



Family Affair



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BUSINESS IN ASIA IS LARGELY A FAMILY AFFAIR, WITH THE MAJORITY OF THE PUBLICLY OWNED COMPANIES REMAINING FAMILY-CONTROLLED. JAPANESE CORPORATE GIANTS KIKKOMAN, MITSUBISHI AND SUMITOMO STARTED OFF AS FAMILY FIRMS, WHILE HONG KONG BILLIONAIRE LI KA-SHING IS THE CHAIRMAN OF CHEUNG KONG (HOLDINGS) LIMITED AND HUTCHISON WHAMPOA LIMITED, WHICH INCLUDE NINE LISTED COMPANIES IN HONG KONG ALONE. THIS ISSUE, LET US TAKE A LOOK AT THREE SUCCESSFUL FAMILY BUSINESSES IN THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE (F&B) INDUSTRY OF SINGAPORE: VISMARK FOOD INDUSTRIES, HUBER'S PTE LTD AND CHIN GUAN HONG (SHARKSFIN) PTE LTD.

Steak-ing A Claim

Starting in the mid-1990s, Huber's Pte Ltd (Huber's) is a family business that comprises two retail outlets: Huber's Butchery @ Bukit Timah and Huber's Butchery & Bistro @ Dempsey. The company also owns a factory that specialises in the manufacturing and processing of premium meat products. Huber's is most known for its European-styled premium specialty stores that boast a wide selection of meats, sausages and hams. The man behind the company is chairman Ernst Huber (pictured centre on page 142), who had an illustrious career as a chef before he set up the company. Ernst Huber was the executive chef at Dynasty Hotel (now Singapore Marriott Hotel) and he was also notably a founding member of the Singapore Chef's Association. "I never expressed the desire for my children to head the company. But of course when you start a business you would want your children to succeed you," reveals Ernst Huber. His silent wish was fulfilled when both of his sons joined the company in a seemingly natural progression. "About four months after I graduated in Australia, I worked part-time at the shop. It wasn't long before I decided to do so full-time," shares eldest son Ryan Huber (pictured left on page 142) as he recounts joining the company. Today, he holds the helm as managing director. "We appreciate what my dad has done for the business. Our dad has also explained to us that

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running a business is not easy and doing it alone is even tougher. After I saw my brother joining the business I thought it'd be easier for us to do it together," adds youngest son and executive director Andre Huber (pictured right on page 142). Employing similar principles for both work and home, Ernst Huber lists a number of qualities that matters most to him: discipline, honesty, straight-forwardness and hard work. These principles appear to have trickled down to the next generation, as Ryan and Andre share how they prepared for the role of heading the family business. "Work hard and be a fast learner," Ryan tells me without hesitation. Andre's tip for success includes setting an example by working hard while gaining experience at the same time. Expressing confidence in both of his sons, Ernst Huber tells me in jest that he now plays the role of a 'director mentor' – "The company belongs to them and I'm just helping out occasionally. I mainly go to the shops now." Speaking of plans for the future, Andre displays an ambitious drive. "We're still young, so there are many expansion plans in the works. Opening up more shops, gaining a bigger market share in terms of foodservice and exporting products to neighbouring countries are just some of the examples of what we have in mind." Even though both sons are not planning to start a family in the near future, they hope that their children will be able to succeed the business. "We'll like to see the family business go on for as long as possible," Ryan shares with a grin.

