



ability to provide the full range of printing services. My father did not put any pressure on me to join the company. However he did indicate that he preferred his children to take over the reigns when he retires. It would indeed be a pity if the next generation shied away from taking over the company and failed to provide continuity for the future. He indicated that he was willing to provide the necessary training and guidance to bring this about.

I was certain that it is a well established printing company which provides excellent career opportunities and could be developed even further. In addition I was sure that I could learn a lot from my father. He is a very knowledgeable man, full of business savvy and thoroughly well versed in all aspects of the printing business. So I decided to join my father at Grenadier Press.”

**So how has the last two years been like for you at Grenadier Press?**

“I made the right decision by joining my father at Grenadier Press. I was given the opportunity to learn all aspects of the printing business including the shop floor. I now oversee the sales function in the company. Having been given all-round training I am now given a free hand in the sales department. My father continues to provide guidance and will help if the need arises”.

**Did you encounter any problems when you first joined?**

“No I did not. I get along well with my colleagues and we all work together as a team. The fact that I am part of the family was never an issue. It all boils down to mutual respect and a common vision on what our objectives are. Everything has worked out well and I am very happy in the company overseeing the sales function”.

**Tell us something about how you spend your after-office time and your outlook on life?**

“My after-office time is usually spent with my family. Modern day marriages are different than those of the past. Husbands have to do their share in raising the next generation. I actually enjoy spending time with the family. Due to my family commitments my hobbies are also home-based. I listen to music and read a lot. My reading also helps me to remain updated on business and current affairs.

I am a practical person and I adopt a realistic approach to life. I believe in working hard by using my knowledge and skills. It will not be plain sailing all the time. We have to address the problems and challenges that we face and find solutions to them. In life we must all continue to learn and develop ourselves as we go along”.

## Mr. Tan Jit Khoon of Winson Press



*Mr. Tan Jit Khoon*

**Mr. Tan Jit Khoon** “I believe that in life we should appreciate and be grateful with whatever we have. We should make the best out of any situation be it good or bad. It is really up to all of us to make our own dreams come true. We should treat everyone with respect and learn continuously. Our life is a reflection on how we apply our knowledge. Good people are what matters most in any business – staff, partners and customers. Help them shine and you will shine! “

**Can you tell us something about yourself?**

I am 42 years old. I graduated in 1992 with a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the National University of Singapore. I am married with two children and I live in Mandarin Garden in the eastern part of Singapore. Currently I am the CEO of Winson Press.

**What was your working experience prior to joining Winson Press?**

I joined Hewlett Packard in June 1992 as a process engineer and moved to process development one and a half years later. It was a positive learning experience



▶▶ as I was exposed to the production and engineering environment of a leading MNC which produced top-notch computer products.

### **When did you join Winson Press?**

I joined Winson Press in May 1995.

### **With a degree in engineering and a good career in the electronic industry why did you opt to join the family printing business?**

My father set up Winson Advertising in 1965 providing design and print brokerage services. He built a strong following in the traditional Chinese medicine and health supplement industry, specializing in paper boxes. My mother joined him in the 70s and they gradually built the business..... purchasing our first factory in Chancerlodge Complex and then our first offset machine in 1989. Winson Press Pte Ltd was incorporated in 1990.

Even though my parents preferred me to join the business, they did not put any pressure on me. As my elder sister and younger brother were both not keen, it was obvious that if I did not join the company and learn how to run it, my parents would eventually have to sell the business when they retire or close down the company. So I decided to join the family printing business. I could have waited and joined at a later date after acquiring some management experience outside the printing industry. However I decided that it would be better to join earlier so that my father can train me while still in his prime.

### **So how has the last 14 years been like at Winson Press?**

It has been a great learning experience for me as well as our company. I started as a die-cut machine operator for half a year. Being a small business I gradually covered the other aspects such as estimating, scheduling, customer service and sales. Initially I was not given any job title and the learning process was fluid. I really put in the effort and worked very hard to learn the ropes.

Being an engineer made it easier for me to grasp the technical aspects of the operation but I have absolutely no clue on critical areas such as finance, sales, marketing and most important of all, management and leadership skills. So I decided to pursue a Master Degree in Enterprise Innovation focusing on Entrepreneurship shortly after I joined to give me a kick start. It was a challenging 2 years balancing work, study and girlfriend then.

In 1997 we not only purchased our current factory but also committed a huge investment to move into label production so as to serve our customers better in the health supplement industry. Our sales were badly affected during the Asian Financial Crisis. Further, we paid a high price for being the pioneer in this region for high quality UV flexo printing as supplies and expertise were not available locally.

We recovered and thrived until 2003 when our largest customer ran into problems. They reduced their orders by more than 97%! As their business represented 50% of our total sales, we scrambled to find new customers to fill the void and ran into credit problem. It was quite a miracle that we survived and sales gradually picked

up. Somehow, history repeated itself when our largest customer pulled out of Singapore in Feb 2008. This represented 25% of our sales at that time. This time round we were stronger financially with a better infrastructure in place. Fortunately, all our key staff stayed with us despite our difficulty. Most importantly we managed to pull through the recent economic downturn without any retrenchment.

The future looks bright for us. Being one of the few companies in the world that offers both paper boxes and labels put us in a very unique position. Our management infrastructure is also taking shape after years of hard work. Most important of all, we have built a great culture with strong values and we are improving continuously. My father is a Director of the company and is still present to advise and decide when necessary.

### **Did you encounter any problems when you joined?**

I would say that I encountered many challenges along the way. The single biggest challenge was leadership. Other than CCA in School and Army, I have had no management and leadership experience. There are so many things that I do not know; sales management, budgeting, setting KPIs, marketing, branding, and many others. I realised that I must first improve myself for the company to do well. For small company like us, we are faced with countless issues everyday and we had to constantly review our priorities and put long term strategies in place.

The next big challenge was to attract the right people to the company, putting them in the right position, giving them the right direction, tools, equipment, training and authority to do their job well. After which, we will have to figure out how to get the best out of everyone when we work together. A strong corporate culture can be a sustainable competitive advantage but it takes many years of work to make it happen.

### **Tell us some thing about how you spend your after-office time and your outlook on life?**

I enjoy spending time with my family after work. My wife and I used to enjoy outdoor activities such as trekking, diving and especially tennis very much. All these took a back seat since the children came along. It is really fun to see them grow. They bring a lot of joy to our extended family as well, though disciplining them can be challenging at times. Cycling, swimming, visiting the zoo or playground are some of our favourite pastimes.

It must be mid-life crisis that drive me to take part in Triathlon again after 18 years. Now I spend about 10 hours training every week. Physical activities have brought me a lot of benefits; I can cope with stress a lot better, have a clearer mind and give me more room to enjoy my favourite food. One other important benefit is that I get to listen to self improvement audiobooks while I train.

For voluntary activities, I serve on the Management Committees of the Print & Media Association Singapore, Institute of Printing Singapore and Packaging Council of Singapore.

I think we should live life with passion, be grateful with what we have and whatever it is, it is up to us!