



'Let's just say I'm an accidental entrepreneur.'

— Eldee Tang, managing director of LFI (Singapore) and winner of a Most Promising Entrepreneur award

BT: And what are some of the challenges you've run into?

Eldee Tang: Since literally anyone can be a distributor of our company, they could have promised prospective customers anything just to get the sales done. When discovered, instead of terminating them, we counsel them through various methods to straighten out their behaviour – because it's a behavioural issue that has stemmed from their past experience, character or background. While some straightened up and became better, some left. We did our part.

BT: What attributes should a young entrepreneur like yourself possess?

Eldee Tang: It's easy to be an entrepreneur, anyone can become one. But growing it into a sustainable business takes more than just an idea. When someone is confronted with challenges, he either faces them squarely and continues to grow with determination or just falls out when the stress level gets too much for him to handle. Otherwise, he gets phased out by the competition if he begins to enjoy the fruits early and neglects the blindside.

In our case it takes team effort, sacrifice, innovation and a lot of reflection to continue the journey. We are still on it.

Young minds, big ideas

Three young entrepreneurs tell **LYNN KAN** what drives them and what it's like heading a company at their age

RUNNING a business comes more easily if one has credibility, something that comes with age and experience. That might be part of the reason why few youngsters leave the comforts and confines of employment to become hard-nosed entrepreneurs.

However, inventiveness and vigour are some of the traits of youth that are synonymous with being leaders of companies. Being one's own boss at a youthful age has some benefits as well, as some young winners of this year's Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship Awards tell BT.

BT: What were you doing before running your own business?

Eldee Tang: I was exploring direct selling when I was in national service. I became a full-time distributor in 1999 after my NS. Jobs were scarce then and that's when I realised I had to have more control over my future and not leave it to fate. I left the company in 2003 and started working in a management position as a business development manager in a skincare company. My primary task was to develop a model for direct selling for the company.

BT: How did you start your business?

Eldee Tang: Let's just say I'm an accidental entrepreneur. I left the previous company's management because a promise made to me was not delivered. Disappointed, I wanted to enrol in a Masters programme but a group of sales distributors approached me collectively. They understood the reasons why I left the company and they wanted me to start a company of my own so that they could continue to work with me. It was very touching and encouraging. That was how LFI started in April 2006.

BT: Who or what motivated and inspired you to start your own business?

Eldee Tang: No one in particular but I am always impressed with and encouraged by entrepreneurs who succeed in their business ventures against all odds.

Of course, each success has a story to tell. In the first company I was in, I witnessed many people behaving irrationally with their newfound wealth and status. To some it's a life-changing experience and to others, a derailed character and an ego boosted out of all proportion. They simply did not know how to manage success.

It certainly gives me confidence going by how our prospective overseas business partners see our establishment. The first question often is: "How much did your parents help you with?" I just laugh it off and say "I was not so lucky to be born with a silver spoon in my mouth; the company started off with a team of people and with some savings."

BT: What have been some of the high points of running the business?

Eldee Tang: It was shifting into this new building and branding it "LFI business centre" – a gathering place for people who want to have more control over their future. Our motivation to reach for greater heights is seeing them excited and motivated about their future. Also, witnessing our distributors maturing to become responsible adults and seeing customers supporting our products and services with gratification are the high points.