



CPI Antitrust Chronicle

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**Effective Engagement of
Stakeholders: Inquire,
Innovate, Intrigue**

Competition Commission of Singapore

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I. INTRODUCTION

Given the significant impact that competition law could have on the course of doing business in Singapore, CCS regards it as an important priority to educate and raise awareness of the competition regime to the business community. In a recent stakeholders perception survey conducted by CCS that covered over 400 businesses, 200 consumers, competition practitioners, and government agencies, it was found that consumers and businesses displayed fairly low levels of understanding and knowledge about competition law as well as a very unclear perception of what CCS did (consumers: 36 percent; businesses: 41 percent). This underlines the need for further advocacy and outreach to boost awareness and knowledge. The challenge is to communicate highly technical legal and economic concepts to our stakeholders, and to make ourselves heard above the many messages and voices that people are bombarded with daily.

To address these challenges, CCS developed an advocacy framework, I³, to distill and help stakeholders understand competition law and its benefits through simple innovations and fun methods that explain the intricacies of competition law and economics. The core pillars that form the I³ framework are: Inquire, Innovate, and Intrigue. The I³ framework guides our efforts to convey educational messages in a way that is engaging, relevant, and effective. CCS strives to be innovative in advocacy to enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives.

II. INQUIRE: KNOWING THE NEEDS OF DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

For competition advocacy to be successful, there must first be a clear and deep understanding of the needs of stakeholders. The "CCS Stakeholders Perception Survey" which was conducted first in 2009 and subsequently in 2012, helped to lay a foundation of deep insights grounded in market research and analysis.

Conducted through online surveys and focus group discussions, the findings of the survey demonstrated a relatively low level of awareness among business and consumers; in particular, there is an urgent need for Small and Medium Enterprises ("SMEs") to better understand competition policies and the impact the latter have on businesses. While stakeholders saw the benefits of competition, not many understood the intricacies of the law. These findings provided actual insights into stakeholders' mindsets and formed a basis to refine CCS' advocacy efforts in order to connect competition policies and laws with these mindsets.

Segmenting our stakeholders into four groups makes it easier for CCS to innovate in advocacy. As each stakeholder group has different needs, CCS has developed a targeted approach to address each through extending beyond our online means of communications.

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III. INNOVATE: CREATING INNOVATIVE CCS' ADVOCACY MATERIALS

Our approach to simple innovations in advocacy materials led to the production of short and succinct corporate videos and trailers in the earlier years after CCS' establishment. These helped visually demonstrate the harms and ills of anticompetitive acts such as cartels, bid-rigging, and price-fixing. Among them, the video on cartels, which utilized a creative "reversible script" that turned the businesses' typical arguments (when defending themselves on why they participated in cartels) against them, was recognized by the International Competition Network as one of the Best Antitrust Films produced thus far.

In January 2012, CCS launched its Digital Animation Film Contest. This landmark contest was created with the aims of raising awareness of competition law in Singapore, generating greater understanding of how the law operates, and informing participants and viewers alike of the benefits of CCS' enforcement efforts. The contest has helped our stakeholders to better understand CCS' role and responsibilities through a cinematic and creative approach.

CCS is keen to reach out to our stakeholders through the use of social media. Also in January 2012, a complete revamp of the CCS website was completed. With the new website, information about CCS is better organized and is made available to our stakeholders using an intuitive and user-friendly interface design. The revamped website won the 2012 Interactive Media Award ("IMA") Outstanding Achievement award under the category of "Advocacy." This international award is the second highest honor bestowed by IMA and is a very challenging award to win.

Another innovative advocacy effort by CCS was the launch of a quarterly e-newsletter, *Competitive Edge*. The inaugural issue was launched in March, 2012. *Competitive Edge* seeks to deliver greater value to our stakeholders by bringing them all of the latest news, insights, developments, and items of interests from CCS. Its interactive feature allows easy navigation with the click of a mouse. Users are also able to take part in short quizzes and puzzles in the "Just for Fun" section.

