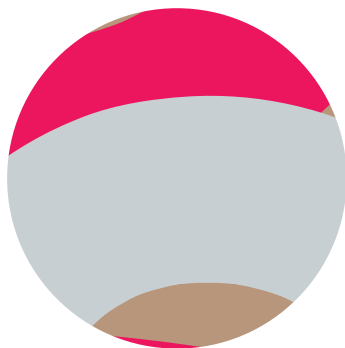
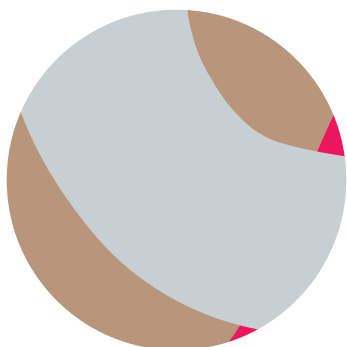
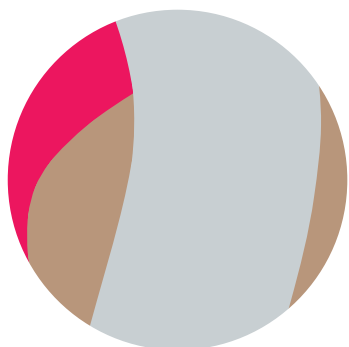


SEED EXPERIMENT

A record of a group
of young social innovator



SEED EXPERIMENT

A record of a group
of young social innovator



FOREWORD

A DISPLAY OF CARE, COURAGE, TALENT

LING KAR-KAN, SBS

Director

Jockey Club Design Institute for Social Innovation

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Creativity is infinite. Innovation is an essential force which drives the progress of society. The 31 stories recorded in this book are 31 forces driving social progress.

Innovation is often goal oriented. When we see things that are far from desirable in the world, aspirations for change arise. These 31 stories showcase care for the visually impaired and hearing impaired, care for the autistic, dyslexic and disabled, care for elderly scavengers, and care for parents and children. These are the kinds of care that inspire infinite creative ideas which bring about the possibility of changing the current situation.

Creativity must be transformed into action to bring about real change. These 31 stories are examples of putting creativity into action. They involve people who gave up their high paying jobs and put aside their comfortable lifestyles. Some, despite their doubts, carried on with their projects in an indomitable manner; and some, despite knowing of the difficulties lying ahead, had no fear or regret. All of that requires a tremendous amount of courage! It is precisely this courage that has driven them to act, to press ahead, and to open up 31 paths in the wilderness of frustration.

They are moving towards their goals with unsurpassable bravery and

determination, carrying not only their creativity but also the expectations of their loved ones. One day, these winding paths will turn into open highways. They have the talent to plan and execute with precision; they have the wisdom to master and apply advanced technology and pioneering techniques. Every social innovation project is akin to a social experiment. The most important part is the affinity of the social innovators, who have successfully convinced and brought together a large number of like-minded people to participate in their experiments and develop their ideas into technically viable and sustainable ventures. Many of them have successfully started their own businesses!

Funded by the government's Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund, 700 people have participated in Good Seed's innovation and entrepreneurship incubation programmes over the past three years. The programme has seen the proposal of nearly 200 innovative ideas, which have been consolidated into about 100 social innovation projects. Nearly half of them have received funding from the Social Innovation Fund. We have selected 31 of

these projects to tell the touching stories behind them, hoping to pass on the efforts of more than 700 people, so that in the future, Good Seed can accommodate more people's dreams of innovation and entrepreneurship, promote social progress, and make our world a better place!

This is not just a dream, but an ideal that you and I can achieve!

FOREWORD

GOOD DEEDS AND GOOD SEED

RAYMOND CHU

Former Assistant Director

The Knowledge Transfer and Entrepreneurship Office
(KTEO, formerly the “Institute for Entrepreneurship”)

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Many social enterprises have sprung up in Hong Kong over the past few years. The number of social enterprises has increased from around 200 a decade ago to over 600 nowadays. The variety has also increased. Years ago, these social enterprises were mainly derived from social welfare organisations and focused on creating jobs for the needy. Now, they are established by people from different sectors to help various disadvantaged groups using innovative ideas, products, and services. Social enterprises are becoming better known and accepted by the public.

However, the concept of “social innovation” is slightly different from that of social enterprise; the term is also

relatively new in society. A few years ago, few incubation programmes existed. When the government launched the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund (SIE Fund) four years ago, we seized the opportunity and submitted our proposal to apply to become an intermediary. We wished to extend our experience and spirit of supporting students and alumni to “Do Well Do Good” in The Hong Kong Polytechnic University to the entire city. It was our honour to be approved by the Fund and become one of the first intermediaries of the scheme. We launched the Good Seed programme in early 2015, aiming to train young people to become social innovators. At the same

time, the programme also provides funding for these young people to put social innovation ideas into practice and to “experiment” with them in the community in order to test their effectiveness.

People may know the programme as “Good Seed”, but perhaps fewer are familiar with the Chinese name “好善社”. When we brainstormed the Chinese name, it was challenging to come up with one that conveyed the meaning of “Good Seed”. It seemed too straightforward to translate it literally as “好種子”. In the end, we decided to align the name with the aim of our programme. Our vision is to nurture young people, with the hope that they will blossom in the community, bringing innovation to society and solving social problems. The Chinese name “好善社” comprises the meaning of gathering good people and good deeds in society. Reading it backwards also results in the meaning of “good society”, which is also the goal of this project. We aspire to produce people and things that are good to society.

Over the past three years, we have trained over 700 young people through this programme, including students and working professionals such as doctors,

physiotherapists, ex-bankers, brand managers and social workers. We have also funded more than 40 projects through the SIE Fund. These projects are targeted at various disadvantaged groups in the community, including the elderly, the visually impaired, hearing impaired and disabled, low-income families, ethnic minorities, as well as autistic children.

I have been fortunate to work with a group of dedicated and creative young people over the past three years. Their common point is their sincere wish to do something good for society. We have Rico, who provides opportunities for the visually impaired to enjoy artworks; we have Terence and Alison, who work together to save short-dated food by setting up Hong Kong’s first short-dated goods retailer, providing affordable food that is safe to consume to the public, especially to low-income families. I have felt in person their commitment to the community and the underprivileged, not to mention their faith and perseverance in doing something good for society. This goodness in people and the things they do is exactly how Good Seed touches lives and hearts.

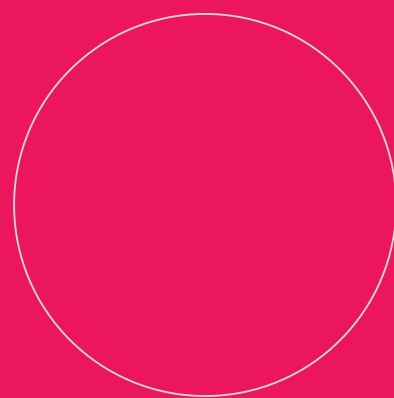
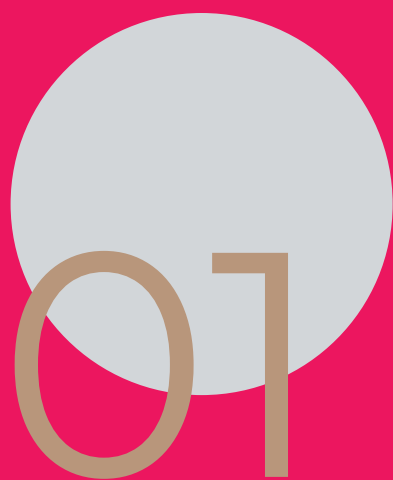
CONTENTS

In this book, you can find the real-life stories of around 30 social entrepreneurs supported by Good Seed on their paths of social entrepreneurship over the past few years. I hope that after reading this book, readers will feel how I felt and be touched by their passion and perseverance.

Social innovation and social entrepreneurship have always been exceedingly difficult paths. I am glad to see so many young people willing to step forward and embark on this challenging journey as pioneers. I hope that this book will inspire more people to join us in advocating social innovation, using creative thinking to solve social problems, and building a fairer, more equitable and sustainable society in Hong Kong.

12	AESIR Story + Technology: Developing a Positive Mindset while Having Fun
18	BARRIER FREE SCHOOL Building a Self-Learning Platform to Promote Independence and Flexibility
23	BEYOND VISION PROJECTS Everyone Is Equal Before Art: “Seeing” Through Tactile Technology
28	CHEARS Enhancing Hearing Aids with Smartphones Breaking the Barrier of Hearing Loss for Seniors
34	CHOCOLATE RAIN Passing on the Mobility and Local Wisdom of the Older Generation
42	EASIREAD Choose Fonts to Cater to Your Needs
48	EFFORTLESS TOILET Unwavering Commitment to Developing Barrier-free Toilets Stronger Conviction Thanks to Depression
55	EYERUNNER Personal Navigation Device Challenges Limited Senses
61	FESTYLE “Festyle” Nurtured from Idealism: The Little Hothouse Flower and Women’s Path to Empowerment
68	GREENPRICE A Precocious Entrepreneur
74	HAPPIKAMIWORKSHOP Innovative Origami,a Breakthrough in Traditional Teaching Tools

80	ISEE MOBILE APPS Using Technology to Become Others’ Eyes	166	BRING PARENTS FOR FUN Let the Children Lead
86	MARKETEER Discovering Local Hidden Gems in Public Markets	172	LITTLE POSSIE LIMITED Little Possibilities in the Gaps
92	MEDEXO ROBOTICS How an Inventor Shows Care to Society	179	THE SECOND BOX The Destination Is the Start — An 18-Month “Failed” Lesson
99	MEDPOT When Passion Becomes a Weapon	186	SEW ON STUDIO Let the Elderly Grow Old Elegantly
106	ONUP From Paper to Ground, The Evolution of Mobility Aids	192	LOVE SOCCER Fun Soccer on the Turf
112	PATERMATER A Compulsory Course for Children	198	AUDIO DESCRIPTION ASSOCIATION (HONG KONG) A Touchable Exhibition
119	POKEGUIDE Searching for an Exit for Urban Dwellers	205	WITH YOU OUT-PATIENT ESCORT SERVICES Pioneers of Transforming the “Industry of Humans”
126	DYELICIOUS Beauty that Regenerates Food Waste and Reconciles Families	212	Reflections of the Executive Team
133	SENIO TECH FALL DETECTION DEVICE I Travelled, and I Saw the World and People	216	One’s Attitude Determines Their Success
140	SHARE FARMING COMMUNITY A One-man Social Enterprise, A Half-green Life		
148	UNSPOKEN Tearing Off Labels by Telling Stories		
154	VOID Relax and Empty Your Mind		
160	WHEELMAN Building a Barrier-Free City to Cater for Everyone’s Needs		



STORY + TECHNOLOGY: DEVELOPING A POSITIVE MINDSET WHILE HAVING FUN

AESIR – CHAN HO SING ERNEST

STORYTELLING IN 3D MAKES LEARNING ENJOYABLE

A graduate of PolyU's Department of Land Surveying and Geo-Informatics, Ernest has formed an inextricable bond with children with special educational needs (SEN) by serendipity. As a volunteer, he met a child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who seldom communicated with others. Until one day, on a trip around Hong Kong Island, they ended up telling each other stories throughout the trip and both enjoyed it thoroughly whether the stories were real or fictional. "He really enjoys listening to stories, and I realised that the way he looks at things is different from others – he's more observant – like, he'd pay attention to the colour of the tiles in a restaurant." To his surprise, the kid told his mother about their trip after going home. This brought Ernest immense satisfaction, planting the seed of his forthcoming project.

Upon graduation, Ernest started working at a large corporation in Sweden. On the surface, it seemed like everything a fresh

graduate could ever ask for. However, Ernest could not find his purpose in life through his work and experienced an existential crisis, after which he quit his job and returned to Hong Kong with determination in search of a new direction. He found out by chance that he could incorporate technology into storytelling to make it a communication tool between parents and children. "Sometimes, parents may not know exactly how to keep the conversation going with their kids. In such a case, AR can help." During the development of his project, Ernest kept asking himself what message he wanted to convey and what impact he hoped to create. In the end, he decided to target children with learning disabilities, ASD, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

“ Storytelling is the best parent-child activity. A lot of research suggests that telling stories to children can boost their imagination, improve their attention, teach them to control their emotions, let them acquire everyday knowledge, and strengthen parent-child relationships.

That is why Ernest, teamed up with researchers of positive psychology, published the first interactive storybook in Hong Kong aimed at nurturing a positive mindset in children using a 3D AR mobile app. ”



“I wanted to make something practical, something that really helps.” The project aims to use AR to explain the theories of positive psychology in a way that is easy to understand, with the hope that the book can become a useful reference tool for parents, teachers, psychologists, counsellors, social workers, and healthcare professionals. The book includes evidence-based exercises to help children experience positive emotions and become more aware of them. In the long run, it can encourage proactive behaviour and build positive values. “Kids are sensitive to pictures, and we can explain to them why they should or should not behave in a certain way through the story.”

To Ernest, SEN is just a label – everybody

learns and gets along with others in their own ways.

“The most traditional and ‘efficient’ way is for children to listen when you speak. But why can’t we do something or read something together? It’s at least better than making them lose interest in learning.”

He believes that different people have different learning modes, and his partner is a good example. “He dropped out of school when he was in Form 4 and worked different jobs. He then went to night school, the Institute of Vocational Education (IVE), the Vocational Training Council (VTC), took distance learning courses, got a higher diploma, and then acquired a bachelor’s degree. We still

work together just fine.” Labels are for commodities, not people. Ernest hopes that the AR storybooks can someday bring joy to learning as much as Disney does. “People are most willing to listen to stories. In the past, stories could only be told orally. Now, I want to use a more effective way to get messages across. I hope the centre can be transformed into a playground, a place where even kids with special educational needs can learn something happily.”

From preparation to implementation, from printing the first edition to having it sold out and needing to reprint, Ernest felt the happiest about gaining recognition while doing good for society. “I remember this from a talk I once attended – ‘whether an organisation is for-profit or non-profit, it should do something good for society and create value.’” Creating value means doing something useful. Ernest also made friends while planning the project, got to know people who share similar values, and gained recognition from others. He has even received a “love letter” professing support for the project. In this commercial society, however, Ernest still feels a little insecure.

“Social enterprises face the same problems as for-profit organisations. We’ve had people pretending to be clients asking for information, and we’ve faced false accusations – all sorts of curious incidents. So, we need to set a proper boundary.”

He stresses that whether one engages in social innovation or not is not important; what matters the most is not doing harm to society. It is difficult enough to do something well – isn’t it even more challenging to make sure that it is also a good deed?

“ Everything is challenging, and that’s why it’s worth doing. If it’s too easy, I’ll be like, it’s not for me. To achieve breakthroughs, we need to challenge ourselves constantly. ”



02

BUILDING A SELF-LEARNING PLATFORM TO PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE AND FLEXIBILITY

BARRIER-FREE SCHOOL –
CHEUNG WING YIN

INDEPENDENCE LEADS TO CONTROL OVER LIFE

Barrier-Free School was founded 14 years ago. Cheung Wing Yin participated in activities organised by Good Seed with other members. “I’m hard of hearing, so I have to read people’s lips when I talk to them. I have insight to the needs of people with disabilities, so I’m able to offer opinions from a user’s perspective.” It all started when the team saw an old man in a wheelchair selling chewing gum in Causeway Bay. They began thinking about how they could help people with disabilities and agreed that the cost of teaching IT is low as it only requires a computer. They decided to teach IT-related courses. While a wide variety of tutorial videos are available online, Wing Yin pointed out that those videos neglect the needs of the disabled. “There is often a lot of slang and English, making them hard to understand. So, in our videos, we use simple language and add subtitles. We also enlarge the images and choose background colours and fonts for easy reading.” In addition, the length of each video is around 10 to 15 minutes, so viewers do not have to stay focused for

an extended period of time. “We think computer-related courses can help equip people with disabilities and allow them to take up jobs at home.” The team hopes to encourage independence in people with disabilities so that they can learn with flexibility without having to rely on others.

The online platform of Barrier-Free School is like an educational institution without age or gender restrictions, or any requirements of academic qualifications. After registration, anyone can watch the videos according to their own needs at their own pace, anywhere, anytime. The videos are easy to understand, so they are suitable even for complete beginners. Topics include Microsoft Word workshops, Wix Web Design Introduction, video editing and post-production, website design and production (beginner), image editing with Photoshop (beginner to intermediate), PowerPoint and AI workshops, and so on. Moreover, there is a forum for students to ask questions and interact with one another. Students are also assigned homework, and tutors

on the platform will leave comments for them. The platform aims to be barrier-free and inclusive.

This project is not really an eye-catcher – it was simply born out of an often overlooked need for barrier-free online education. However, innovation is usually the product of communication and exchange of ideas. “I think Good Seed is really special. It lets us approach different organisations that are usually out of reach, stimulates our creativity and makes us realise the needs of people from different backgrounds. We’d never thought that design could help people in this way. We’ve learnt to see things more clearly.” Wing Yin also pointed out that feedbacks for the platform made them realise that they had neglected the fact that some people with disabilities cannot understand English. Afterwards, they started offering a supplementary elementary English course to help viewers understand the content taught in the IT courses.

“Helping people to help themselves” has always been a maxim in the social welfare sector, but helping others also provides you with an opportunity to help

yourself. Wing Yin revealed that she used to be afraid of speaking in front of others. Thanks to her partner’s encouragement, she took up the challenge of participating in a public speaking contest on behalf of the team.

“I was really scared at the beginning. I kept wanting to go to the washroom, and I wanted to throw up. But still, I had to bite the bullet.”

Overcoming her fears opened up new possibilities. She started doing promotions at different organisations, got to know different people and expanded her social circle.

“ The Hong Kong Government introduced compulsory education in 1971. Now, all children in Hong Kong enjoy 12 years of free education, and we have come to take education for granted. However, for people with disabilities, any chances to receive education are extremely valuable.

Barrier-Free School became aware of the fact that local people with disabilities can hardly gain access to IT training, so it set up a distance learning platform for them to learn at any time at home. After all, if you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.

”

However, no matter how good a project is, the question of whether it can earn money still comes up from time to time. “Money is not the most important thing. People with disabilities are already burdened, so we don’t want to charge them tuition fees.” Without income from the project, everyone on the team has to work full-time, and they only meet up once every two weeks. “We don’t want to rush. We’d like to take it slow since quality really matters, and there are different things to consider when filming videos for different levels.” Wing Yin admitted that the target audience is exclusively people with disabilities, but she hopes that everyone would stop taking things for granted and start thinking from a different perspective.

“There are a lot of misconceptions about people with disabilities. I really hope that the public will know that people with disabilities are not worthless. They’re unique in their own ways, just like ordinary folks. I hope everyone can treat them like any other people and get to know them, and after that, you’ll understand them better.”

03

EVERYONE IS EQUAL
BEFORE ART:

“SEEING”
THROUGH
TACTILE
TECHNOLOGY

BEYOND VISION PROJECTS -
CHAN MENG KHEONG RICO

TOUCH AND HEAR: FULFILLING EVERYDAY NEEDS FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Ten years ago, Rico was very much surprised when he saw some photos taken by visually impaired people in an exhibition. The quality of the photos was exceptional. After that, he started to pay attention to the needs of the visually impaired. He noticed that a lot of people thought that visually impaired people were not interested in art, but the fact was that most art venues neglected their needs. It was the lack of accessible facilities that deterred them. That was why Rico set out to write his doctoral dissertation on the Tactile Audio Interaction System, combining his interest and skills in design and art. He put a lot of effort into developing the technology needed, and later realised the need to bring his theories to life to bridge the gap, which would allow visually impaired people to appreciate works of art through touching and hearing. He then founded the social enterprise “Beyond Vision Projects”.

The Tactile Audio Interaction System turns 2D images into 3D art that can be felt and touched. Take the Mona Lisa as an example. The first step is to outline the portrait, demarcate different areas with lines and dots, and then print it on a special kind of heat-sensitive paper. When ink is heated, it expands to create texture on the paper, resulting in a tactile painting. Apart from feeling the painting with their hands, the audience can press a button on the painting to listen to an audio description that gives them more information about the painting. This puts visually impaired people back in charge in art appreciation. They can feel and understand the works at their own pace and of their own volition.

The project has already been running for a while. Rico said that even though he had never seen it as a business, he had no choice but to accept the rules of society over the past 18 months. “It turned out doing good and doing business are

“ To a lot of Hong Kong people, art is something they can easily do without — they seldom crave for it. Still, art has the power to move and inspire. It breaks the boundaries of time, place, and culture; it nourishes our lives.

To the visually impaired, however, they do not even have a chance to experience the inspiration brought by works of art. Therefore, Rico developed the Tactile Audio Interaction System during his five years of doctoral studies to let the visually impaired “see” masterpieces like the Mona Lisa and the scenery of Hong Kong.

”



inextricably linked. After all, you have to make a living.” As a result, he spends a lot of time socialising, meeting new friends, and expanding his social circle. Rico told us that he had been actively trying to get in touch with local art museums and explain his vision to others. A lot of people would praise his ideas, but very few would take action. He attributed this inaction to Hong Kong people’s fear of failure, which makes them unwilling to be the first person to make an attempt, but nor do they want to be the last. By chance, he got in touch with people from the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and was invited to design Tactile Audio Interaction System versions of their exhibits. He was surprised. “Local investors don’t believe in influence. They only see numbers.” Maybe investors focus only on the number

of beneficiaries and the volume of usage, so they have different demands. This situation sometimes makes Rico want to give up.

“But giving up is way too easy. In fact, no matter what you do, you will always come across challenges and difficulties. So, even if only 1% of people will benefit from it, I still think it’s worth doing.”

Rico later added that even if only one person will benefit from it, it is still a worthwhile cause and a good deed. “Once, a 16-year-old boy with acquired visual impairment came to an exhibition. After feeling a painting of the Tian Tan Buddha, he drew a picture himself, which included a lot of tourists. After asking him about it, I found out that the experience reminded him of his visit to the Tian Tan Buddha

“ As long as it continues to exist, it will impact lives. ”

when he was a child.” Therefore, Rico believes that the system does not only convey information and images, but also help people rediscover long-lost emotions and memories. This project does not only promote a technology, but it also promotes a vision — accessibility in society.

Our society belongs to each and every one of us, and everyone has different needs. Why should a particular group be ignored? Rico once travelled to a small island in Japan. No one spoke English there, so he could not ask for directions verbally. He had to resort to drawings to communicate with the locals. This inspired him to create some simple symbols to help visually impaired people to make sense of images. For instance, he created symbols of leaves to represent forests and trees, so that when people touch them, they recall images of natural sceneries. These techniques and symbols can be used in printing the map of Hong Kong and pictures of tourist attractions, such as the Victoria Harbour. Rico believes that a lot of visually impaired people do not know what Hong Kong, their

home, looks like. “They have the right to get to know their own city.”

It has been a bumpy road. Oftentimes, Rico wonders if it would have been easier if he had not started the project in Hong Kong. Joining Good Seed indeed helped him take a step forward in founding a social enterprise. He was able to build a stronger social network and learn from others’ experience and stories. Now, he stands on his own and wastes no chances to explore more possibilities. “If they don’t come my way, I’ll go to them.” Facing rejections and refusal, Rico believes that rather than waiting for art museums to make use of the technology, organising an exhibition himself is a better approach. While people may find the community of the visually impaired small, Rico continues to look for other ways to apply the technology. For example, he has discovered that tactile paintings can spark the interest of students with special educational needs, which helps them concentrate and learn new words.

04

ENHANCING HEARING
AIDS WITH SMARTPHONES

BREAKING THE
BARRIER OF
HEARING LOSS
FOR SENIORS

CHEARS - WEN ZHI HUI WILL

APPLYING KNOWLEDGE TO HELP PEOPLE FACING SIMILAR PROBLEMS

Will was brought up by his hearing-impaired grandfather. When they had conversations, they often had to repeat multiple times because they could not hear each other. Unfortunately, traditional hearing aids were expensive and could not filter out background noises. Therefore, his grandfather was unwilling to get one. As a result, it affected his whole family's quality of life and emotional stability.

When studying Electronic and Information Engineering at university, Will learnt about processing audio files on smartphones and noise cancellation. He wanted to do something for his grandfather, and successfully developed a replacement for traditional hearing aids with a mobile app and earphones, which enhanced the audio clarity. The first person to try it out was, of course, his grandfather. "He talked and talked the first time he put it on!" It was greatly encouraging to Will, so he joined different competitions and founded a company in hopes of launching

his product to help more people with hearing impairment and elderly people suffering from hearing loss. Users can adjust the tone setting manually between high, middle, and low, as well as the left/right sound balance and the audio setting for different environments such as indoor, outdoor, and open space. The product was well-received during the trial stage, but Will said that he knew nothing apart from the design of the product — he had no clue about the legal and corporate procedures of starting a company. "To most people, those are tough challenges, but I had no choice but to face them head-on. There's no one else who'd do it." He did it all by himself, for he knew that for start-ups, founders must come up with solutions themselves.

Having started a company and developed the technology to reduce audio latency, Will encountered difficulties in choosing the right hardware. The mobile app must be used with suitable Bluetooth

earphones that contain a specialised chip, so the cost is high — around six times that of an ordinary pair of earphones. He visited various organisations to introduce his project and look for manufacturers who were willing to work with him. However, “Everyone was practical. They thought the product wasn’t complete and the order was too small, and users wouldn’t be willing to pay.” Earphones are produced in thousands for each order, so Will have not been able to find a manufacturer to make the product prototype. “It’s difficult to find hardware manufacturers in Hong Kong. You either go to Shenzhen or Taiwan for that.” This, in turn, engenders new problems due to a change in business environment and the need for remote management.

5% of the world population are hearing impaired, which means that 360 million people need hearing aids.



“We’re a small company, so there are bound to be imperfections. That’s the give-and-take.”

Will was ambitious at the beginning. He wanted to launch a free version of the app along with a paid professional version, as well as providing a one-stop service for tailor-making Bluetooth earphones for users. But now, he has compromised with reality and slowed down a bit. According to the World Health Organization, around

““H-E-A-R” — that is how we learnt to spell the word “hear” when we were kids. What makes up most of the word is “E-A-R”. However, as ageing makes our bodies deteriorate, it gradually becomes difficult to hear clearly with our ears.

