THIS WEEK’S TOPIC:
Are businesses in Singapore better prepared now in the event of another Sars-like outbreak and, if so, why?
More broadly, what has changed to make Singapore better prepared for a wide-scale medical epidemic?

Being battle-ready for any epidemic

Dummett Jean-Michel
Chairman
Fuller-Tay-Ai

WE have learnt from past epidemics that communication is at the heart of managing an epidemic. With an increasingly connected world, it is critical to act quickly and make information available to the public.

Public health officials and businesses have new insights into effective communication strategies and best practices. The media and the public have also become more discerning and are able to assess the validity of information more quickly.

The Sars epidemic of 2003 was an important milestone in this area. After the Sars outbreak, there was a shift in mindset from focusing on the execution of safety measures to also considering the communication aspect. Businesses had to consider how to communicate with their employees and customers during an epidemic and how to manage potential panic.

The Sars outbreak also highlighted the importance of having contingency plans. Businesses had to identify potential risks and develop strategies to respond to them. This requires a clear understanding of the potential impact of an epidemic on business operations and the ability to respond quickly and effectively.

The Sars epidemic also underscored the importance of collaboration between different stakeholders. This includes government agencies, healthcare providers, and businesses. Effective communication with these stakeholders is essential in managing an epidemic.

In conclusion, the Sars epidemic was a significant learning curve for businesses. They have become more prepared and are better equipped to respond to any future outbreaks. The lessons from Sars are applicable to any epidemic, whether pandemics or pandemics.

Mark Micallef
Asia Vice-President, Asian Pacific
SINGAPORE is better prepared today for a wide-scale medical epidemic thanks to lessons learned over the past decade. One of the major reasons for this increased preparedness is the adoption of proactive corporate initiatives, which focus on employee work-life balance, the practice of moving work to the most productive location and ensuring business continuity in situations where people need to work together from multiple locations. As a result, businesses have learned to make the best use of their employees in the event of a similar emergency.

Christophe Duchatelier
CIO
Adesa Asia
APART from having better health and medical infrastructure such as screening facilities in place, one of the biggest takeaways from the Sars episode was business continuity. Businesses have taken steps and have invested in technology and most firms have strong business continuity planning. Hospitals are also better prepared, and the information that employees need to take necessary steps to trash their employees in the event of a similar emergency.

Mike Muller
President, Asia Pacific
Avaya
EFFICIENT real-time communication and collaboration are critical to business continuity, in conflict of crises such as the recent Sars epidemic. Avaya, which, since its inception, has been focused on furthering the mission of helping organisations communicate and collaborate as a means of increasing productivity. However, the biggest change is that organisations have become more aware and employees in the event of a similar emergency.

Carrie Foo
Vice-President for Asia Pacific
Brocade
Companies in Singapore and around the region have invested in technology and most firms have strong business continuity planning. Hospitals are also better prepared and have taken necessary steps to trash their employees in the event of a similar emergency.

Toby Fowstj
Managing Director
Singapore
Rob Wails (Singapore) Ltd
PEOPLE are the best assets to any business and in the event of an outbreak, every company should be trained in business continuity management. It is a key component of crisis management. In view of possible medical outbreaks, we have implemented contingency plans within our organisation to aid employers should such an outbreak occur and have sufficient hand sanitizers in place. This will allow us to keep our workforces healthy.

Stephen McNichol
Managing Director
Asia Pacific and Japan
Ademco Security Group
SINCE the outbreak of Sars in 2003, Singapore has been better able to plan, prepare and respond to each of these outbreaks as many more companies are aware of the importance of having a disaster management plan and are committed to investing time and money to prepare for such situations. In the event of an outbreak, every company should be trained in business continuity management. In view of possible medical outbreaks, we have implemented contingency plans within our organisation to aid employers should such an outbreak occur and have sufficient hand sanitizers in place. This will allow us to keep our workforces healthy.

Victoria Chia
Chief Executive Officer
Dairy Farm Singapore (Food)
The breakout of the deadly Sars disease in Singapore in 2003 was a wake-up call for most businesses to take quick action on the part of relevant authorities and operators alike to work together to contain the problem. It also prompted a whole new perception of business continuity planning, management, one which would have remained as SOP (standard operating procedure) for most businesses till today.

Raymond Ko
Group Managing Director
Advence Security Group
BUSINESSES in Singapore have most certainly grown since the days of Lord Lee’s, and with the growth of the business sector, Continuous Planning since the 90’s and fear has increased. As an industry, railways and businesses have increased investment in risk management, which has had a positive impact on the safety and disaster preparedness. We are holding awareness building awareness of continuous steps to mitigate risk that can happen. Additionally, shareholders are faced with a new question: How should businesses prepare for the next event?

Lim Soon Hock
Managing Director
Plan 9 IACO Pte Ltd
BUSINESSES in Singapore take the lead from the government in terms of preparations. Should the government unsure the situation and find need for a higher level of preparedness, compare with what is normal, commensurate with a Sars threat, we can expect businesses to respond swiftly and be ready to cope. It was the case in the fast outbreak. With that said, businesses need to be more prepared now, in the event of another Sars-like outbreak. We must respond very well to the test.

May Lee
Executive Director
ICT Academy
We are a progressive country and I believe Singapore’s healthcare system has taken the lessons from the Sars outbreak and there are now certain protocols to handle such an event in future. Healthcare has also been taught how critical it is for a rapid response in order to contain the situation. Additionally, medical technology has come a long way in the past 10 years, Singapore scientists have already found a way to generate antibodies that can neutralise and deactivate the Sars virus in the body, which is a potential miracle.

Lee Wee Sio
President
International SOS
Singapore scientists have already found a way to generate antibodies that can neutralise and deactivate the Sars virus in the body, which is a potential miracle. With regard to the business environment, I expect that most companies have not only been actively working on implementing a standard protocol to handle another Sars-like outbreak. In some cases, if they are ISC businesses such as retail and food & beverage, perhaps, however, their business community would probably have learnt from the past in the sense that they may be better able to identify such risks and respond more quickly and perhaps take necessary precautions such as the creation of a Child in the office to shut down operations if it comes to.

J Huinck
Managing Director
ICTI
Singapore businesses have been more ready for the next Sars-like outbreak. This is because the industry has become more ready since the Sars outbreak, thus taking the necessary precautions and or disseminated tasks across organisations to work together, help others in the community and ensure business continuity and public safety.

Stephnie Hui
CIO
Micallef