

STRAITS TIMES

Special Singapore Prestige Brand Award 2010

THE STRAITS TIMES THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9 2010 PAGE 2



Dr Tan and Mrs Chong-Tan left their stable and well-paying jobs to start the dental practice. PHOTO: MIBASHEER

Smile Inc. — Established Brand

Show me your teeth

Smile Inc. Dental Surgeons makes gains by focusing on cosmetic dentistry

by theresa tan

BRINGING out their patients' best smiles has brought Smile Inc. Dental Surgeons a happy bottom line.

The dental practice has seen its revenues grow "exponentially", with growth rates of between 50 and 100 per cent each year since it started in 1997.

Today, it runs three clinics in prime locations and counts royalty, celebrities and chief executives among its patients. And it is so well-known that some foreigners fly to Singapore just to see the dentists at Smile Inc.

"Publicity is literally by word of mouth as every patient is our brand ambassador," says Mrs Grace Chong-Tan, managing director of Smile Inc. She founded the company with her dentist husband, Dr Ernest Rex Tan.

With its focus on cosmetic dentistry, Smile Inc. stands out from the typical dental clinics that offer the usual dentistry services.

In fact, the couple left their "stable and well-paying careers" to start a dental practice which "spearheads the use of advanced and cutting-edge technology to offer revolutionary dental services and treatments".

For example, Dr Tan says Smile Inc. was the first dental practice here to introduce laser teeth whitening technology. This technology allows dentists to significantly whiten patients' teeth in just one visit.

Dr Tan explains: "We foresaw there would be a strong demand for lifestyle and cosmetic dentistry, where patients visit the dentist to maintain and enhance one's smile, which contributes greatly to their dental health, appearance and confidence."

"In many instances, we have witnessed the confidence-boosting power of an attractive smile and the positive effects cosmetic dentistry can have on a patient's personality and life."

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— Dr Ernest Rex Tan, co-founder, Smile Inc. Dental Surgeons

To stay ahead of the competition, Smile Inc. continually invests in "cutting-edge and relevant technologies, techniques and ideas".

For example, it invested in hospital standard equipment to sterilise its instruments, and its high standards of hygiene practices paid off during the severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars) outbreak.

Mrs Chong-Tan says: "During the Sars episode, instead of facing a dwindling number of patients, we experienced a marked increase in the number of patients and revenue as patients felt they could trust our high standards of sterilisation."

But their boldness to tread into "places where no one had thought of or dared to go" came at a price.

Mrs Chong-Tan says: "By modernising dentistry and positioning it as a lifestyle service and introducing innovative and proprietary equipment and technologies, we were deemed to be too far ahead of our time by established members of the industry."

In their first year of operations, a magazine journalist initiated a story about Smile Inc. but some dentists saw the story as an advertisement, Mrs Chong-Tan says. This was in the late 1990s, before advertising by doctors was liberalised.

This sparked off a series of events which led Dr Tan to take the Singapore Dental Board to court as he felt they had wrongly viewed the article as advertising. Smile Inc. won the case in the end.

She says of that incident: "In addition to our vindication, we also received the best 'advertisement' money could ever buy: our victory was splashed in colour on the front page of The Straits Times. The positive response from our patients and the public was overwhelming, giving our success a great shot in the arm."

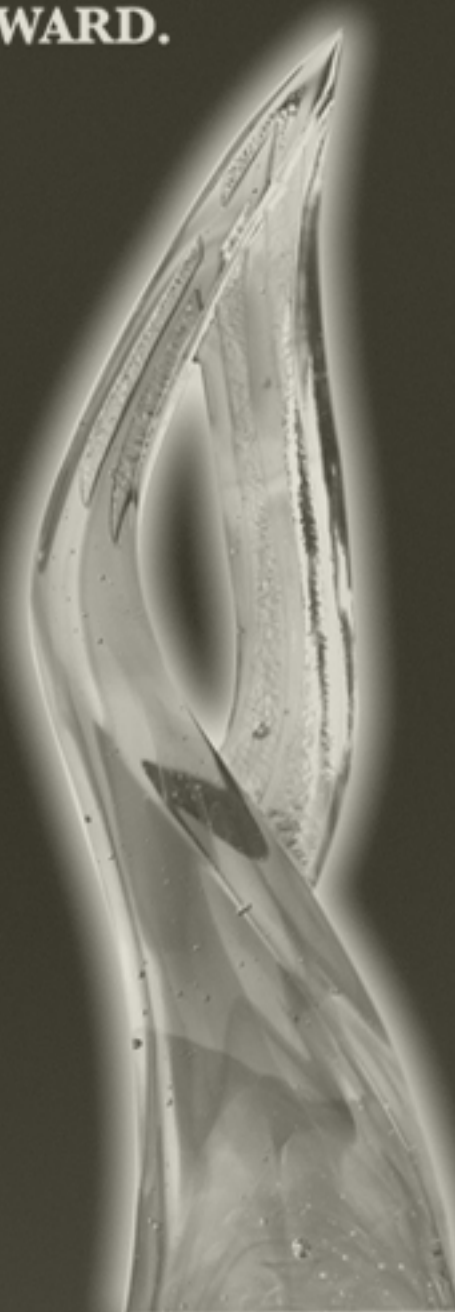
Winning the Singapore Prestige Brand Award this year is an honour and privilege, say the Smile Inc. founders.

Mrs Chong-Tan says: "Do the best work you can, build trust and strong relationships with your clients, learn from the challenges you will encounter and capitalise on opportunities that present themselves."

"Most importantly, keep things in perspective and enjoy the journey as it is rewarding and fulfilling. It is a continuous pursuit of success."

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SMILE inc.® DENTAL SURGEONS is honoured to be the first dental establishment to win the Singapore Prestige Brand Award (SPBA) – Established Brands 2010/2011. This milestone achievement is the latest of our many firsts, and we would like to thank our patients, colleagues and partners - whose trust, faith and support have made this Award possible. This Award inspires us to continue in our quest to continually deliver exceptional quality and value in our services.

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