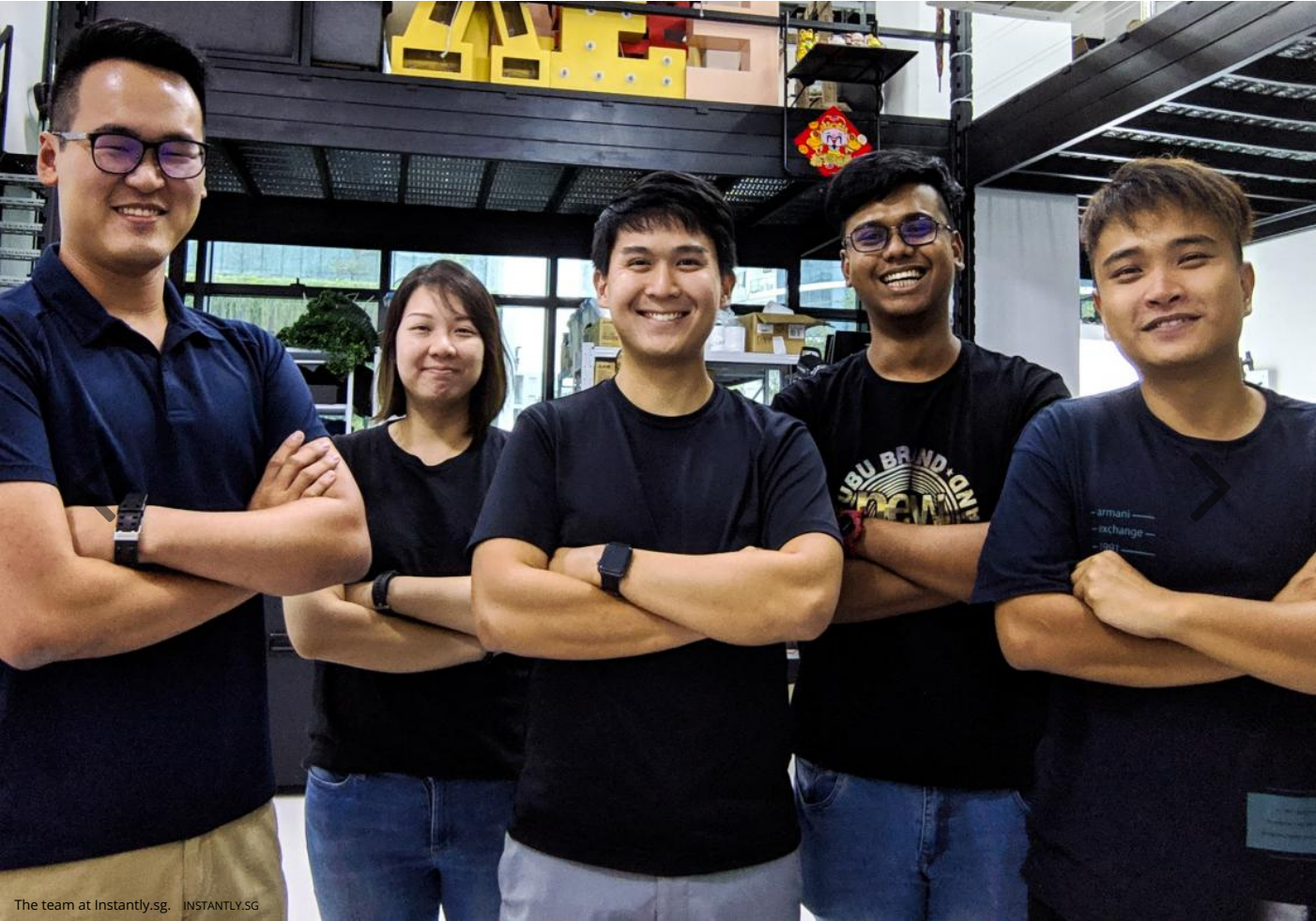


(https://
mini=tru
speak/in
beyond/
url=https://www.sgsm
speak/innovat18gtitle=l
(https://
u=https://divi
speak/in
beyondbeyondbeyond&summi
traditionthe traditionthe
1&src=sdiprpal) summar

Innovating beyond the traditional

BY SAMUEL CHIN (/AUTHOR/BYLINE-16899)



24 MAY 2019 - 12:22

Keep learning, never be stagnant. Failure is alright. Start small. These are just some of the tips that Ewan Sou, 30, has for entrepreneurs. He is the founder of Instantly.SG, a company which provides interesting photo and video booth installations like 360 Time Stop and the Slow Motion Booth.