Will had seen first-hand how his grandfather’s hearing impairment impacted the quality of life, so he founded Chears Technology Company Limited. He developed an innovative smartphone hearing aid app that is different from traditional hearing aids to help seniors with hearing loss from grassroot backgrounds; it reduces environmental noise greatly by 70%, and can be downloaded for free and used with earphones.

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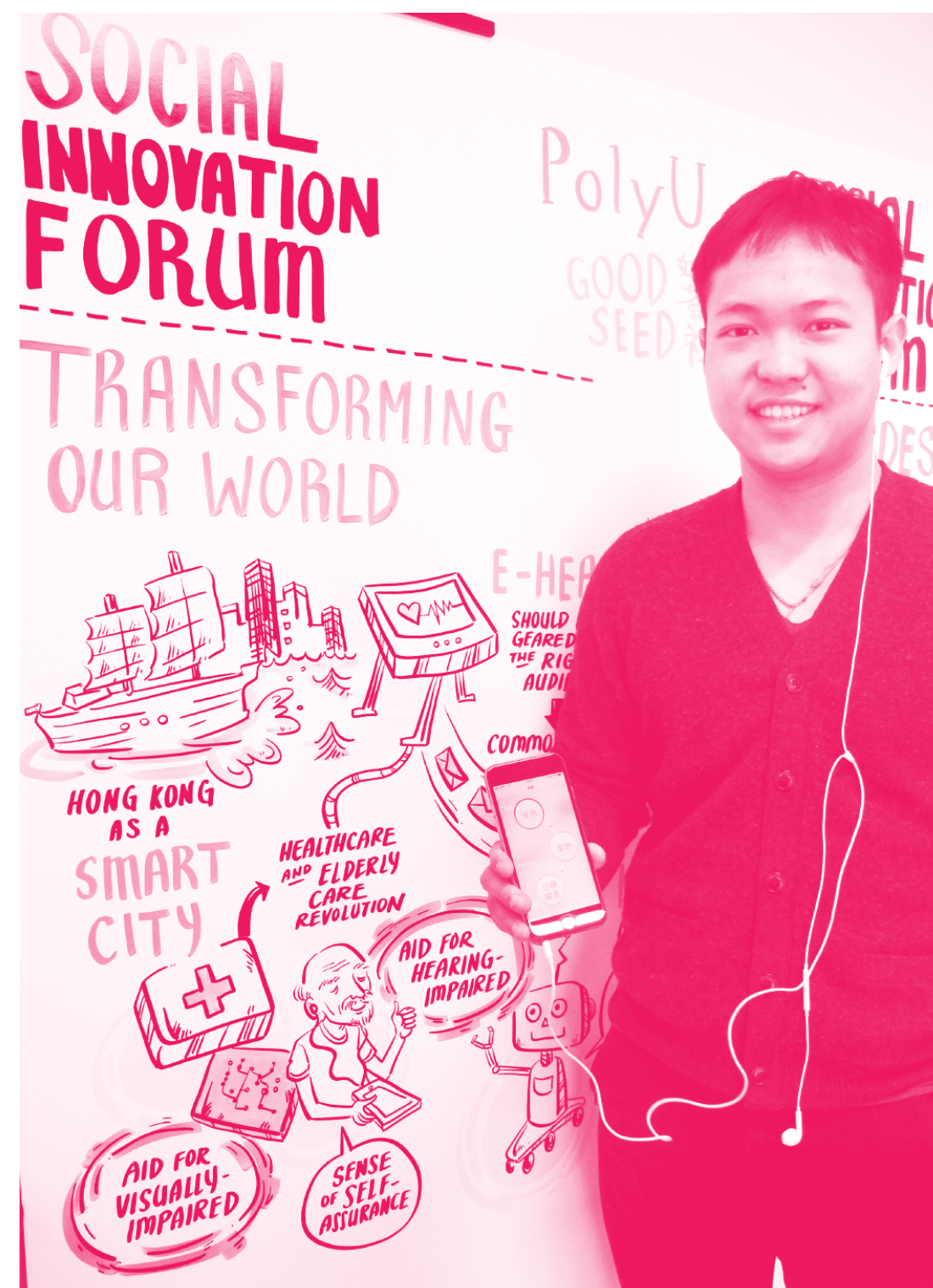
There are 200 thousand of them in Hong Kong alone — is the market really that small? “No matter how high we’re aiming, we have to be down-to-earth sometimes. A lot of people are enthusiastic and willing to join us, but we can’t provide reasonable remuneration. I don’t want to make it difficult for them. After all, they, too, have to make ends meet.” The company has decided to spend half of its time on real business, and the other half on enhancing its mobile app and the quality of the earphones. It will wait for enough funds to invest in hardware manufacturing, or for a large company to develop low audio latency earphones. Speaking of business transformation, Will mentioned that the company had not generated any income for a year already and had been relying on funding alone. He is always thinking about how to generate gains, and at times, he wants to give up. “It’s quite difficult to earn a living with this project. A lot of people are willing to try it out, but they’re not so willing to pay for it. We’re hoping to educate the public. Luckily, my family has been supportive towards my attempts.”

Compared to being an employee, there is much more to take up when you have your own business. Meeting with clients, building a social network, improving yourself constantly — you have to do it all on your own. To expand the customer base

and the source of income, Will is going to incorporate a hearing test in the app to see how users react to different frequencies. He also hopes to get certification and gain recognition.

“I’ve been talking a lot with my partner, but we must have the right mindset. We can work on projects while developing the product. We were more ambitious in the past; but a plan is just a plan, and it can be changed.”

He told us frankly that what he had accomplished in his final-year project was only 30% of the whole project. The real challenge was what came after. “That one year wasn’t enough.” He declared that he would not set a deadline for himself. After all, what he is not able to achieve now may be achieved in 30, or 40 years. Time is only one of many considerations.



05

PASSING ON THE MOBILITY AND LOCAL WISDOM OF THE OLDER GENERATION

CHOCOLATE RAIN -
MAK NGA TUEN PRUDENCE

“ Today’s city life has long been different from life in the olden days: parents are too busy to read bedtime stories to their kids, hawkers are driven out to clear the way for urban development, and even streets are disappearing; no one knows how to patch their clothes any more, nor does anyone cherish the last grain of rice in their bowl. This has not made us happier, nor has it made the city freer. ”

I met Prudence at her studio in Kwai Chung, and could not help but marvel at the sight once I stepped in — the walls were filled with her original designs, including dolls, teaware, storybooks, and so on. I was welcomed by the warmest, quirkiest colours and shapes, as if I was teleported to a childhood wonderland filled with love and fantasy.

“Come in!” Prudence raised her voice like a hawker. She was candid and cheerful, opening up about her true feelings and thoughts on society even to a stranger like me. Her self-mockery and humour revealed an innocent refusal of complete socialisation. She was painting a mural for a primary school in Kowloon City on that cold winter morning. At lunchtime,

she hurried back to her studio to conduct a workshop for a charity. She then squeezed in some time to talk to me while she gulped down her lunch. Her schedule is full every day, a sign of her devotion to creative work and the community.



CREATING EMOTIONAL RESONANCE WITH ART

In 2008, Prudence was doing a master's degree in design at Central St Martins in London, learning about community-oriented design. "Design must be incorporated in our daily lives, and it has to be relatable." But she only came to realise this after being in the industry for years. Looking back, when she just graduated, like many other girls who studied art, Prudence dreamt of becoming a cool artist. She started her own handicraft brand, Chocolate Rain, in 2000. "My target was high-end international markets. It was all about getting my works in galleries." But after a few years of creating designs on her PC and indulging in lonely self-admiration, she found that she was not happy — "Back then, my works were only created for the rich, or for narcissistic self-fulfilment. But after all, art should create emotional resonance. To achieve that, I decided to be more down-to-earth."

And that was her background. Just like in Robinson Crusoe, everything was built from scratch. Prudence grew up in a squatter area in Stanley. Her mother was a tailor, and her father, a carpenter. She found her love of painting because coloured pencils were the most affordable

toys that her parents could get her. Her grandfather was a scavenger, and he would, from time to time, bring her old dolls and broken toy keyboards. With a few strokes of colour, she would give them new life as the coolest toys. She would then give them to her classmates, who would treasure them dearly.

"People in the village were caring and loving. If you didn't have time to cook, you could go over to your neighbour's for dinner. If you were too busy to take care of your child, Mrs Lee next door would be there to help — in fact, she was taking care of all the kids in the village. People did things together and shared everything. We shared our bathrooms, we shared Mrs Lee's motherly love, we shared our woks in the kitchen, not to mention all the daily necessities. That was just how things were for us."

The values of sharing, doing it yourself, and treasuring things — values which she grew up with — were gradually passed on through her designs and the social enterprise she founded. Prudence smiled and pointed out that these are "the trendiest and the most old-fashioned values" that people often talk about, but

are also hard to realise. The reason why she came back closer to the lives of ordinary people, though, was the experience of owning a little store in Central's SoHo, Hong Kong's most affluent district. Housewives living in the Mid-levels brought their daughters to the store to learn how to make soft toys; office ladies working in the district, too, were Prudence's clients. Those clients, who would usually buy whatever they liked, were intrigued by the time-consuming process of making something, and fell in love with it. "They said they'd never thought they could make something so 'primitive'. It was only then that I realised the process of creation could bring about understanding and communication."

The "Hong Kong Fairy Tale" social innovation project was incubated during her participation in the Good Seed programme, 17 years after teaching rich housewives and office ladies. The popularity of her classes had grown over the years; she worked with 10 to 20 charities every year and participated in more than 200 projects. People from all walks of life joined, from teens to young adults, to even people in their sixties and seventies.

"But I wanted to build an NGO myself. I wanted to start a campaign from scratch, watch it grow, and pass on the messages I want to convey."

Prudence learnt industriously in Good Seed classes every week. Gradually, an idea of a social innovation project took shape, a project to tell fairy tales about local heroes to children in different districts.

"It's important to get in touch with kids in their neighbourhoods. They are overprotected, and know nothing about the basics of life. Once I held a bean bag workshop. I couldn't get beans, so I got rice instead. The kids played with it as if it was sand — they spilled it onto the floor and stepped on it carelessly. Their parents were so embarrassed and asked them to pick it all up, grain by grain. It was clear that their parents had never taught them where the rice they ate came from. If it had been needles, thread, or rags, I would've just let it go, but rice — that's a definite no-no. Since then, I've been determined to teach kids about the value of each grain of rice."

“ Having grown up in a squatter area, Prudence is used to caring neighbours like those in The House of 72 Tenants, as well as ragpickers and street food stalls. These all contributed to her optimistic and passionate disposition. More than 10 years after becoming a local artist and designer, she returned to the community, wheeling a storytelling trolley as a girl who sells stories. ”



BE A HAPPY FOOL

Prudence built a wooden trolley shaped like a mushroom house. She wheels it into different districts as if she were a hawker selling fish balls. She has been to Sham Shui Po, Kwun Tong, schools, public housing estates, and countless more places. She tells stories and makes soft toys. She saw the success of TOMS' buy-one-give-one model, and followed suit. When a customer buys one Hong Kong Fairy Tale DIY Kit, Chocolate Rain will donate one kit to children from low-income families. "TOMS mobilised the whole United States. Shoes were sent to kids in the Congo and Mumbai. It's no easy task in Hong Kong." Despite so, she has already sold more than her original sales target of 30 sets a month. With 200 already sold, she is off to a good start.

Kids love listening to Prudence's stories. She tells them about Ming Gor offering free meals to the poor in Sham Shui Po. She talks about rock-climbing champion Lai Chi Wai having a car accident, and then conquering the Lion Rock with his wheelchair tied to him and never giving up. She adapts the story of the theatre

actress and directress Lai Yan Chi's childhood in a farming village, how she loved climbing trees, and that she would climb up to the top and think about what she wanted to do in life. Prudence also shares with them the badminton player Yip Pui Yin's love of baking and other hobbies, and how she finally found something she was good at.

"It doesn't matter where you're from. It's okay if you want to do many things too. Take it slow. Something's bound to stand out."

Her aim is not to tell stories about how people become successful, but to recount their silly moments and how they get themselves into trouble — no matter how silly they are, or how big the trouble is, there is always a way out. It is a truism, indeed, but she wishes to help kids of this generation release emotions that they have bottled up. "Society expects a lot from them. They're not understood and become sad. They then lose the ability to understand others. These kids — they aren't happy."

"I have done countless life planning courses at secondary schools. Kids are usually told to stay positive. They're also told to strive for good results and dream big. What I tell them, instead, is how I got an E in Visual Arts. It catches their attention, and they all focus and listen to me."

Positivity is not something that can be simply appear when requested by teachers or parents. Prudence's family, neighbours, and the squatter area where she grew up in have constructed a support network for her and made her the person she is today. And now, she has the ability to create resonance in the community. She grows more confident with each experience, and she passes on the social values and emotions of the older generation in each encounter with youngsters. She hopes that, at the very least, she would inspire them to become a "happy fool".



06

CHOOSE FONTS TO CATER TO YOUR NEEDS

EASIREAD -
YAU SHAU MEI SAMMY

SAYING NO TO A CARBON-COPIED LIFE STARTING WITH FONTS

When we open a document on the computer, we often take no heed of the font and go straight to reading the content. However, for people with dyslexia, fonts and layouts directly affect their comprehension. Sammy, a Communication Design graduate of the PolyU School of Design, is one of the victims. Looking back at her A-Level days, she said that it was extremely demanding for her. She was a very slow reader, and it took her a lot of time to understand everything. By the time she finished reading an article, she would have already forgotten the first sentence. Her learning was hampered as a result, and she was unable to secure a place at university. Surprisingly, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise. She did a Higher Diploma in Design, which let her deal with more pictures than words. Her results improved significantly. Finally, she was able to go to university.

Finding the right way leads to good results. Along with her classmate So Shun Hei, Sammy developed Easiread, a smart font and layout application.

The application is designed to take care of three kinds of problems: word recognition, reading fluency, and visual pressure. When browsing websites on Google Chrome with this application, users can enlarge words, adjust the spacing, change the background colour, use a digital ruler to read line by line, print the adjusted text, and save the settings for future use. Do not underestimate these seemingly minor adjustments. Sammy pointed out that a lot of people with dyslexia confuse “b” and “d”, so fonts that accentuate the properties of different letters are useful. In addition, some fonts may cause dizziness, so there is a need to redesign the layout. Spacing between lines and words can interrupt comprehension and reduce reading fluency as well.

“ The scientist Albert Einstein once said that it is foolish to judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree. Countless different kinds of people exist in the world. If you measure everyone by the same yardstick, you risk stifling and wasting talents.

Yau Shau Mei Sammy, who has dyslexia, decided to develop an application which allows users to choose fonts and layouts to cater to their needs. It would let people with different reading needs browse websites in their own ways, making reading a truly fun experience. ”



To obtain useful data, they invited children with dyslexia of different severity to participate in an experiment over the last year and a half. They found that letting the children adjust the layout themselves reduced the reading time by 20%. They were also more willing to read after that. Moreover, Hei pointed out that the application is not just useful for people with dyslexia, but also those with colour vision deficiency and those who are sensitive to bright white backgrounds.

“Our aim is to make it work for everyone. Everyone has different reading habits, so we hope to enhance the reading speed and reading fluency through customisation.”

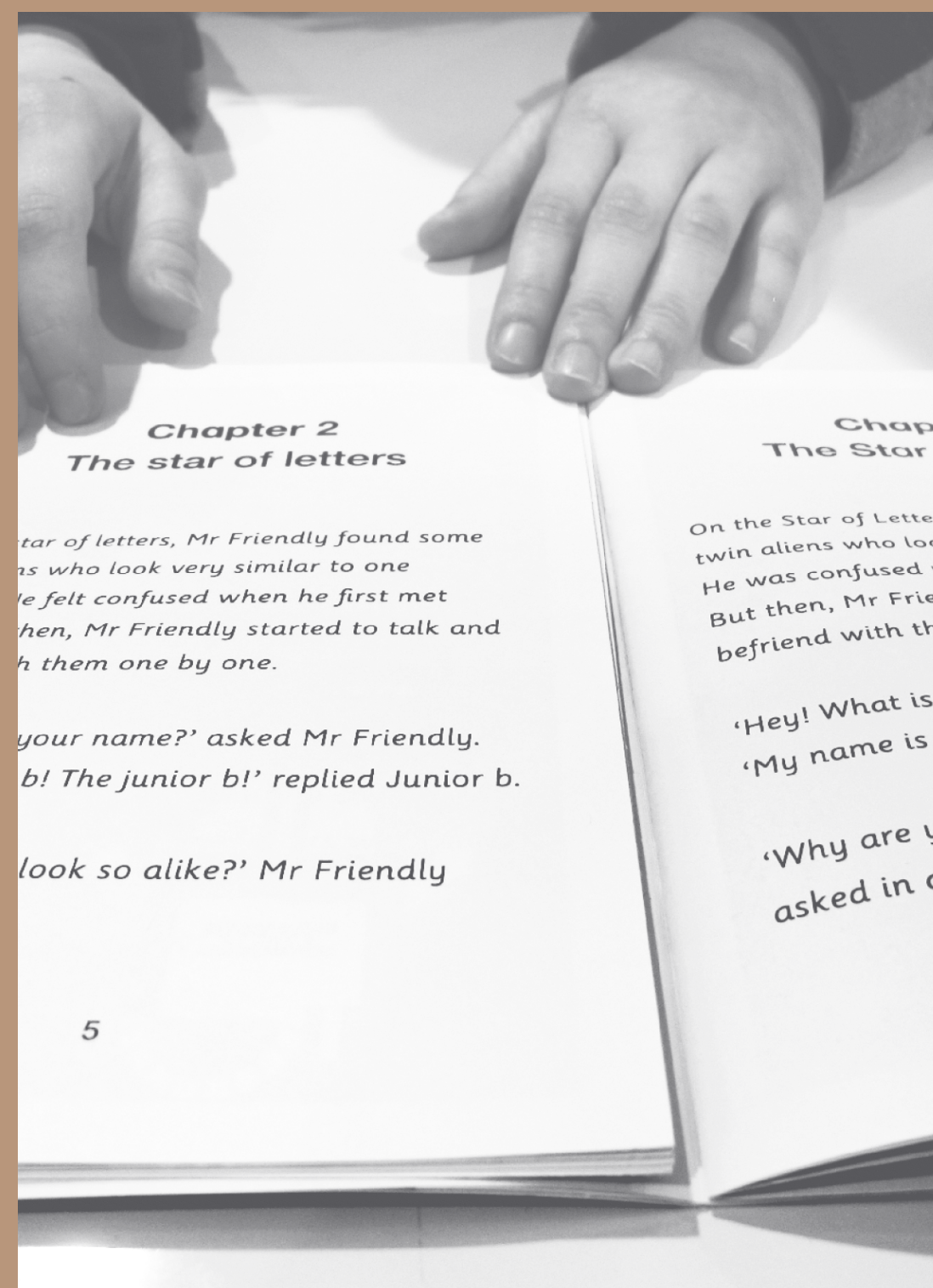
Along the way, a lot of people have asked

how they could make profits. Sammy confessed that they have not really thought about money. “Right now we’re just hoping to get more data from users to understand their needs. And then, maybe we can try to add PDF support to the application, develop the application to support more languages, and implement a character recognition system to let readers render printed texts in the most suited fonts and layouts.” Although there have been quite a lot of adjustments to do with the designer, they have realised the difference between needs and the actual application, and learnt to compromise and strike a balance. “We can already see the light at the end of the tunnel, and now we’re ready to launch the application. We’ve found schools for conducting free trials.”

The application has been turned from a graduation project into the core of a company. Apart from solving technical problems, there were also legal issues that needed attention. Sammy and Hei had had no experience in running a business, so they had to learn how to turn ideas into concrete plans with the help of Good Seed. "A lot of tutors have helped us. They also trained us to present our project with just a few words: to enhance everybody's reading experience." Simply put, it is combining design and technology to let people create the best reading experience for themselves. Bluntly put, it is a protest against a carbon-copied life. Why must everybody use the same piece of paper and the same type of font of the same size? For Sammy and Hei, it is more ideal to let everybody design their own reading layout. "Schools tend to give more time to kids with special needs, or they ask teachers to read the whole passage to the kids. That doesn't solve the root of the problem." They hope to give more autonomy to the children and reduce the labelling effect and sense of helplessness. Some children have different needs, but it does not mean they are worse off.

"I've been there. I don't want kids with dyslexia to label themselves or think that they just can't do it. I've had the experience myself, so I can make the design better. Similarly, I hope people can take the initiative to figure out what to do when facing difficulties. I myself made a breakthrough with my design," said Sammy. Hei, who was not so into reading, said he had always thought white backgrounds were too bright, so he tends to adjust it to something more yellowish these days.

"Are people really repulsed by words, or is it just the layout? I used to not like reading, but now I've realised that it's really important for gaining knowledge."



07

UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPING BARRIER- FREE TOILETS

EFFORTLESS TOILET -
FUNG WING CHIU

STRONGER CONVICTION THANKS TO DEPRESSION

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES ON THE PATH OF GROWTH

University students, the elderly, toilets — these things seem to be unrelated. So how did it all begin? “I was in my fourth year in 2016. One day, I told my friend: ‘It seems like we haven’t really done anything over these four years. This isn’t right.’ Coincidentally, I saw a poster outside the society room that said ‘Annual Inventor Competition’, and I was like, why not? It wouldn’t hurt even if we lost,” Chiu recounted in a daze. It all sounded like a Stephen Chow movie, funny yet passionate and full of energy.

Chiu then teamed up with four of his BME friends and signed up for the competition half-jokingly. One of his teammates was working on the EMG signals of the elderly for his graduation project and had to invite elderly people to the laboratory in PolyU to get tested. In the process, he found that seniors often have difficulty standing up after using the toilet due to a lack of strength in their legs. After a series of discussions, Chiu and his teammates decided that it was a good direction for the competition — they would develop a

toilet assistive device. When speaking of the competition, Chiu still sounded like he was not quite sure what happened. “I actually don’t know how we made it to the finals, or how we got the first place. I really don’t.”

“My whole life has been like that. It’s like I did it all by chance. I don’t really know how to describe the past twenty-odd years.”

When it came to the competition, or even his life, Chiu kept saying that his achievements were fortuitous. The 22-year-old inventor came from a grassroots background. He went to an ordinary primary school when he was a kid. When it was time to choose a secondary school, his mother picked a traditional elite school for him, and he “hit the jackpot”. During his secondary school years, Chiu studied hard, but his public exam results were just so-so; they should not have been enough for him to get into BME, but he got in “fortuitously” anyway.

Chiu kept stressing on his “fortuitousness”, saying that he was only lucky. But in fact, his willingness to try out new things was also a determining factor for his achievements. He admitted that he did not like attending lectures or studying during his university days. However, he was actively engaged in student societies. In his second year, he joined the Drama Society as a member of the stage and props crew.

“It was the best stage crew among all universities because members got trained really well.”

Sometimes, he would pull all-nighters a few times a week just to finish his work, during which he learnt a lot about carpentry and design. He would not have imagined that the knowledge he gained would come in handy in modifying toilets. It would also determine his important role in the team.

At this point, you may think that Chiu’s story is simple — just a few bored university students signing up for a competition, designing some random product, and winning. But behind the award and applause, Chiu had experienced the onerousness of life deeply, which was life-changing for him.



“ I met Chiu at PolyU on the day of the interview. Dressed in a simple outfit and looking rather reserved, he led me to the society room of the Biomedical Engineering (BME) Student Society. It had been an important part of his life over the past few years, as well as the strategic location where he and his friends devised a plan to modify toilets. They hope to develop an assistive device that can offer barrier-free access to the washroom for the elderly, thereby enhancing their self-care ability. ”



SUDDEN BOUT OF DEPRESSION

“It was around October or November in 2016, when we had just made it to the finals. I started having emotional problems and I didn’t really know why. I started to ask myself a lot of questions about life. I felt down and couldn’t think clearly. I’d be like, ‘the world is bleak’, ‘I’ll be working for somebody for my entire life after graduation’, ‘the world is meaningless’... I think I experienced some kind of mental illness. Waking up on a cloudy day would make me feel lethargic, and I wouldn’t feel like eating anything. There wasn’t even a reason. It was excruciating.” He felt first-hand the pain of depression and realised why it was so hard for regular people to understand depression.

Was it because of the stress brought by the competition? Or was it the anxiety caused by his looming graduation, or the stressful environment in Hong Kong society? Chiu could not identify the cause, nor could he explain the situation — he only knew that the problem was serious. He tried to seek help from a social worker and tried to go to church to talk it out, but it was all in vain. At last, he recovered with his own willpower after a few months. During those painful days, Chiu

trudged on with the competition and won the first place with his team in the end. This award, on the surface, looks like the turning point for Chiu and his team as a ticket to participate in Good Seed, where they succeeded again and got the funding to continue with product development. But for Chiu, his episode of emotional problems was the real turning point — before that, he did not really care about winning the competition. He only wanted to look for a stable job after graduation and lead an “ordinary” life, just like any other university student. It was only after the episode that he started to ponder what kind of person he really wanted to be.

“My attitude changed completely. I don’t want to work for somebody for my whole life after graduation, or make no contribution to society. A life like that is meaningless.”

Chiu’s tone became serious and determined. “The thing is, I just want to do something to help the people around me. It doesn’t have to be something big.” Chiu attributed his change in attitude to two things. The first one was his emotional problems, since they made him realise how lonely and painful life could



be for some people. The second one was his participation in Good Seed, which helped him understand theoretically why he should contribute to society.

“I joined a bunch of activities in Good Seed. I listened to a lot of people talk about what they had experienced, and that was really moving. It really made you understand why they started a social enterprise, and why they would put so much effort into it. I was really touched.”

