

## Arming Up to Take On the Manpower Crunch



Mr. John Kong, Managing Director of M Metal Pte Ltd and current Chairman of Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMF) Metal, Machinery and Engineering Industry Group (MME IG), displaying his new robotic arm

M Metal is a local manufacturer of high-quality steel and non-steel building solutions, a roofing and walling supplier and a building solutions provider from concept to completion. Mr. John Kong, Managing Director of M Metal Pte Ltd and current Chairman of Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMF) Metal, Machinery and Engineering Industry Group (MME IG), has recently purchased a robotic arm. The idea of purchasing a robotic arm dawned on Mr. John Kong over a networking dinner session with the MME IG, where one other member shared that he had tapped on the Productivity and Innovation Credit (PIC) Scheme to invest in automation.

With this new investment, it increases business productivity, makes work processes safer for his employees as well as allows his workers to focus on more specialised tasks. "The robotic arm cuts our steel decking at ground level and this has completely eliminated risk of working from heights. Two men working on cutting one sheet metal takes around 3 to 4 minutes to complete the job. On the other hand, the robotic arm cuts the metal in 35 seconds. The cutting process is improved by more than 600% with this investment. Simultaneously, by allowing employees to

work on this robotic arm, it serves as job enrichment for them. As such, we see many benefits to this investment in the areas of productivity, safety and staff satisfaction," explained Mr. Kong.

"Our employees spend more time working in our company than with their families. It is important that they go home safely without having to deal with the risk of falling from heights. Productivity at work is important. To be productive, it would translate to working smarter by taking repetitive work and doing it through other means. However, productivity also needs to go hand in hand with safety. I purchased the robotic arm as it can both enhance productivity and improve the safety of my employees," said Mr. Kong.



M Metal employees inspecting the sheet metal

The staff at M Metal are happy to assume more responsibilities with the investment of the robotic arm. For employees who were chosen to operate the robotic arm, they were also given two weeks of training to better understand safe handling of the machine. "This is a place where I feel that I can grow, as I was given the opportunity to take on a bigger role," shared Mr. Wong Hong Wei, Robotic Arm Operator, M Metal Pte Ltd.

Mr. John Kong does not intend to just stop at using the robotic arm for cutting sheet metal. "The robotic arm has a lot of potential to do a variety of functions, and we are still in the exploratory phase for most of these. However, we do intend to maximize the uses of the robotic arm and we have plenty of ideas in the pipeline," concluded Mr. Kong with a smile.

## M Metal Clinches Singapore Environmental Achievement Award 2013

M Metal Pte Ltd was presented the Setsco Singapore Environmental Achievement Award (Manufacturing) on 22 August 2013. The award recognises companies that achieve breakthrough in environmental performance. M Metal conscientiously recycles materials such as steel, timber pallets and glass. With the new robotic arm, this eliminates the smoke and noise of cutting steel which was previously caused by using a circular handsaw.



Guest-of-Honour Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources (6th from left); Mr. George Huang, Chairman, Advisory Committee, Singapore Environment Council (5th from right) and Mr. John Kong, Managing Director, M Metal Pte Ltd (1st from right), together with winners of the Singapore Environmental Achievement Awards Ceremony 2013