

The Finder

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**EAST
COAST**
45 Hot Finds



WONDER WOMEN

MEET THE GIRLS MAKING A
CHANGE IN THE LION CITY

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HANG OUTS

+

BOUTIQUE
WINE & DINE
VINEYARDS
down under

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Dream Teams

...who's scoring big points with expert style & know how?

Business Profile

Tips & tricks from those in the know

Finding lux

Do you perceive dentists and dentistry with fear and trepidation? Dr Ernest Rex Tan & Mrs Grace Chong-Tan, both founders of **SMILE INC. DENTAL SURGEONS**, help you view a trip to the dentist as a step towards a healthier and happier lifestyle.

TF: Smile Inc.® is a well-known and respected brand in Singapore. What do you believe has contributed towards your success?

Grace: We started in 1997 with the vision of making Singapore the dental hub of the region. At that time, the name *Smile Inc.®* itself was already an indication of a distinct and modern dental facility – one that provided high-quality dental care and services, utilising the latest techniques and state-of-the-art technology and facilities. We constantly innovate and push the envelope in terms of our interior design to benefit the patients in terms of providing a soothing ambience or the latest designer-chic décor. Our newest flagship concept at the Marina Bay Financial District's The Sail – a cutting-edge breakthrough concept in design and architecture – is set to take our practice to another level by offering the finest service and experience in a 'modern-luxe meets timeless-chic' setting, outstanding staff service, state-of-the-art technologies and exceptional dental skills and techniques.

TF: What are the most popular services at Smile Inc.®?

Rex: Apart from routine dentistry to specialist procedures, *Smile Inc.®* is most well known for its reconstructive and cosmetic dentistry. *Smile Inc.® Makeovers®* include Laser

Teeth Whitening, Instant Braces and the Smile Lift, an anti-aging cosmetic dentistry procedure. We also offer Implant Dentistry and Routine Crowns, Bridges and Veneers services for our patients.

TF: Grace, how would you best describe your outlook for the business and your position at Smile Inc.®?

Grace: I was inspired to introduce a different approach to dentistry, to dispel the traditional fear of visiting the dentist and incorporate an innovative approach to how a new-age dental practice could look and be run. Sixteen years ago, the thought of visiting a dentist was always a foreboding one and not pleasant – people would only visit the dentist when they were in pain. We wanted to change that. As for my role, I'm constantly striving to be a leader who searches for change and responds to it. This exemplifies the very vision that led to our starting such a new-concept like *Smile Inc.®*

TF: What drives you to greater heights in service and care?

Grace: We believe one must always have the tenacity and perseverance to adapt to new situations, to always seek new trends, opportunities and groundbreaking applications and technologies, and to constantly differentiate one's business from the rest – to constantly stay on top and ahead of the game.

TF: Do you foresee challenges as a business owner in 2013-2014?

Grace: One of the greatest challenges in 2013-14 will be the lack of easy access to quality manpower given the government's tightening of foreign labour. I personally do not believe such a move will lead to improving productivity, and especially not in a services sector such as ours. A more holistic approach, one that takes into consideration the critical skill sets that could be rendered by foreign manpower to augment our local population in areas lacking whilst simultaneously providing earnest schemes to enhance productivity, would be beneficial for Singapore's economy as a whole.



TF: Your most adventurous business project to date?

Grace: Our current *Smile Inc.®* set-up at the Marina Bay Financial District's The Sail. Though challenging, implementing our vision of the first duplex-fronted medical/dental practice – similar to recent trends by luxury brands *Chanel* and *Louis Vuitton* – whilst still offering our trademark state-of-the-art facilities, cutting-edge technologies and multi-disciplinary specialist skill sets, has been very exciting and extremely rewarding.

TF: Sixteen years together in business. What is your secret?

Grace: It helps being a couple. That we are like minded with the same vision and goals makes for efficient management. There's little worry that any differing views may result in miscommunication or delays in projects. I believe husband-and-wife teams make for the most successful of businesses.

TF: Can you dispel any myths about working together as a married couple?

Rex: Being able to work together to establish and develop *Smile Inc.® Dental Surgeons* is a good testament to the strength of our relationship. In business as in life, many decisions have to be made jointly and many issues and situations will require discussion, planning and decision making. In many instances, it enables us to recognise and acknowledge each other's strengths and wisdom.

TF: Any helpful hints for The Finder readers who may be interested in establishing a business of their own?

Grace: Planning is important – simple cost/benefit analysis and market surveys for preferences and trends should be done. 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.

TF: On a day-to-day basis, what is most important?

Grace: It is paramount to have a positive mindset. You must expect sacrifices on your personal time and leisure, and be able to face adversity and uncertainty at every turn because nothing is constant. If the very thought of being accountable for every aspect of the business puts you off, then do more soul searching before plunging into it. **MANDARIN GALLERY #04-18 ONE RAFFLES QUAY, NORTH TOWER #09-02 SUNTEC CITY MALL #02-124/6 MARINA BAY-THE SAIL #01-02 Tel: 6733 0660, www.smileinc.com.sg**