A. Shaw's Tale

Business from its name. (The Shaw Group) (Shaw's Tale) is an important chapter and attachment of food products such as wheat and frozen meats. The two generations, business and family, both need and share business. Experience is what is the key to the company. It was founded by the son, Yu Hong (young generation) (YH), who is the director and the son of the founder. His daughter, Charlotte (young generation) (YH), has also joined the company as the assistant administrative manager. "I was never clearly told what the company was all about. I was just told that I would help out in the company when I graduated from university," says Charlotte. When asked if he expected his children to succeed the family business, Yu Hong says with his hands, "Yes, both Charlotte and her sister would come to the shop during their school holidays. It was always clear to help me with some assignments. I would like to see the company continue to flourish under their care." For the Yu family, business and family are different but in the pursuit when it comes to business, Yu Hong says practice the same methods that he father used to teach him when he was learning to run the family business. "Don't let it seem to be an obstacle and wanting from me when available work needs, just like the way I was when I was learning the ropes from my father." The business is the common principle for both to head the company and the family. Yu Hong says a few when it comes to parenting the daughter. "The main management is in her own hands. I don't give her too much to do up to her to consult me if she has any issues. She has to earn the respect of her colleagues and the trust of our customers as the boss." Having to do a lot of things, Charlotte seems to be dealing with her role in the family business in a subtle. "I think the pressure comes from making sure that the learning on the job. My father wants for our customers and I quickly and that up the service level is very high and I intend to maintain the standards." All these families have expressed that the main challenge of running a family business is the risk of letting work more affect personal relationships. Yu Hong says agree with this view and believes that a clear distinction between work and family is necessary to avoid such conflicts. "There is a line for work and a line for family. We do not let family work come with us. We long to see respect each other, any issue can be resolved." Building a agreement, Charlotte says she also does not take disagreement during work personally. "We make the extra effort to ensure that the work will get done after office hours. Respect is important, for it between family members, customers, staff or suppliers."



"She's had to learn to accept criticism and scolding from me when mistakes were made, just like the way it was when I was learning the ropes from my father."
Yu Hong Long

Three in One & Crowd

Manulife Trust Insurance (Manulife) was established in the early 1980s by managing director David Tan (pictured). The company operates in public, private and public-private sectors and markets as well as providing asset-based services. David Tan describes his career as "the story of 30" starting from scratch. "After sailing for so many years, it is only natural to wish that my children will succeed me in the business." Fortunately, his three children share his sentiment. "We've been helping out in the company over time and with young" events, public and marketing manager David Tan (pictured left), the second child of the Tan family, the eldest daughter, Anne Tan (pictured right), joined the company six years ago and is now the administrative manager. She has four years of experience under her belt while managing her. David Tan (pictured third from left) recently joined the company as the operations manager a year ago. With three promising children committed to carrying the family business, David Tan shares his secret for nurturing the second generation. "I start from the basics. Every company has its customer base and it starts from its first customer. The customer needs to be the focus and it is also in their needs." He also talks about the importance of unity. "Even though they each handle a different department, I expect all of them to look out for the company as a whole and not just their own actions." When asked if he handles family and business affairs differently, David Tan tells us that it is difficult for him to be strict when dealing with business. "Customers are the source of our profits, so service always comes first. Ensuring that customers get the best quality products is our priority." In the second generation, David Tan also sees the family business. David seems to have a clear goal in mind. "We're not planning to change the business structure now after the succession. The focus will be on setting

up the new service. Much needs to work to succeed before we fully take over the business." Additionally, David Tan wishes to lay out their skills to help other businesses and social media for marketing purposes. "Word of mouth and social media are the most important marketing tool. Due to increased competition, there is a need to step up our brand awareness" explains David Tan. "Marketing is not just a job, it's a passion. You need to engage with customers and go online and have a better understanding of the market. With the help of the children, David Tan expects a more focused marketing effort. "We've been working on increasing awareness for the brand, such as participating in events like World Business Summit and GoodBusinessAsia." Before getting away, I asked the three future leaders of Manulife what is the most important principle that their father has taught them. "Service above all" David explains almost immediately, citing the company's slogan. Anne adds on that her father has taught her the importance of flexibility, while David agrees to his father's "work as you want" spirit. He is motivated to work harder. Serving customer first has been David Tan's motto with a tough "I gave it my best to make coffee with my old hand now" (2).

We Are Family

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