



For immediate release

Google and UOB expand SME Leadership Academy capacity ten-fold and revise curriculum to help SMEs hard hit by COVID-19

The revised and online curriculum aims to help SMEs tackle immediate challenges and sustain their business

SINGAPORE, 24 April 2020 -- Google and UOB today announced the new curriculum for the [SME Leadership Academy](#)¹ training programme has been customised to help business leaders of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from the retail, tourism and food and beverage (F&B) sectors respond to the unprecedented challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the pressing need for SMEs across different industries to be able to transform their businesses digitally, the SME Leadership Academy will also expand its capacity to help 4,000 SMEs by end 2021, a ten-fold increase from the initially projected 400 SMEs.

In collaboration with the Economic Development Board and with the support of the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) Marketing College², Enterprise Singapore and Singapore Retailers Association, the training programme for retail and tourism SMEs will be conducted online through six to eight webinars, each lasting an hour, starting on 28 April 2020. Previous training sessions were conducted through in-person seminars.

The revised and online curriculum now teaches SMEs how to use digital solutions, including online collaboration tools, to be more effective when managing their businesses from home. SMEs will also gain insights into effective people and business management during crises, which can then be turned into practical steps they can take to tackle their own immediate challenges. UOB will guide SMEs on how to apply for COVID-19 financial relief assistance to help tide them over during this difficult period. The Bank, through its innovation accelerator The FinLab, will also connect SMEs with suitable technology solution providers. With the support of these providers, SMEs will be able to implement digital solutions that will see them through the current situation and ensure they are well-positioned for better times.

Mr Ben King, Country Director of Google Singapore said, “The considerable disruptions of COVID-19 has made this a tough time for businesses at all levels - doubly so for SMEs who need to accelerate digital adoption and quickly move their business online to adapt to the evolving situation. It is critical that we support them in whatever way we can. Alongside our other initiatives to help the business community, we hope that the webinar series of our SME Leadership Academy will empower Singaporean businesses through skills training and enable them to succeed in a digital economy, which is especially critical during this challenging business climate.”

Mr Lawrence Loh, Head of Group Business Banking, UOB, said, “At UOB, we have been helping SMEs overcome their business challenges and deepen their capabilities for more than 80 years. We understand that during these especially challenging times, the priority for SMEs, especially those in the retail, tourism and F&B sectors, is to keep their business afloat. Through the customised curriculum and online webinars, we want to make it easier for SMEs to address the business constraints resulting from the pandemic and to be ready for recovery. They can do so

¹ Please refer to the [Google-UOB joint news release on the launch of the SME Leadership Academy](#).

² STB Marketing College is a learning and development programme tailored for marketing professionals in the travel and tourism industry. The STB Marketing College team is working with key digital partners to roll out online training resources to help the tourism industry upskill during the COVID-19 period.



by gaining relevant market insights and learning how they can make use of digital solutions to create new revenue streams and to manage their costs more effectively.”

Mr Eric Tham, Head of Group Commercial Banking, UOB, said, “Just as UOB has been actively helping our SME customers address their immediate concerns, we want to ensure that they are well-prepared for the future. We expect the new ways of working today will become the new normal for the future. The SME Leadership Academy’s new online curriculum is one way we can help enable SMEs adapt to change and adopt technology for their long-term business continuity and growth.”

Mr Kiren Kumar, Chief Digital Industry Officer, Digital Industry Singapore, said, “The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted businesses from every industry, making it crucial for the business community to stay united. The expanded SME Leadership Academy webinar series will help more firms leverage technology to get through this difficult time, and build digital capabilities within their businesses to prepare for the eventual recovery. We look forward to collaborating with more companies like Google and UOB to support companies during this period.” .

SMEs keen to sign up for the webinar series can visit: <https://eventsonair.withgoogle.com/events/sme-leadership-academy>.

Clearer learning path for SMEs with Google

In order to help SMEs better take advantage of existing digital solutions, Google has also introduced a more streamlined path to learning for SMEs under [Grow with Google](#) to promote digital transformation and upskilling on an organisational level.

Grow with Google
Free training, tools and events to help you grow your skills, career or business.

For Businesses
Learn how to help your business evolve and succeed using digital marketing tools and resources.

SME Leadership Academy
Training program for Singapore business leaders to boost SME business performance. Topics covered include digital strategies, tools and people solutions.
[Express interest](#)

Improve your business and marketing skills with five-minute lessons
Primer is a mobile app with quick, interactive lessons on writing a business plan, making a great website, marketing a business online, and more.
[Get the Primer App](#)

Grow with Google provides free training, tools and events to support businesses in their digital upskilling journey

The website provides a platform for businesses to learn about Google’s SME initiatives, including the [SME Leadership Academy](#), [Squared Online for SMEs](#) and [Primer](#) - a free mobile app that offers 5-min long easy-to-understand lessons for business owners and anyone looking to grow their business and digital marketing skills. It



also consolidates useful tools such [Google My Business](#) and [Market Finder](#) to help businesses grow their local and global presence.

Businesses looking for ways to build their digital capabilities can visit <https://g.co/growsingapore>.

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About Google

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. Through products and platforms like Search, Maps, Gmail, Android, Google Play, Chrome and YouTube, Google plays a meaningful role in the daily lives of billions of people and has become one of the most widely-known companies in the world. Google is a subsidiary of Alphabet Inc.

About United Overseas Bank

United Overseas Bank Limited (UOB) is a leading bank in Asia with a global network of more than 500 offices in 19 countries and territories in Asia Pacific, Europe and North America. Since its incorporation in 1935, UOB has grown organically and through a series of strategic acquisitions. UOB is rated among the world's top banks: Aa1 by Moody's Investors Service and AA- by both S&P Global Ratings and Fitch Ratings. In Asia, UOB operates through its head office in Singapore and banking subsidiaries in China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam, as well as branches and representative offices across the region.

Over more than eight decades, generations of UOB employees have carried through the entrepreneurial spirit, the focus on long-term value creation and an unwavering commitment to do what is right for our customers and our colleagues.

We believe in being a responsible financial services provider and we are committed to making a difference in the lives of our stakeholders and in the communities in which we operate. Just as we are dedicated to helping our customers manage their finances wisely and to grow their businesses, UOB is steadfast in our support of social development, particularly in the areas of art, children and education.

About SME Leadership Academy

Launched in April 2019, the SME Leadership Academy is developed by Google in collaboration with UOB with the support of the Economic Development Board. The programme aims to help SMEs in Singapore build strong digital capabilities to accelerate their digital transformation by introducing them to collaborative tools and resources to boost productivity, as well as industry best practices to help reimagine the way they work and bring their business to the next level. For more information about SME Leadership Academy, please visit <https://leadershipacademy.withgoogle.com/>