

SPH Plug and Play: Start-up founders meet investors, mentors



At the unveiling of SPH Plug and Play's first intake of start-ups were (from fourth left in photo) SPH Media Fund CEO Chua Boon Ping, Infocomm Investments general manager Pang Heng Soon, SPH chairman Lee Boon Yang, SPH CEO Alan Chan and SPH executive vice-president of corporate development Deborah Lee. Eight start-ups from Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong were introduced to investors and mentors yesterday. PHOTOS: MATTHIAS HO FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

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Accelerator programme will help media giant boost digital strategy, keep up with technologies



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The eight Internet start-ups picked in the inaugural intake of the Singapore Press Holdings accelerator programme called SPH Plug and Play were introduced to investors and mentors last night.

The firms, which are in the fields of content and content curation, learning, employment, lifestyle and data analytics, come from Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong.

They were picked from about 280 teams from around the world, including South Korea and Kazakhstan.

The start-ups began a 10-week boot camp last week that aims to refine ideas and scale their businesses.

SPH chairman Lee Boon Yang said last night that the programme will focus on building a pipeline of high-growth, innovation-driven tech start-ups that will help the media giant strengthen its digital strategy and allow it to stay tuned to new technologies and investment opportunities.

Dr Lee hopes to see about 20 start-ups trained in two batches.

The accelerator programme is a joint venture between SPH, Plug and Play Accelerator from the United States and Infocomm Investment, the venture arm of the Infocomm Development Authority.

The eight start-ups are fashion discovery app Fashory; Snapask, which connects students to tutors; employee referral system Yellow Elevator; social media analytics service Circus 20/Twenty; education platforms Tutate and Imagin8ors, e-commerce firm Plus Margin; and content creator Bolt.

Investors, mentors and SPH executives mingled with the start-up founders at the company's headquarters last night.

Mr Bradley Chiang, co-founder of Hong Kong start-up Snapask, said he hopes that the accelerator programme will help him build a business model for global expansion.

"Singapore has a similar curriculum as Hong Kong, thus we think that this is the best place for us to start off a cross regional online tutoring service," he said.

Mr Chiang, who came here from Hong Kong, aims to raise US\$2.5 million (S\$3.4 million) for expansion after the programme.

Fashory co-founder Emmy Teo said her mobile app aims to make every woman feel beautiful.

"Most women find that they can't find clothes that suit them well.

"Our recommendation technology will be able to recommend them clothes that fit better based on, for



ONE START-UP'S AIM

Most women find that they can't find clothes that suit them well... Our recommendation technology will be able to recommend them clothes that fit better.

MS EMMY TEO, Fashory co-founder, on how her mobile app aims to make every woman feel beautiful

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example, factors like their height and weight," she said.

The one-year-old start-up is into its second version of the app. Ms Teo hopes to raise about \$500,000 after the accelerator programme.

Imagin8ors co-founder Balaji Ramanujam said that his team hopes to gain from the vast experience, content and access to markets that SPH provides.

Venture capitalist Koh Soo Boon said at the launch that the media group is taking the right steps by setting up the accelerator.

"The company can now access new technologies faster and which could be used for its media business," she added.

Mr Chua Boon Ping, the chief executive of SPH Media Fund, said the start-up companies were selected for their interesting ideas that are relevant to SPH's businesses such as educational technology, recruitment and lifestyle.

In recent years, SPH has acquired and invested in online firms, including property index SRX, car portal sgcar mart and e-commerce platform Q0010.