Chiu wanted to dedicate himself to helping others. When such an idea grew, he started to treat his toilet assistive device seriously. He wholeheartedly wanted to launch the product so that he could help the elderly and stroke patients. However, along the way, he found out that the development process was not easy at all. There was a lot of room for

improvement, such as the stability of the product. He admitted that the product is only 30% ready, still a long way to go before it is ready for mass production. “I think I’ve kind of failed, but I don’t mind continuing with it. Or maybe, if someone wants to take it from here, I can work with them as well.” It is as though he has reached a dead end, but Chiu does not feel frustrated. This experience has already helped him grow. Going forward, he is going to find another way and open other paths in social innovation. “I don’t want to lose my passion so soon.”

08

PERSONAL NAVIGATION DEVICE CHALLENGES LIMITED SENSES

EYERUNNER -
WONG CHUN YIU OSCAR,
YIP WING YIU YOYO,
CHIU KA CHUN EDMOND



FROM NOTHING TO SOMETHING — LEARNING TO COMPROMISE

Navigation systems were first used in aircrafts in 1912, and in cars in the 1920s. In recent years, car manufacturers have launched automated navigation systems in a bid to replace manual driving. This piqued the interest of Wong Chun Yiu Oscar, Yip Wing Yiu Yoyo, and Chiu Ka Chun Edmond in utilising the technology on humans. They learnt from the news about guide runners for visually impaired athletes. That was how they came up with the idea of using automated navigation systems to help visually impaired people walk around freely on the streets.

After deciding to work on the idea for an assignment and starting the investigation, they realised that there were a lot of limitations. They found that what they originally wanted to do would involve a lot of real-time analyses of images. Therefore, they adjusted their goals gradually, changing the target venue from “anywhere” to the sports ground, and the mode from “fully automated navigation” to navigation along a specific route.

“We think visually impaired people deserve a quality life as much as anyone else. Now, when they want to go running, they need help from guide runners, and there aren’t a lot of them in Hong Kong. So, visually impaired people can’t go running anytime they want.”

Not only can the navigation system help visually impaired people do sports, but it also increases their autonomy and enhances their independence. Giving them another way to enjoy sports can also improve their health and help them socialise with others. People may have the misconception that visually impaired people cannot do a lot of sports. In fact, apart from running, they can also do sports like swimming, rowing, bowling, golf, and futsal.

“ The first Paralympic Games were held in 1960 in Rome. At that time, there were only around 400 participants; in 2016, more than 4,000 athletes participated. Hong Kong athletes have gotten satisfactory results every time, and the city ranked 40th among 160 participating countries or regions in 2016, winning 2 gold medals, 2 silver medals, and 2 bronze medals. It was definitely something to be proud of. ”

The team faced numerous problems while working on the project as an extension of their school assignment. “When we got the funding from Good Seed, of course we wanted to make it big. But the more we worked on it, the more technical problems we faced. We didn’t have enough funding either.” Another issue was not being able to find people to do the trial. Participants of trial runs would have to sign a waiver and no insurance company would be willing to cover any accidents. As a result, they have been unable to test the immediacy of the system. With the limited resources, they kept modifying the navigation device — from a box-shaped gadget to a bum bag, and then to a vest. Now, they are working on the fourth generation of the navigator. In the past

year, they have been working on it two days a week in hopes of further improving the system. The three of them could not help but sigh when talking about how they felt during the process. They admitted that they had underestimated the task at the beginning. “We shouldn’t have been overconfident. Having an idea is just a start.” They had the opportunity to take part in a competition in Japan, where they realised how big the world is — it is filled with talented people and innovators who are way better than them.

They felt inferior, and the biggest blow was the fact that they did not have enough resources to solve known problems, not just mechanical ones, but also problems in high-tech computer



programs. However, they became more determined to realise their idea — the world, being so big, must have some room for them. They have been feeling contradictory, torn between frustration and optimism.

Yet, contradictions and conflicting identities have always existed. While the three of them are the backbone of the project, they are still students. They want to make it big, but it is hard to strike a balance between the project and their studies. They even have to borrow their studio from their teachers. They need a lot of space for storing hardware, so ordinary co-working spaces would not suffice.

“We want to help people. We’d like to launch the product so that more people would know about it, and large businesses would want to collaborate with us.”

Without copyright issues, they would make what they have developed so far available to the public and let interested parties work on the project. The reason why they participate in competitions and programmes like Good Seed is to promote their product. However, this comes with arduous administrative work and paperwork, and they need to report on their progress regularly. They see the one-year time limit as a deadline to push themselves forward. At the same time, they hope that there will be room for adjustment — the tech world is always

“ Though clichéd, it cannot be emphasised enough that disability does not determine how far one can go. Given the right conditions and opportunities, anybody can thrive. These Biomedical Engineering students from PolyU are developing a navigation device to help the visually impaired run independently in sports grounds. ”

changing, after all. Sometimes, they might have to give in to reality and lower their standards to accomplish what they originally wanted to do. “We have to adapt to changes in the environment. We cannot go on blindly at full speed all the time. We should adjust according to our abilities, the environment, and what we encounter,” said Oscar.

“ Even though the impact might be limited at times, there is at least some exposure, which spreads the idea. After all, we have to build our own experience,”

Edmond added. There is no way to achieve instant success. Yoyo also stated that there are bound to be things they cannot do.

It is a hard row to hoe. Are they perseverant, or simply foolish? Oscar pointed out that the first step to success is to act. They must seize their own opportunities. Edmond, similarly, thought that it is okay to be ambitious; when facing difficulties, they must keep their vision in mind and keep moving forward. With each experience, they will learn something new, and their passion will be as strong as ever.

09

“FESTYLE”

NURTURED FROM IDEALISM:

THE LITTLE
HOTHOUSE
FLOWER AND
WOMEN'S PATH TO
EMPOWERMENT

FESTYLE -
YIP HIU WAI DING DING



Pumpkin and garlic meatloaf, lotus root stuffed with fish, braised chicken wings with mushrooms... As you browse the “Festyle” website, you will find a wide variety of home-cooked dishes that will make you feel like you are home for dinner. Clicking on the logo in the top right corner lets you order a “ready-to-cook cuisine package” of these dishes, which will then be delivered to your home. This is the main service of

Festyle. It is worth noting that a group of women, some of whom new immigrants or women from grassroots backgrounds, produce these meal packages, from writing the recipes to handling the ingredients.

LEGACY OF PARENTS

Ding Ding started Festyle with her team for various reasons.

“I studied sociology in university. Sociology focuses on social issues, that is, how social structures cause problems, especially in capitalist societies. The more I studied, the more powerless I felt; with the political situation in Hong Kong, I wondered if it was possible for me to do something to solve social problems.”

After much research, she stumbled upon the concept of social enterprises and became convinced that they can solve social problems effectively. “I heard that if you put \$1 in Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), you can generate only \$1 in socio-economic return; but if you put \$1 in a social enterprise, you can generate \$13 in socio-economic return.”

On top of that, it turned out that Ding Ding had always wanted to start her own business. “I want to inherit my father and mother’s legacy. My father is a restaurant owner, but he didn’t open his restaurant in Hong Kong or in Mainland China — he opened it in a city in West Africa. He found a completely new path. I think that’s the true entrepreneurial spirit.” Ding Ding talked of her father like a legend, with utmost admiration. “He has high standards for food. Every time he came back to Hong Kong, he would prepare delicious food even in the small kitchen at home.” When Ding Ding was still in kindergarten, her father was already running a Chinese restaurant in West Africa and mostly away from home, so her mother took care of the family singlehandedly.



“My mother’s style was healthy, homely, cheap, and frugal — that’s how she raised me and my siblings. My parents’ two sets of thinking are what I hope to pass on.”

So, Ding Ding took her first step into entrepreneurship by participating in the Hong Kong Social Enterprise Challenge with four of her classmates and friends. Ding Ding’s idea of Festyle is closely related to her mother. Ding Ding has one brother and one sister, and her mother gave up her job to take care of them, letting go of her personal interests to take up the burden of her family, just like many women do. That was why Ding Ding wanted to build a social enterprise to empower women by giving them an opportunity to work outside of home and participate in the community, and thus, Festyle was born.

Ding Ding’s team won the second place even though it was their first competition; after that, Ding Ding entered as many entrepreneurial competitions as she could, winning many grants and prizes, and accumulating several hundred thousand dollars in capital. “But for a business, a few hundred thousand dollars is not much, and it can run out in six to nine months. Not to mention that in the catering business, renovation alone can cost that kind of money, so it was definitely not enough.” But Ding Ding still wanted to give it a go, so she went into Festyle full-time immediately after graduation. “It may seem like you’re sacrificing something, but when you think about it, you don’t have anything to sacrifice. But starting a business was not as easy as I expected either.” Winning the prizes was just the first step, and the real hurdles were still to come.

WAITING FOR LIGHT IN DARK TIMES

Shortly after Ding Ding went full-time with Festyle, one of her business partners passed away unexpectedly. “My relatives were all still alive, even my great-grandmother. It was the first time in my life facing the death of someone so close.” This had a huge impact not only on Ding Ding, but also the morale and operations of the team. However, things still had to be done. “While we were sad, we helped with his funeral and rebuilt the company structure,” Ding Ding’s voice trembled as she recalled the event.

“Although it was no longer the original team, if we wanted to keep the company running, we had to keep working hard. This was also to continue his mission. He was gone, so we kept working in his honour.”

Ding Ding described the year that followed as a “dark period” with problems in every aspect. “I thought hiring women would be easy, but it wasn’t; I thought finding a working kitchen would be easy, but it wasn’t either.” She found that women from grassroots backgrounds often had to work long hours to support their families, making it difficult for them to take up

part-time jobs. On the other hand, empty nest women with no financial pressure would not want to spend long hours in the kitchen preparing ingredients. “These are common challenges in the catering industry. You just have to keep looking.” Over the years, Ding Ding has finally found more than 10 women to help write the recipes and hired three to four women to run the daily operations.

For the women to make meal packages, there must be a kitchen for them to work in. Initially, Ding Ding wanted to rent a kitchen from a restaurant, but she failed repeatedly: “One restaurant talked to us for a long time, but suddenly it didn’t work out. Then, a second restaurant let us in, but suddenly it had to stop because the lease was up and the restaurant wasn’t going to renew it, so we had to move out.” It might sound like nothing, but in fact, it is a lot of work to pull out of a kitchen, as frustrating as “breaking up with a lover”, as Ding Ding described it. After endless waiting and searching, Ding Ding finally came across an opportunity and found the current location in Kwai Chung. Finding a location that she could use without worrying was a major turning point for Festyle.

“ To start a business is to see a faint light in the darkness and follow it. This is especially true for social enterprises,” Ding Ding said. Outsiders may think that this sophisticated remark does not sound like something Ding Ding would say, as she looks as young as a bright girl who has just entered university. Indeed, Ding Ding used to be a little hothouse flower, bathed in idealism in an ivory tower; through the years, she has gone from idealism to “Festyle”, from a little hothouse flower to grass standing strong in the wind, as strong as her mother and many women who carry heavy burdens. ”

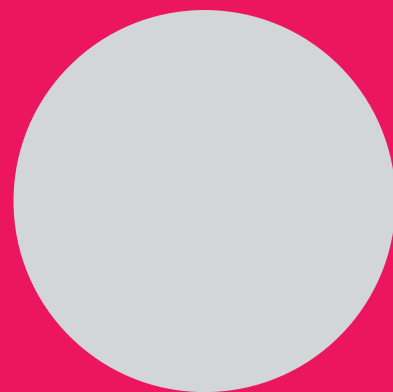
Now, Festyle is getting on track, and only needs more customers and orders. Ding Ding laughed that these women have become like mothers to her. “Once, I had a cold and was ill for three weeks. They brought me secret home remedies, including cold medicine and home-made stewed lemon with dried orange peel. They bring me whatever they have made at home so that we can try it together. I’ve tried their walnut cookies — the cookies were so much more delicious than the ones sold in shops.”

After getting to know one other, Ding Ding marvelled at the women’s ability:

“**Actually, it’s not me who is empowering them — it’s them who are empowering me.**”

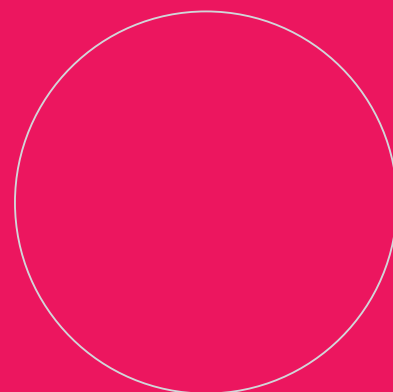


10



A GREENPRICE -
HON CHUN HIM TERENCE

PRECOCIOUS ENTREPRENEUR



“Many university students spend their days playing video games and mah-jong late into the night, squandering their youth without a thought. Terence was the same when he first entered university; but now, two years later, he has transformed into a precocious entrepreneur, living a very different university life.”

”

“I get calls every day and none of my WhatsApp messages are from my friends. I’m approached by over ten suppliers every morning,” he said with a wry smile. Terrence is one of the founders of GreenPrice Supermarket, an organisation launched less than two years ago that has already opened physical retail outlets in Kwun Tong and Sham Shui Po; its sales team consists of more than 10 people and its business is steadily growing. Today, he brought me to GreenPrice’s warehouse in Kwun Tong for photos and the interview. The large warehouse was filled with countless stacks of packaged food that they had “rescued”.



RESCUING “EXPIRED” PACKAGED FOOD

That’s right. GreenPrice’s mission is to salvage packaged food that is about to or has just “expired”, and sell it at a lower price or donate it to the needy. In this case, “expired” food does not refer to food that is past the “used by” date, but the “best before” date, also known as “short-dated food”. Many Hong Kong people are still unaware that just because it is past its “best before” date does not mean it is no longer edible. Terrence pointed out that some supermarket chains even refuse to sell packaged food that is still six months away from its best before date to protect their brand image, returning it to the supplier. As a result, suppliers are sometimes left with a lot of edible packaged food that no one wants. The aim of GreenPrice is to help these suppliers reduce loss and reduce wastage.

The four core members of GreenPrice are all “post-90s”, but their entrepreneurial experience has made them more mature than university students their age, and they often have to hire people older than themselves. Calling them entrepreneurs

would not be an overstatement — they had the courage to launch a business and managed to break even with the high rents of physical retail outlets and warehouses in Hong Kong, where “a square foot of land is worth a square inch of gold”. So how did it all start?

Terence studies business at the University of Hong Kong. In his first year, he lived the hall life of “playing mahjong until 3 am to 4 am”. After that, he started wanting to learn more about the outside world and do something more meaningful, so he actively participated in various volunteering activities. On one of his visits to Food Angel, he discovered that society was wasting a lot of short-dated packaged food. Along with the business knowledge acquired in the classroom, Terence started thinking about how to solve this problem in a commercial way.

He said,

“Business schools these days teach you to help society apart from making money, so there are many courses on social enterprises that teach you how to work in a value driven way.”

With awareness of the problem, Terence signed up for the Good Seed programme in the same year. “I entered on my own. GoodSeed put participants into groups that deal with different issues, some dealing with environmental issues and some serving people with disabilities,

so I chose the environmental group and met my current partners. We didn’t know each other at the start.” Initially, they only wanted to design an app to create a platform to match suppliers and consumers over short-dated food, but they soon discovered that it was difficult to get both sides involved. “One night at the Good Seed camp, one of the instructors suggested that we can collect short-dated food and sell it ourselves, so we tried out the model to see if it would work,” Terence recalled. Since then, they have worked hard to build a complete supply chain step by step, and it has not been easy.





QUESTIONED BY PEERS: WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

To start selling short-dated packaged food, they naturally needed to find a source of supply. It was difficult at the start. Around October 2016, they started actively working on the project, initially with just one source of supply. It was a health food wholesaler introduced to Terrence's business partner by their professor. The wholesaler had dozens of boxes of short-dated tea leaves that they "couldn't even finish in their office", so they passed the tea leaves on to GreenPrice. For the first time, GreenPrice set up a stall at a bazaar and faced the public's reactions to short-dated food. "Many customers had negative comments and asked us: 'Are you scamming me?' We tried our best to explain, but the message

probably didn't get across. Some people said, 'Kids, these have expired. Take them away.'" Terrence recalled, laughing bitterly. It was only Terrence's first time as a salesman, and he had to sell short-dated products that were not widely accepted in society. He admitted that it took courage to overcome the problem:

"It was really hard to get over the psychological hurdle. A lot of people would question me, and some of my classmates asked: 'Are you crazy? What on earth are you doing?' It was very stressful."

Although their first bazaar experience was not as successful as they would have liked, they were featured by a major media outlet and the seeds of success were sown. "At the end of December 2016, a supplier approached us after reading the coverage. It was a re-exporter who re-exported goods to Mainland China and had a lot of stock on hand." They got a large amount of Almond Roca chocolate from the re-exporter that would pass its best before date in January 2017; it was their first batch of goods that had "not yet expired". They sold the chocolate for \$10 to \$20 a tub, and the chocolate sold very well. "The re-exporter has since supplied us with other goods in addition to Almond Roca and the income started to match the rent." The partnership not only turned the tide for GreenPrice, but also confirmed the existence of the problem that suppliers are stuck with short-dated food.

Since then, Terrence's team has found more and more suppliers to work with, who supply them with a wide range of short-dated products, such as ketchup, chips, and chocolates. After solving the supply problem, other technical problems were also solved gradually.

Within a year, they had rented the warehouse in Kwun Tong where this interview took place and opened a branch in Sham Shui Po, and the company can now support 5 full-time employees. Terrence credited Good Seed for everything, because he could not have saved \$100,000 on his own, nor would he have known what it meant to start a business. He admitted, "Without Good Seed, I don't know what I would be doing now."

However, Terrence is not complacent with himself or with GreenPrice. On the one hand, he believes that customers buy GreenPrice's short-dated food mostly for the bargain, not for environmental reasons, so he hopes to raise customers' environmental awareness in the future. On the other hand, he does not want to be a mere product trader — he is considering studying a master's degree in food and nutrition, so that he can learn more about the subject and share it with his customers readily.

11

INNOVATIVE ORIGAMI, A BREAKTHROUGH IN TRADITIONAL TEACHING TOOLS

HAPPIKAMIWORKSHOP -
ANGELA CHENG

SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS, SPECIAL LEARNING APPROACHES

Angela has a relative with dyslexia. At family gatherings since she was a child, she has seen his parents making a big scene while calling him “stupid” and forcing him to go to university.

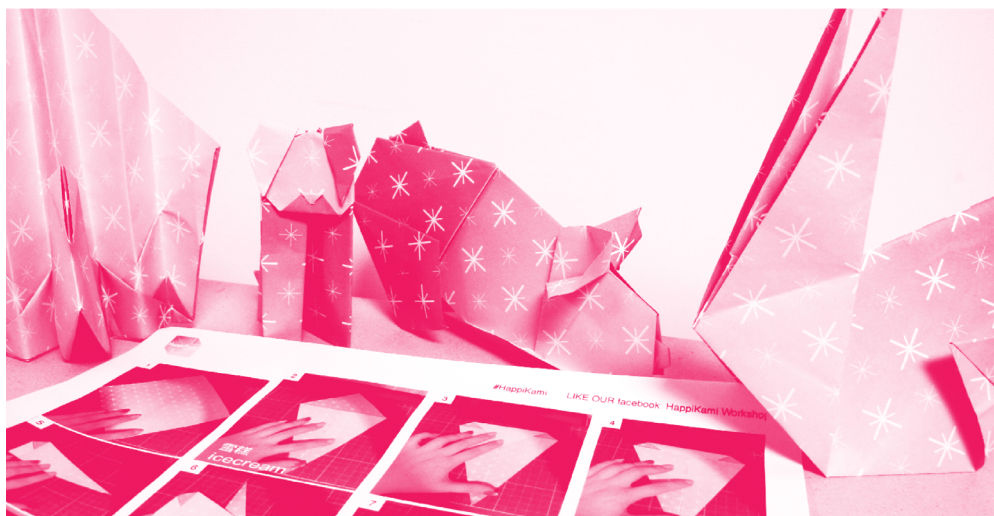
because we liked them.” Although she only spent a few years studying abroad, it had already left a deep impression on her that studying can be fun and does not have to be forced.

“I remember that he seldom spoke since he was small, and lacked self-confidence even in his 20s. I think society should take the needs of people with special learning needs seriously, like not forcing someone to get a university degree when they obviously lack the academic aptitude.”

Is studying the only way to get ahead in life? Angela has experienced it herself; she remembers clearly that when she was in kindergarten in Hong Kong, she was taunted by people who said she was dumb, and she felt stupid. “When I went to primary school in Australia, I was so happy to find out that there was no homework, no exams, and no school uniforms. I wondered if exams were essential to studying. Students were not categorised into those who were good at school and those who were not; we all read a lot and did things

In 2016, Angela joined Good Seed. During the brainstorming activities and learning process, she decided to use her design skills to help students in need and found various partners to work with. During her research, she learnt that Joseph Wu, a Chinese origami artist, suffers from attention deficit disorder, and that origami makes him sit still and concentrate.





In fact, origami requires not only the creativity of the right brain, but also a lot of left brain-led tasks such as mathematics, logic and sequencing, so origami can train both sides of the brain at the same time, and help improve concentration and behaviour. This discovery strengthened Angela's determination to bring the fun and benefits of origami into schools. She wanted to use the different textures of paper to enable students with special educational needs, including hyperactivity disorder, attention deficit disorder and autism spectrum disorder, to learn new things with their own hands, and enhance their social skills, patience, creativity and learning ability.

When it came to origami, Angela recalled doing it during the "origami stars" years; origami allowed her to let her mind to go blank and gave herself some quiet time.

"I think it's a process of exploration. Something always emerges from the folding."

Originally from China, origami is a way to create delicate designs through folding paper, but Japan made it popular. Traditional origami consisted of relatively simple designs, such as paper cranes; since the 1950s, origami techniques have undergone major transformations, with mathematical theories and laws introduced to elevate it to art. Stunning origami products have been created, including furniture, fashion items, and scientific equipment. Origami is now a professional craft.

“Learning is more than scoring”, but is that really so in the real world? The Hong Kong Education Bureau has listed nine types of students with special educational needs (SEN), including hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical disability, intellectual disability, emotional and behavioural problems, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, speech and language difficulties, specific learning difficulties, as well as giftedness.

The Government allocates funds to schools to provide small group education for SEN students in the hope that they can catch up. Do these groups push the children to grow too hard, or do they tailor teaching to the children's needs?

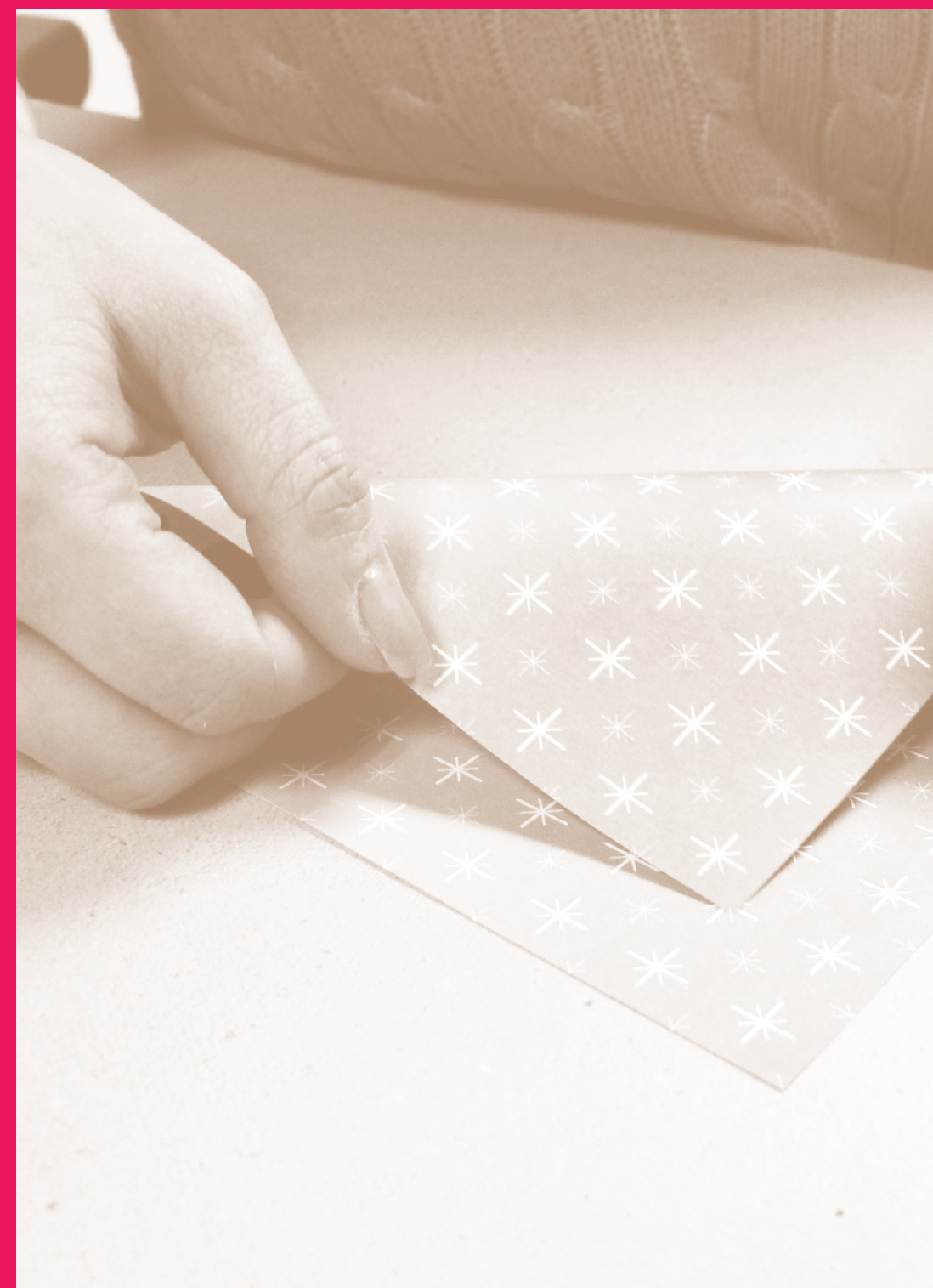
To bring this professional art into the school, Angela not only needed to know how to fold paper, but also build a structured curriculum. They designed a 16-lesson course on folding 12 animals from the sea, land and air, as well as an origami booklet for students to keep their artwork. They also designed special handmade paper with gradient colours on both sides and grids to help SEN students follow and understand the instructions. “We wrote the instructions from scratch, step by step, short and precise, so that the students would be interested in following them. For example, we would say that a certain shape looks like an ice-cream cone that everyone would want to have a bite.” Because of the extreme details required for each step, what could have been a two-minute process would easily turn into a 30-minute one.

