Humans and technology should stand on the same side of the fence

Feinmetall Singapore shows a company’s transformative journey towards Industry 4.0 does not have to leave its employees behind.

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Is digital transformation always have to come at the expense of employees?

As Feinmetall Singapore Pte Ltd shows, a company’s transformative journey towards Industry 4.0 does not have to leave its employees behind.

Set up in 2007 as a German Singapore joint venture precision engineering SME with only five employees, Feinmetall is now a leading provider of contract solutions in Singapore with 60 employees. It offers turnkey solutions for the design, manufacture and repair of wafer probe cards for the semiconductor industry.

Since 2012, growth has been in double-digits and the company shows no sign of slowing down. Feinmetall’s general manager Sam Chee Wah attributes this rapid growth to two big factors: continual innovation and commitment to its employees.

Breaking new grounds

As a company, Feinmetall does not shy away from investments or risks. Within a decade of its incorporation, the company had invested over S$1.5 million to develop its capacity and capabilities.

In 2017 it took a huge leap forward when it opened its new S$15 million state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in the Maritime Industrial Estate, the first of its kind among SMEs in the semiconductor industry.

The 6,700 sq ft Feinmetall Digital Manufacturing Facility (DMF) adopts technology solutions under the Model Factory@SIMTech. A key feature of the DMF is the Manufacturing Control Tower (MCT) dashboard, which allows Feinmetall to inspect and control the entire production floor from a single control room.

In opening the new facility in a culmination of Feinmetall’s continual efforts to deepen its engineering capabilities and an embodiment of its mindset that continues to set new standards for the local precision engineering industry.

Despite all of this, Feinmetall knows better than to dive head first into expensive IT infrastructure as the primary driver of innovation. “We don’t jump into expensive solutions first,” said Mr Sam. “We don’t want to build a museum.”

Instead, Feinmetall is guided by a few principles that focus on delivering a smarter, cost-effective implementation of technology.

For a start, the company only invests in equipment or machinery if it is truly relevant and beneficial to the business. It also believes that processes should be standardised, and complexities eliminated prior to a digital transformation.

Humans in focus

On its website, Feinmetall claims a little about: “Our employees are important to us. This doesn’t only apply to our products, but especially for our employees.”

Feinmetall has established a culture which respects and empowers employees as innovative, passionate individuals and not just as a number in the system. The company is all for providing employees with opportunities for career progression.

Most of its management stuff have worked their way from the ground up and have a great sense of loyally to the company. It also has an ongoing partnership with Nanyang Polytechnic and employs several of its diploma gradu-