An economics graduate from Nanyang Technological University, Mr Sou started Instantly.sg in 2014, coming out of an innate desire to start something; nurturing it and seeing it grow. He had an interest in entrepreneurship, in other words.

Along the way, he has encountered many challenges and learnt countless lessons. One of them would be to delegate, as he speaks of a time when it used to be highly owner-dependent and going overseas meant staying up to clear emails.

Now with experience under his wings, Mr Sou has plans to expand. Having recently set up an office in Kuala Lumpur, he is considering turning Instantly.sg into a franchise and licencing out the unique software his team has created which makes the intriguing photo and video effects possible.

However, he is not just stopping at that. He speaks about doubling down on research and development and the evolution of his business from that of a photo booth company to “an experiential marketing and transformative services company”.

Thus, combining that with his plans to expand, he hopes to be able to carry out multi-country campaigns and impacting consumers in the process. As he puts it: “Experiential marketing is the future direction of Instantly.SG. I see a lot of potential in exploring this front.”

Now, he takes a look back on his business journey in this interview.

Could you give a brief overview of Instantly.SG and what is it that sets you apart from the competition? Who have you worked with in the past?

In layman terms, I always tell people we are a photo booth company, but we are actually more than that. We do a lot of custom photo and video booth installations. Our aim is always to help brands and corporate companies to market their events through custom photo and video technology. We have worked with big companies like Apple, Netflix and Cartier.

What motivated you to start Instantly.SG?

There was this Dinner and Dance (at the company where I was working at) where I was ‘arrowed’ to (take photos). At that point of time, Instagram was very popular. During the dinner, I was thinking of ways to entertain my colleagues. There was this free software which allowed people to use hashtags on photos and the photos would then be shown on a live feed. After I tried using this software, I found that the reception was pretty good. I thought, how about I go one step further and get these photos printed out? So that’s when everything started. Our first service was actually not a photo booth but an Instagram printing service. From there, we subsequently evolved. Between then and when I left my job, it was really because starting my own business has always been something which I wanted to do. The seed of entrepreneurship in me was sown when I was in NTU (Nanyang Technological University). I took up a minor course in entrepreneurship, that’s when I thought it is something which I really would like to do. I like to start things; I like to work on things and seeing them grow. Even though I interned at some companies before, my heart wasn’t there, I always wanted to start something for myself. Subsequently, the opportunity presented itself and I took it up.

How did you overcome the challenges you faced along the way with Instantly.SG?

There were many challenges. For example, when you first start a company, you do not have a fixed salary anymore, everything will be very hard. The capital was only S\$5000 so I had to bootstrap and it was a one-man show for at least the first one and a half years. I was doing everything myself, the things that do not scale. I went to every event, serving customers and building the rapport. Some of my customers, the wedding brides, till now they still get back to me when they have some people that need my service.

What part of your personality helped you overcome the hurdles faced during the one and a half years when you were working on your own?

I think one thing about me is that I am rather hard-working, so when things come up, I just do it to the best of my ability. However, I see it as a weakness. I think entrepreneurs should not be too hard-working, they should learn how to delegate. That is something I have been learning throughout my journey, especially when I started to build my team. To me, how I overcame the challenges mainly boiled down to the fact that I had to survive. At the time, I was about to get married. My wife told me: ‘You have to try now. You shouldn’t wait until you get a kid and try then. If you do, it will be difficult and take a toll on you.’ So in a way, I knew I had to just go all out and do it. I was focused. As I was working hard, I did not take any time-off and had no social life. However, the thing is that I really loved what I did, so my passion kept me going. I did not really find it a chore. It was actually a quite exciting period of time, I was always thinking: ‘What’s next?’ Truth be told, I was even more motivated then. It was quite fun.

