



SmarTone

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14

## Grasp the present, look to the future – Anna Yip

既爭朝夕 放眼未來 — 葉安娜

The price competition in the local mobile telecommunications industry is leading to perpetual price wars. With the dawn of the 5G era, there will soon be radical changes to the industry's overall eco-system. Anna Yip, Chief Executive Officer of SmarTone, believes price wars are merely short-term, stopgap strategies among competitors and that only a superior network with thoughtful and flexible services can truly stand out in the market, which she says "is exactly the competition edge of SmarTone".

### Knowing the market and customer base

As Anna mentioned on a number of occasions, taking part in price wars is by no means a long-term or sustainable way to maintain a company's competitiveness. She points out that reducing prices is easy, however, what customers really value is service quality. One single strategy cannot cater for all customers, therefore, SmarTone continues to conduct market researches and focus groups in order to tailor-made service plans for customers with different needs. These include the SuperCare Family Plan with several SIM cards for families and mobile phone workshops for elderlies; monthly plans especially designed for tertiary students; multi-destination with free data-sharing service plans for frequent travellers, travellers can even choose different service day plans to meet their own needs; the recently launched all-digital self-service brand, Birdie, provides millennials with an online-only sales

and customer service platform with service plans that are even more flexible. Customers can download and use the Birdie mobile app to share their user experiences. She adds, "The key is still remaining relevant to the actual market conditions and needs because price is not the only factor customers consider."

SmarTone conducts market researches and collects customer feedback from different channels on a regular basis, and recognizes what customers value most is a good network experience. However, there is a general misunderstanding in the market that theoretical network speeds equal network performance. In fact, as many have already experienced, even when a network speed test result is satisfactory, online browsing is not necessarily smooth. Anna says that this is because online browsing experience will be affected by many other factors in addition

to network speed. For this reason, actual network quality and user experience cannot be assured when you only tout network speed. In view of this, SmarTone redefined a new standard of telecommunications services with a "5S" designation last year. 5S stands for Speed, Stability, Seamlessness, Security and Service. "People think the higher the network speed, the better the online experience. In fact, many factors, including network stability, seamlessness and even customer service, can directly influence the overall user experience of customers. That's why '5S' is the new standard that focuses squarely on the overall customer experience."

### Opportunities despite fierce competition

Anna thinks fierce market competition also brings about positive impact to business development. "During last year's price wars,



Anna encourages creativity among her team members  
葉安娜鼓勵同事創新

SmarTone attracted many new customers by offering a superior network and thoughtful services. The telecommunications business actually involves a great deal of fixed investments, so operating costs don't vary much regardless of the number of customers. While we will continue to invest moderately, price wars have given SmarTone an opportunity to acquire more new customers, which has had a positive impact on our business."

While attracting new customers is crucial, retaining current customers is just as important. SmarTone's customer churn rate is the lowest among local telecommunications service providers. Anna points out that besides providing fast, stable and seamless network quality to customers, their enviable customer loyalty can also be attributed in large part to the efforts of their staff. "Our team has put a great deal of effort into bolstering customer loyalty, including offering suitable and competitive monthly plans to customers whose contracts are approaching to end soon. We also constantly provide thoughtful services and privileges like birthday cakes and free workshops for customers. Moreover, we reward selected customers with prestigious benefits, including a 24-hour service hotline, prestigious bespoke offers and diverse lifestyle experiences, to show them how important they are to us at SmarTone," she adds.

### The 5G era early bird

The coming 5G network revolution will greatly increase data flow and reduce latency, providing a better online experience for consumers as well as providing a host of different business opportunities. SmarTone began developing its Information and

Communications Technology Solutions (ICT Solutions) a few years ago. Now with the 5G era approaching, SmarTone has sped up the development of its ICT business. SmarTone Innovation Hub, established in November of last year, develops new technology applications by building a cross-industry platform to assist and encourage corporate customers to move towards business digitalization. SmarTone's ICT business has achieved satisfying results in the early stage. Anna adds, "our ICT business is growing annually at 50%, generating positive word-of-mouth publicity by helping corporate clients increase overall productivity. We have discovered countless opportunities in labour-intensive industries such as manufacturing sector and service sector."

Standing at the cusp of the 5G era, SmarTone is certainly working hard to continually enhance its network quality. The territory's first 5G technology demonstration was successfully conducted early last year. Also, SmarTone became the first network operator to trial the FDD Massive MIMO technology and run a successful technical test of its License Assisted Access (LAA) technology, which will significantly boost current network speed and stability.

