IT Leader Awards

Securing an $800,000 change

NTU student who helped the RSAF improve its guard rooms is a winner at annual awards, reports SHERWIN LOH

DURING his stint in national service, he received several pats on the back, including a Letter of Commendation and a Letter of Merit.

But the awards were not given for his physical skills or combat abilities.

Rather, Pan Zhengxiang, 25, picked up the IT Youth Award at last Friday’s annual IT Leader Awards for the way his love for technology brought about an $800,000 change for the better.

While serving in the Republic of Singapore Air Force, he came up with the Innovative Pass Verification System to improve security measures.

The system uses a series of cameras to relay visitor images to guard rooms. Before this, there was no way of knowing who was approaching.

“With IT, it is less of finding ways to solve problems, but how to use it to improve lives,” explained the soft-spoken student, now studying computer science at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

Zhengxiang also won several IT competitions and initiatives at NTU, making him a natural choice for the award, said the Singapore Computer Society, which organised the awards.

For instance, for the first Asian Youth Games last year, he invented iChat With Frasias, an instant messaging application that listed details such as participating countries, venues and timing of individual sports of the Games via Windows Live Messenger.

He is currently upgrading the software for iChat With Merly And Loyo, for the Youth Olympic Games this year.

Three other awards were also given out.

The Young Professional of the Year award went to Bernard Leong, a co-founder of SGETrepreneurs, which is a Web resource that provides start-up information for new businesses.

For his work in promoting online portals for government services, high-ranking civil servant Peter Ho was placed in the award’s Hall of Fame.

Peter holds several portfolios including the posts of Permanent Secretary (Foreign Affairs) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Head of Civil Service, as well as Permanent Secretary (Special Duties) in the Prime Minister’s Office.

As for the top award, IT Leader of The Year, that honour went to Lim Hup Seng.

Currently an advisor to IDA International, Hup Seng, the former Deputy Secretary (Performance) in the Ministry of Finance, advanced the iGov2010 initiative, which took e-government services to the masses.

One criteria for this award is that the winner must have advanced the cause of IT outside of his own business interests.

His greatest achievement, added Hup Seng, was roping in five statutory boards like the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore, to adopt common administrative enterprise systems three years ago.

With it, human resources, finance and procurement systems are shared.

To date, 11 agencies are on board, with more signing up this year, he said.

This is the first time that the various statutory boards are “rolling up their sleeves and working together” on an enterprise system. It has done away with the grunt work that could be centralised and automated.

Hup Seng said: “We should conserve our creativity for something different and not do things over and over again.”

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