In fact, there are many origami centres overseas, but Hong Kong is relatively backward in this aspect. Angela admitted that it was very difficult to bring the course to schools.

“At the beginning, we struggled to find schools to work with. We had to knock on their doors and send letters. We even did workshops for free.”

However, after starting to do it, Angela found that many of the problems were

not about practicality, but mentality. She said that at first, she thought many people would be willing to help SEN students, but it turned out not to be the case. Parents think that SEN students should just go to special schools and do not want to send them to regular schools. On the other hand, schools think it would be more practical to have regular classes. All these make it difficult to develop the school market. “I think there’s a big discrepancy in the way society thinks about SEN students. Besides, many people think that they don’t need to pay social enterprises, but we all need to make a living.” As a result, Angela struggled between money and ideals. She said that she had been covering the costs of school workshops with her commercial business. “A SEN group of six students needs three instructors, which is not economical but a practical necessity.” Despite the difficulties, Angela often remembers the expression “fake compassion”, which she learnt during classes at Good Seed. It reminds her not to do things just for the sake of doing them; instead, she insists on recognising the audience and doing what is good for the participants. That is why she will not forget her original vision — learning can be done in many ways.



12

USING
TECHNOLOGY TO
BECOME
OTHERS' EYES

ISEE MOBILE APPS -
FUNG KWONG CHIU MICHAEL



ADJUSTING SAILS IN THE WIND TO REACH THE DESTINATION

Words frame the way we see the world. In the past, we used to say “the disabled”, but now we say “people with disabilities”. This change in language shows that we are more aware of equality and more willing to understand that different people have different needs and possibilities. The founders, Michael, Ching, and Yuen, believe that mobile apps

allow users to scan a specific QR code to read out the dishes on the menu, so that people with visual impairment could choose what to order in their own time. They thought that an annual fee of \$500 for each restaurant would be affordable and provide the enterprise with enough to support, while improving the lives of people with visual impairment — a win-win-win situation. But in the end, it was not about the amount; without any concrete benefits to them, restaurants would not subscribe even if it was \$50 a year.

“Visual impairment is just an entry point. Because the current platform supports screen reading functions but not images, anyone who can hear can use our app, and it can be readily applied to many other areas.”

They first designed a few free mobile applications with simple user interfaces, such as double swiping for the phone to read out the content, and double clicking to use the function. They hoped to solve the difficulties faced by people with visual impairment when they eat out, read the news and shop, but a lot of practical problems emerged in the process. Initially, they wanted to work with restaurants to

“Accidents happen — one’s fortune can change in the blink of an eye. One day you are having dinner with a friend, and the next, you are suddenly paralysed. Perhaps, unexpected things in life can make you realise that other people and events are closer to you than you think and result in empathy. The founder of the free mobile app, iSEE, has witnessed the needs of family members and friends with disabilities, and wants to use technology to help people with visual impairment.”



“In Hong Kong, social enterprises seem to have halos; people think that social enterprises are charities and can, therefore, somehow miraculously survive on their own. Since Hong Kong does not have social enterprise certifications, I would say we are a barrier-free technology company, as we employ staff with visual impairment and we promote barrier-free access to the Internet.” In the process of developing barrier-free access, they have studied international standards and local laws, and found no legislation related to web accessibility in Hong Kong, which is why people with visual impairment cannot access the content of most of the websites. “There are things that ought to be done, such as enabling the function for enlarging the font size of webpages. Foreign countries have laws to ensure that everyone has fair access to information.” In Hong Kong, however, people tend to focus on the business side: how much money they make, how many clients they have, when they will expand, and so on. Even in competitions, some judges asked them to “take their business more seriously”. “When a social enterprise gets too much funding, sometimes they may become overconfident and too optimistic, and overlook the reality.

After all, they must face society and the market.” When they entered the market, they found that the three apps that they originally wanted to develop — reading restaurant menus, recognising banknotes and listening to the news — were all received differently. Now they will first focus on developing iSEE, an app for instant object recognition.

“We must keep trying and exploring, and if it doesn’t work, we can change it. I always say, ‘We won’t change our vision, but we can change our method thousands of times.’”

said Yuen. They stressed that if a product failed to offer something that the market wanted, it would be a waste of energy to persist.

The company insists on using information technology to break down barriers. They hope to use mobile phone technology to help people with visual impairment break through the visual barrier and connect with society, improving their quality of life. But in the face of various difficulties, they have decided to develop their business in multiple directions.

“Entrepreneurship and doing good deeds bring both gains and losses. The team is becoming more thoughtful and realistic, as well as more aware of the bigger picture, considering more aspects of the situation. However, the most important thing is to never forget their vision: to do something good for society. That is why they all hope to make the company a global authority on technology and accessibility.”

First, they will continue to provide free mobile apps and update them on a long-term basis. Second, they will help businesses conduct accessibility tests and provide test reports to improve accessibility. Lastly, they will find solutions for NGOs to increase the usage rate of people with disabilities, aiming to increase their customers by 10–15%. They believe that the implementation of tools only treats the symptoms but not the root of the problem. To solve the problem once and for all, the general environment must change. “Entrepreneurship can be a kind of publicity, influencing many unrelated people. Small things can help society, not just big things.” They are glad that the activities of Good Seed

are not focused on business, but on building social enterprises and social innovation. Immersing themselves in a series of practical courses for a long time was useful for them as first-time social entrepreneurs.

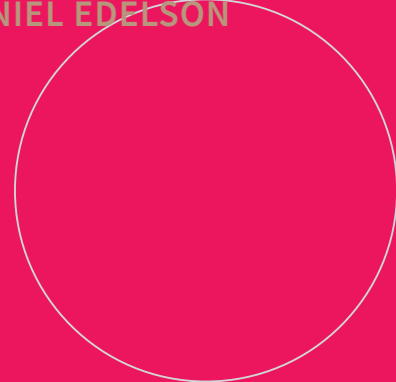
“If you decide to start a business, you should know it is not an easy ride, and you have to think it through. Many people will only see the good side of it, but very often only you will know how tough it really is. Expose yourself to information, as 98% of start-ups collapse. You must remember why you started.”

13



DISCOVERING LOCAL HIDDEN GEMS IN PUBLIC MARKETS

MARKETEER -
DANIEL EDELSON



BRINGING PUBLIC MARKET WISDOM OUT OF THE CHINESE-SPEAKING WORLD

Many markets around the globe are not only places where local people go in their daily lives, but also tourist attractions, such as the Tsukiji Market in Tokyo, the Nishiki Market in Kyoto, La Boqueria in Barcelona, and the floating markets in the suburbs of Bangkok. Hong Kong's public markets are in no way inferior. The CNNGo website has highlighted Hong Kong's public markets as tourist attractions, including the Graham Street Market, the oldest open-air market in Hong Kong with a history of nearly 160 years, as well as Chun Yeung Street, where trams go right through an operating market. Hong Kong's markets can be divided into three distinct phases: open-air markets set up before the opening of the port, practical covered markets with allocated stalls, and markets in municipal buildings; all of them sell both wet and dry goods, such as live poultry, fresh meat, seafood, vegetables and fruits. However, with the modernisation of the city, many public markets, especially open-air ones, have

been replaced by buildings constructed after urban planning. Markets play an important role in the development of a city; through them, we can see changes in the whole community, shifts in the focus of urban development, and the shopping habits of the residents.



“ In Hong Kong, there is always a public market nearby. There are over 180 public markets in total in the 18 districts of Hong Kong, which incorporate a lot of traditional street wisdom and local culinary customs. But as supermarket chains expand, how do local markets survive?

Daniel Edelson is one of the few expatriates who have fallen in love with Hong Kong's public markets. He insists that public markets are a “hidden gem” of Hong Kong, and that was why he developed a mobile app called “Marketeer” to help non-Chinese people shop at public markets and learn about local produce.

”

Daniel said that when he first arrived in Hong Kong, he thought that local public markets were dirty and unhygienic, and that he could only live on food from supermarkets. It was only four or five years later that he suddenly had the courage to go into a public market and realised that he had been wrong all along. “The freshest and cheapest food ingredients are in the public markets, but it is difficult for people who don't know Chinese to shop there. At the same time, I saw that many public market businesses were struggling to survive because their regular customers were getting older and the younger generation might not like going to public markets — they were losing customers gradually.” So, Daniel felt the urge to do something.

“Hong Kong's public markets offer excellent prices and quality. They only need a little push to make these cool places more accessible, especially to foreigners.”

He said that many of the ingredients in local markets are unfamiliar to foreigners, who might not even know their names, not to mention how to use them, but no one had the time to compile such information. “For example, ‘Chinese spinach’ is not the same as ‘spinach’. Sometimes, you can't even find any

information on the Internet, and much of the information is copied and pasted without verification. If you don't know the ingredients, how would you know their nutritional information?” Daniel pointed out that western countries are more concerned about the nutrition labels and ingredients of food, but Hong Kong people seem to be less concerned about it. “It turns out that too much vitamin A hurts the liver, but the vitamin A content of local produce is a mystery. This is even more problematic for people with special dietary needs.”

So, Daniel spent a whole year collecting information on local produce. He said that about 90% of local ingredients are not found in the United States, so he had to spend a lot of time checking the nutritional value and going to the market to take photos for each ingredient. “I've been locked up in a market overnight several times,” he said. Since Daniel often goes to the market for research, many stall owners recognise him and have set up a small corner for him to take photos of fresh food. “They have become my family. They would invite me to their homes for meals and give me mooncakes during festivals.” In addition to developing a software system to identify ingredients and collecting photos of ingredients, he also created recipes for each ingredient.



The most important part was to allow customisation in the app to let each user adjust the criteria for food recommendations, and this was also the most difficult part. “I’m the only full-time member working on this project. It feels ironic that I’m working on an app that promotes health, but I’m living an unhealthy life because of it.” Daniel received funding from Good Seed and met many of his teammates there, but most of them treated it as a school project; when the funding ended, everyone else went back to their own worlds, leaving him alone to continue the fight. “I never saw it as a competition. I think it is a need — there is a need for an app like this.”

Daniel said that he spends almost every day in a state of meltdown, as new problems arise every day, and the launch of the app has been postponed several

times. However, he pointed out that only the strongest can survive, and it was better to be late than never. He is determined to make the app work because he believes that it can fill a gap in the market and benefit foreigners living in Hong Kong. “Public markets offer the freshest ingredients at low prices. This app can help local markets expand their business and help foreigners live a healthy lifestyle at a low cost. It’s a competition, but it’s also a need. There’s really a need for this win-win situation.” Daniel has not thought about how the app could make money; he only imagines using it to live a healthy and affordable life.

“I think all foreigners, like domestic helpers, can use my app to go shopping in the market, which will help them integrate into the local life and reduce the training time.”



14

HOW AN INVENTOR SHOWS CARE TO SOCIETY

MEDEXO ROBOTICS -
YIN FAN DENIS HUEN

On the day of the interview, Denis's team was taking part in the "Golden Age Exhibition and Summit 2018" at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai. He looked pale and was obviously not feeling well — he had just returned from Israel and had not slept enough.

"Israel has a population similar to that of Hong Kong, but it is surrounded by enemies and suffers in war. However, it still attracts much capital internationally, and its technological development and technology ventures are thriving. This trip allowed me to learn from others' experience."

Despite feeling exhausted, Denis lit up when it came to these topics, his diligence shining through.

Before long, visitors stopped by to see the products Denis had developed. Denis approached them to introduce the products, and I took the opportunity to find out about the progress of his projects. Apparently, besides the robotic stabilising gloves, Denis had recently developed a set of devices to solve the walking problems of Parkinson's patients,

including a cue light and vibrating shoe insoles. Parkinson's patients have poor balance and tend to walk with a broken stride. The cue light is attached to the patient's waist, directing a constant green laser beam in front of the feet, prompting the patient to step over the light to return to a normal stride; along with the rhythmic vibration of the shoe insoles, the patient can walk at a normal pace.

When the media reports about Denis's inventions, it is often mentioned that he saw his friends and relatives with Parkinson's disease suffering from hand tremors, which inspired him to research the topic during his master's degree in the UK, leading to his achievements. While this was certainly one of the factors, Denis also emphasised that everything added up, including his interest in robots and his care for people with disabilities — it did not happen overnight.



“The American physicist Edward Teller once said, “The science of today is the technology of tomorrow.” Denis Huen, the founder of MedEXO Robotics, already understood this idea as a secondary school student. Today, he has developed a wearable robotic glove to help Parkinson’s patients mitigate their hand tremors. This multiple-award-winning technological product was indeed built upon the scientific knowledge that Denis had accumulated over countless yesterdays.

”

A PASSION IN INVENTION INSPIRED BY HIS MOTHER AND TEACHER

Denis, now 31, has had a curiosity about things around him since he was a child. “Whenever an appliance broke in the house, such as a fan, my mother would disassemble it and try to fix it. I would help out by her side and gradually developed an interest in the area.” He imitated his mother, taking apart fans, TVs, and CD players.

“That gave me good experience. I took them apart and got to know their structure. It made me curious about the principles behind other things too.”

As a child, Denis had innovative ideas from time to time. For example, in secondary school, despite his mediocre grades and dyslexia, he won the book report award every year. It was all because he knew how to write creatively. “For example, if I read a book called *Exotic Israel*, I would write the book report in the format of a script for a travel show, with dialogues between two hosts to introduce the content.”

When Denis was in Form Four, his physics teacher held a mini competition that gave him the opportunity to combine his

scientific brain with creative ideas. The teacher asked the students to design a material that could withstand the impact of an airsoft pellet, and the lightest design would win. Denis came up with the idea of folding paper into strips, weaving them together and overlapping them to disperse the impact of the airsoft pellets. He ended up in the top three and was awarded a free film ticket.

This small classroom activity further sparked Denis’s interest in inventing and motivated him to participate in the Hong Kong Youth Science and Technology Innovation Competition in Form Five. Initially, he only thought of inventing something that did not exist, such as the Flaptor flying machine in *Laputa: Castle in the Sky*, but he soon realised that it was beyond reach in terms of technology; and if the device was to float instead of fly, it would have been too far from his original idea, so he decided to think of something else.



INNOVATION DOES NOT HAVE TO BE “FROM SCRATCH”

He tried to think of a real-world problem to be solved; from the news, he noticed that Africa was still lacking food and got the idea to develop “artificial chlorophyll”. He then went to the University of Science and Technology every day to read books on the subject. Based on his knowledge at the time, he could only put together the components of chlorophyll like a jigsaw puzzle, using equations to make a written report for the competition. “At the interview, the judges asked me if I had ever thought that I didn’t have to go through all that trouble. They told me that all I had to do was to collect some leaf samples and extract the chlorophyll from them.” Denis was shocked with realisation, and instead of defending his research, he asked himself why he had not thought of this. Obviously, he did not win the competition.

“This experience taught me that innovation or creativity does not always mean ‘building from scratch’. Some things already exist, or the focus could be on making effective use of natural resources, and making additions and subtractions — that is already innovation,”

Denis said. Spurred on by his first defeat, he

made another attempt. That year, he was already in Form Six; despite facing difficult A-level exams, he mostly focused on the competition, thinking about what invention he could make with his interests and abilities.

“At that time, I continued to watch the news for inspiration and discovered that countless World War II landmines were left in Cambodia and they were difficult to clear. Because of the high value of the mines, the locals would take the risk of digging them up, which would often explode and wound them or even make them lose legs.” Denis, who has loved robots since he was a child, wanted to design a mechanical leg to help Cambodians who had lost their legs from mines. It took him one month to conceive the idea and four months to design it, using wires and switches to build a control system. In the end, not only did he win the Hong Kong Youth Science and Technology Innovation Competition, but also the third prize in the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair and the first prize in the 5th Little Scientists of Tomorrow Competition in China. This experience was an important turning point in his life, proving his ability in science and innovation, and paving the way for his future career in medical technology.



THE PYRAMID OF SCIENCE-BASED SOCIAL IMPACT

After his A-levels, Denis enrolled in the Physics Department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He chose physics instead of the technology-related subject of engineering, because in talks by renowned scientists which he attended from time to time in Form Seven, he realised that all technologies are ultimately based on basic science, that is, physics.

“This formed a pyramid, with science at the bottom. Applied science — or technology — is on top of that. Then, on top of applied science is technological products, while at the tip is influence, or social influence.”

The closer you get to the bottom, the bigger the pyramid you can draw. With this in mind, Denis became eager to

pursue the fundamental knowledge that would allow him to make a greater impact in the future.

With this attitude, he completed a Master’s Degree in Physics at CUHK and a Master’s Degree in Medical Robotics and Image-Guided Intervention at Imperial College London, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Biomedical Engineering at the University of Oxford. In the next six months, he aims to launch the cue light and continue to improve the mechanical stabilising glove to bring convenience and comfort to the lives of Parkinson’s patients.

15

WHEN
PASSION
BECOMES
A MEDPOT - SUE HO WEAPON



RETURNING FROM THE UK AND MISSING ITS HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

After graduating from the UK, Sue worked as a pharmacist in the geriatric department of a local hospital. Pharmacies were separate from doctor consultation services, meaning that there were pharmacies and family doctors in each community. When patients were discharged from hospital, they could pick up their medication from the community pharmacy at regular intervals. Sue's role was to inform the community pharmacy of any changes that the hospital wanted to make. "The local system was very comprehensive; the medication was even divided into doses." The community was closely linked to the hospital, but Sue still saw many seniors admitted to hospital for taking the wrong medication. When she returned to Hong Kong, she found that the local healthcare system was even more limited.

"When I came back, I found that the whole system was completely different from the UK one. There were no community pharmacies. What could I do to help the elderly? Apart from an ordinary pill box, can we do anything to remind them to take their medication?"

Sue said.

MedPOT is designed to cater for the elderly's need to take medication on a schedule. Apart from reminders and instructions on how to take the medication, there is also an app connected to family members and familiar medical institutions — when the pillbox has not been opened for a while, they will be notified. "The whole idea was not only to address the practical needs of the elderly, but also to raise awareness in the community — how can we use more effective methods to help the elderly?"

PHARMACIST AS EXHIBITION “HELPER”

Having noticed this social problem, Sue wished to make a change, but reality did not go as planned. Sue was unemployed for almost a year after she came back to Hong Kong. “I kept failing one of the exams, so I tried to work all kinds of jobs that year, including the position of exhibition receptionist. People who interviewed me said, ‘Ms Ho, you are overqualified — this is not funny’. I tried everything, but I never heard back.”

Sue’s path seemed to be full of thorns and she could not see the way forward, but the people and events along the way seemed to be preparing Sue for her dream. During her year of unemployment, a friend from Mainland China invited her to Mainland China to share her experience of working in the UK, and she also attended a charity talk where she heard a representative from a social enterprise talk about “upcycling” burlap bags. These experiences gave Sue a deeper understanding of her profession, broadened her imagination, and pushed her to put into practice the ideas she had already developed.

“After listening to different people, I was fired up. Seeing how many resources are wasted in society, I felt that this must be done.”

Sue said with passion and conviction in her eyes.



“The interview with Sue was a race against time. The mocha on the table had cooled down by the time she hurried into the room and apologised profusely. After about 30 minutes, looking sorry, she said that she had to leave for an important meeting. Even though the meeting was brief, one could feel her enthusiasm for the development of “MedPOT”.

”

DIFFERENT ASPIRATIONS LEAVING ONLY TWO IN THE TEAM

Sue took the idea of MedPOT to Good Seed and shared about the project with different people at various workshops. Eventually, she met seven teammates. Sue said that she was not a leader by nature, but she had the strongest passion out of all of them and she was committed to everything she did. However, reality is often not as good one might imagine. “It gets hard when you actually start doing it, and you see team members who joined for fun leaving the team one by one,” Sue said lightly. After regular meetings and working according to a schedule, Sue has learnt to be understanding when her teammates do not make it on time.

The team members came from different backgrounds and had different visions and expectations of the project. Sue’s original intention was to help the elderly and raise public awareness, and whether the product would make money was not her primary concern. This idea may have fallen short of the expectations of some team members. “The whole process was a bit like speed dating, where people came together quickly but didn’t stay together for long. Some of the team members realised that we couldn’t split the money when the revenue came in, so they left because of different priorities,” Sue laughed.

“I like to finish what I set out to do, and I don’t like overstatements. If some people say, ‘Sure, sure,’ but they don’t do as they say, I will get mad at them. Afterwards, I start to wonder if their passion has worn off.”

AFTER DOUBT, FAITH NEVER DIES

Sue remained optimistic in the face of her teammates’ lack of enthusiasm and their gradual departure; it made her feel even more grateful to teammates who decided to stick around. “Only one member remained, and we invited a third new member to join only later.” The departure of Sue’s teammates once made her worry about whether she could continue with the project, but her faith kept her going. “I have a doubt-believe-doubt-believe thinking pattern. When I doubt the possibility of belief, a miracle happens,” Sue said. From doubts to miracles, Sue’s enthusiasm never waned, and she quit her government job and went into the private sector to launch the project. “There were struggles, but I kept my passion, and I had a voice inside me that told me I had to do this!” Sue said with enthusiasm.

From forming the team, research and development, to prototyping the product, Sue admitted that she had been under a lot of pressure; however, she believes that

if she keeps on believing, she can be the spark that keeps the passion going.

“I’m just a nobody. I just want to be a spark that starts the engine and find like-minded people to continue the work. I may not be able to do much on my own, but I believe that even the smallest cog can make a difference.”



16

FROM PAPER TO GROUND, THE EVOLUTION OF MOBILITY AIDS

ONUP -
JUNE LAU



ALL IT NEEDED WAS A BREATH OF MAGIC

Although June did not have any children with disabilities around her initially, she took part in a friend's graduation project by chance, in which they redesigned walking aids for children and teens aged 10–15 with spastic diplegia or cerebral palsy, hoping to help them overcome emotional and physical barriers and enhance their social development.

“Many children with spastic diplegia or cerebral palsy in the UK study in mainstream schools. The schools are very supportive and the children get along well with their schoolmates, but they sometimes get strange looks when they use their walking aid, which makes them feel embarrassed.”

So, she and her friend wanted to design a stylish and user-friendly walking aid to motivate sick children to move around and enhance their self-image.

Spastic diplegia or cerebral palsy has many possible causes. Patients suffer from varying degrees of impairment in

limb mobility. As they cannot recover completely through treatment, they need mobility aids to cope with their daily lives; at the same time, they need to go through various training to increase their independence and mobility, and learn to deal with emotions in different situations. In Hong Kong, the ideal aim of integrated education is to help students, teachers, and parents to recognise, accept, respect, and even appreciate the differences of each individual, so as to promote personal growth and build a harmonious society. This is all very idealistic, but in the classroom, it becomes merely a paper exercise. Individual differences in students require teachers to use different teaching methods, and students cannot be expected to achieve a uniform level of learning. Ideally, schools should provide a great deal of support in terms of attitudes, facilities, and opportunities; for example, they need to address discrimination by teachers and students against students with disabilities, improve school facilities to facilitate student movement and learning, and provide sufficient

“ In 1997, the Hong Kong Government introduced the “Whole school approach to Integrated Education”; under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, all schools are obliged to admit students with special educational needs (SEN) and provide them with appropriate support. Unfortunately, true integrated education cannot be created by a single ordinance or a single bill. June Lau, who has studied in the UK, is particularly concerned about children and teens aged 10–15 with spastic diplegia or cerebral palsy; she has redesigned walking aids for them in the hope of improving their mobility and social life through improving the hardware. ”

opportunities for different students to participate in various school activities. As a matter of fact, students with spastic diplegia or cerebral palsy may not be able to cope with the school environment even in terms of the facilities for general access. “The existing walking aids are too large and bulky. Others can’t get close, and the user can’t walk backwards — they need to walk around in a huge circle just to turn around.” These limitations reduce the user’s desire to move around.

“We hope to design a walking aid that looks as cool as Iron Man’s suit for these children, so that others will be curious to learn about their needs. This will open up the conversation, increasing their social connection with different people.”

To be cool, you have to start with the design. June, her partner Sotiris Tsouris, and intern Yoyo Kwok set out to build a compact, seatable and highly mobile walking aid with a foldable seat for the user to sit down and rest when they are tired, increasing their independent mobility. The team then invited an occupational therapist to try it out and give them direct advice and criticism. “We originally

planned to use a three-wheel design for better mobility, but the occupational therapist said it would not be stable enough for children with low mobility. After a long struggle, we decided to use a four-wheel design to cater for a broader group of users.” June said that the process made her realise that she had to accept criticism in order to bring her imagination into reality. In addition to modifying the design, they also had to suspend the project due to problems in capital. “It costs \$300,000 to produce a walking aid, and we must make sure that the manufacturer will get orders for it in the future. Although many people found the walking aid great after trying it, we couldn’t find investors. There is really nothing we can do about it.” June believes that one has to make a living after all, so after calculating the opportunity cost, she decided that the best thing to do at the time was to suspend the Onup project and wait for a better opportunity.

It takes a long time to develop and improve a brand new product. Although the funding from Good Seed was just seed money, June is grateful for everything that she has encountered in the process. “I think this is the best funding because they are very supportive and willing to let us

try. Even if we fail, it’s not the end of the world, because life is made up of various failures and attempts.” Back to reality, June admitted that even the best ideas require the trust of investors as well as the belief that they can face change and implement it. Nonetheless, she was relieved to see the community become more aware of accessibility and more willing to listen to stories and projects in the past two years, so she is optimistic that one day, the project will make a comeback, improving the relationship between users and the community, thus achieving true social inclusion.



