusionment” with business analytics, Mr Khaw said.

Pointing to the IDA’s updated four-year manpower development roadmap (MDEV 2.0) that it rolled out in March this year, he said one of its key pillars is to develop new skill sets at the school level.

The IDA has also added business analytics-related roles and competency areas under the National InfoComm Competency Framework (NICF).

IDA and the Workforce Development Authority (WDA) had developed the framework to map out the skills and requirements of infocomm professionals. The aim is to help executives plan their skills upgrading in the industry.