Enriching the visually impaired community: How non-profit organisation iC2 PrepHouse did away with paperwork to focus on what's important

After going digital, Singapore's iC2 PrepHouse spends less time on its administrative processes and more time fulfilling its mission to enrich the lives of visually impaired children.

When Jamuna Rani Govindaraju joined **iC2 PrepHouse** as the executive director, she wanted to make a difference. The Singaporean charity helps children with impaired vision so that they can benefit from a mainstream education – a very worthy cause that appealed to Jamuna.

Three years on, she has found immense satisfaction in seeing the organisation make a difference to the lives of so many. For instance, iC2 PrepHouse once helped a young boy with glaucoma as he began to lose his eyesight just before his O-Level exams. Thanks to the charity, he was not only successful in completing his exam, but also enrolling in a university afterwards.

"It's very rewarding to make a difference and it's heartening to see that the work we do is improving people's lives," said Jamuna.

Wearing many hats: Juggling several roles
At iC2 PrepHouse, Jamuna has several responsibilities.

"I'm in charge of HR and finance, as well as the overall management of the company's day-to-day operations. I write up business proposals for grant applications and organise meetings that might lead to new opportunities for the organisation," said Jamuna.

In April 2016, Singapore's Ministry of Manpower made it mandatory for all employers to issue employees with itemised payslips and written key employment terms. Jamuna found herself and her staff mired in more responsibilities that meant even more paperwork. That's when she decided to find a way to cut down on it.

"We needed something that was user-friendly and easy to handle," said Jamuna
.

Automating payments: Digitalising the payslip
In her search for an app that would help reduce the paperwork, Jamuna came across Singtel's Essentials Payslip (E.Payslip). Singtel had recognised early on that local businesses such as iC2 PrepHouse needed a solution to this problem, and created E.Payslip to provide digital payslips to employees, which they can then access through any internet-connected device.

"It's much more environment friendly and certainly saves a few trees!" she said.

Leaving out the manual labour: Digitalising leave management
As part of her HR duties, Jamuna needed to keep track of her employees' leave requests and leave balance. Since iC2 allows staff to carry over 50 per cent of their unused leave to the next year, this only made her task more complicated.

"We were using Excel spreadsheets to tabulate employees' annual leave," said Jamuna. "I had to manually key in the dates for their annual as well as medical leave, subtract that from their yearly allowance and calculate the balance. It was a real strain on my time."

It also meant that her staff had to keep a tab on how many days of annual leave they had already taken and how many they had left. They also had to inform Jamuna each time they sent in their leave application.

That's when, as an existing user of E.Payslip and being well acquainted with its ease of use, Jamuna was one of the first to register for Singtel's Essentials Workflow (E.Workflow) when it was launched in May 2017. E.Workflow digitalises manual HR processes such as employee leave registration and calculation within a centralised system, allowing managers to track employee movements as well as automatically calculate their leave balance. When an employee wants to apply for leave, they can simply log in, send a request and wait for approval. The manager gets notified and they can then approve or reject the request.

"If employees can't clear all their leave before the end of the year, the system automatically carries it over to the next year. It's very smooth and easy for both the organisation and the staff," added a pleased Jamuna.

The system includes other types of leave too – such as medical leave – and is extremely simple to set up.

"You just need to set up a profile for your organisation and the staff, which for a small company like ours took less than half an hour," said Jamuna. "Then it takes about one to two hours a month to manage. It's not labour-intensive at all."

Cost-effectiveness was also an important consideration for a not-for-profit organisation such as iC2 PrepHouse.

"Other companies also offer similar apps, but they have a high upfront investment and steep monthly maintenance fees, which aren't practical for an organisation of our size. But Singtel's apps are much more competitively priced. It was easy for me to convince the board to automate our processes when it was so affordable," said Jamuna.

Reaping the benefits: Putting the time saved to good use
The combined use of the two apps has allowed iC2 to work much more efficiently. Jamuna estimates it has cut her workload by roughly 20 per cent. This is phenomenal, since it means she can spend less time on administrative work and more time doing what she's there for – bringing hope to the lives of children who are visually impaired.

Jamuna says she would definitely recommend these apps to other businesses.

"The apps have been helpful, and besides, I have previously dealt with Singtel for other services and have always found their sales teams easy to work with," she said.

A piece of Do Different advice from Jamuna
"Other companies also offer similar apps, but they have a high upfront investment and steep monthly maintenance fees, which aren't practical for an organisation of our size. But Singtel's apps are much more competitively priced. It was easy for me to convince the board to automate our processes when it was so affordable," said Jamuna.