17

A COMPULSORY COURSE FOR CHILDREN

PATERMATER -
WONG BING KIN SOLOMON

“From kindergarten to university, we spend more than a decade’s time in school. Yet, the compulsory curriculum includes nothing about the parent-child relationship. To Solomon, PaterMater is a compulsory course in elderly care; it is tricky to estimate the course duration, but Solomon has set a provisional duration — a lifetime.”

On the day of the interview, 27-year-old Solomon was holding his fourth daffodil planting class in collaboration with Ying Pak Kin, the founder of Bring Parents For Fun. Despite the two of them being close in age, Solomon, with his glasses on, exuded an air of maturity and calmness. He stood next to the participants and observed their needs; when one of the “daughters” looked around, Solomon immediately attended to her and offered his assistance. Apart from organising child-parent activities to let children spend more time with their parents, PaterMater also provides practical information and advice on how to care for the elderly. This prompts the question that all children face — how should we prepare as our parents grow older?

In 2015, Solomon’s parents were just entering their retirement years and still in good health. While he thought that things would go on as usual for his parents, his mother’s experience at a fast food restaurant struck him. “She told me that she had spent the whole morning sitting in a fast food restaurant, surrounded by seniors in their 70s and 80s. She asked me, ‘So do I have to sit there for the next 20 years?’” This conversation made Solomon realise that his mother was getting older; it also made him think about children’s role in their parents’ lives from when they first retire to when their physical abilities decline, or even when they pass away. “I decided on the name PaterMater before any concrete planning was made because the project was dedicated to parents,” Solomon said.

CHOICES AT CROSSROADS

Ever since he conceived the concept, Solomon alone has been responsible for deciding on the direction, content, and promotion. But one person can only do so much; while he can manage his time and workload step by step, the most challenging part for him is decision making. “The first decision I had to make was whether to quit my job.” After graduation, Solomon has worked as a corporate finance analyst at BNP Paribas, and as an executive assistant to the president of Link REIT. He has also worked in real estate investment. It was undoubtedly a promising career path. But six months after starting PaterMater, Solomon was about to take on another deal at work, which meant that he would not have time for the project for a few months. “If I chose to stay for another deal, I would have to work till 2 am for a few months, which meant I would have to let go of the work I’ve done for PaterMater in the past six months. I discussed this with my girlfriend, and she was very supportive of me continuing my work in PaterMater. If it wasn’t for her support,

it would’ve been very difficult for me to decide in such a short time,” Solomon said with a smile.

The decision to resign was not an impulsive one, as Solomon had already saved up enough for a year’s expenses, as well as getting additional medical insurance before he resigned. From what he said, he seemed to be pragmatic, with his future well thought out. “My girlfriend thought of the worst-case scenario for me. Even after working on the project for two or three years, I would still only be 28 or 29 years old by then. It would be no big deal. Although I have invested a sum of money, I could just think of it as getting a master’s degree in gerontology. I would be doing internships at different organisations for the project, and at least I would learn how to take care of my own parents — even if I don’t need to do it yet, the moment will come.”



300 HOURS TO BECOME A HEALTH WORKER

The first step he took after resigning was to get a health worker's licence to work in a home for the elderly. "It was my girlfriend's idea. She thought that if I was to do a project with the elderly, I might as well get to know a bit more about their needs." To get a health worker's licence, one has to take 300 hours of classes, eight hours a day for two months consecutively, and read two books that are thicker than dictionaries. "At one point, I realised these two books were just an introduction to elderly care. How would a regular office worker know how to take care of the elderly?" Solomon's voice rose in amazement.

During his internship at a home for the elderly, Solomon had to change diapers, feed the elderly, and help them take showers, just like a regular care worker. He readily accepted all the tasks which most people would consider unpleasant, because he would be able to observe the needs of the elderly during the process. He once saw an old lady with angina who often acted up and refused to eat, so the

staff would call her son, which turned out to be a sure-fire way to help.

"It was amazing. Whenever her son came to visit her, she would not need to be fed, eat everything herself, and even drink all the soup. The elderly don't necessarily need a nice environment or nice facilities when they get old. What they want most is to be loved and to have company. That made me feel from the bottom of my heart that it was right to start PaterMater."

Solomon said with determination in his eyes.



“GUESS WHERE I PUT THE DAFFODIL?”

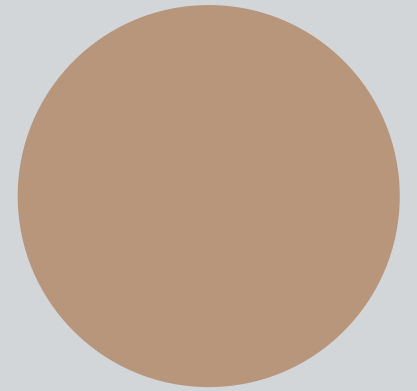
Solomon's parents have participated in child-parent activities held by PaterMater, such as Thai boxing, eco-tours and tea tasting sessions. His father made new friends during the tea tasting activity and even inscribed the flowerpots for the daffodil class. His mother has become the coach of the massage class. PaterMater became a bridge between Solomon and his parents, bringing their lives in sync. “I used to get so annoyed when they asked me about work, but now when I get home, my dad would ask me, ‘Guess where I put the Daffodil?’ It's cute and fun,” he laughed.

In the three years since Solomon started PaterMater, the bonus for him was getting closer to his parents and spending more time with them.



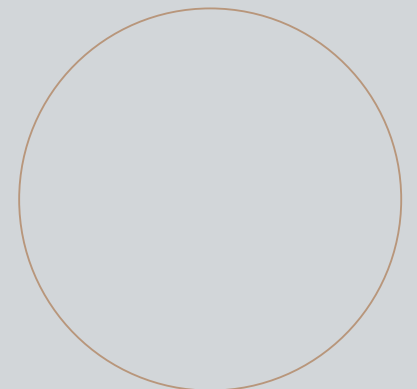
“I have no regrets about this experience. I've always been rather rational when communicating with my family, and I seldom share my feelings. But I've done so many activities with them now and interacted with them so much more — that is already worth it.”

18



SEARCHING FOR AN EXIT FOR URBAN DWELLERS

POKEGUIDE –
HUI PUI YIN BRIAN



“ Many Hongkongers may have already heard of this mobile app with the playful name “Pokeguide”. This app is designed to assist busy urban dwellers to locate the carriage and door nearest to the escalator to a designated exit, suggesting the shortest route to save their time. ”

Pokeguide was founded by a pair of post-80s brothers, Brian Hui and Andre Hui, as well as a friend of Andre’s. From its launch in 2015 to the end of 2017, not only has Pokeguide reached an accumulated download count of 180,000, but also added a range of features. For instance, it has launched features designed for users with visual impairment and wheelchair users. Recently, it also launched a new “AR Navigation” feature, which provides an intuitive way of navigation for people who are bad at reading maps. Pokeguide has also expanded its business from Hong Kong to Taiwan and San Francisco, with more international expansion plans to come.

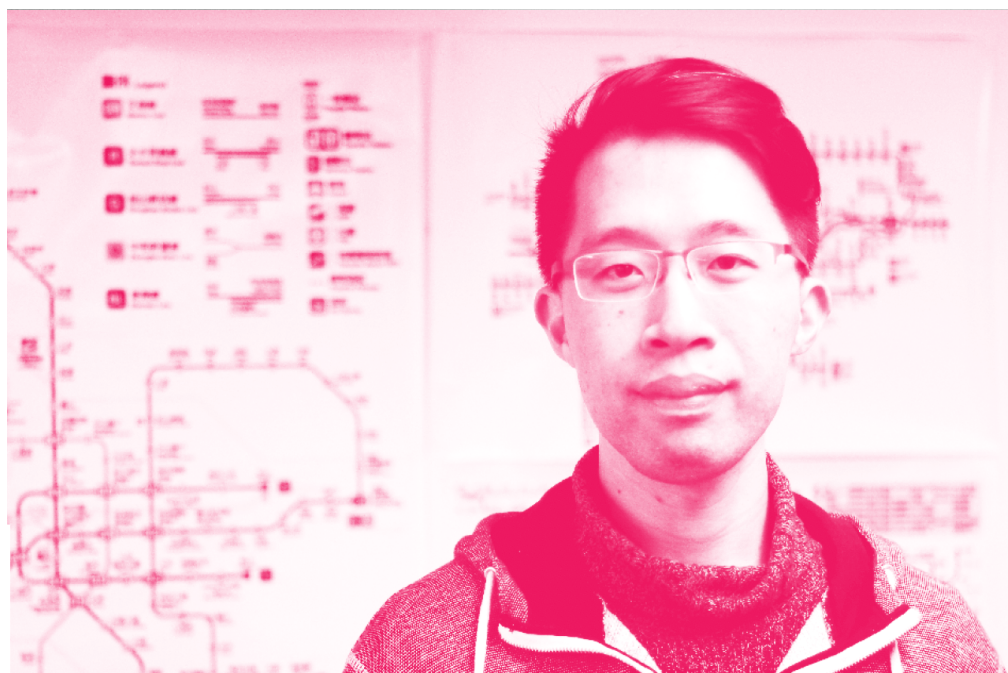


IDENTIFYING SOCIAL NEEDS FROM EXPERIENCE

On day of the interview, Brian, the elder brother, brought me to their office in Causeway Bay and shared the story of Pokeguide and the mental journey of the founders. The story began at the end of 2012, when Andre, his younger brother, was drafting the topic for his final-year project for his degree in Product Engineering with Marketing at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. During brainstorming, Andre recalled a habit that he and his brother had when taking the MTR when they were kids: they used to make a mental note of which carriage and door were closest to the escalator to certain exits in their most visited MTR stations. “We lived in Causeway Bay. Going through the wrong exit would result in a long walk of more than ten minutes on the street. For example, our home was near Sogo, so if we went out through the Causeway Bay Plaza I exit, it would take a long time for us to get home.” It is common

for social entrepreneurs to discover social needs from their own experience. Due to the growing popularity of smartphones, Andre decided to design the mobile app Pokeguide.

After that, Andre began to discuss the feasibility of the app with Brian. Brian, five years older than Andre with commercial and IT background, had been working full time for almost ten years at that time. “When I heard about his idea, I thought it would benefit a vast number of commuters. Not only would the app improve the MTR-taking experience, but also save time and improve crowd control at MTR stations. This was the vision we had from the very beginning.” Brian believes that if a product is useful, business opportunities will come. “Even if the performance indices are not satisfactory at the moment, once it grows to a certain economy of scale, it will shine.”



As a result, Andre completed the prototype of Pokeguide in a year, and he got an A in his final-year project.

After finalising the prototype, the mobile app would be ready for launch after a short period of programming and data optimisation. However, at that timing, the Hui brothers made a wise key decision —

clearly the well-known incident of the MTR allegedly “stealing” the start-up’s idea. Andre then spent another year visiting subway stations around the globe to record all relevant information of carriages and doors.

“We decided to collect subway transit data for ten or more major cities around the globe, and to launch the support for each city one after another. By doing so, even if someone steals our idea, they can never catch up with our pace. And reality has proven our decision to be right.”

The reality that Brian referred to was

ANDRE’S SUDDEN ILLNESS BROUGHT BRIAN TO THE START-UP

In November 2014, when Andre finally thought that everything was ready for launch, he was suddenly diagnosed with cancer, which put the whole project on hold. “His top priority had to be cancer treatment and rehabilitation. Therefore, I decided to resign from my job and fully engage in Pokeguide’s work because it would be a shame to forgo this project,” Brian said. Luckily, the cancer was discovered at the initial stage, and Andre recovered fully within a year. The Hui brothers then rented a co-working space in June 2015 to complete the programming, and successfully launched the trial version of Pokeguide after two months.

Afterwards, the Hui brothers kept improving the technical aspect of Pokeguide; at the same time, they actively engaged in various entrepreneur competitions to gain entrepreneurial knowledge and promote Pokeguide. Brian thinks that joining Good Seed was a key turning point: “Good Seed allowed us to reach the visually impaired

and wheelchair users. We followed up the discussion with a few meetings and interviews.” Despite wanting to help people with disabilities in the initial phase of designing Pokeguide, the idea had seemed hard to realise. Good Seed gave them a golden opportunity to analyse the needs of the visually impaired and wheelchair users, which helped them design related features. For example, users with visual impairment can enter their destination into Pokeguide through voice input, and the app will immediately reply with the closest subway exit and the train door; wheelchair users can press the phone button in Pokeguide to call the designated service centre of the MTR station for direct assistance from the MTR staff.

PRAGMATIC DESIGN BORN FROM TRUE COMMUNICATION

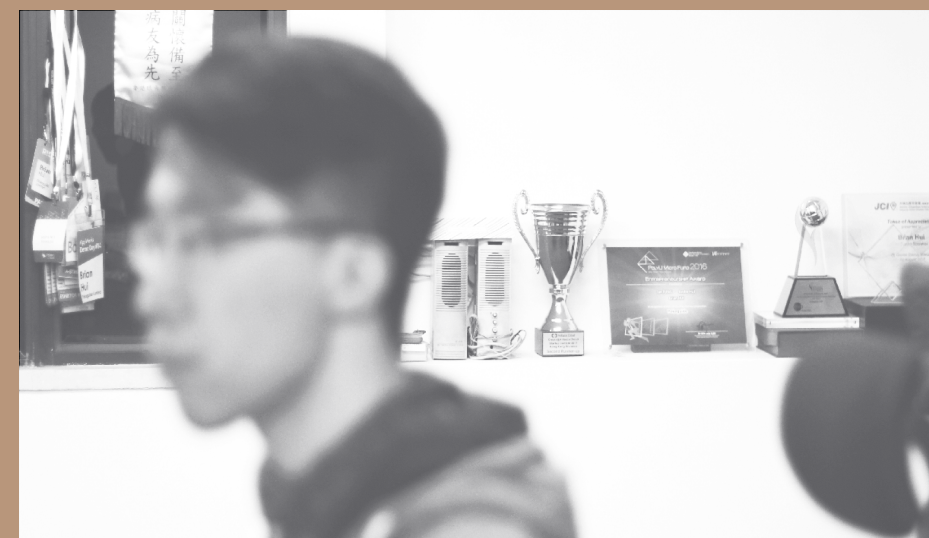
“Good Seed inspired us to think differently. In the past, we used to see people with disabilities as the minority, and we would prioritise the majority, or the general market. After joining Good Seed, we learnt that if we take the need of a group to heart, it can benefit the group hugely, and they will become the foundation of our business.”

Brian admitted that due to the small numbers of minority groups, they had brought little economic benefit. However, they were active in giving feedback on room for improvement, which significantly fostered Pokéguides’ improvement. They also sent encouraging and supportive messages to the team from time to time, which was a shot in the arm for Brian in times of trouble, such as during the incident of the MTR allegedly “stealing” their idea.

As the MTR incident, which happened in September 2017, has been widely reported by the media, the details will not be covered here. Facing this situation,

Brian was unsure whether to laugh or cry. “I remember at that time, we were about to launch the San Francisco version. How did I feel? It felt like I was trying my best to complete a task — I can’t say to win glory for Hong Kong, but at least we were showing the world that start-ups in Hong Kong were a thing... Who knew we would get stabbed in the back? What was our own team doing to us?” After this, Brian learnt that a start-up company should never expect anything from collaborating with a sizeable company, but it should instead prepare for the worst. It also highlighted the importance to “think global” — without their advance planning on covering cities outside of Hong Kong, the MTR incident would have struck them even harder.

Now, Pokéguides has expanded its team from the three initial members to more than ten. It is expected that its service will soon expand around the globe.



“Social innovation does not only emphasise on creativity, but also on providing solutions to social needs. The successful story of Pokéguides is the best demonstration that instead of working behind closed doors, communicating with real people is the best way to understand social needs.”

19



BEAUTY THAT REGENERATES FOOD WASTE AND RECONCILES FAMILIES

DYELICIOUS -
ERIC CHEUNG & WINNIE NGAI



Eric graduated in environmental applied science and Winnie studied design. The two young people set up Run2 Tree Design five years ago, focusing on environmental and sustainable development, and engaging in food waste recycling and food design. Eric became concerned about the problem of leftover food in Hong Kong when he was in university and initiated the “Clear Plate Campaign”. As implied by the name, it was about eating all the food on one’s plate and not creating leftovers. At first, they mainly worked with large food manufacturers to solve the problem of food waste, such as upcycling food waste into various commodities like soaps, paper, and dyes. Their original “leftover dye” was awarded the “Hong Kong Green Innovation Award 2014”.

After participating in the Good Seed Social Innovation Project two years ago, they have found another use for food waste dyeing in terms of the social aspect. It can be an ideal medium to improve family and parent-child relationships, and educate the public to appreciate food and recycling. As a result, Run2 Tree Design established a branch that mainly organises food waste dyeing workshops named “Dyelicious”.

THE POWER OF CONNECTION IN FOOD WASTE DYEING

On the day of our visit, they had just moved into a unit on the fifth floor of PMQ. Dyelicious had become their main focus of development, and they would hold food waste dyeing workshops at PMQ. They were striving to create a space where people can feel at ease and enjoy fabric dyeing.

“In future courses for grassroots families, we plan to include a trip to Central to let the participants explore a community that they are unfamiliar with, since they are mostly from the New Territories, North District and Tseung Kwan O. After spending a few months with them, I know they rarely go to other districts. Lacking in money, they may feel uncomfortable going somewhere ‘middle class.’”

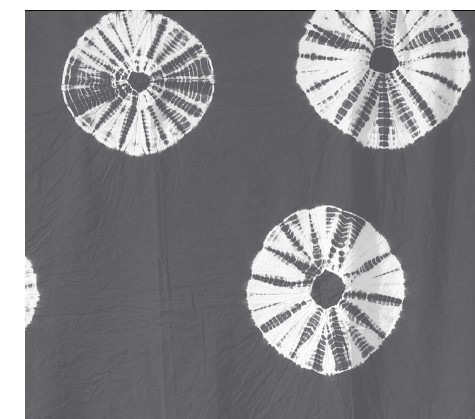
Eric told us that they are actualising the concept of “do well do good” step by step, but he and Winnie do not like to play by the rules. He pointed out that social enterprises focus mostly on poverty alleviation. “We observed that many social welfare organisations were already

supporting them financially, providing them with free goods and food. Could we fill other gaps from the perspective of social innovation? We then realised that the lack of familial love is also a kind of poverty and deficiency. The underprivileged work hard. They are not only short of money, but also short of time. They hardly have common pastimes, and it is difficult even for the whole family to have a meal together. Parent-child activities available in the market are not cheap, and low-income families cannot afford these expenses.” Many of the social issues caused by grassroots families have been exacerbated by long-term alienation and conflicts.

“This inspired us to explore food waste dyeing as a medium. Dyeing is simple, but it is not something one can do on their own. Unlike art jamming, which is an individual form of art, dyeing requires cooperation and communication. Therefore, I thought of using it as an opportunity for parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren to interact with one another.”

What Eric said was not just an empty slogan. He had put a lot of thought into the design to encourage participants to work together. “A typical workshop or one-off event wouldn’t work. I wanted to make the short communication more intensive and meaningful. We had thirty families participate in our 3-month long-term programme as a test, with one session every other week. These families were referred to us by registered social workers from three agencies, who also observed and analysed them to see if the family communication would change. During those six sessions, I made them sit there and look at one another. They would only start to talk heart to heart during that opportunity. For example, parents would ask their children about secondary school subject selection. On top of that, we designed the programme to make the dyeing process difficult. We would present them with the finished product without giving them detailed instructions and ask them to re-create it to foster communication. They would need to discuss and try out different

approaches like tying rubber bands and marbles. If they were doing board dyeing, which required them to clamp a thick and folded piece of cloth between boards, it would fall apart if it was not clamped or held tightly, leading to conflicts and arguments. The process would bring the usual conflicts to light. The registered social workers would then help mediate and guide them to think of a plan together in a more considerate way.” After the classes, the relationships continue, carrying the memories. “They hang the beautiful works that they have made in their homes, which would remind them of the memories.”



“The Taiwanese writer Chiang Hsun, who has been promoting beauty throughout Asia, once exclaimed that instead of looking for beauty in art galleries or music halls, city dwellers must at least “live an authentic life” in order to discover beauty. Beauty is far more than attires and decorations — it is a sensitivity and pursuit of the good. A young local couple, who started their business five years ago, want to make the world a more beautiful place. They started off by transforming food waste, which most people find dirty and smelly; they wanted to inspire people to reflect on living in excess, on how to eat well, on eating fairly and righteously, on estranged family relationships that people are too lazy to mend, and on all the possibilities in restoring beauty.

”

THE BUMPY PATH OF ENTREPRENEURS

6 months after the prototype classes were initiated, the social workers observed positive changes in all 30 families. After the Good Seed funding period was over, Eric and Winnie were able to secure funding for the grassroots family courses from regular clients, such as property developers and banks, so Run2 Tree does not need to bear the cost of holding these workshops; that, together with the income generated from the fees of non-grassroot family classes, they established a firm footing. They moved into PMQ, and Eric showed great confidence in paying the rent of over \$10,000. The five years of food waste upcycling business and education have not been easy. They had moved their studio four times in four years; finding a physical space to settle and develop is a challenge that local entrepreneurs must face. In 2013, they were forced to move from a 180-square-foot industrial building unit in Kwai Hing due to a crazy rent increase. After that, they successfully applied for the Design Incubation Programme and moved to Kowloon Tong, and then moved their studio to Wong Chuk Hang. After the programme ended, they wanted to move into the PMQ, but no units were available, so they stationed in a PMQ Pop Up Store. After a few

months, they finally “settled down” in their current unit.

“We hope to show the possibilities of food waste to more locals and foreigners here.”

Eric is a careful person, but he is also good at execution. For several years, he and Winnie has been going to public markets and supermarkets to pick up leftovers, edible but unattractive looking fruits and vegetables, and inedible but fresh fruits and vegetables. They took them home for dye tests and persuaded friendly vegetable stall owners to give the edible but unattractive looking fruits to people for free. They also worked with the Vegetable Marketing Organisation to provide a food safety label for unattractive fruits so that the fruits could be sold. They are now focusing on food waste dyes. Eric went to Nara in Japan to learn professional tie-dyeing. It was only then that he discovered his “origins”. His Japanese grandfather happened to be a dyer of the previous generation who ran a dye house in Nara. Now that the dyeing workshop had adopted an industrial and chemical dyeing approach, he decided to go back to the dye house to learn about dyeing methods and the science behind it.



Eric seizes every opportunity, resource, and method to help Hong Kong people rediscover the beauty of food and things around them, from upcycling food waste to reconciling relationships.

“I hope people can rediscover things that they are familiar with but never had a chance to feel, be it cheesy hot dogs or sweet potatoes, or even their families,”

Eric proclaimed. When they were invited by the Milan Expo to share about their food waste dyes in 2015, the organisers said that they had created “the most beautiful colours in the world”, and those beautiful colours not only dyed pieces of cloths, but also touched the hearts of people.

20

I TRAVELLED, AND I SAW THE WORLD AND PEOPLE

SENIO TECH FALL DETECTION DEVICE -
LEE SUI HA CELIA

“ Once we start working, the burdens on our shoulders increase, such as our prospects, jobs, and partners — all we care about is ourselves. After six years of work, Celia gave up her stable life and set out into the world. Along her journey, not only did she see sceneries, but also the needs of people around her. The experience inspired her to embark on another journey in social innovation to develop products for the elderly. Letting go does not necessarily mean losing; whenever we close our fists again, we gain more.

”

Babies and the elderly are on the opposite ends of life's spectrum, and both need care and attention. Yet, most of us tend to be happy to see the arrival of new life, but feel reluctant to take care of the elderly. 35-year-old Celia Lee held up a model of a baby's foot and admitted that the original idea of the product was to measure a baby's heartbeat and blood oxygen, before deciding to make a fall detection device for the elderly.

“From a business point of view, parents are willing to spend money on their babies, but many people would also tell you that the elderly have more needs. We hoped that the product would help mothers take care of their babies, but if the product was for the elderly, it might save lives.” To make it easy for the elderly to wear, the device will have a bracelet or watch design. If the elderly user falls, the built-in program will confirm their condition, connect to their smartphone via wireless signal, and call their family members or organisations for help instantly.



A YEAR OF CONSTANT TRIALS

Celia's team is developing two products at the same time, and even though both have prototypes, it has already taken a full year. From the formation of the team to the initial idea, it took several months of discussion and compromising.

“We didn't know each other at that time — we were introduced to one another by friends, and it just so happened that we all wanted to do something meaningful.”

Celia is good at programming, while other team members have their own specialties, including hardware design and business development. However, even friends would have conflicts when working together, not to mention new colleagues who are strangers. “I'm relatively easy-going, and fortunately, we are all very rational. Instead of throwing around comments starting with ‘I think’, everyone provides sufficient reasons to support their points during discussions. After all, we all care about the product most.”

This is always easier said than done. Celia and her team encountered many obstacles when they put the idea into

practice. “We spent a lot of time on hardware research and testing. Now, we have a lot of electric fuses and wires scattered around the office. After the design was ready, it was time for testing. We had to go to Shenzhen to find a manufacturer and wait for it to send the prototype back. If there was a change, we had to take the hardware to Shenzhen in person, because we could not send electronic parts there from Hong Kong,” Celia sighed. The team kept testing, waiting for the prototype, and then testing again. Celia laughed and said that they had pretended to be a falling elderly user many times. “We kept falling on the sofa to test how long it would take for the test device to respond — because the device was designed to respond only after confirming that the user has actually fallen down,” Celia explained.

FROM HIDING BEHIND THE COMPUTER TO FACING PEOPLE

While testing the prototype repeatedly, Celia and her team continued to participate in competitions and workshops, meeting professionals from different sectors, which meant that they had to deal with a variety of social situations. Before starting her own business, Celia spent six years writing programs on the computer. She told us that the office used to be so quiet that you could only hear typing sounds. Since initiating the project, she is no longer just looking at the cold glow of a computer screen, but living and breathing people. At first, she was a little shy when attending these occasions. “People in the business world can talk for hours with a glass in their hands, and I often wondered what they were talking about. Then, I found out that they would mostly share their success stories, and I would just listen,” she laughed.