### Seeing is believing

"Seeing is believing" is the core of Anna's management philosophy. She says that no one really knows whether a plan is good or bad until the results are seen. Therefore, she tries to avoid implementing plans that may take a very long time to see the results. The earlier results are seen, the sooner we can conclude if a project is effective or not. Monitoring interim results is what motivates the SmarTone team to continue working hard too. "Actually, I encourage my team to make mistakes, as long

as the costs aren't too high. If I don't tolerate some mistakes, my team will be exceedingly careful, which will just block their creativity. However, I do ask them to detect mistakes as early as possible. If we discover dead ends too late, it will be difficult for us to remedy the situation and get back on the right track," Anna notes.

Anna also believes strongly in the power of teamwork. She thinks senior staff bring experience and stability, while younger staff introduce innovation. Together they motivate a business to constantly strive for excellence. She adds that being decisive and determined is still an essential management trait today. However, unlike in the past, managers have to find out how to sustain a company's creativity more than just issuing orders. She also touched on how important it is to promote business creativity and development from the bottom up. "Even if we think a product is excellent and attractive, continued persistence will be futile if the market does not accept it. We must keep on improving and developing our products and services until customers truly like them. Under today's new economic model, more than ever we need our frontline staff to lead the company's creative thinking from the bottom up through their experiences meeting with and observing customers."

### Balancing work and life

Focusing on one thing too much can hinder flexible thinking, so even though Anna is deeply engaged in her work, she insists on living a balanced life. Apart from her work responsibilities, this mother of one enjoys doing yoga, going to the gym, hiking and reading. She jokingly says she is also quite busy during her time off, adding - "I like getting in touch with the world and learning things outside of work. I'm always too busy to sit down and read a book, so I watch sharing clips on the net instead to help broaden my horizons."

She admits that obstacles in work and family are inevitable, but the most important thing is to find a step-by-step way to deal with issues when they arise. She explains her approach to problem-solving - "First, you need to understand the situation you are facing, then you examine the causes and effects so you can approach the issue honestly. Finally, it is important to fully let go of any unhappy memories." Only when we face adversity calmly can we be fearless against the challenges that confront us.

本地流動電訊業競爭激烈，減價戰不時出現，而隨著5G時代來臨，行業生態即將出現巨變。SmarTone行政總裁葉安娜深信，減價戰只是同行競爭的權宜之計，未來只有憑優質網絡、貼心而靈活的服務，才能在市場中脫穎而出——「這正是SmarTone的優勢。」

#### 需掌握市場情況客群結構

葉安娜過往在不同場合都強調，減價戰並非長遠及可持續維持公司競爭力的方法。她指出要減價是很容易，但客戶看重的仍是服務質素，單一策略絕不能滿足所有客群，因此SmarTone不斷進行市場研究和分析，因應不同客戶而度身訂造切合其需要的服務計劃——例如為家庭客戶而設的多SIM「全家享」月費

計劃，並為長者客戶安排手機工作坊；為年輕客戶而設的大專生月費計劃；為經常往來香港及海外人士提供數據免費共享服務計劃，外遊人士亦可因應需要而選擇不同的漫遊日費計劃；至於近期推出的全新網上自助服務品牌「自由鳥」，提供純網上銷售和客戶服務平台，以及更具彈性的服務計劃，更成立「自由鳥族群」，用戶可於自由鳥手機應用程式內互相分享使用心得，則是針對千禧世代客戶。「關鍵仍然是緊貼市場實際情況和需要，因為價錢不是客戶唯一的考慮因素。」

SmarTone定時透過市場調查及不同渠道收集客戶意見，了解到客戶最著重的是良好的網絡體驗。然而，市場上

有很多誤解，認為最高理論網絡速度相等於網絡表現，但很多時候即使網絡測試速度結果理想，但上網時卻不見得特別順暢，相信是不少人共同的上網體驗。葉安娜表示，因為上網是否順暢，除受網速決定之外，還受到不同因素影響，故單純標榜網速快慢，並不足以衡量真正的網絡質素及體驗。因此，去年SmarTone以「5S」來釐定電訊業服務新標準——快（Speed）、穩（Stability）、順（Seamlessness）、安心（Security）及貼心（Service）；「坊間往往以為網速愈快，上網體驗愈好。事實上網絡的穩定性、暢順度，以至客戶服務等，均直接影響客戶整體網絡體驗，而5S正正是一套著重客戶體驗的新標準。」

“ Actually, I encourage my team to make mistakes. If they are too scared to make errors and are exceedingly careful, that will just block their creativity.

