

# Apps for soldiers



PHOTO: DSTA

## DSTA defence engineer Ambrose Goh Maoliang puts his computing skills to good use in his job

by hazel tan

IT WAS a toss-up between a high-flying banking career and a chance to serve his country. And Mr Ambrose Goh Maoliang (above) chose the latter.

"I decided to be a defence engineer as I could apply my information technology (IT) engineering skills to make a meaningful contribution to my country," says the engineer, who graduated with a Bachelor of Computing from the National University of Singapore in 2010.

He is currently working at the Enterprise IT Programme Centre at the Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA).

### Deploying new technologies

At DSTA, the 29-year-old handles several engaging yet challenging projects.

For example, he manages the development of applications on LEARNet 2.0 – a virtual, one-stop learning environment designed for Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) servicemen that is available on mobile and web devices. The portal uses mobile technologies and social media to integrate learning concepts and tools and is one of the first IT

touch points for soldiers doing Basic Military Training.

"My role is to manage the development of applications on the portal to ensure they are user-friendly and easily accessible for our servicemen," says Mr Goh. "I am a member of a team that taps IT in innovative ways to develop unique solutions for the SAF and the Ministry of Defence."

Working on this portal required Mr Goh to balance the views of his stakeholders while ensuring timeliness. He did this by organising a focus group session for the different stakeholder groups.

"We brought in graphic designers, our partners from the SAF and colleagues involved in the project. This session was an efficient and productive way for everyone to discuss, offer suggestions and come to a quick design solution," he says.

Being in the IT field means Mr Goh has to be constantly on his toes and keep abreast of new developments.

"I am constantly scanning the market for new technology trends and designs that are applicable to my projects. As a developer behind LEARNet, I conduct market research to see how people search, acquire and share information online,

and incorporate these findings to develop IT solutions that meet the needs and expectations of today's tech-savvy servicemen," he says.

In addition to LEARNet, Mr Goh has the chance to adapt new technologies in novel ways, such as using mobile tools to monitor soldiers' well-being and developing a self-help portal for Mindef personnel.

### Reaping rewards

Currently pursuing a part-time master's degree in knowledge management at Nanyang Technological University to better understand how to harness technology for real-world applications, Mr Goh is thankful his employer is supportive of his learning pursuits.

"While part-time studies are never easy, DSTA has been supportive of my quest for learning. I can apply for time off and exam leave for my studies and I really appreciate that," he says.

He has no regrets about choosing the public service over a banking career.

"I love how work as an IT defence engineer in DSTA offers a blend of engineering work and project management, with the opportunity to support Singapore's defence capability. Knowing my work benefits others drives me to innovate and deliver solutions that improve the training and learning of our soldiers," he says.