

Committing to Continued Excellence

In January last year, I wrote "Competence is Not a Constant", an article detailing the Society's renewed focus on a proactive and needs-based approach to continuing professional development ("CPD") backed by specific training goals and a structured training framework for the profession. After more than a year, it's time for an update.

Recap & Reflect

Our focussed CPD strategy was executed in the last financial year with the Society organizing 50 CPD programs in areas of law, practice management, general business and management and personal development (4.17 events per month). In comparison, a total of 56 CPD programs were organised (1.81 events per month) in the 31 months from January 2001 to July 2003. There is now more variety and choice for members. **Chart 1** provides a breakdown of the types of programs organised.

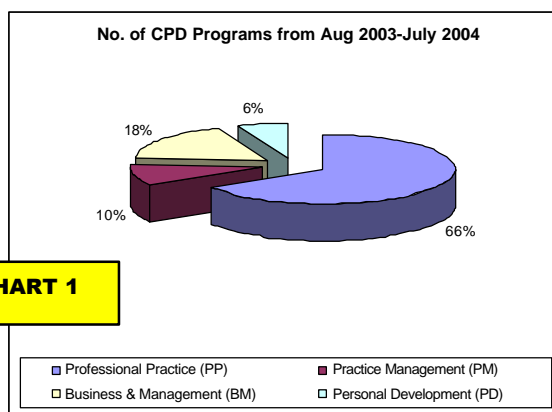


CHART 1

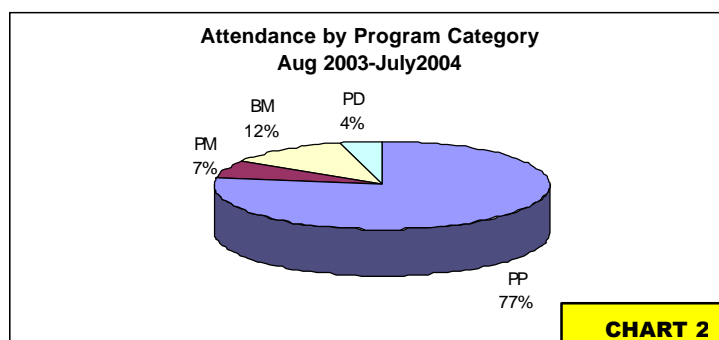


CHART 2

More than 2,200 attendees attended these 50 programs. The new strategy of including a broader menu of non-law CPD programs proved effective with $\frac{1}{4}$ of attendees registering and taking part in such programs – see **Chart 2**.

To ensure that we were staying relevant to a broad cross-section of the Bar, we monitored registrations, attendance and the profile of participants for every event and analysed the more than 850 feedback forms received. Then, we ploughed the lessons learnt back into refining our CPD planning and programming. Some interesting discoveries we made in the course of the year were that:

1. 25% of attendees were non-members - see Chart 3. This validated our cross-marketing efforts and collaborative approach with other professional bodies/ associations in developing inter-disciplinary programs, allowing both learning and networking to take place.

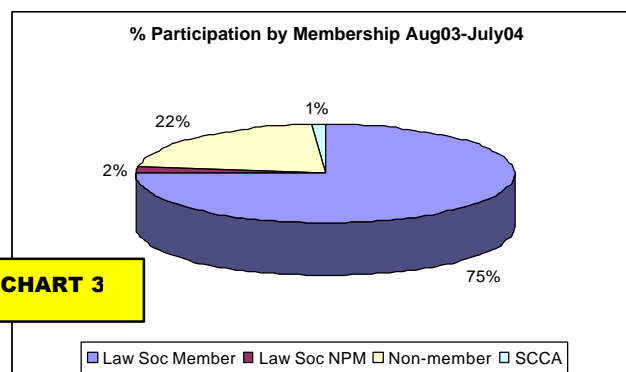
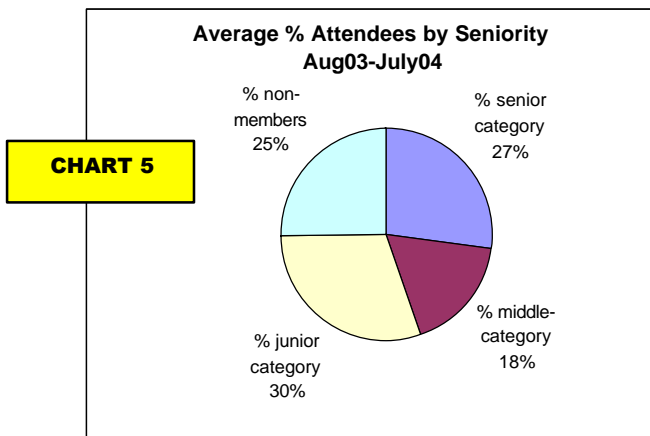
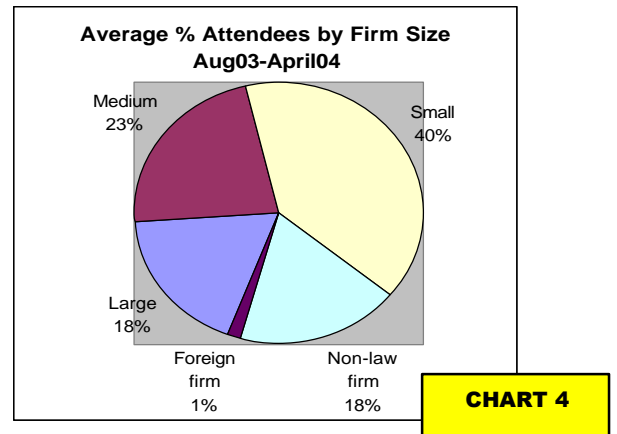