我鼓勵同事犯錯，因為太害怕犯錯，只會變得規行舉步，窒礙創意。

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Anna reveals that SmarTone has sped up the developmental pace of its ICT business, which has achieved satisfying results in the early stage  
葉安娜透露，SmarTone的ICT業務加速發展，初步取得相當理想的成績



Anna considers her team to be close comrades  
葉安娜視同事如戰友，關係融洽



### 激烈競爭下的機遇

葉安娜認為激烈的市場競爭對業務發展也有正面影響。「減價戰之下，SmarTone憑著優質網絡及貼心服務，在過去一年吸納了很多新客戶。事實上電訊業涉及很多固定投資，無論客戶人數多寡，營運成本亦不會有太大增減，我們亦會繼續適當地投放資源，而減價戰為SmarTone帶來增加客戶數量的機會，從而為我們的生意額帶來正面影響。」

除了吸納新客外，留住現有客戶亦同樣重要。SmarTone在本港電訊業內維持全行最低的現有客戶流失率，除了為客戶提供快、穩、順的網絡質素外，葉安娜亦歸功於同事的努力。「同事在提升客戶忠誠度及歸屬感方面花了很多功夫，如為快將滿約的客戶提供切合其需要而具競爭力的月費計劃；公司亦不斷為客戶送上貼心的服務及優惠，如生日蛋糕及免費工作坊；更以優越禮遇回饋特選客戶，包括設立24小時服務專線、安排度身訂造的優越禮遇及多元化的品味生活體驗，讓他們感受到SmarTone對他們的重視。」

### 早著先機 迎接5G時代

未來的5G網絡，能大大提升數據流量，兼能大幅縮短時延，除了令消費者有更佳的上網體驗外，更衍生出不同的業務機遇。SmarTone早在多年前，已拓展資訊及通訊科技解決方案（ICT Solutions），而隨著5G時代臨近，亦

加緊了ICT業務的發展步伐；於去年11月成立的SmarTone Innovation Hub，透過建立跨業界平台，研發新科技應用，協助企業客戶邁向業務數碼化，ICT業務初步取得令人滿意的成果。「公司在ICT解決方案的業務規模按年增長50%，贏得知名企業客戶口碑，協助他們提升工作效率。我們更發現在一些勞動密集型行業，例如製造和服務業等，仍然有很多發展機會。」

當然在5G時代來臨前，SmarTone亦持續提升網絡質素——去年初在本港進行首個5G技術展示，其後亦是首間網絡商試行FDD Massive MIMO技術及首次成功試行LAA（License Assisted Access）技術測試，提高現時網絡速度和穩定性。

### Seeing is Believing

眼見為實（Seeing is Believing），是葉安娜的管理哲學核心。她笑言任何計劃，只有看到結果才可判斷是好是壞，故會盡量避免制定一些要經過很長時間才見成效的計劃，因為愈早見到結果，便知道項目的可行性，同時這些「階段成果」也可以成為同事繼續堅持下去的動力。「其實我鼓勵同事犯錯，只要代價不太昂貴便可。因為若不容許他們有錯，只會令同事變得規行舉步，窒礙創意。不過我會要求他們及早發現錯誤，若太遲才知道行不通，事情便難以修正。」

葉安娜相信團隊的力量，她認為年資長的同事帶來經驗和穩定性，年輕同事則可為團隊引入新思維；相輔相成，企業才有不斷進步的動力。她表示現今作為管理層，當然要有敢作決定的魄力，但要企業保持創造力，不能像以往一樣，事事依賴管理層「發號施令」，更需要由下而上推動業務創新和發展：「即使我們以為某些產品多好、多吸引，但市場要是不接受，再堅持也是徒然，只有不斷改進產品及服務，令客人喜歡才行。在今天的新經濟模式下，我們更需要前線同事，透過他們親身接觸客人的經驗和觀察，再由下而上將創意思維引入企業之內。」

### 平衡生活之道

要有靈活的思維，就不能過份專注在單一的事情，葉安娜縱使投入工作，她也堅持活出平衡生活。工作以外，她是一孩之母，喜歡瑜伽、健身、行山和閱讀，她笑稱公餘時間也忙過不休。「我喜歡接觸工作以外的世界和知識，由於平日始終太忙，能夠靜靜地看書的機會不多，因此較喜歡瀏覽一些分享短片，以擴闊自己的眼光。」

她坦言在工作 and 家庭中，總會面對逆境的時候，但最重要是懂得一步一步離開艱難的處境：「先要明白眼前的景況，再確切理解當中的來龍去脈，然後認真處理問題，最後徹底放低不愉快的回憶。」大概只有能從容面對逆境，才能毋懼面對挑戰。