

## Top foreign speakers at forum on the vital role of brand recognition in developing business overseas

By Shervin Seah

**MORE** Singapore companies are expanding into international territory, but few realise the importance of branding to help them penetrate overseas markets.

Many still think branding is an unnecessary expense and therefore avoid it.

But this would be a mistake, says Mr Lee Yi Shyan, chief executive officer of International Enterprise (IE) Singapore, who is responsible for the country's development as an international trading hub and for helping local enterprises to internationalise.

Said Mr Lee: "Singapore companies need to overcome the key mental block that branding is an expense and understand the power of branding as a corporate strategy."

With this in mind, IE Singapore has joined forces with advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather to organise the first Global Brand Forum at the Shangri-La Hotel here on Dec 1 and 2.

The forum will discuss the future of global branding and business leadership.

"We hope that, through this forum, we'll be able to establish Singapore as a centre for brand-thought leadership," said Mr Lee.

# Making branding count

"We'll be able to expose Singapore brands to an international gathering, and we also hope to exchange the best practices in the industry."

Some major Singapore brands to date include SingTel, DBS Bank, Asia Pacific Breweries, Singapore Airlines, Osim, Great Eastern, F&N and The Hour Glass.

Seven internationally renowned speakers will address the forum. Among them are the founder and chairman of Indian software giant Infosys Technologies, Mr Narayana Murthy, who won Ernst & Young's World Entrepreneur of the Year last year; founder of Body Shop Dame Anita Roddick; founder of Banyan Tree Resorts Ho Kwon Ping; Mr Scott Bedbury, the marketing strategist behind Nike's "Just Do It" campaign; and Mr Tom Kelley, co-founder of IDEO, the world's leading design consultancy firm.

This will be the first time that these top guns, whose individual fees range from US\$50,000 (S\$87,725) to US\$100,000, are speaking at the forum.



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— Mr Lee Yi Shyan, chief executive officer of International Enterprise (IE) Singapore

Said Mr Karthik Siva, chairman of the Global Brand Forum and group strategy director at Ogilvy & Mather: "It is very hard to get these speakers all on the same platform. Usually, you have only one of them as a major speaker."

Branding is an important aspect of business today as companies build individual "brand personas" to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

Said Mr Lee: "Singapore has a very strong brand reputation, but this is an under-leveraged asset."

"The question is how would a single product build on this existing reputation to build their own persona."

"Product for product, quality might be the same, but there's a certain emotion you associate with a brand, and Singapore companies need to develop this sophistication in terms of branding and design to appeal to the emotion."

Tickets for the forum will cost \$3,500. Those who register before Sept 30 will pay only \$3,000.

Registration can be done online at [www.globalbrandforum.org](http://www.globalbrandforum.org)