

Design thinking 'key for businesses now'

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DESIGN thinking is now the way to move for businesses, serving as a viable methodology to streamline internal processes to better serve customers.

Through the use of design thinking, companies are able to generate consumer insights that can be used to create products and services to serve the needs of customers, according to participants at the 2017 ACI Asia Business Series Roundtable.

The discussion, organised by Nanyang Technological University's (NTU) Institute on Asian Consumer Insight and supported by *The Business Times*, was held on Tuesday at InterContinental Singapore.

The roundtable was focused on using consumer insight to design for the future, and aimed to reveal insights on Asian consumers to help businesses navigate turbulent market conditions and look for approaches to embark on their next phase.

The session was chaired by Boh Wai Fong, ACI fellow and head of NTU's Information Technology & Operations Management Division, who also moderated a panel that discussed design thinking and how it can help companies remain relevant.



Prof Boh (right) moderating the panel discussion at the roundtable. The panel, which included Mr Kea and Ms Kwek (centre), discussed design thinking and how it can help firms remain relevant. PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

"This topic is important especially now as things are changing very quickly, and there is a lot of disruption in the form of innovations and business models that are coming into the picture," Prof Boh said.

"Design thinking allows companies to easily identify areas in their internal processes that need to be streamlined, in order to produce

outputs required by their customers. This encourages companies to understand what customers need and to design the products and services that meet those needs accordingly."

Panellist Agnes Kwek, executive director of DesignSingapore, spoke on how conventional mindsets in companies may possibly be a barrier when switching to the fresher

method of design thinking, but mentioned that people are becoming more aware of new options.

Garick Kea, executive director for consumer insights at Nielson Singapore, also shared his views on how customer insights can be powerful tools to understand customers and recognise their needs that can be fulfilled through products.

The third panellist, Kristin Wood, co-director of the SUTD-MIT International Design Centre at the Singapore University of Technology and Design, spoke on how the methodology of design thinking can easily be melded with conventional methods to create a viable process to come up with customer solutions.

Head of design for Phillips Asean Pacific Low Cheaw Hwei shared his experiences on how design thinking has helped his company in various projects and how it can help differentiate brands which create unique solutions based on customer insights.

"Events like this help broaden people's understanding of design and innovation, and how it is important to move to the next stage of changing mindsets in terms of how design thinking can help companies," said Marisa Agrasut, co-founder and innovation practitioner from The Inceptory, who attended the event.

The 2017 ACI Asia Business Series will peak with the Asia Business Summit which will be held on Oct 9.