CHART 3

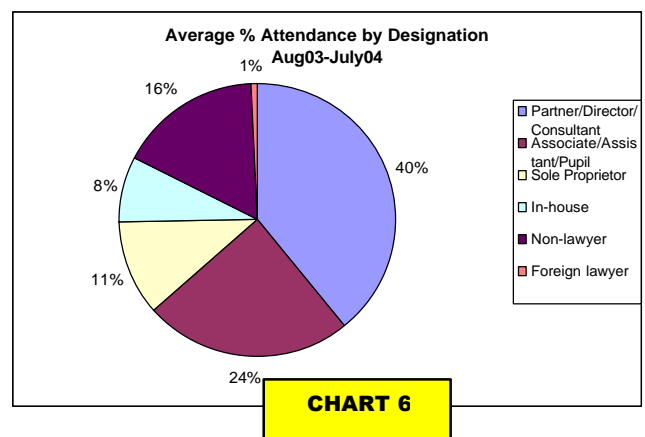
2. 40% of attendees came from small law practices – see **Chart 4**.



4. in terms of designation, the greatest representation came from law practice partners (both salaried and equity) directors, associate directors and consultants. See **Chart 6**.



3. in terms of seniority, the greatest representation came from junior category lawyers (30%) – see **Chart 5**.



In terms of the feedback we received, it was encouraging to note that on average participants rated us “good” to “excellent” in our event organisation (including how we fared in venue selection, event duration and ensuring value-for-money) and in their opinion of our programs (including whether the learning objectives were met and whether they would recommend our programmes to others). The performance of our chairpersons and speakers were on average also rated “good” to “excellent”.

Further, more than 40% of the feedback received contained requests that the Society continue to organise non-law related CPD programs. This is consistent with our CPD planning guideline of 60% law-related: 40% practice management, business & management and personal development programs.

In all, last year was a water-shed year for CPD, with a record number of programs being organised and a record number of attendees taking part in these programs. Further, the willingness of participants to share their views on how well we did and the ways we could improve convinced us to continue to engage our “customers” and raise the bar.

Reinvention Continued

We are grateful for the support of the members of the profession – including practising lawyers, in-house counsel and legal officers. This has encouraged the CPD Committee and Secretariat to undertake 3 major new challenges for FY 2004-2005:

1. to develop a comprehensive CPD portal with enhanced services for members;
2. to study, develop and implement the pilot phase of a minimum CPD scheme; and
3. to develop a integrated training management solution that would enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Society's CPD functions as well as deliver to members the enhanced functionality of the training portal for the purposes of the pilot phase of a minimum CPD scheme.

With this commitment, we set about to deliver the goods.

The New Face of CPD

Our new portal was launched 1st March 2005, boasting not just a new look and feel but more importantly enhanced features that include:

1. a comprehensive one-stop shop for all training-related resources and information from the Society;
2. an enhanced CPD Event Calendar that details all programs organised by or approved by the Law Society; and
3. a suite of online services (available from 1st April 2005) for members, non-members and training providers.

Currently, these new services are available without charge for members and their law practices. Anyone interested in finding out more should visit the CPD Portal at www.lawsociety.org.sg/CPD.

"vWHAT"?

The Society took a bold step forward in declaring the profession's commitment to continued standards of excellence in the public interest with the launch of its pilot phase of a minimum CPD scheme for the profession on 1 April 2005. Known as “voluntary Minimum Continuing Professional Development” or “**vMCPD**”, this phase involves no mandatory standards or reporting requirements to be met by members. However, one key distinction from the Society’s past CPD scheme is the setting of certain **vMCPD Best Practice Guidelines** drawn up by the CPD Committee which are benchmarked against the CPD best practices in jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia and Hong Kong. The Society's practitioner members are encouraged to strive to attain these Best Practices regardless of area of practice or seniority.