The team member responsible for business development often accompanies Celia to networking events, and she is deeply impressed by his social skills. “People at these events tend to take the initiative. They would approach you,

immediately hand out their business card, and introduce themselves. You don't see that when working with a computer,” She paused, and then continued,

“Sometimes, you don't do that because you're too concerned about what people may think of you. But after second thoughts, it's not strange at all because everyone does the same. It is common to rush over and shake hands, but I often wonder if I would look weird,”

she said with a smile. After a few events, Celia gradually figured out her place and started to get used to expressing herself in front of people. “When someone walks by, I would introduce the product and let my teammate do the socialising. Even if he can't make it, I believe I can handle it now.”



LEARNING TO LET GO IN TWENTY MONTHS

Looking back on the past year and a half, Celia admitted that she had never imagined she would experience something like it. She left behind six years of stable life and embarked on the unpredictable journey of social entrepreneurship. This change was triggered by a journey that lasted 20 months. “After six years of work, I felt a bit bored with my job, so I went on a trip with my boyfriend,” Celia said.

During this 20-month-long trip, they did not rush to visit all the tourist spots. They stayed in the homes of locals, bought

food and cooked meals, visited markets, and chatted. This relaxing time allowed Celia to settle her mind and redirect her attention to people around her.

“Because we had a lot of time, I started to see other people’s worlds and their needs instead of just thinking about myself. This inspired me to observe people around me even after I returned to Hong Kong.”

They travelled with heavy backpacks to many European countries, including the UK, Italy, France, and Spain. The farther they travelled, the less weight they carried

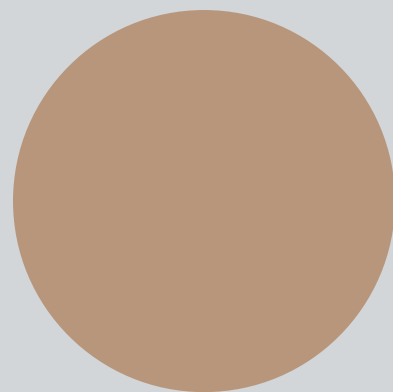
on their backs. Not only did they let go of their baggage, but also their original thoughts. “During the trip, I thought about what I wanted to do after I get back. I wanted to do something for society. If that something is meaningful, I would be even more dedicated,” Celia said.

The interview lasted for more than an hour. Whether we were talking about travel or the long wait in the development process, Celia spoke nonchalantly; it felt like a cup of hot coffee that had been sitting for a while, still a bit warm and very soothing. But when it came to the stories of the elderly around her, she suddenly became choked up and drops of tears fell slowly. “My grandpa just passed away last week because of pneumonia. He was almost 100 years old. None of us knew he was ill, and by the time he was admitted to hospital, his condition was already severe.” As she spoke on, she calmed down a bit and took a deep breath, and her tone returned to its usual calmness. “I don’t know if my grandpa would’ve been saved if we had launched our product earlier, but at least we would’ve known his health condition earlier.” But we cannot change the past. It’s been a year and a half since the development of the

product began, and Celia only hopes that the product can be launched to help the elderly in need as soon as possible.

“After the product is launched, we will have to face new problems in areas like sales and marketing, but it doesn’t matter. Right now, I just want to launch the product and see how the market responds. I am ready to face the response, be it good or bad.”

21



A ONE-MAN
SOCIAL
ENTERPRISE,
A HALF-GREEN
LIFE

SHARE FARMING COMMUNITY -
LAI HIU FUNG WILLIAM



SEED EXPERIMENT





A Salvation Army service building can be found at the edge of Shek Kip Mei where old housing estates like Tai Hang West, Tai Hang East, and Nam Shan Estate are, and next to the luxury villas of Yau Yat Tsuen. William was carefully watering plants in the rectangular open garden in front of the building on the right, checking the leaves and branches of the plants.

The area is like a forgotten place. The stores, the buildings, and the environment have remained the same as they were in the 1960s and 70s. In this refreshing and open piece of land, birds sing and trees flourish. The Salvation Army has lent this piece

of land to William's SHARE Farming Community and it has become William's "base".

“ We see endless expansion of cities, population growth, various types of pollution, food crisis, spiritual deprivation, “diseases of civilisation”, and many more issues in the world. Urban farming has emerged as an “antidote” to these issues. It was first practised in the United States in the early 20th century, and then spread to the United Kingdom. In recent years, it has become more widespread and well-known. In Hong Kong, innovators and business models that promote urban farming have started to appear. One entrant to the industry has walked out from an enclosed white cube into the sunlight, peacefully accompanying his growing vegetables in solitude.

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WHEN ORIGINALITY MEETS REALITY

The garden has more than 40 planting boxes in rows with herbs, seasonal fruits, and vegetables. Besides tending to the crops, William teaches farming classes, rents out planting boxes to the public, organises guided tours, and attends to the greening of the building. But according to William, it is a small-scale business that focuses on community work, so there is not much promotion or large-scale activities at the moment. People who live in the neighbourhood would pass by, see him tending to the plants from outside the fence, feel interested, and then approach him to sign up for classes. Most of the participants are families or retirees.

He has the flexible aura of a farmer, but his skin tone and appearance are no different from a city dweller. He has been working as a radiographer in a hospital for 10 years, operating equipment for X-ray, MRT, and CT in an enclosed space every day; he described his job as boring and stagnant. Yet, he has a lively mind and loves to help people by nature. In addition to working in the medical field, he often does voluntary

work to help others. Over the years, he had seen many non-profit organisations struggling to apply for grants and funding, which left him wondering if he could establish a business model and earn money to help people.

So, he began to study social entrepreneurship, enrolling in the Social Entrepreneurship Programme at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and later in Good Seed. He tried urban farming as part of his social entrepreneurship coursework at HKU. In the beginning, he had an ambitious goal. He aspired to bring together the disadvantaged to learn and manage a farm, and he envisioned growing and mass-producing crops all around Hong Kong on rooftops, terraces, and in indoor areas. He also wanted to develop areas for renting out planting boxes for people who were interested.

“My mentor at the time thought it was a promising idea and was confident that it would bring considerable income.”

But it was not easy to actualise his ideas. At first, he set up a community farm with three other Good Seed participants whom he did not know.

“But they eventually dropped out and I was left alone. I then reached out to a friend who was experienced in farming to be one of the founders. Later, this friend had other plans to pursue so I went back to being alone again. I do all the bookkeeping, accounting, and monthly reports for Good Seed myself,”

he laughed bitterly.

The only caretakers of the farm are William, a handful of young people with low academic qualifications trained during Good Seed’s funding period, and retiree volunteers. Besides, William has observed that many people find farming interesting, but when it comes to paying for classes or spending time taking care of plants regularly, it is a different story. The business has remained small with limited

expenses, and the Salvation Army does not charge rent from them. Therefore, funds from Good Seed are used to buy trays and farming tools and subsidise volunteers, while his regular work income is used to buy soil and fertilisers. Although he runs the business alone, he tries hard to find ways to sustain it. One way is to maintain his original job while tending to the farm. He has switched from his full-time job at the hospital to a part-time job that only requires him to work two-thirds of his previous hours. This allows him to tend to his farm at the Salvation Army at least two days a week. “The hospital job is my fallback. Private hospitals have short working hours, so I still have energy to do what I like after work. This can sustain my business for longer, since I won’t easily give up for fear of not earning enough money from farming. I can take my time and do a better job when no one is giving me pressure.”

FROM AN ENCLOSED ROOM TO WORKING UNDER THE SUN

In Hong Kong, more and more people are engaged in farming, but very few of them are full-time farmers. In the 1990s, Naoki Shiomi proposed the concept of “half-farmer, half-X” to address various development problems in the city. He defined a “farmer” as “a person who lives a simple life in accordance with the course of nature, being self-sufficient through small-scale agriculture practices and satisfying basic needs with a simple lifestyle”; “X” is not just any job, but a career and a vision, and using one’s talents to create a positive connection with society and bring happiness to the public.

In Hong Kong, there is a group of “half-farmer, half-X” or “half-farmer, half-other worker”. William positions himself not as a self-sufficient farmer, but someone who uses farming as a medium to serve the community. Rather than living a “half-farmer, half-other worker” life, William has more of a “side-gig lifestyle”, developing his personal interests and career after work.

William found someone on a social media platform who was following a similar path — he was also an X-ray technician who ran a farm at the same time. They got in touch, and William would help out on his farm from time to time. “His farm is very different from urban farming. We exchange ideas.”

William did not know much about farming before, but as he continued to try and explore, he became more interested in it. He has taken five or six courses on cultivation, guided gardening, and horticultural therapy:

“It’s amazing and challenging to grow a huge plant from a seed.”

But he has never thought about running a farm like his counterpart. Farmers live a hard life working outdoors under the bright sun and extreme weather, investing everything into farming. His vision is different; he has always preferred green or agricultural activities that are community-based and related to helping the disadvantaged.

Smooth as his life path has been, it has been a challenge to move from the comfort zone of working in an enclosed space to working outdoors under the sun, not to mention embracing uncertainty. He said that farming is facing countless uncontrollable conditions, the ever-changing climate, and long waits, for everything in nature has its own rhythm and pace. With his endeavour in farming, he is slowly opening his own path of social entrepreneurship. He will not give up his original vision, holding tight onto the hope of achieving it one day.



22



TEARING OFF LABELS BY TELLING STORIES

UNSPOKEN –
SIN HIU LAAM OPHELLIA

REJECT STEREOTYPES, EVERYONE IS BEAUTIFUL

On UNSPOKEN's Facebook page, there is a quote: "It takes a long time to produce a gorgeous pearl. Even a small pearl must undergo a long polishing process to shine. The same can be said for any kind of beauty." To Ophellia, everyone has a story to tell, and every story is worth listening to.

When Ophellia first started working as a social worker and narrative therapist in prison many years ago, she was scared; but after spending some time with the prisoners, she realised that they were no different from the rest of us, and most of them value bonds and relationships highly. "I remember a group member called "Cheese". He was very quiet in the group and seldom spoke up. But later, he began to write to me, sharing with me his inner world in words — he even drew me a beautiful thank-you card. I didn't expect a 'tough guy' to do such things, so I was really surprised." She wanted to bring this "surprise" to everyone. "I knew that no one would have the patience and interest to listen to other people's stories, so I wanted to use a softer and more interesting

approach to expose people to the stories of rehabilitated people." Therefore, Ophellia brought together a team of designers and media workers to collect stories from rehabilitated people through conversations, turning them into designs and text to be printed on T-shirts for sale. Each T-shirt has a QR code printed on it, and one can simply scan the QR code to read the story of the rehabilitated person. The biggest challenge in the process was getting involved in the fashion field. The team spent a lot of time choosing fabrics and cuts, comparing different colours and prices. Finally, they found a thick 100% cotton fabric from a local manufacturer. Although the price was high, the quality was guaranteed and it was immune to colour bleeding and pilling.



One might think that everything is ready, but there are always discrepancies between reality and imagination. What was considered a beautiful design became a business challenge after the product was launched. What kinds of design appeal to Hongkongers? What is the target market? It turned out that being a social enterprise in Hong Kong is also a label.

“It’s hard to run a social enterprise in Hong Kong because people think that social enterprises provide free products, or that the products should be cheaper.”

Ophellia also thinks that most people in Hong Kong prefer big brands instead of local brands, unlike Japan and Taiwan. “Hong Kong people are willing to donate money and spend money, but they are not used to buying from social enterprises yet.” It is also difficult for social enterprises

to build a reputation in a short period of time. “I’m sure more people will hear about us through media promotions, but there’s a lot to take care of in a short time. I’m also worried that we won’t have enough supply to meet the demand.” Since Ophellia had no previous experience, it was easy to make wrong decisions. When she first learnt about social enterprises in university, she was surprised to learn that doing business could help people, reallocate resources, and make a bigger impact than front-line social workers. However, seeing the increase in social enterprise competitions, she admitted that they are just competitions — the process can impress participants, but many of them just see it as an experience without really wanting to develop their ideas. Therefore, to develop social enterprises, it is better to incubate them, providing plenty of time and support.

It is normal to encounter difficulties when running a business. “I never aimed at making a lot of money. My greatest concern was not to lose money, but now I feel a bit tired.” This project has brought them collaboration invitations from as far away as Australia, and they have received support from many local organisations, so why is Ophellia tired? It turns out that they have met many structural barriers in the process. For example, the Correctional Services Department was very supportive of the project, but the actual implementation was not considered to be in the field of employment for rehabilitated persons, and no corresponding department was responsible for it, so nothing happened in the end. Some NGOs liked the concept but were unwilling to invest in the production of the product. “We need to take care of a lot of details. If we want to achieve sustainable development, we must look at it from the perspective of a business. If that’s the case, we may have to sell 100 pieces of clothes, but some things are meant to take time. For example, each interview takes a long time.”

Art is a kind of self-expression; painting a life story is a new experience for both the artists and the rehabilitated people. Almost two years have passed; Ophellia told us that the brand will have a new positioning,

moving from fashion to everyday products, and collaborating with various artists to launch products at major festivals. An example is the recent collaboration with local illustrator C Kong to launch a love-themed Christmas hand cream set with an American skincare brand. “More people use everyday products. I hope that apart from the stories, the products can also convey different messages.” Ophellia understands that advocating for “no labelling” sounds vague, and it is not something that can be done overnight, but she believes that it is a movement.

“To me, success is a qualitative impact. I didn’t think this communication process would have such a big impact on the artists — it’s a kind of empowerment.”

She hopes that before making any judgements, everyone can think carefully about whether what they know is the whole picture. She stressed: “Don’t judge before you listen to the story. Stay connected.”

“ Humans are smart and lazy creatures. Since childhood, we already know how to combine new knowledge with experience to reduce the time needed for processing information. But at the same time, this may lead to overgeneralisation and labelling. Ophellia Sin, a former registered social worker, quit her job to fight against labelling; she set up UNSPOKEN, working with designers to tell the stories of ex-prisoners and hoping that more people will learn to understand those around them.

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23

RELAX AND
EMPTY YOUR
MIND

VOID –
CHAN KAI HO HERCULES



“ A quick search on the Internet will show you many reports on Hongkonger’s mental health conditions, such as the overwhelming stress level and having the highest depression rate in the world. Mental health is as important as physical health, but it is often overlooked. Some see suffering under stress as being “inadequate” and suffering from depression as being “pessimistic”. Hercules Chan, a student at the University of Science and Technology, has launched a mobile app to help and encourage people to take some time for themselves, whether it is just to relax or to space out, and to pay attention to their mental health. ”

A HOLISTIC APPROACH IS NEEDED FOR MENTAL HEALTH

What is mental health? According to the World Health Organization, mental health refers to a state where a person is aware of their potential, can cope with the normal stresses of daily life, can do productive activities such as work, and can contribute to their community. Health is a holistic concept; it is not simply defined by whether someone is ill, but also their ability to derive satisfaction from relationships, have fulfilling outcomes, and adapt, change, and cope with adversity. Mental health enables thinking, communicating, and learning; it allows us to grow emotionally and empowers us with resilience and self-esteem.

Hercules has always had an interest in mental health and counselling. He was introduced to psychology in secondary school and hypnotherapy a few years ago. He became a certified hypnotherapist and began doing hypnotherapy for friends. He claimed that since learning hypnosis, he has not fallen ill much and he can relieve his own symptoms when he does. “One-on-one therapy is very useful, but there are too many people in Hong Kong. I wanted

to find a more efficient way.” That was why he and his friends looked into developing a mobile application infused with hypnosis and psychotherapy theories, hoping to help users relieve stress and raise public awareness on mental health. Hercules has already won many awards for this project and participated in the Good Seed competition twice. He lost the first time but tried again, which resulted in him meeting his current partners and receiving funding for the project. “I’m glad I didn’t get the funding the first time because people are really important, and money can’t buy them.” In his second Good Seed event, Hercules’s idea attracted new members to join the team, including Samuel Chan, who is in charge of programming, as well as Iris, Polly, and Agnes, who are in charge of publicity and paperwork. They are all very interested in mental health; they have experienced mood swings and think that people need to learn to relax and pay attention to themselves. Samuel has also studied hypnosis; he performs hypnosis before going to bed, which helps him regulate his state of mind.



Iris pointed out that during the examination season, the library is full of people and many of them get insomnia, but instead of looking for solutions, they take medication, which is not a cure — they need to look inwards to find the root of the problem.

The app is finally on the right track after numerous attempts and failures, as well as changes in team members. For the time being, the app has two parts. The first part is a finger game designed by Hercules, as various studies have shown that slow finger movements can slow down the body’s rhythm, helping the user relax. The second part is a recording section which helps the user relax and fall asleep, with a different recording each day. The team values users’ feedback highly — they were replying to inquiries even during the interview. Samuel pointed out that with the feedback, they can address

the users’ concerns and make decisions that meet the market needs. “Many similar apps exist overseas, and many people use them. It’s just that there’s no Cantonese version catered for Hong Kong, and hypnosis is best done in the mother tongue.” Hercules said that it was a big challenge to translate the English wordings into Cantonese, as there were fewer words to choose from to convey the meaning, and it also had to rhyme. With the new team’s efforts, the app has gained more media coverage and public awareness. Agnes said that she wants to learn how to package it so that it will continue to draw attention.

“After all, many people still think that having mental health issues mean you are ill. There is a lot of misunderstanding and resistance. Education is needed.”

Most of the current team members are still students, so how do they treat the app? “I think of it as a business, though it may not grow into an actual one,” Hercules laughed. Other members feel that being able to work together as a team with the same goal in mind is something hard to come by. Polly, the newest member of the team, agrees with it and thinks that it is a good idea to be adventurous in university when the opportunity cost is low. “I don’t think students should only think about what career path they want to pursue. We should think about what value we can create.” Hercules agrees that the most important thing is to create value. He hopes to turn Hong Kong into a happy city where people can relax and let the “space” add colour to their lives. “Everything has its priorities, and I will stick to this project until I can’t find a way to do it anymore.”

“To put it plainly, life is a choice.”



24

BUILDING A BARRIER-FREE CITY TO CATER FOR EVERYONE'S NEEDS

WHEELMAN -
LAU SHIU FUNG

FROM HIS OWN NEEDS TO SOCIAL NEEDS

Fung, who suffers from spinal muscular atrophy, started to use a wheelchair in Form 3; since then, he experiences a lot of inconvenience almost every day. Living in the southern part of Hong Kong Island, his travel time to PolyU is several times longer than usual. Since the bus stop is at the entrance of the tunnel, no assistive facility is available for him to go to the bus stop by himself. He has to ask the staff to help him every day, and one time, it took more than an hour for him to receive help. In addition to that, the Hung Hom bus station is next to the train station, so the designated wheelchair space is often occupied by passengers' luggage. He has to wait for one bus after another before there is space for him to board to go home. Fung once came across a bus driver who was rude enough to tell him, "I don't take passengers in wheelchairs," before driving away. Recalling all these grievances, Fung laughed bitterly and said he was used to it.

When he saw a competition related to social inclusion, Fung participated with a wild idea. He had never expected to succeed, but it gave him the funding and manpower to actualise his idea. The original idea was to create a barrier-free map mobile app to provide wheelchair users with information, including barrier-free facilities in shopping malls and barrier-free routes to shopping malls. The aim was to help wheelchair users integrate into the community and improve their quality of life. But Fung, who started the project with nothing but good intentions, found out that there were a lot of provisions to study after participating in the competition, and many copyright issues arose, while the fund was nearly exhausted halfway through. Even his teacher at school asked him to give up, because the app was nowhere near completion, and there was little room for development. The team morale hit a new low. "People in Hong Kong are concerned about money. They only care about how you operate and how you make money.

Many judges asked about our plans on sustaining the development, but no one cared about the benefits of the app or how many people it would be able to help.” To build an inclusive society, one cannot simply rely on an app or a software — support from the government and large organisations is essential. Wheelman’s database was built by wheelchair users and volunteers, who would call venues to inquire about the facilities and carry out field visits in person. So far, the app contains barrier-free information on more than 30 shopping malls in Hong Kong to help wheelchair users enjoy life.

“I didn’t think about setting up a company or turning this into a business. If the aim becomes making money, it would go against my original intention. I just wanted to make life more convenient for myself and my friends. That’s why I think it is worth doing.”

Although in recent years, society has been advocating for the construction of barrier-free facilities, Fung pointed out sadly that it is usually done for the sake of doing. For example, most wheelchair seats in cinemas are in the first row, and no one would want to sit in the first row to watch films; some restaurants’ barrier-free toilets are unavailable because they are used as storage rooms; some

shopping malls have hidden elevators which are difficult to find; some MTR stations only have one elevator, making it impossible to take the MTR when the elevator is in maintenance. The list of everyday inconveniences is endless. “The most important thing is to change the mindset of society. A step at an entrance would already be an obstacle for us. Some people think they can help carry us, but my electric wheelchair weighs more than a hundred kilograms so it’s difficult to lift.” Fung recalled his experience at a computer fair: a large company’s booth was slightly raised for no apparent reason but there was no ramp, so he could only watch from afar. To change the social atmosphere, educating the next generation is the first step. He told us that children on the street would often curiously point at his wheelchair and ask “What’s that?”, and their parents would look embarrassed. However, he thinks that situations like that are actually good opportunities to teach the next generation about respecting people with different needs. “You can simply tell them it’s a wheelchair, so that they know there are different people with different needs in the world. After all, it’s the attitude that counts.”

“ We were taught in school that Hong Kong has scarce land but a large population. A majority of policies and designs, therefore, try to accommodate the most facilities while taking up as little space as possible. While a planned city should cater to the different needs of different users, many places in Hong Kong have neglected the needs of wheelchair users. Many people with disabilities need to spend unnecessary time waiting, take detours, or simply choose to stay at home to avoid the hassle.

Lau Shiu Fung, also known as Fung, is a graduate of the Department of Computing of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). He designed Wheelman, a mobile application that provides barrier-free information, in the hope of giving people with disabilities more opportunities to utilise urban design and enjoy life.

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Now that the mobile app has been launched, Fung feels relieved to have accomplished his goal. To him, Good Seed’s funding and flexibility led to the turning point that allowed him to complete the project. Now, he can refine and add to the information in the app at his own pace. He has recently been collecting information on the accessibility of karaoke places, so that more wheelchair users can enjoy the entertainment facility.

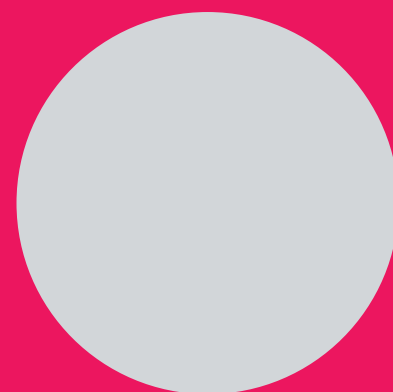
A society always consists of people with different needs. Empathy is what allows us to bridge the differences.

(Note: The mobile app Wheelman is not in operation currently.)

“I think the most ideal state is not needing these apps anymore, with communities built with accessibility in mind to cater for everyone’s needs.”

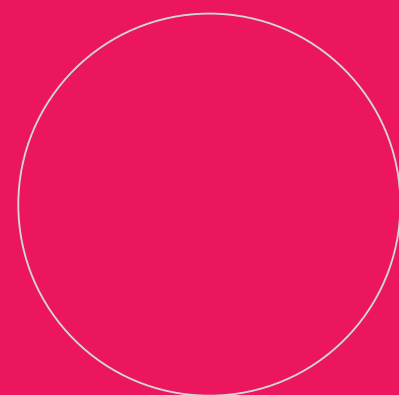
Fung also pointed out that barrier-free facilities are not only beneficial to wheelchair users, but also to the elderly and parents with baby strollers.

25



LET THE CHILDREN LEAD

BRING PARENTS FOR FUN -
YING PAK KIN



“ The love of family is like a flame that gives you light and warmth, igniting a passion deep inside your heart and letting you spread the love. Bring Parents For Fun is about stories of love. When you first learnt to walk, your parents held your soft little hands and led you around; when they start to walk stiffly and slowly, are you willing to hold their wrinkled hands? ”

In 2016, 28-year-old Ying Pak Kin founded Bring Parents For Fun, a programme that encourages adult children to bring their parents to different activities, aiming to bring two or even three generations closer together. “As parents grow older, they encounter various psychological problems. They may feel as if no one understands them and feel disconnected from society. Can children do more to help them? The simplest thing to do is to take them out!” said Ying firmly.

After graduation, Ying joined the banking industry. While he went down a smooth and prosperous career path, he also decided to join the ranks of social innovators. “Banking” and “child-parent activities” are not related at all, so why was he suddenly concerned about

problems between generations? “I have a really good relationship with my family. I grew up seeing how my mother took care of the elders in the family. Her actions have influenced me.” His mother would accompany her mother to buy groceries and go for walks. Ying grew up watching her and saw it as the proper way to treat one’s elders. However, when children grow up and start working, work, friends, and partners often take up most of their time, so they would spend less time with their parents at home. One day, when Ying was working in his office as usual, the idea of “taking his parents out” suddenly struck him, and he started developing Bring Parents For Fun.

THE LAW OF ATTRACTION

When I met Ying on the day of our interview, he was dressed in a denim jacket and a sweatshirt with a shoulder canvas bag, preparing for a daffodil class. When the activity was about to begin, he took off his original clothes to change into a short-sleeved T-shirt with the logo of PaterMater, and stood in the cold wind to greet the participants. PaterMater is another social innovation programme that promotes child-parent relationship and provides information on elderly care. Through a friend, Ying met Solomon, who not only shares an Alma Mater with him, but also shares similar beliefs, resulting in instant friendship. However, in the early days of Bring Parents For Fun, he spent most of his time alone thinking about the development direction and handling work like registration procedures and promotion — he could only spend one day a week on the actual programme. He admitted that being both a bank consultant and the founder of the project, the most difficult part was time arrangement. But along the way, he was able to gather many like-minded people to join as volunteers and share some of the

work. “I want to do so many things, but I don’t have enough time. That’s why I need helpers to help me with the development direction, or handle operation-related tasks when I don’t have time. I’m lucky to have met people who are willing to join as volunteers.”

