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# Entrepreneurs' digest

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# A PRICELESS SMILE

**"GRACE CHONG-TAN, MANAGING DIRECTOR, SMILE INC.® DENTAL SURGEONS SHARES ON HOW SHE TOOK DENTISTRY TO ANOTHER LEVEL WITH NEW TECHNOLOGIES, TECHNIQUES AND EXPERTISE.**

WRITTEN BY: SHARON LONG

THE NEXT TIME YOU GET ALL JITTERY ABOUT VISITING the dentist, make a trip down to Smile Inc.® Dental Surgeons. There is a good chance that the fear anticipated will disappear the moment you step into the clinic.

This was the type of experience that Grace Chong-Tan, Managing Director of Smile Inc.® had in mind for her clients when she went about designing a patient-friendly concept embedded in a modern-luxe meets timeless chic setting as early as 1997.

From a welcoming reception area and elegantly designed interiors that exude a soothing ambience, to having televisions mounted on the ceiling of consultation rooms, these create an environment where patients are able to forget their fears.

## **Making a name for Smile Inc.®**

Established in 1997 with the vision of making Singapore the Dental

Hub of the region, Smile Inc.\* is the modern dental facility that provides high quality dental care and services with key strengths in reconstructive and cosmetic dentistry.

The Group takes a multifaceted approach to enhance its quality of services by establishing itself as the leader in various areas.

"We constantly upgrade the skill sets and expertise of our dentists and specialists for the benefit of our patients, constantly innovate and push the envelope in terms of interior design that will benefit the patients and establish trust and strong relationships with our patients," said Grace.

Grace has since extended the Group's capabilities beyond what she had set out to accomplish 14 years ago. By possessing a "Nothing is Impossible" mentality and the drive to constantly "think out of the box", she was able to effectively tap on the strengths of Smile Inc.\* to build a brand identity that has been commended by many to be "the future of dentistry".

From being a single dental facility at Suntec City Mall in 1997, Smile Inc.\* is now a multi-disciplinary practice in locations like One Raffles Quay and Mandarin Gallery.

#### Vision to move ahead of time

While others were happy to go along with a regular dental setup, Grace was not hesitant to take the plunge.

"I was trying to create a different environment and remove the prohibitive connotations attached to dentistry. By modernising dentistry and positioning it as a lifestyle service as well as our introduction of innovative and proprietary equipment and technologies, we were deemed to be too far ahead of our time by established members of the industry," she said.

From being the earliest to fully computerise its operations and use hospital standard equipment in their sterilisation methods, it is also the first and only practice that offers the revolutionary Laser Teeth Whitening Technology in Asia (excluding Japan) since 1997. The Smile Inc.\* Makeover\* which combines a series of principles and cosmetic dental techniques to enhance each individual's smile, was another pioneer procedure in the industry.

#### Plans for Smile Inc.\*

Backed by a solid reputation and brand recognition that had built up over the last 14 years, Smile Inc.\* has witnessed exceptional growth to both cement and maintain its position as the leader in its field. It was a Winner for the Singapore Prestige Brand Award— Established Brand in 2010, and was Singapore's first dental establishment to win this Award. Grace is determined to take its success up by another notch.

"We will continue to reinforce the Smile Inc.\* brand and to maintain our position as the premier cosmetic and reconstructive dental practice in Singapore and the region," she said.

It is also apparent that the Group has fired interest in the overseas markets with its growing international clientele. Patients from overseas have been flying into Singapore specifically to have their dental treatment since 1997, and the numbers and markets have been growing rapidly.

She said: "Smile Inc.\* believes that the high standards that they have set for the Group and their continuous pursuit for progress have earned her the trust and recognition from its patients."

When asked about plans for overseas expansion, Grace replied: "We approach our overseas expansion with deliberation and prudence, and gain in mere numbers alone is never the sole determining factor. Other factors such as the non-dilution and

**"Make sure you have the relevant skills and knowledge for the particular industry you intend to be in. Planning is important, simple cost benefit analyses and market surveys for preferences and trends should be done."**

upholding of the quality of our services, the preservation of our premium brand name and synergistic collaborations are key factors in determining our expansion overseas."

"The time is right for our expansion drive to an international level. We have had several good offerings that we are currently deliberating on, and expanding in the region, in particular China, is now timely."

#### Words to Budding Entrepreneurs

For those who see Grace's story as a cue for success, this is her advice: Do your homework first.

"Make sure you have the relevant skills and knowledge for the particular industry you intend to be in. Planning is important, simple cost benefit analyses and market surveys for preferences and trends should be done."

Grace also believes that one should always plan and prepare for contingencies. Having a clear vision and goals at least for the first three years of the business will be essential. It is also important that this vision be carried out and implemented efficiently and effectively.

"A leader and entrepreneur will always have to adapt to new situations, to always seek new trends and groundbreaking applications and technologies and to constantly differentiate one's business from the rest of the industry," she added.

A devoted mother who places much emphasis on kinship, Grace also stresses the importance of support from family members.

"Ensure that one's immediate family and dependents understand that there will be sacrifices on your time and resources and get their full support and agreement before you embark on it."