THE vMCPD BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

1. Each practitioner member should take personal responsibility for planning his/her own CPD using the *4-step training cycle of planning, acting, practising and evaluating*.
2. Each legal practitioner should attend **at least 10 hours of Approved vMCPD Programs per practice year (i.e. 1 April to 31 March)**.
3. **Approved vMCPD Programs** are formal CPD activities, such as seminars, lectures, workshops and discussion groups, which are either:
 - a. Organised by the Society and awarded CPD Hours for the purposes of vMCPD;
 - b. Organised by Approved Training Providers and notified to the Society for the purposes of vMCPD; or
 - c. Approved Training Courses organised by an external training provider for the purposes of vMCPD.
4. Each Approved vMCPD Program should be of a minimum duration of 1 hour, excluding all breaks.
5. Each practitioner member should maintain his/her own comprehensive training record for the practice year and retain copies of their training records for a period of 3 years.
6. CPD Hours for participation in Approved vMCPD Programs are computed as follows:

TYPE OF PARTICIPATION	COMPUTATION OF CPD HOURS
Attending Approved vMCPD Programs	1 CPD Hour for each 1 hour duration (excluding all breaks)
Chairing Approved vMCPD Programs	1 CPD Hour for each 1 hour duration (excluding all breaks)
Speaking, teaching, training, facilitating or presenting at Approved vMCPD Programs	2 CPD Hours for each 1 hour duration (excluding all breaks) for the 1 st time the event is presented. For repeated presentations, CPD Hours will be awarded only if it can be demonstrated that the content has been substantially changed and such change required additional research, study or preparation by the presenter.
Preparation of presentation materials and handouts for Approved vMCPD Programs	1 CPD Hour for each 1 hour duration (excluding all breaks), provided the speaker has confirmed to the Training Department in writing the practitioner member's involvement in such preparation work.

Read the "Members' Guide to the Law Society of Singapore's Voluntary Minimum Continuing Professional Development Scheme" available on the CPD Portal for more details.

During vMCPD, the Society will also provide additional membership services free-of-charge for the practitioner members. These services include:

- a. A system for online registrations and payments by members and non-members;
- b. A wide array of Approved vMCPD Programs (i.e. courses organised by the Society and training providers approved by the Society ("**Approved Training Providers**"), as well as third-party courses approved by the Society), participation in which would attract CPD Hours;¹
- c. The Personal Online Record of Training ("**PORT**") which enables members and their law practices to maintain a record of their training history in the course of each practice year. With PORT, you and your law practice have access to detailed information such as the number/type/subject matter of training programs attended, the number of CPD Hours and the amounts spent on CPD.
- d. Participation in Approved vMCPD Programs will be automatically tracked and included in both the members' and their law practice's training records. You can also customize your records and use PORT to include other formal CPD activities not automatically captured by the Society.

¹ Law Practices are encouraged to apply to become Approved Training Providers under the scheme. This enables their lawyers' participation in in-house training organised by the law practice to be automatically recorded in PORT and recognised with CPD Hours.

vMCPD will be refined based on feedback received from members and training providers. The Society will also take into consideration the views of the MCPD Steering Committee chaired by Mr. Harry Elias SC, which was set up in 2004 to study whether and, if so, how the Society should implement a minimum/mandatory CPD scheme after the pilot phase.

Re-Engineering CPD

Over the past year, both the supply of and demand for CPD programs has grown tremendously. To maintain the quality of its CPD programming, the Training Department manually gathered, collated and analysed all training-related data collected last year. However, with the increase in CPD programmes set to continue and the delivery of new and enhanced services to members under vMCPD, the Society had to review the administration of its entire training function. After a thorough study which commenced in March 2004, a Training Management System was developed with the assistance of Bizibody Technology Pte Ltd to enable the Society to more effectively and efficiently:

1. Meet the increasing requirements of administering its increased CPD programming;
2. Support the continued growth of its CPD programming by enabling the collation and analysis of vital information and the generation of reports for planning and decision-making purposes; and
3. Deliver the additional vMCPD services to members.

This Training Management System is the engine behind vMCPD and, combined with the continued efforts of the CPD Department, is what enables the Society to not just keep the costs of CPD programs low for members, but also deliver the new vMCPD services to members without charge.

Your Commitment to Continued Excellence

Hopefully, this article has given members an idea of the Society's continued efforts in contributing to the standards of learning of the profession through CPD. However, these initiatives are wholly dependent your continued support. So, do benchmark yourselves against the vMCPD Best Practices, use the new vMCPD services, participate in the variety of CPD programs we offer and keep providing us with constructive feedback. This allows the profession to collectively demonstrate its relentless commitment to ongoing learning and development and its pursuit of excellence in service to the community.

June Tan

Director, Training & Continuing Professional

Development

March 2005

TAKE THIS QUICK QUIZ & WIN 2 PLACES AT ANY LAW SOCIETY CPD EVENT OF YOUR CHOICE*:

Q: How many hours of structured/formal CPD activities does the Society recommend that its practitioner members participate in per practice year?

A: _____

Name: _____

AAS No. / IC No.: _____
(member / non-member)

Organisation: _____

Designation: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Send/Fax your answer(s) to:

The Training & CPD Department
The Law Society of Singapore
39 South Bridge Road S'pore 058673
Fax: 653005700

Terms and conditions apply:

- Only 1 winner will be picked from correct entries.
- Prizes do not apply to events jointly organised with third parties.