Besides the addition of volunteers, Ying admitted that he needed to understand his own shortcomings in order to seek appropriate help.

“I think many people are willing to help you, but the question is whether you know how to ask for help. Some people don’t know that they need help, but I know what I need help with,”

Ying smiled. In the development process, he needed to introduce the concept to different organisations and negotiate the forms of cooperation, making the abilities of expressing himself and thinking logically essential skills. “I’m really bad at expressing myself. Ideas keep popping up in my head and it’s hard to sort them out. My method is

to talk to different people — that helps me process my ideas.” At the beginning of the interview, after each question, Ying would purse his lips and look straight ahead with his eyes wide open. At first, I wondered if the questions were too boring, but then he eventually told me, “I always try to polish my words and think carefully before answering. Was my answer bad just now?” He said with hesitation.



ACTIVITIES AS A COMMON TOPIC

The love of family is the essence and starting point of Bring Parents For Fun. The love between other children and their parents drives Ying forwards. Since its launch in 2016, Bring Parents For Fun has held various activities, such as tea tasting, picnics, and art jamming. Ying has been deeply moved by the interaction between other children and their parents. “A three-generation family participated once. I asked the father why he brought both his son and his father to the activity. He told me that he wanted his son to bring him in the future. I was surprised to learn that what I did wouldn’t just influence him and his father, but also how his son might treat him 20 years later.”

On this day, most of the participants of the daffodil class were daughters and their mothers. While the mothers skillfully prepared the daffodil bulbs with a knife, the daughters were clumsier and not even sure how to hold the knife. Sitting among them, Ying shared a funny story about his mother’s experience in the daffodil class. “My mum was very efficient and I let her

have the moment. After the class, she looked at the daffodils happily every day, and she would tell me about them all the time.”

After starting the project, Ying began to spend more time with his parents, which has helped him understand their needs better. “We have more common topics for conversation. After my mum took the daffodil class, she started volunteering for it from time to time. The project has brought them closer to me, which is more satisfying than anything else,” he said with a content smile. Now that his parents are in semi-retirement, their physical and mental states are gradually changing, and Bring Parents For Fun is a perfect fit for these changes.

“I think it has given them more things to take comfort in and helped them develop their own interests. My dad even made friends with a father who sat next to him in the tea-tasting session and plays chess with him now. I’m glad he made new friends.”

From understanding his own shortcomings and the needs of his parents, to bringing other children closer to their parents, Ying described the experience as challenging and rewarding at the same time. “At the end of the day, a regular job will always give you a framework to follow, but this project lets me do what I really care about. There’s a lot I could do better, but the satisfaction is greater.” Working two jobs at the same time, he has never treated Bring Parents For Fun as a hobby or an “escape” from his work. “This project is about the meaning of life. Going to work is part of life for sure, but not all of it. I want to do something besides work to create value for society and give myself a sense of satisfaction. Therefore, this is something I must do,” Ying said slowly but surely.



26

LITTLE POSSIBILITIES IN THE GAPS

LITTLE POSSIE LIMITED -
CHAN CHI YING CATHY

“Traditional systems are like stone walls — strong, firm, and hard to be shaken. Some people choose to close their eyes and live their lives as usual; some throw themselves against it with a burning passion, hurting themselves physically and mentally; some reach out and slowly feel their way along the stone wall, chiselling into the wall between the stones with a hammer.”

When I met up with Cathy, it happened to be the time of the day when students were going home after school. With her backpack, Cathy seemed to blend right in with the junior secondary students walking next to her.

ups suffer from emotional disorders because of unresolved family problems they encountered as children. But Hong Kong currently lacks an active mechanism for identifying these children — those wounds are sometimes invisible.”

“I used to joke with the students that I was a schoolmate from another class, because I was around the same height as them,”

she said with a bright smile. Cathy is petite but she has a strong passion for helping children with family problems. Through reading the Butter Buddy children’s picture books with them, she observes their reactions to the stories and identifies the family problems that they are experiencing. “In many cases, grown-



SOCIAL WORKERS ARE PAINKILLERS

To face invisible wounds, Cathy used to deal with piles and piles of cases every day for her job. When she worked as a social worker in a family service centre, every case was at a critical point, but she lacked the tools to stabilise and resolve the situation. “A tool could be, let’s say, storybooks for communicating with the children or understanding their emotions. I had to make them myself. The family problems were usually typical, like childcare, financial problems, and housing problems. A stressful life can often lead to emotional problems. By the time we realised it, the problem had already become so serious that they might want to give up their lives or might be abusing their children. I could only protect their safety at that point, but the most effective way would be to foresee the problems and intervene before they arise.”

At the time, Cathy’s role was like a painkiller that could only pause the problem for a moment, but she wanted to become a vaccine. This was why she decided to quit her job as a social worker and go to

Australia to study music therapy.

“I wanted to have an additional profession to actualise my plans. If the social innovation project failed, I would still be able to re-join the workforce with a new profession.” Cathy recalled that when she decided to quit her job, she was worried about her family’s reaction.

“I think that’s what happens when you follow your dream. Your family might not understand what you’re doing, or they might just be concerned about whether you can still support yourself or help support the family. All I can say is we’re ‘buying time’ and I hope we can get it done soon,”

Cathy said with a smile.



WHO WOULD FEEL HEARTBROKEN FOR THE KIDS?

In January, a five-year-old girl called Chan Sui Lam (Lam Lam), died under suspected abuse by her biological father and stepmother. It happened just a few blocks away from Cathy's home. Every time Cathy mentioned Lam Lam, her tone became especially heavy. She feels distressed about what happened to Lam Lam, and she is also anxious about the progress of the project. The picture books are now in the printing stage, but Cathy admitted that the progress had been slow. Since leaving her job, she has become a freelancer. She gets income from providing music therapy or counselling services at various organisations. This way, she can arrange her own time to continue her work on Butter Buddy. This pattern of work should have been less stressful, but her senior's comment pulled her back to reality. "My senior said to me, 'You can wait, but the kids can't.' Look at Lam Lam — who would feel heartbroken for her? Her life was valuable! If I had done it faster, would I have been able to help her? This makes me want to work harder."

Seeing the increasing number of domestic violence and child abuse cases, Cathy did not hesitate to seek resources. But while society often claims that "children are our future", others did not only focus on the children when Cathy started looking for resources to start her project.

"The growth of children has a long-term impact on society, but some people are short-sighted — they would ask, 'How are you going to make money?' But I look at it in the long term. When something has value, it connects people's hearts and minds, and it will resonate in society."

In addition to the issue of revenue, others have criticised the programme for lacking the element of technology. However, Cathy stressed that children should avoid early exposure to electronic products during their formative years, and that an online platform is more than just a website — the follow-up service is what matters the most.

"I feel upset when I hear these criticisms, but I understand why they think that way. Yet, I also wonder: when the purpose of a competition is to solve social problems, wouldn't it be more efficient if we could solve them without the need for technology? I always feel bad for myself when I am faced with such doubts," Cathy said with conviction.

Although the search for resources has been a frustrating process, Cathy still understands the concerns of potential investors. On the other hand, she felt more defeated in hearing the response from schools when she approached them to get in touch with potential service recipients. "Schools are under a lot of pressure because they don't have the resources to assist students with their emotional needs. But this is someone's life we are talking about. Does it mean that the values of many systems in Hong Kong are distorted?" Cathy's voice shook when she said the word "life". To schools, reputation seems to equal enrolment rate and funding, but this formula excludes

the needs of students. Having seen how unbreakable the existing system is, Cathy decided to invest her efforts into a social enterprise, hoping to create possibilities outside the stone walls.

"These topics make schools feel uncomfortable. Therefore, we promote emotional health and family relationship programmes, hoping that people would be more accepting."



A WAY OUT OF THE STRUCTURE

Cathy also understands the pressure which schools face. Before she became a social worker, she taught at a school. Every day, she was already exhausted after finishing basic tasks like preparing for lessons, correcting homework, and having meetings. It was difficult for her to find time to care about the students' emotions. "Teachers meet with students every day. Compared to social workers, teachers have much more influence on them, but teachers are also under great pressure in the system. Society emphasises a lot on inter-professional collaboration, but how can we work well together when every profession is restricted by the system?"

In order to break through the structure, Cathy has been in contact with social workers, clinical psychologists, and other professionals in various fields, hoping to provide aftercare counselling alongside launching the storybooks — she hopes to free the children from their problems.

"I believe many people care about the next generation. Even if it only influences one life, we must keep going."

27

THE SECOND BOX –
WU WAI HO

THE
DESTINATION
IS THE START —
AN 18-MONTH
“FAILED” LESSON

LABOUR ONLY WORTH \$60

The story of “The Second Box” started when four guys moved out from their university hall. In the summer of 2014, Wu Wai Ho wanted to buy a few cardboard boxes from a chain homeware store to move back home from his university hall, and he was astonished to find that a cardboard box costed \$20. So instead, he bought one from an elderly scavenger for just \$5. This prompts the question: Why is a cardboard box in the hands of the scavenger worth so much less than one sold at a homeware store? Why is the labour of the elderly worth less? These questions lingered in Wu’s mind and inspired him to establish The Second Box with three of his friends in November 2015. Since then, they had tried collecting cardboard with elderly scavengers on the street; six to seven hours of labour only got them \$60 in return. “When we collected cardboard with elderly scavengers, we found out that their motivation was to gain extra income with their own hands. What I found the most heartbreaking was what they got in return was not proportionate to their work, and society had never addressed the problem,” Wu said.

After coming up with the idea, Wu’s team planned to purchase cardboard boxes from scavengers at a higher-than-market price and resell them to various retail stores. Due to its high stock turnover rate, “Dried Seafood Street” was the first target of The Second Box.

“We found out that there were competitors in second-hand cardboard box trading, so we began to brainstorm on offering extra value or services to attract customers.”

Wu explained that to raise their competitiveness, they would find out about the needs of different stores and provide cardboard boxes of different sizes to cater for the products.



“Starting a social enterprise is like studying a subject. It is also like falling in love. In the honeymoon period, you grow and bravely rise up to challenges; when you reach a more stable period and start to plan for the future, you may face a bottleneck. Some can grit their teeth and trudge on, while others may get stuck in the mud. “The Second Box” was the latter one, as the founder Wu Wai Ho admitted that the project had to come to an end due to a lack of development opportunities. Despite so, the team’s invaluable experience will become fertiliser for nurturing new hope.

”

FACING A BOTTLENECK AFTER HALF A YEAR

During the interview, Wu often explained the operations of The Second Box with sales or marketing theories — it had a lot to do with his academic background in marketing. With his solid academic background and socially meaningful idea, he seemed to be heading towards success. Nevertheless, reality is often unpredictable. In the first half a year, they already had a remarkable monthly sale of a hundred thousand cardboard boxes and a revenue which increased every quarter; however, Wu admitted that they were already facing a bottleneck at the peak. “After three months of exploration, we had located our first batch of customers; after six months, we already knew precisely what types and sizes of cardboard boxes the customers needed. We could also serve customers all over Hong Kong. But how much did we make? Only enough to pay our monthly salary.”

To increase the scale of a business, most entrepreneurs carry out business expansion. However, when the team sought more funding, the operations of

The Second Box was criticised by the business sector.

“Our operations involved a vulnerable social group, which limited our manpower. Therefore, we were accused of using a large cost to generate similar value instead of using the least resources to generate the maximum productivity,”

Wu said quietly. The path towards expansion was grim, but so was remaining in status quo. The more selling sites they opened, the more cardboard boxes they needed, and they had to ensure that both the quantity and the quality were up to standard. However, the number of cardboard boxes collected by the elderly scavengers varied every day, so The Second Box collected cardboard from other sources too. “But this deviated from our initial intention because it meant we could not help as many elderly scavengers,” Wu explained.

INITIAL INTENTION VS NUMBERS

Facing the bottleneck, The Second Box had once launched a festive product as an attempt to explore new sales options — Christmas cards made of cardboard boxes. Since the Christmas cards sold well, one member suggested making it a long-term direction of development; however, Wu felt uncertain about its feasibility, which led to a lot of conflicts in the team.

“As a limited-time sale, it was great, but my focus was how well it penetrated the market and the value it could bring to the customers. I became rational and started running The Second Box as a business because after all, it was still these numbers, the performance index, that would keep the project going,”

Wu confessed.

Unfortunately, the numbers never met the team’s expectations. As the business had little room for development and the team was unwilling to give up on their initial intention, Wu and the other members

decided to terminate The Second Box after two years of operation. Recalling the journey, Wu reflected on how to balance between social values and gaining profits. “The greatest limitation was the aim of the company. We wanted to help the elderly, and we still do, but we focused too much on this and forgot that businesses earn money by solving problems for customers. Now, I admire social enterprise restaurants, because they directly provide for customers’ needs while hiring the elderly. If I was to set up another social enterprise, my prime consideration would be catering for the customer group,” Wu said calmly.

EXPERIENCE BECOMES NUTRIENTS

The Second Box was the hard work of Wu and his three friends after all, so this result was upsetting. “Of course I felt sad, but it made me reflect on what the problem was. I think I should have handled it more rationally.” But Wu kept analysing business theories and marketing strategies during the interview — why did he think that he was not rational enough? “This was forced out of me. At the start, I was completely driven by emotions and forgot about the numbers,” Wu smiled. The numbers were important, but they were built on the hardship and labour of the elderly scavengers. Then, was the forced termination of the project hard to explain to the scavengers? “Not at all. Actually, they’ve known all along and were always worried about how long we could keep going. They had experience in the trade, so they knew the normal prices. Moreover, they had experienced a lot and seen many people come and go,” Wu said with a small smile.

The Second Box stopped operations last year. Wu has a full-time job now,

but he has not given up on his dream of setting up a social enterprise or a start-up company whenever opportunity arises. “Being back at a workplace, I have more free time to explore other industries as well as local and international public policies. One day, I hope to do more for the elderly scavengers.”

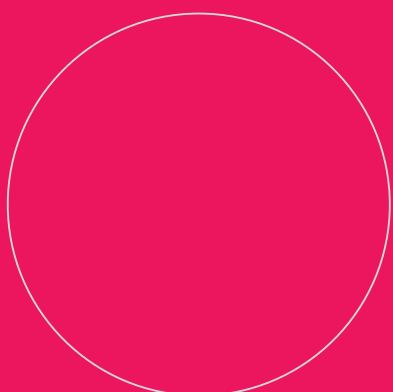


28



LET THE ELDERLY GROW OLD ELEGANTLY

SEW ON STUDIO –
WINSOME LOK



“ In large shopping malls, we can easily find clothing brands for kids, girls, and office workers. However, seldom do we see elderly clothing brands in mainstream boutiques. This prompts the question: do the elderly not have the right to pursue beauty? As one gradually grows old, why does no one care about something as simple as whether one’s clothes fit? ”

When walking past homes for the elderly, we may hear the lonely sounds of the television and the elderly playing table chess. But on the day of the interview, a Neighbourhood Elderly Centre located in Wong Tai Sin was very lively, with its rooms filled with seniors. An old man wearing a Tang suit walked out cheerfully, while an old woman who just had make-up put on was holding the volunteer’s hands and saying, “So beautiful!”. Despite the cold weather, the centre was full of warmth.

Compared to the dressed up seniors, Winsome Lok, Cheng Pui Sze, and Carman Lo were less eye-catching in their blue volunteer uniforms. “Sew On”, a social enterprise established in March 2020, uses clothes as a medium to serve the

elderly. They help seniors save money and let them pursue beauty by mending and making clothes.

“Young people seldom mend worn-out clothes — they simply throw them away. However, many seniors are unwilling to throw away old clothes,”

said Pui Sze.

CLOTHES AS A MEDIUM

Pui Sze has been a merchandiser for more than ten years. In her free time, she enjoys serving the elderly, despite limited contact hours. Since this project allows her to regularly meet seniors, she has been deeply touched by her experience. She once saw an old man wearing a grey knit vest with a few large holes in it, but he refused to let Pui Sze take it away for mending. “Then I said I would give him a new vest for his old vest, and he finally agreed,” Pui Sze smiled. Clothing is just an ice-breaking topic between the volunteers and the seniors — the aim of the project is to let the seniors feel loved and cared for.

elderly can only buy clothes in public markets or at street stalls. Worse still, they do not have many choices in sizing and style, with most of the clothing being oversized and loose. Since the body figures of seniors may change due to ageing and illnesses, Pui Sze and her team have to gather information and observe their needs. “For example, some older women who have given birth have larger waists, so they need looser clothing, but the sleeves might be too long for them,” Pui Sze explained.

“Most of the seniors in this centre have children who live far away, or they have no one to depend on. We don’t ask them much about their affairs. Instead, merely holding their hands and asking if they are cold or praising them already make them very happy,”

she added.

Clothing brands for the elderly on the market are few and far between, so the



MENDING CLOTHES, HEALING WOUNDS

The seniors were showcasing their new clothes, from a hot pink late-Qing cheongsam to a dark green double-breasted coat. Pui Sze admitted that since every set of clothing is tailor-made from design to production in small quantities, each set usually costs around \$2,000 in the market. The cost of making the clothes is expensive, but she thinks that the team has been very lucky.

“We are sponsored by an overseas weaving mill. They produce high quality fabrics and even allow us to choose the ones we want. Without their sponsorship, we wouldn’t have made it.”

Meeting the right people produces unexpected “chemical reactions”. However, meeting someone who shares your value and ideology is not easy at all. Many organisations which the team has reached out to with the intention of helping seniors have challenged the feasibility of the project. “Mending clothes? Is it even possible? Do people still mend clothes these days? ‘Make-up? The elderly certainly won’t like it.’ Organisations have various concerns, and there’s nothing

we can do about it,” Pui Sze said quietly. Whenever the team sees the smile on the seniors’ faces, they feel satisfied. However, to make the events happen, the team faces substantial pressure because of limited resources. In addition to clothes mending services and new clothes events like this one, Sew On is also exploring the possibility of using an organic material called “chitin” to make clothes for the elderly. This material is anti-bacterial and promotes wound healing. Some seniors scratch themselves until they bleed when they feel itchy, and these clothes would serve as an effective dressing to help the wounds heal faster. “This technology is not applied to help the elderly in the current market, but we believe that it is beneficial,” Pui Sze said. Indeed, the team’s initial plan was to invest the profits gained from selling clothes to their services. However, she confessed that the team is facing difficulty in launching both their products and services, as well as breaking even. “We have the prototypes and our next stage is to find a suitable manufacturer for production. As an experienced merchandiser, I believe we should ask the designer to hurry,” Pui Sze smiled with determination in her eyes.



MORE SATISFYING THAN A FULL-TIME JOB

The roles of Pui Sze, Winsome, and Carman are distinct. Pui Sze works on external affairs such as marketing and retailing, while Winsome and Carman are the designer and the accountant respectively. Due to their different professional backgrounds, they respect one another’s opinions. “We respect one another’s professionalism. Winsome is an instructor in a design school and Carman is a professional accountant. We are all experienced in our areas so we don’t question one another’s professional input,” Pui Sze laughed.

It has been a year since Sew On was launched, and Pui Sze thinks that the

current development is amazing — from conceiving the idea to seeing seniors do catwalks in their new clothes, it is more satisfying than her full-time job.

“I can use my skills to make the elderly happy and address their needs. What can be more satisfying than this?”

29

FUN SOCCER ON THE TURF

LOVE SOCCER –
CHEUNG SAU LAN SHERRY

A MOTHER'S PROMISE

“This is a project all about love. Without love, it wouldn’t have happened,” said Sherry Cheung. She shares the same feeling with all parents who stand outside a soccer field. Five years ago, she brought her three-year-old son to a famous local soccer school, but the coach only favoured the gifted children, and her son was invisible to the coach even after a year of training. “The coach didn’t know his name. In a soccer game, he was one of the few students who were not given a chance to play, so we left,” Sherry said. Like other mothers, Sherry only wanted her child to have fun playing soccer. However, the aims of most training schools seem to be more complicated. “I promised my son to let him play soccer. I thought, why not find a dozen children who want to play soccer, and then book a soccer field and hire a coach myself? It shouldn’t be too complicated. Soon, the number of children increased from twenty or so to more than six hundred,” said Sherry nonchalantly.

As words about her self-organised soccer class got out, the number of participants

grew. One day, a newcomer held Sherry’s hand and led her to the side of the soccer field. They pointed at a fan blade and asked, “What is this?” “This is an electric fan,” Sherry answered. During the rest of the class, this child asked the same question 40 times, and Sherry answered them 40 times.

“I was curious and thought the child was special, so I did some research and consulted some professionals. The conclusion was that the child might be autistic.”

“The ball is round.” — this famous quote means that anything is possible. When an autistic child gets a soccer ball, would you grab it from them, or play a soccer game with them? “Love” is immeasurable, and so are the possibilities motivated by love.



“WE HAVE NO AUTISTIC STUDENTS.”

It was the first time Sherry had met an autistic child. She found that despite having difficulty in concentrating and socialising and being unusually sensitive, these children were very capable. “I don’t see autism as an illness. They can achieve more than what we imagine. But I discovered that some parents might think that they can’t do anything.” Since the aim of soccer is only to kick the ball into the goal, repeatedly practising the motion allows them to concentrate and gives them a sense of achievement. “Once, a mother approached me in the third lesson and asked: ‘Could I get another set of uniform? My son has been refusing to take it off after the first lesson.’ Apparently, her son was praised by the coach during the lesson and it made him very happy,” Sherry laughed.

The soccer field removes all labels. The children all wear the same set of uniform and share the same goal. They need to follow the coach’s instructions and collaborate with each other, which enhances their social skills and confidence. The success of Sherry’s project was evident, yet she found it hard to identify and help more children

in need through contacting schools and organisations. “Even if you extend a helping hand, other people might not take it. I’ve had frustrating times. We contacted many NGOs and schools. One primary school principal even told us, ‘We have no autistic students.’ I didn’t believe them,” Sherry said firmly.

Facing repeated rejection, Sherry realised that the cause of society ignoring problems is the existing systems. “Every organisation has a service target which affects the budget. Therefore, to make sure the target is met, they become conservative to avoid losing their service audience.” The reputation of schools and the survival of NGOs are a tall wall separating hidden autistic children, making them lose opportunities for diverse learning. Despite facing the deep-seated problem, Sherry’s target became more focused.

“When I learnt about it, I felt dejected, and then I carried on. I believe everything is challenging. Instead of giving up easily, I asked myself why I started the project. I don’t have any numbers to meet, so I’ll just give my best effort.”



AN EDUCATION FOR PARENTS

Shouldering the roles of a mother, a soccer school principal, and the head of an advertising company, Sherry confessed that she spends 70% of her time on the soccer school. Despite her wholehearted effort to help autistic kids, the role of their parents is still essential. “Parenting is very important. We met a mother who found out about her son’s autism and decided to quit her job to take care of him full-time. Later, he successfully entered a good school. On the other hand, some parents choose to hide the fact and keep their children at home. They also tend to be picky when their children first join the lessons.” The children do not know how to protect themselves, while the parents build layers of defence. Parents have

a lot of questions when their children first join the lessons, as they are worried about discrimination. Facing the “poker faces” of these parents, Sherry tries to be understanding.

“They are all loving parents. Their defensiveness may be due to bad experiences elsewhere. After a few lessons with us, they become more relaxed,”

Sherry smiled.

The project started because of a mother’s wish to give her son a fair chance of learning, and this has since been the soccer school’s purpose. Sherry believes that the project has managed to come

so far all because of the love and perseverance of her companions. “What I treasure the most is the relationship with the kids and the changes in the parents. Despite all the hardship we have gone through, I’m encouraged by the participation of so many supportive companions — we’ve got social workers privately referring parents to the soccer school and organisations continuously supporting us. These are all little things that drive us forwards.

”Under the cold weather warning, we stepped onto the roof of an international school. Dozens of children in jerseys were practising shooting and passing a ball. Parents stood outside the field in

the cold wind, but their children’s smiles after successful shots put a warm feeling in their hearts, almost like having a sip of sweet hot chocolate.

30

A TOUCHABLE EXHIBITION

AUDIO DESCRIPTION ASSOCIATION (HONG KONG)
– LEUNG HOI CHING DAWNING

“After a long night of darkness, the first ray of sunlight splits the night sky — we call this “the dawning of a new day”. Leung Hoi Ching Dawning has been working as an audio description volunteer for years. Her voice, like rays from the morning sun, guides the visually impaired into the world of films. Now, it even guides them through exhibitions in museums. People with normal vision can see, but it does not mean they can appreciate, because appreciation is not done by the eyes, but by the heart and imagination.”

Two days before the interview, Dawning sent us her profile; the academic section includes Master of Professional English, Bachelor of Communication, and Certificate in Interpretation — all related to language and interpretation. Her professional training and interests set her on the path of audio description. “Audio description is a means of communication. Without it, how can you tell the visually impaired about any visual elements?” After attending a workshop in 2011, Dawning’s interest in audio description grew; besides participating in

volunteering activities, she also started doing research on the development of this field in Hong Kong and Asia. She found out that there was a lack of related information. “I discovered that no one has done research on Chinese audio description, and very few studies have been done on the visually impaired in Asia. Therefore, I decided to study for a doctorate degree in Audio Description.”

AUDIO DESCRIPTION IS NOT AN AUDIO GUIDE

Words, images, and graphics are all symbols. Audio description is a form of translation that converts images and graphics into words, involving basic skills like tone and intonation, rhythm, and word usage. While the method is important, so is the attitude. Dawning would stand in the shoes of the visually impaired, and never skip any scenes in her description, even for love scenes.

“If we give vague descriptions of love scenes out of shyness, they won’t know what’s happening. Of course, we don’t need to be too explicit, but whether the clothes are removed slowly or violently already changes the atmosphere of the scene.”

Dawning is concerned about helping the visually impaired “see”, but this attitude is lacking in many other organisations. A visually impaired friend of Dawning once asked if audio description service was available for an exhibition in a museum; despite the staff claiming that the service was available, he only got an audio guide.