Although SMEs generally agree that competition law brings benefits to the economy, they do not understand how the law applies to them specifically and what adjustments they need to make to comply with the law. This poses a challenge in terms of voluntary compliance with competition law and regulations among businesses. Given that one of CCS' desired outcomes is to achieve enhanced voluntary compliance, CCS needs to proactively help businesses understand how to apply and benefit from competition law. To spread the message of competition and compliance effectively, we need to customize our messages and communication channels. To this end, CCS has recently undertaken two new initiatives to help SMEs comply with the Competition Act as well as demonstrate how they can benefit from it.

First, CCS has produced an e-learning tool, "Competing on Merit: Getting to Know the Competition Act," to help businesses understand the essentials of the Singapore Competition Act. This one-stop interactive learning tool provides a clear overview of the Do's and Don'ts for businesses and introduces ways in which businesses can develop a competition compliance strategy. Users can choose to role-play as a Chief Executive Officer, a procurement manager, or an in-house Legal Counsel; role-playing these different scenarios enables them to understand competition compliance from different perspectives.



“Competing on Merit: Getting to know the Competition Act” highlights the Dos and Don’ts for businesses and introduces ways to develop a competition compliance strategy.



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Second, to encourage competition compliance among businesses and to entrench competition compliance as part of good corporate governance (a “must-do” rather than a “good to have”), CCS has also published a handbook titled “Better Business with Competition Compliance Programme” to help businesses comply with the Competition Act and to highlight how competition compliance can help them compete on a level playing field and expand their footprints beyond the local markets. In order to reach out to a greater audience, the handbook has also been published in Chinese.

IV. INTRIGUE: SPARKING STAKEHOLDERS' CURIOSITY

To ignite stakeholders' curiosity about competition law and policy, CCS collaborates and partners with industry and government agencies to roll out a series of public education talks. These talks help to seed an initial curiosity about competition policy and law, as well as dispel any misconceptions the business community may have about the Competition Act.

In 2012, CCS has once again partnered with the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (“SCCCI”), the apex body of the Chinese business community in Singapore, to conduct regular outreach sessions with their network of 130 trade associations and 4,000 corporate entities from a number of different industries.

CCS recognizes that businesses need help to understand how to apply and benefit from competition policy. Following the success of the inaugural CCS-SAL Competition Law Seminar in 2010, CCS and the Singapore Academy of Law (“SAL”) jointly organized the 2012 Competition Law Conference. The Conference brought together regulators, academia, and businesses to exchange views on the latest developments on anticompetitive conduct, merger review, and a review of competition regimes in the region.

One highlight of the Conference was a business-centric segment for business leaders and corporate counsel who are interested in developing their knowledge about best practices of competition compliance for businesses. This segment was supported by the Singapore Business Federation—the business chamber that champions the interests of the Singapore business community in trade, investment, and industrial relations, representing more than 18,000 companies as well as local and foreign business chambers and key national and industry associates from various business sectors. The Conference recorded 252 registered participants, including 82 companies and business associations. Conference speakers, panellists, and moderators were also invited to share their knowledge relating to competition issues on CCS' inaugural blog. The blog serves as a platform to build up a body of knowledge on competition and to engage competition authorities and practitioners worldwide.

CCS has adopted a proactive outreach strategy to link directly with trade associations, professional bodies, and business chambers to reach out to their members. With over eleven outreach sessions since the start of 2012, we have reached out to 395 companies covering different sectors of the economy. Participants have found it useful to engage directly with CCS staff and to receive personal attention to their views and queries. Although this approach is resource intensive, CCS will continue with such direct personal interaction as it is a good way to raise awareness and to gather ground feedback.

V. CONCLUSION

While much progress has been made in the areas of enforcement, outreach, and advocacy, CCS recognizes that much more remains to be done. We will continue to champion competition by pairing effective enforcement with active advocacy.

Moving forward, we will continue to work with all stakeholders to strengthen Singapore's competition regime. Businesses must have confidence that competition law is there to protect them from anticompetitive behavior from their competitors, and to assure them of a level playing

field to grow their business. Shaping a constructive, effective, and responsive competition regime will require the commitment and contribution of all parties.