

## OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19



*Ms Sun Xueling, Minister of State for Education, and Social and Family Development (left) and Ms Sim Ann, former Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information (centre) presented 2,400 masks to SingPost in appreciation of their service to the nation, received by Mr Vincent Phang, CEO, Postal Services and Singapore (right)*

COVID-19 was the single-most disruptive event impacting SingPost's operations and services in recent history. From transshipment delays on a global scale, to extended border closures with Malaysia and infection cases amongst staff members, the pandemic threw a massive spanner in every aspect of the business.

Despite these monumental challenges, SingPost held steadfast to its national responsibility as an essential public service: serving Singapore's postal and last-mile needs even during the darkest days of the pandemic.

As COVID-19 forced people to stay home for most of 2020, eCommerce item volumes surged to record levels as shoppers took to purchasing online. The sustained volumes put a strain on SingPost's operations, which was exacerbated by the border closure between Singapore and Malaysia, preventing daily commute for many postmen that resulted in a massive manpower shortage.

SingPost's mail processing facility was also shut down after team members tested positive for COVID-19, while close contacts were immediately issued quarantine orders. At the height of the pandemic, some 200 team members were quarantined,

resulting in further manpower constraints while trying to preserve operational capabilities. Having to process and deliver record volumes of deliveries with significantly reduced manpower while adhering to stringent control measures mandated by the government, 2020 became one of the most challenging years in SingPost's 162-year legacy.

Over the course of the year, SingPost mobilised its resources to meet these challenges head-on. Accommodation and allowances were arranged for Malaysian frontliners who chose to remain in Singapore. In addition, corporate staff were activated to assist in mail delivery where possible. In view of the SingPost Centre cluster of COVID-19 cases, full support was extended to staff who were infected or under quarantine. To prevent further spread of the virus and provide peace of mind to other team members, operations at the Mail Processing

Centre were briefly suspended and thoroughly cleaned. All 11 staff members who had contracted COVID-19 have since made a full recovery.

On the international front, global logistics and supply chains halted overnight, as the aviation industry was decimated amid a dearth of travel as countries move to contain COVID-19. In light of these developments, SingPost worked closely with its regional and international counterparts to explore alternate means of international mail delivery, including non-air freight options. For air freight routes that remained open, the cost of shipping rose dramatically but SingPost absorbed the additional costs.

Yet, COVID-19 brought out the resilience of the postal service and the adaptability of its staff members, but also threw its limitations into stark relief. The massive surge in eCommerce item volumes throughout 2020 – almost half of it channeled through Singapore's postal service – underscored the urgency at which critical postal infrastructure and processes needed to be upgraded. The need for a convenient, secure yet contactless delivery method in place of doorstep deliveries for bulky postal eCommerce items as well as Registered Service items also surfaced. Manpower issues caused by the pandemic necessitated a review of operations, on whether SingPost could be less reliant on a large labour force.

SingPost had in late 2019 unveiled a prototype of its smart letterbox as part of its Future of Post vision. When COVID-19 reached Singapore's shores just a few months later, it became eminently clear that the future of post was approaching sooner rather than later, as the pandemic was catalysing the adoption of eCommerce not just in Singapore, but around Asia-Pacific and the world. SingPost doubled down on its Future of Post development over the course of 2020, culminating in the launch of



Staff coaching a resident at Clementi on how to use PostPal

the public trial of PostPal, the world's first smart letterbox, at Blocks 202 and 205, Clementi Avenue 6.

As a next-generation smart letterbox that can accommodate traditional mail as well as postal eCommerce items, PostPal offers a myriad of benefits for residents as well as postmen. Its auto-sorting feature shaves hours off the postman's daily routine, while greatly reducing human error for mail deliveries. PostPal's dynamic mail allocation function enables postal packages to be stored in appropriately-sized compartments so incidences of full letterboxes are significantly reduced. Residents can, for the first time, receive alerts via the SingPost app whenever mail is delivered to PostPal, and would simply need to flash a dynamically generated QR code for retrieval.

