

Rethinking Food For Good

X-Inc Pte Ltd (also previously known as FoodXervices Inc.)



The warehouse stirred long before sunrise, with boxes shifting, hands sorting, and footsteps weaving through aisles heavy with grain and purpose. Between stacks of rice and cartons of canned food, the rhythm of work unfolded steadily. Beyond the logistics, something deeper was taking shape: a belief that food carries dignity, that distribution can be an act of care. Into this world stepped a group of adult learners, ready to unpack ideas of sustainability, equity, and shared responsibility.

The challenge: how can a small-to-medium enterprise (SME) lead in sustainability reporting while turning purpose into impact, and potentially, into a service model for the wider food sector?

That question brought together a group of adult learners enrolled in an SMU-X Lifelong Learning course *Digital Economy Capstone* co-led by SMU Associate Provost for Lifelong Learning Professor Gary Pan¹ and SMU Vice Provost (Education) Professor Venky Shankararaman. The learners came from varied industries and shared a common mission: to co-develop a sustainability strategy and roadmap that was visionary, practical, and scalable.

X-Inc Pte Ltd, established in 2007, is the parent company of FoodXervices Inc., a leading foodservice distributor in Singapore serving over 2,000 clients including hotels, airlines, restaurants, and culinary institutions.

With a commitment to building a vibrant, resilient food sector, X-Inc integrates sustainability at the heart of its operations and partnerships.

With guidance from Gary, Venky and strong support from X-Inc CEO Nichol Ng, the team started with fundamental questions and conducted an in-depth analysis of what sustainability indicators are being tracked, what sustainability data is available and how partners and suppliers have contributed to X-Inc's sustainability efforts.

The group designed a performance dashboard to track energy usage, waste streams, and recycling rates. They created a centralised knowledge base to catalogue

green initiatives and crafted new policy proposals to strengthen X-Inc's environmental governance. Their efforts culminated in a comprehensive roadmap that now informs X-Inc's long-term Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategy and feeds into its company-wide KPI system, supporting Singapore and the Global Net Zero emissions by 2050. "What impressed me most was their courage," said Nichol. "They offered thoughtful insights and were bold enough to question assumptions, including my own."

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Lyndon Teoh

Gary believed this approach is key to real-world learning. "These professionals brought their expertise into the classroom, along with the richness of their lived experiences," he shared. "They connected strategy with application, and helped the company translate ambition into measurable progress. This is where learning and impact truly converge."

The impact has been far-reaching. The employee handbook has been updated with policies informed by the project. The knowledge base now enables clearer communication with customers and suppliers.

Most excitingly, the project has sparked the idea of offering "sustainability as a service" to other SMEs in the food sector.

"We are extremely pleased with the quality and the outcome of the project," Nichol added. "These are experienced professionals who brought fresh perspective, practicality, and innovation into our sustainability journey."

For the learners, the journey unfolded as an awakening. What began as a project soon became a shared purpose. "We completed more than just a task," reflected Lyndon Teoh, a member of the X-Inc project team. "We co-created solutions that could help a business grow with intention and meaning. That changes the way you see your own potential."

In the process of listening, designing, and problem-solving, the students began to understand that their ideas carried weight. Guided by mentors and shaped by the trust of X-Inc, they stepped into a space where learning became impact, and effort became belief.



¹ In addition to his role as Associate Provost (Lifelong Learning) and Academic Director of the Industry Practice Master's (IPM) programme, Professor Gary Pan is a full-time faculty member at the SMU School of Accountancy. He also serves as Professor of Accounting (Education) and Associate Dean (Undergraduate Admissions and Student Development) within the School. A strong advocate of experiential learning, Gary was the inaugural Academic Director of the SMU-X programme and continues to champion its development and impact across the University.

Why It Matters

What happens when professionals bring their expertise back into the classroom to drive sustainability in the food sector? This SMU-X Lifelong Learning collaboration saw adult learners bridging industry experience with academic insight, co-developing a future-ready ESG roadmap for X-Inc. Their efforts strengthened X-Inc's environmental strategy and operations, setting a new benchmark for sustainability practices across the food services industry.

• Strengthened ESG governance and internal policies:

Learners delivered a performance dashboard, policy recommendations, and a sustainability knowledge base that now informs X-Inc's long-term strategy and operational KPIs.

• Catalysed new service innovation:

The collaboration sparked X-Inc's exploration of "sustainability as a service", positioning the company to help other SMEs improve their environmental impact.

• Enhanced stakeholder communication and alignment:

Clearer sustainability messaging and reporting tools have improved how X-Inc engages its employees, suppliers, and clients on shared environmental goals.