What led you to move beyond the traditional photo booth?

Competition was, and still is, very tough. If you were to do a Google search for photo booth companies, you would find a lot of them. Every day, I am finding new competitors. Instagram will suggest new competitors to me too. So, after 2016, I knew that we have to be different as I started to see the growth stagnating. There are a lot of competitors offering cutthroat prices. So, I knew we had to differentiate ourselves to be able to branch out to the corporate sector and capture that market. Previously, at the start, we were working at a lot of small parties, weddings and everything. We did have some corporate events, but they were not our main clientele. So, I had to innovate to be different as working with corporate clients led us to be able to charge a higher margin for customised services which helped to sustain the business. We realised that innovation is key.

I see you were interviewed back in 2017 by Jumpstart magazine. How has Instantly.SG evolved since then?

I was interviewed then as the magazine was curious about the new 360 photo booth which we made for an event organised by Canon. The booth itself was a challenge from Canon. They were asking us if we could do something like that. We have evolved to provide a much wider and more diverse variety of services. I learnt a lot of things from that event, such as the importance of being different. When you create something wild and exciting, people will share, the exposure will be there, they will not see you as a normal photo booth company anymore.

What are some of the plans you have in store for Instantly.SG in the future?

I plan to work on software as a service. We actually produce some of the software ourselves. Instead of keeping it to ourselves, I thought why not help other fellow photo booth owners worldwide. I am on a Facebook forum with other photo booth owners from the US and the Middle East. They post questions asking about some problems, which we know how to solve. Thus, we are planning to license out the software.

I also hope to be able to take this as a franchise and sell it to other people, saying: 'If you want to do a photo booth business, we are the one for you, with the know-how, technology and software. It will be a wise investment on the side.'

How do you get ahead of the curve in order to innovate and come up with exciting products and services like 360 Time Stop?

We have two ways. One, we look a lot at what people overseas are doing. The US market is more mature, so we pay close attention to what people in the US are doing. The second way is when a customer throws us a challenge. For example, one client was telling us how photo booth companies in France were innovating and asked if we could do something similar.

Who is your biggest inspiration?

That would be my grandmother. She had nine kids, with my father being the second youngest. She brought up the nine of them all by herself. On top of that, she owned her own coffee shop, which was subsequently sold to Kopitiam. I myself am at the age where I will have children and I am thinking: 'It is already pretty tough with one kid. How did she manage to do it with nine kids and still manage a coffee shop which she sold for millions?' So, I am very amazed by her. Although, when I was young, I did not get to talk to her about entrepreneurship and all. She did however give my father and uncle a lot of advice. Both of them are also entrepreneurs. She backed them a lot and gave business advice. If I could turn back time, I would want to ask her: 'Ahma, how did you do it?' It was really quite amazing.

Finally, what tips do you have to offer entrepreneurs?

One thing I feel is that you must start young. I started at a point of time when I was going to get married but my first foray into entrepreneurship wasn't then, I actually failed a couple times previously. I learnt a lot from those experiences. Also, you must not merely say it, but actually do it. Lastly, you have to be willing to tough it out. However, if you are passionate about it, it is easier to 'tough it out'. Do not do it for the money. If you were to do it for the money, you will burn out quickly. My first event was free. It was for a start-up event at a club. Although it was free, it was beneficial as it brought me a lot of exposure. Keep learning, never be stagnant. Failure is alright. Start small.

[INSTANTLY.SG \(/TAGS/INSTANTLYSG\)](#)[PHOTO BOOTH \(/TAGS/PHOTO-BOOTH\)](#)

0 Comments

Sort by Oldest[Facebook Comments Plugin](#)

SGSME DIGEST (/NEWSLETTER/SIGN-UP)

Sign up for our newsletter to keep up-to-date with the latest SME news and views, local SME profiles, events and what's happening on our Just Ask board.

enter your email address here *

Are you an SME owner?*

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you work for an SME?*

☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ I have read and accept the privacy policy (https://sph.com.sg/legal/sph_privacy.html)*

[Sign Up Now ►](#)

MORE STORIES



(<https://www.sgsme.sg/news/myrent-aims-become-rental-version-carousell>)

NEWS (/NEWS)

