

Strike a balance at work

For senior engineer Edwin Toh, work-life balance is achievable at Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA)

by teo kuan yee

DSTA senior engineer Edwin Toh has represented Singapore in various dance sports overseas competitions and is active in competitive Latin ballroom dancing. This June, he is looking forward to becoming a father.

All these are possible because his career at DSTA provides him with flexibility.

He says: "Working in DSTA helps me achieve work-life balance so that I can perform well in my various roles and pursuits. I am able to plan my work schedule and pen in time to pursue my personal interests."

Since young, Mr Toh has leaned towards technology, gadgets and programming. Hence, the 30-year-old joined DSTA five years ago, attracted to the gamut of opportunities to work on cutting-edge technologies as well as develop his technical competencies.

A senior engineer in DSTA's InfoComm Infrastructure Programme Centre, Mr Toh belongs to the cyber defence cluster that safeguards the IT infrastructure of Ministry of Defence (Mindef) and the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF).

He explains: "In a nutshell, my work involves protecting the nation's critical IT defence assets. My team analyses network traffic to detect and prevent potential cyber attacks."

DSTA is the agency that implements defence technology plans, acquires defence materials and develops defence infrastructure for Mindef and provides leading-edge technological solutions to the SAF.

Other than ensuring the information systems in Mindef and the SAF remain secure, Mr Toh's team is also the brains behind pioneering technologies to enhance cyber defence capabilities. The team is constantly building on existing solutions to beef up the IT infrastructure so as to detect and pre-empt emerging threats.

"Cyber security is an integral part

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— Mr Edwin Toh (left)

of any organisation that uses IT — it has become more important due to recent high-profile cases where there were breaches in information security such as data leakage," explains Mr Toh who has an honours degree in Computer Engineering from Nanyang Technological University and a Master in Computing (InfoComm Security) from National University of Singapore.

The work of an IT engineer is varied and involves regular interactions with stakeholders to understand and leverage developments in the global cyber defence community, he says.

He even gets to participate in public outreach programmes such as the Cyber Defenders Discovery Camp 2012 in June. The camp aims to raise awareness and generate interest in cyber defence and security among Integrated Programme, junior college and tertiary students.

"I am glad that I can contribute my knowledge and experience as a member of the organising committee," he says.

A major challenge for Mr Toh is to constantly keep pace with the latest technologies in the market so he regularly reads up on online periodicals and journals to learn about the latest

breakthroughs in his field.

DSTA also embraces the culture of continuous learning, encouraging staff to develop a good mix of project management and technical skills. This has allowed Mr Toh to gain a wide range of both technical and soft skills.

Various on-the-job learning opportunities are available in a working environment that encourages teamwork and sharing. For instance, his supervisors and colleagues encourage and support one another to think out of the box for innovative new ideas to solve critical issues.

"Two heads are better than one, and I appreciate how easy it is for us to approach and consult our peers or superiors for advice on projects, or even on matters not related to work."

To those who are contemplating to follow in his footsteps, Mr Toh advises: "You have to be clear in what you want to do, and it is equally important to plan ahead to achieve it. Focus on the areas that you have a passion for and work towards it."