“My friend responded, ‘You know, I can’t see. An audio guide is useless for me. I’ll just leave.’” Audio guides only introduce the background of the exhibits and the creators; they do not give descriptions of the exhibit’s appearance, patterns, or texture. “For example, the recent exhibition on mummies was beautifully arranged, but the most common sight was the “No touching” sign. Dawning’s friends said, “If that’s all, what’s the point of visiting the exhibition instead of listening to the information at home?”

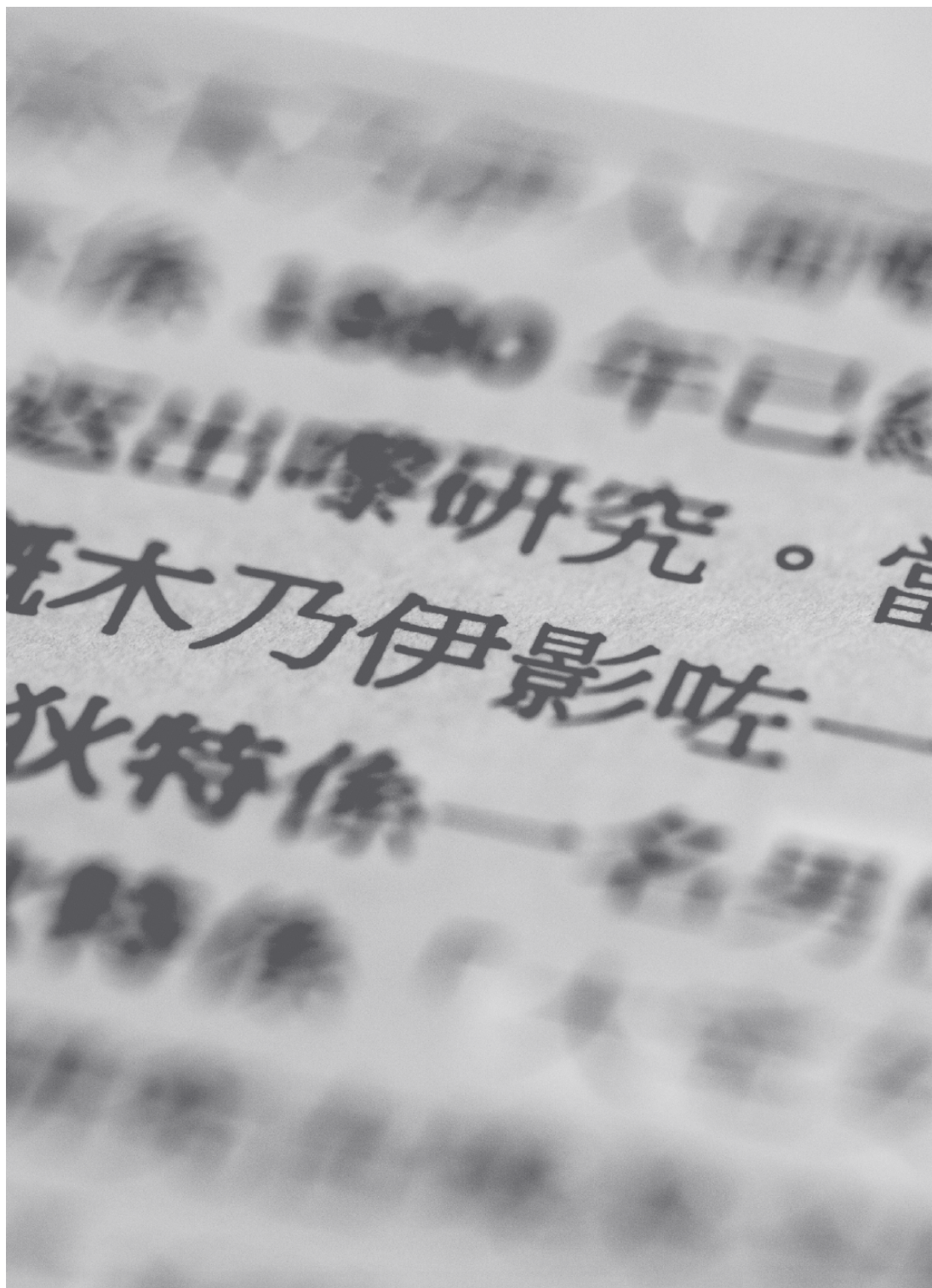
HANDMADE “MUMMIES”

Inspired by her friends’ experience, Dawning realised that audio description can be applied to museum exhibition appreciation. In her office, she has a few models of coffins for mummies, eyeballs, as well as Tang Sancai. Even though the coffins are only palm-sized, the patterns and royal symbols carved on the surface are delicate. Inside each coffin is a handmade “mummy” wrapped in layers of gauze. Besides word descriptions, touch can also enhance the imagination of the visually impaired.

“A visually impaired friend of mine loves to feel the coolness of the glass display cases by leaning close to them, because the coolness enhances the feeling of being in a museum,”

Dawning smiled. Her props looked intricate; she pointed at the “Tang Sancai camel”, which had some clay stuck to its humps, as if it was freshly dug out from the ground. “This is real ceramic that some friends of my friends found in Mainland China. I don’t know where they bought it,” she laughed.





HUSBAND AS THE “GUINEA PIG”

To ensure that visitors will enjoy the exhibition, Dawning is involved in every step, from preparing props and scripts to training audio describers — this has much to do with her personality.

“I am an achiever. Once I set a target, I must achieve it.”

Therefore, when she decided to start working in audio description, she resigned from her position as a university lecturer without a second thought, and enrolled in related courses. The real struggle at that time, however, was choosing between marriage and further studies. “I faced a dilemma between marriage and further studies because the courses would last three to five years. My boyfriend suggested getting married first, and then he could accompany me to the UK for my studies. We even attended an audio description event the day after our wedding!” She smiled radiantly. Without her husband’s support, Dawning would not have been able to fully concentrate on promoting audio description. “Before I do an audio description for a film, I often ask my

husband to be the “guinea pig”. He would close his eyes and listen to me, and then open his eyes and compare the description to the scene in the film. If he says something like ‘Good, that feels right,’ then I would continue.”

UNFORGETTABLE SATISFACTION

From the world of films to the museum, not only does an audio describer broaden the horizons of the visually impaired, but also create opportunities for communication. “The biggest difference from film description is that we end each section by asking for questions and feedback from the visitors. Once, after a visitor saw the ‘camel’, they said, ‘It’s a Bactrian camel. I had seen one before I lost my eyesight.’” Evoking memories through touch and provoking imagination through colourful descriptions — to Dawning, the smiles of satisfaction and praise on the visitors’ faces are her greatest motivation.

“After watching a film, they can discuss the plot with us. After seeing an exhibition, they say it was great. These simple gestures and praises are more than enough,”

Dawning smiled with satisfaction.

Dawning’s personality and professionalism have guided her through her career in audio description. On the way, she discovered an unexpected talent, like the

visually impaired. “When I was a teacher, I never imagined that I could establish an association. Despite their visual impairment, these people have a lot of creative ideas and can achieve a lot. The problem is whether we assume that they cannot see or cannot do something. Why can’t we just have faith in their ability and possibility?”

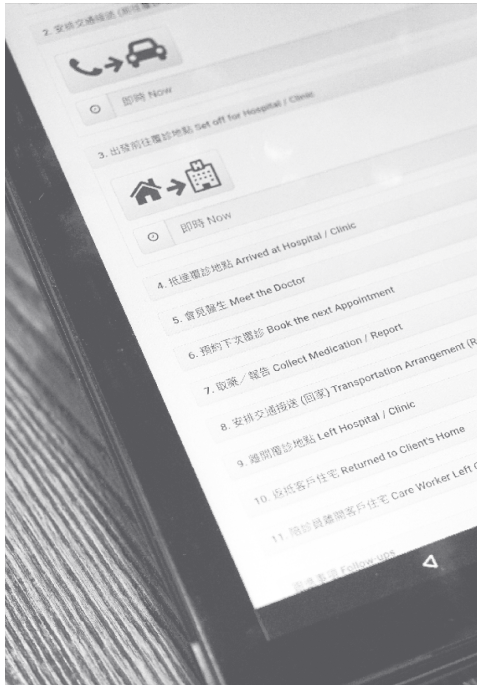


31

PIONEERS OF TRANSFORMING THE “INDUSTRY OF HUMANS”

WITH YOU OUT-PATIENT ESCORT SERVICES –
WU WAI TUNG AND EMILY

“Here, we have four church friends with different personalities from different backgrounds. Like many Hongkongers, they have to take care of seniors who suffer from illnesses at home. In the long days of providing care and under the helplessness of using out-patient escort services, these four carers decided to go a step further and transform themselves from service users to revolutionary pioneers.”



Wu Wai Tung (Ah-tung) is young, but she has been close to illnesses and death since her childhood. Her mother, two uncles, and aunt all passed away because of cancer in the last ten years, while her grandmother has suffered from two strokes. Ah-tung is used to going to hospitals after school and after work. From a young age, she has already learnt that cancer patients feel cold easily, so she should bring items to keep them warm when escorting them to the hospital and pour some hot water for them once they arrive. She has also packed emergency hospital bags for her family many times — when they have to call an ambulance, she would take the bag and go.

This is her daily life.

IT ALL STARTED FROM HELPLESSNESS

Similar to Ah-tung, Emily has a grandmother who suffers from osteodystrophy. Emily’s mother used to take care of her grandmother, but now her grandmother has moved to a home for the elderly. “In the treatment room, doctors seem to ask questions at the computer monitor instead of you. If you can’t get to the point, like my mother, the doctor will keep saying the same things, that this is what happens to all seniors, that she just has to keep taking medicine.”

Emily realised that her mother was unable to relay her grandmother’s condition after visits to the doctor. On the other hand, Ah-tung was overloaded with work and hired an escort attendant for out-patient visits, but the escort attendant was unable to clearly tell her about the health condition afterwards. Ah-tung told us: “Escort attendants are mostly freelancers. In Hong Kong, there are never enough nurses or caretakers, and there is no assurance of quality. Sometimes, the escort attendants could be someone referred to us by neighbours or acquaintances from a day care centre, and they may not be

professionally trained. Health workers and nurses have a well-established registration system in Hong Kong, but not escort attendants. My grandmother lived alone at the time, so I could not meet the escort attendant easily, and there was no reporting system for the escort service either. Not only did it make providing better care for my family hard, but also led to communication problems within the family.”

At the hospital, they often witness similar communication problems in other families — patients in the adjacent bed or chair and their family seem to care about each other, but they would hurt each other unintentionally because of a lack of understanding. Everyone was helpless and tired.

Ah-tung came up with an idea: creating a mobile application for escort attendants to record the medical appointment, so that they can help the patient’s family more. She didn’t think very far, but she soon realised that no escort attendant would use the app. “It was impossible to

make them report everything when escort attendant services generally only entail accompaniment.” So she gathered three church friends to “make it big”, including Emily, Phoebe, an accountant who has a nursing qualification, and Alfred, Ah-tung’s former supervisor who works in IT. “We treated it as an experiment. During the trial, we directly hired five or six escort attendants to test the app. We accompanied them on their escort trips to get immediate feedback on the app. We got 30 cases in 3 months and fine-tuned the app according to the feedback from the escort attendants and the patients’ family; for example, we broke down the report to make it easier to understand.” The app lists details of the medical appointment, such as the public transport taken, the waiting time, as well as the doctor’s advice, like switching medication and new treatment plans; the report is sent to family members the same evening. Ah-tung gave the app a neat and direct name — “With You”. The trial was very successful, and as the app filled a gap in the market, the team has now expanded to more than 20 staff members, handling nearly 300 cases. “I don’t want to simply expand our service size. We only take cases within our capability. Since launching the app, we’ve turned down over half of the

service requests — those cases were too complicated to deal with, and we didn’t want to put the patients in any risk,” said Ah-tung.

Ah-tung is not planning to profit from this project. Her motivation was never her optimism in helping others, but her own frustrating experience of being unable to help her family:

“I helped them buy things and made them more comfortable, but I couldn’t change their health conditions. In the end, I could only watch them pass away.”

Neither could the app help her beloved aunt. Diagnosed with cancer, her aunt asked if they could find an escort attendant that would work in Tung Chung, but they could not.

“ They developed a helpful app and built a matching platform to provide professional escort services for out-patient visits. Carers can easily search for professional escort attendants and communicate with them, allowing carers to entrust the patients to them with confidence. “This is a trait of someone in IT: if there’s no suitable tool, I’ll create one,” Ah-tung said cheerfully.

”

HELPING THE CARERS TO LET THEM TAKE CARE OF THEIR FAMILY

Ah-tung seems calm and rational. Despite facing numerous helpless moments, she managed to focus on things that she could “help a bit”.

“After I started working in escort services for out-patient visits, I discovered how huge the problem of caring for seniors is in Hong Kong. The population is ageing, there’s a shortage of people joining the carer industry, and Hongkongers are busy with work. It’s common to see the ‘young old’ taking care of the ‘old old’, but they feel exhausted and lack the knowledge to be a carer, while the younger generation is unable to take up the duty. By using escort services for out-patient visits, carers can finally take a break for a few hours from their round-the-clock care, which relieves the tension of being together all the time, improving their relationship.”

Moreover, many seniors do not want their family to know about food restriction orders from the doctor. “The doctor

may ask the patient to restrict their diet, like only eating half a Chinese sausage, but they always want to eat the whole sausage. Worse still, around one-third of seniors over 80 suffer from dementia, which is not just a disease, but irreversible deterioration. The deterioration process is lengthy, eroding the patient’s self-esteem and putting great stress on their family.” At this juncture, escort attendants as third-party professionals play an important role in bridging and supporting these families in terms of communication, emotions, and knowledge.

In the interview, Ah-tung reiterated the importance of escort attendants’ professionalism, which is also her ultimate wish.

“Escort services for out-patient visits are an ‘industry of humans’,”

Ah-tung took a deep breath. “I hope the quality can improve. I don’t mind others

copying our business model, as long as the overall out-patient escort services quality in Hong Kong improves.”

With You maintains long-term partnership with its freelancing escort attendants, providing labour insurance and making MPF contributions, while giving them strict professional training. The team respects their escort attendants while expecting a high service quality — this motivates the escort attendants to exhibit professionalism.

Among the thousands of escort attendants in the job market, With You has hired only 20 or so as a first step. They are yet to hire more staff because it is hard to find people with their ideology.

“But we are happy to find that quite a number of nursing students are eager to try the new service mode, while some retired carers try hard to learn to use the app. Some escort service providers also wish to collaborate with us...”

They can see the world changing.

“At the same time, we want to influence carers and teach them to take good care of their family and do their duties.”

This also made Ah-tung reflect on her own role as a carer. She finally understood why her grandmother, who is suffering from gout after being healthy half her life, finds her annoying, and why conflicts have arisen between them.

“Like most seniors, my grandma refuses to admit that her body is deteriorating and doesn’t want to be vulnerable in front of her family,” Ah-tung smiled faintly. “I finally know how to make her less angry.”



REFLECTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE TEAM



The term ‘social enterprise’ has become increasingly popular in the last decade, but there is no standardised definition in Hong Kong yet. Generally speaking, a social enterprise has to be a sustainable business that achieves a specific social purpose. Since 2011, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) has been providing seed money for starting a business. In the process, we have seen a number of young people with the dedication, ability, and creativity to promote the idea of creating wealth and doing good. In 2014, PolyU’s Institute for Entrepreneurship and the Jockey Club Design Institute for Social Innovation (JCDISI) jointly established Good Seed, funded by the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund (SIE Fund). The aim was to bring together good people and good deeds to encourage young people to care for and help those in need through social innovation, and thereby bring positive economic benefits and social impact to the community.

The programme is divided into three stages. The first stage consists of interactive training sessions which focus on design, technology, and business, to inspire participants to become innovative project implementers. In the second stage, participants will submit their innovative idea proposals to compete for

funding from the SIE Fund. If they make it to the third stage, each winning team will receive a funding of HK\$100,000 to actualise their planned social innovation projects with the support of mentors. Within three years, 700 people in total have attended the training provided by Good Seed and 45 projects have been funded. Raymond from Good Seed hopes that it will become a platform to help and train young people on social issues and provide them with tools to create value. Young people have a lot of potential; unlocking this potential will bring a positive impact on society. Speaking of young people, Raymond stressed that being young refers to the state of mind, not the actual age, so there is no age limit for the participants.

Recalling the 700 participants, Raymond admitted that they exceeded his expectations, but there were also some discrepancies. “We had hoped to bring together people from different sectors, such as the academia, NGOs, and the business sector. But it’s something even the government has not managed to do — it’s hard for us too.” Good Seed might not have brought people from different sectors together, but it has gathered a group of participants who want to do something good. Everyone is helpful and the connection between them is

strong. They all share their resources and do not care about how much money they make. What is important to them is the promotion of their ideology. The interaction is great too. Marco, the Assistant Programme Manager, pointed out that social innovation is a relatively new field, where people can come together to discuss ideas regardless of their backgrounds and perspectives. It is a dialogue that should not be given up as it continues to expand. “People this age rarely join activities and go to camps. But when they are at the camp for three days and two nights, they sit together and discuss. One can really feel the passion.” What is special is that the mentors are also enthusiastic, and they would stay up all night to have discussions with different teams and support the whole event. “I felt the impact of our project and that I’ve done the right thing. It touched me.”

Something that many of the participants valued about the project was the relationships that they established, but the process of actualising the projects was really difficult. “It is difficult enough to start a business. Few succeed in creating wealth, let alone doing good deeds and passing on kindness. But kindness alone cannot sustain a business, so participants need to have both in mind from day one.” Raymond stressed that it is a seed fund,

a prototyping process, so it is hard to see the results immediately. Marco said that Hong Kong lacks education on failure. “When it comes to innovation, there are bound to be failures, and education does not show us that we can try even if we fail. It does not teach us to face failures.” Leaving one’s comfort zone is a prerequisite for innovation. It takes time to take a big step forward, and the labour, resources, and time involved might have discrepancies. Failure is always possible.

“I believe that the culture of entrepreneurship will gradually become better, and if society can accept failure, young people will be more willing to try. But of course, we still need to make a living even if we are spreading kindness — we have to be realistic,”

Raymond said. A more realistic question would be whether the families are supportive. “In one of the cases, a BBA graduate went around collecting cardboard boxes on the street for his project, and his parents were unhappy about it. Financial pressure makes it difficult for one to find a way out.”

If you want an investor, you have to do something that suits their interest. There are various kinds of investors: some just want revenue, but some are willing to

take social responsibility. “It’s a chicken-and-egg problem. There are good projects without investors, and there are investors who can’t find good projects,” Raymond said.

“Rome was not built in one day. You have to do mundane work while doing it, and you have to find income while doing it. You have to ask yourself if you have the perseverance.”

The most ambitious vision for Good Seed is to not need to exist anymore, or to transform into a different model, under an environment where everyone in business upholds their social responsibility and everyone wants to change the world.

“However, not everyone is suited to be an entrepreneur. Hong Kong social enterprises do not necessarily have to help the poor — there are many other possibilities, such as cultural, artistic, and social participation. In short, if Hong Kong is to remain competitive, we cannot rest on its laurels.”



ONE'S ATTITUDE DETERMINES THEIR SUCCESS



Among the 700 participants, some were selected, and some were not. Among them, some have tried twice, while some were glad that they were not chosen. How did Good Seed change them? In this interview, we invited four people of different ages from different sectors and backgrounds to share their joys and sorrows in the programme. When asked why they were willing to come back for an interview after the programme had ended, they all said that it was because of Marco, and then burst out laughing. All four of them emphasised that the people were what motivated them to keep showing up for activities.

Q: What project did you want to initiate when you first joined Good Seed?

Koey: I'm a nutritionist. I've participated in Good Seed twice, but they were two different projects. The first time, I wanted to set up a farm and invite the elderly to run it to promote organic farming. The second time, I wanted to teach low-income families how to make cheap but nutritious meals. However, I didn't get funding either time. For the first proposal, the judges thought we were asking the elderly to be our labourers, but in fact, we had technology to help with the process, and we actually started the project ourselves later on. For the second proposal, they said we had the wrong service target.

Miles: I had a cat that passed away from an illness. When I found out about the illness, it was too late to do anything about it, so I wanted to make health-monitoring equipment for pets. Before Good Seed, I had already joined two competitions and won, but there wasn't any funding or mentoring provided. At first, I thought I would definitely get the funding from Good Seed, but as I started working on the project step by step and did some surveys, I realised that I might not be able to do it because of technical limitations.

Shirley: When I was travelling, I found out that some places have mobile apps to inform people where leftover food is available so that they can buy food at a low price and restaurants can reduce waste. But we didn't get funding. Later on, I learnt that some people in Hong Kong are doing something similar, so my friends and I decided to volunteer for them. However, most of those restaurants are opened by foreigners and not a lot of local restaurants participate.

James: I'm actually an undercover agent, ha-ha. I work for an NGO, and I wanted to see what was going on in the outside world, especially for young people. It was good that this programme has no age limit. I had to grit my teeth to do it at first, but during the discussion in the camp, I realised I could try organising activities for young people or parent-child activities, as it would help hidden youths and provide activities for families. I don't know why I didn't make the cut, but I think we don't have to focus solely on young people. We can also do activities with the elderly on an equal footing.

Q: Were you disappointed about not getting the funding?

James: I've started my own business before. I think it's already great that we received so much help. There were mentors who would teach us and people who would sponsor us. The world is truly different now. I think all funding programmes need to serve their purpose and goal, so it's reasonable to be selective and have limitations.

Miles: In the UK, many people run social enterprises; but in Hong Kong, we are just starting out, so there are various social innovation competitions. Although I didn't get the funding, I am now working in a social enterprise and Good Seed's activities have influenced me a lot.

James: It's normal to fail eight times out of ten. Frankly, it was a relief to fail. I've always been doing what I want to do, so I don't necessarily have to rely on Good Seed.

Shirley: I wasn't disappointed, because I can make my own money and Good Seed is also a platform to get professional advice, so winning or losing didn't matter to me.

Koey: I was a bit disappointed when I didn't see my name in the two emails, and I wondered why. Although we didn't get the funding, our farm changed directions in the process and we found the right opportunities. Now, we are collaborating with organic farms and organising activities and workshops like tea-making classes and calligraphy classes during weekends.

Q: Is it difficult to run a social enterprise in Hong Kong?

Miles: Many people in Hong Kong think of social enterprises as charities or private businesses making gestures for publicity. Does social innovation have to involve technology? If no technology is involved, is it not innovation? I think the relationship between people is also a factor.

Shirley: I think a lot of people settle for a regular job. I truly appreciate those who can do something good for society. I can't do it because I need a stable income and a sense of security.

Koey: Many social enterprises talk about social responsibility, but what I think matters the most isn't what they do. You don't always need to do something remarkable. For example, using 10% of your income to support others is good enough. I think the relationship between people is the most important thing, and sometimes technology cannot benefit people at the bottom of society.

The discussion became more heated. Shirley said that Hong Kong people are forgetful and like gimmicks. James stressed that these phenomena are not limited to social enterprises. In the past, many people used to have regular jobs, but now they feel that regular jobs are not rewarding enough, so they want to start their own business. But is starting a business the only option? When everyone starts their own business, what about other jobs? Koey pointed out that the reason for starting a business is to fill a gap in society — instead of waiting for someone else to fill the gap, you can do it yourself. Then, it occurred to the group that selling their ideas to large corporates might be a way out. They suggested Miles to sell his health-monitoring equipment for pets to a sports and wellness company, and maybe he could make a go of it. However, they also raised questions about whether large corporates would have the space to take on these new ideas, since if they did, no one would have to start their own business.

James mentioned Beyond Vision, a project in Good Seed, saying that it is an innovative idea with a huge impact, but not something that will make money. Many good things need to rely on large companies or collaborations, though it might be that Hong Kong people are just too practical. But if you look hard enough, you should be able to find celebrities who are willing to help and make use of their reputation.

Although the four of them had already completed Good Seed's activities, they all said that they would be happy to "come back" to

help with other projects. They also offered their advice to make Good Seed's activities better.

James: I think the matching process can be refined. In the camp, we wrote a skill card and put it on the wall, but we didn't have time to look at it. It was actually quite important because that could've helped us find people with the right skills. Maybe you could try blind selection to make the matching process more effective.

Miles: I think a challenging round could be a good way to give others a chance to get back into the game.

Koey: I think there should be an "alumni group" for people who have participated in Good Seed, so that people from other years can contact us if they want to find partners. Then, those who do not get the funding would feel valued as well.

Shirley: I think Good Seed could teach people about equity because I don't know anything about it, and I can't explain it when others ask me.

Finally, James brought the discussion to a nice conclusion: "The fact is, you will experience setbacks whether you go for a start-up or a social enterprise, but Good Seed is here to help you fail less and fail softer."

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ABOUT GOOD SEED

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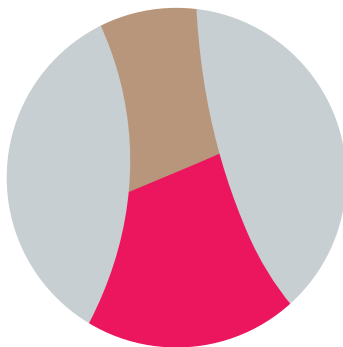
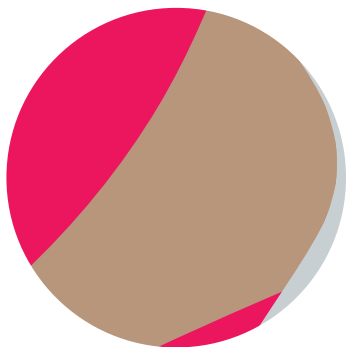
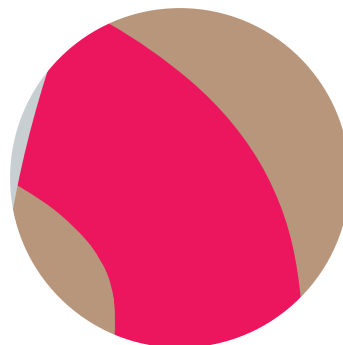
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