MAY 27, 2019

MyRent aims to become the rental version of Carousell

(<https://www.sgsme.sg/news/myrent-aims-become-rental-version-carousell>)



(<https://www.sgsme.sg/news/starting-small-big-ambitions>)

NEWS (/NEWS)

MAY 22, 2019

Starting small, but with big ambitions (<https://www.sgsme.sg/news/starting-small-big-ambitions>)



(<https://www.sgsme.sg/news/towkays/towkays-speak/how-health-tech-start-ups-should-protect-against-misuse-patient-data>)

TOWKAYS SPEAK (/NEWS/TOWKAYS/TOWKAYS-SPEAK)

MAY 16, 2019

How health-tech start-ups should protect against misuse of patient data
(<https://www.sgsme.sg/news/towkays/towkays-speak/how-health-tech-start-ups-should-protect-against-misuse-patient-data>)

BEST OF SGSME.SG



Freeing up Singapore's power market bittersweet for businesses

(<https://www.sgsme.sg/news/freeing-china-trade-war-will-hit-singapores-power-market-bittersweet-businesses?obOrigUrl=true>)



How US-China trade war will hit Singapore

(<https://www.sgsme.sg/news/how-us-china-trade-war-will-hit-singapore?obOrigUrl=true>)



It Changed My Life: She gives up high-flying career and five-figure salary to...

(<https://www.sgsme.sg/news/it-changed-my-life-she-gives-high-flying-career-and-five-figure-salary-pursue-mindfulness?obOrigUrl=true>)



Starting small, but with big ambitions

(<https://www.sgsme.sg/news/star-small-big-ambitions?obOrigUrl=true>)

MORE FROM THE WEB



Secretlab Omega 2020 review: Fit for a king

HardwareZone

(https://www.hardwarezone.com.sg/review/secretlab-omega-2020-review-fit-king?utm_source=outbrain&utm_medium=paid&utm_content=feature&utm_campaign=ma_outbrain&obOrigUrl=true)



How to Grow a Million Dollars from Just 10% of Your Salary

SGSME

(https://www.wealthacademyglobal.com.sg/review/wealth-academy-how-to-grow-a-million-dollars-from-just-10-of-your-salary?utm_source=Outbrain&utm_medium=paid&utm_content=feature&utm_campaign=ma_outbrain&obOrigUrl=true)



SG Residents: Don't Miss This Promo to Adventure Cove Waterpark

Resorts World Sentosa

(https://www.resortsworldsentosa.com.sg/promotions/adventure-cove-waterpark?utm_source=Outbrain&utm_medium=paid&utm_content=feature&utm_campaign=ma_outbrain&obOrigUrl=true)



Suffering from Knee Pain? It Might Be More Serious Than You Think

acl.orthosports.com.sg

(https://www.acl.orthosports.com.sg/knee-pain?utm_source=Outbrain&utm_medium=paid&utm_content=feature&utm_campaign=ma_outbrain&obOrigUrl=true)

Recommended by



(/) AN

WEBSITE

FOLLOW US     

TO SUBSCRIBE TO ANY OF OUR PRODUCTS VISIT WWW.SPHSUBSCRIPTION.COM.SG
([HTTP://WWW.SPHSUBSCRIPTION.COM.SG/](http://WWW.SPHSUBSCRIPTION.COM.SG/)) OR CALL +63 6388 3838

[ABOUT US \(/ABOUT-US\)](#)

[CONTACT US \(/CONTACT-US\)](#)

[HELP \(/HELP\)](#)

[ADVERTISE \(/ADVERTISE\)](#)

[TERMS & CONDITIONS \(HTTPS://SPH.COM.SG/LEGAL/WEBSITE_TNC.HTML\)](https://SPH.COM.SG/LEGAL/WEBSITE_TNC.HTML)

[DATA PROTECTION \(HTTPS://WWW.SPH.COM.SG/LEGAL/PDPA.HTML\)](https://WWW.SPH.COM.SG/LEGAL/PDPA.HTML)

[SPH DIGITAL NEWS \(/SPH-DIGITAL-NEWS\)](#)

© 2019 Singapore Press Holdings Ltd. Co. Regn No. 198402868E