PostPal is a welcome upgrade to the letterbox infrastructure that has remained similar in form and function for decades now. Residents' feedback have been most positive, with nine in 10 households registering for the service. What has been particularly heartening is the ease at which even elderly residents have been able to learn to use PostPal. Crucially, its functions and capabilities square with developments and requirements brought on by COVID-19. Following a successful launch in Clementi,

SingPost aims to progressively roll out PostPal for trials to various parts of Singapore in the coming year. It bears mention that SingPost is also looking into other technologies and operational enhancements such as smart stamps, allowing all mail to be tracked, integrating post and parcel infrastructure to capitalise on synergies as well as upgrading existing hardware and vehicles to be more efficient and sustainable.

The eCommerce surge driven by COVID-19 is a harbinger of the future. The pandemic has justified SingPost's emphasis on proactively preparing for an eCommerce-led future by reviewing and revamping even foundational aspects of postal operations and services. It has also reaffirmed the postal service as essential to the

nation, cementing its importance and relevance in the hearts and minds of the people. But SingPost is more than just a postal service. As a homegrown organisation with over 160 years of service to the nation, SingPost has always championed the uplifting of the vulnerable and needy in the community.

In times of crisis, assistance to this segment of the community is especially important, as they are usually the worst hit. Last year, SingPost partnered with the national Masks Sewn With Love movement, and leveraged its nationwide postal infrastructure and network to deliver more than 180,000 reusable masks sewn by members of the public to the needy and vulnerable, as well as frontline staff.

In February 2020, SingPost also pioneered a medicine delivery service equipped with cold chain capabilities catering to patients who required regular medication but were wary of visiting healthcare institutions. The service afforded patients peace of mind, while alleviating the load of frontline medical workers who could then focus on emergencies and battling the pandemic. The service has been very well received by patients as well as healthcare providers, with coverage expanding from a hospital and three polyclinics at the outset, to all public healthcare institutions currently.



Speedpost medicine delivery staff scanning and packing temperature-controlled medication into medical-grade cooler boxes before delivery



# OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Delivering hope and joy has always been a central tenet of SingPost, and it became even more relevant in 2020 as COVID-19 swept across Singapore and the world. As a global company with a deep Singaporean core, SingPost has been exposed to the vagaries of COVID-19, but it remains steadfast

in continuing to provide trusted and reliable services despite the circumstances. Even as vaccines are developed and inoculation drives are launched in nations across the world, SingPost will continue to do its part and remain on the front lines until the war against COVID-19 is won.

## #HEREWITHYOU INTERNAL CAMPAIGN

As COVID-19 continues to disrupt work environments around the world, SingPost remains committed to continuously engage its employees, look after their mental well-being and morale, and keep them connected during these challenging times.

With heightened concerns of social isolation at the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak in Singapore, #HereWithYou internal campaign was launched to send a simple message across to all its employees across the organisation – “We are HERE WITH YOU as One Team”.





A special #HereWithYou video was created by the global management and ground leadership teams to express their gratitude and support to all its employees, especially the frontline delivery, operations and post office network teams who quietly and tirelessly serve the nation during the Circuit Breaker period.

Various initiatives were also rolled out to care for its employees under the #HereWithYou campaign, including Live Wellness Webinar Series on topics such as self-care and preventing burnout, mental wellness during COVID-19, and physical wellness/ergonomics at home.



### #VACCINATED INTERNAL CAMPAIGN

With the rapid roll-out of Singapore's COVID-19 vaccination programme to more high-risk groups and essential workers, including SingPost's frontline essential employees, an internal campaign #Vaccinated was launched by SingPost to promote COVID-19 vaccine awareness and encourage participation. COVID-19 vaccination talks were also organised to help its employees understand the COVID-19 vaccine better and provide support.



#vaccinated  
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