

# THE STRAITS TIMES

SPECIAL H23 | HOME BlueSky Festival 2007

## 'An entrepreneur not rely on sp

What does it take for a business to succeed? Four entrepreneurs share their experiences with Mary Lim

**How did the idea for your business come about?**

**DC (Darius Cheung, chief executive officer and founder, tenCube):** Our anchor product is WaveSecure, which allows users to lock their phone remotely to completely disable it, track it, back up data and wipe out data on it. This came about because one of our founders, Varun, kept losing his mobile phone. So we tried to come up with a way to help users not only recover their phone but get a copy of the data on it.

**IR (Issy Richardson, creative director, Belle & Dean):** Belle & Dean is an online company that sells fashion for men, women and babies. Our products are made of 100 per cent certified organic cotton; we do not use sweatshops or child labour. We are based in Singapore, but also sell to customers in Australia and the UK. When my business partner Dean O'Sullivan and I found out that cotton was one of the world's most chemically sprayed

plants, we wanted to do our bit to help save the environment. We also discovered that organic cotton fashion was not available in Singapore and decided to bring it here.

**YGJ (Yong Guan Jer, senior sales executive, Gajah International):** Gajah International is a one-stop solution research and development company offering a wide range of software designs.

It was started by a group of seven friends in National University of Singapore, where the spirit of enterprise is advocated through various support programmes.

We were working on an idea for real time bus information in 2002 but went



the following year accumulating funds so we could further develop the concept.

**KE (Kenny Eng, director, Gardenasia):** My dad owns a nursery business, Nyeer Phoe Flower Garden. One day, I was roped in to help with a roadshow. I enjoyed the experience so I decided to join the business.

In 2000, I restructured the business into three different sections, including Nyeer Phoe Flower Garden, Petal & Leaves, and Gardenasia, all under Nyeer Phoe Group. With Gardenasia, the business took on a new, lifestyle element, as our range of water features helped push the notion of bringing outdoors indoors.

**Describe the biggest challenge you had to overcome.**

**DC:** Establishing credibility. We were a young company run by young people, so it was tough convincing clients about our products.

**IR:** Finding a supplier. We were quite particular with requirements, so it took us over six months to find the right one.

**YGJ:** Finance. To accumulate enough funds to



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PHOTOS: JAMIE KOH

Clockwise from above: Yong Guan Jer, Issy Richardson, Darius Cheng and Kenny Eng.



PHOTO: BELLE R DEAN

...s but also sold electronics hardware. Creating awareness. When I first joined the business in 1999, it was dealing with the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis. After that came Sars and the bird flu scare. So I had to

**Do you think Singaporeans have become more enterprising or at least more open to the spirit of enterprise?**

**DC:** Yes. The environment allows us to thrive, thanks to tax breaks and incentives such as patent grants, among others.

**IR:** Singaporeans generally seem very enterprising. But they are less open-minded about trying out untried and untested ideas. Less emphasis on the bottom line may help.

**YGJ:** Yes. Local universities provide students with many entrepreneurship programmes. So that has allowed many young people to develop ideals and a strong drive to succeed at it.

**KE:** It is important to boost the spirit of enterprise. An entrepreneur must have so much hunger, it should motivate him to continue pursuing his vision even after a fall.

Meanwhile, the Government, instead of giving grants, can consider giving rewards to companies whose proposals are accepted. After all, an entrepreneur shouldn't rely on

## SPECIAL

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