



## Spreading the word

FIRST-TIME entrepreneur Alex Liao Whatt Meng (left) believed he had a good product but something was missing.

Having practised psychology for nine years with extensive training in childhood psychology and autism, he wanted to bring Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention and Relationship Development Intervention therapies to children with special learning needs as he found these therapies worked well in tandem.

He set up Nurture Pods in 2011 to provide intervention programmes designed to develop these children in behaviour management, cognition, social, language and communication, motor skills and coordination.

Depending on word of mouth and referrals from psychologists was sufficient to support the company in its early days, but after it opened its Centre for Child Development and Early Intervention, Mr Lim wanted to know how he could get more clients.

Previously, he thought people would

naturally go to them if their services were good. However, without brand management, people did not know about them and the quality of their therapy.

In 2013, with the aid of Spring Singapore's Capability Development Grant (CDG) for brand development, Nurture Pods engaged the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute, an institute of Singapore Management University, to develop a clear brand identity and marketing strategy.

Over 12 weeks, a team of student consultants, led by a project adviser who was an academic and a practitioner, analysed the company's competitive landscape and devised marketing strategies.

The CDG grant subsidised over 70 per cent of the cost. With the outcomes and recommendations, the company realised it had to simplify its marketing material, to make it easier to understand and paint a more approachable image to parents.

It realigned its brand positioning to express how it is "a local therapy centre that truly

cares about growing your child's potential".

It commissioned a video to add to its arsenal of mostly print material, overhauled its website and used online marketing to spread the word. These boosted the number of inquiries it received.

The company also worked with partners in the same industry to create opportunities for collaboration.

Nurture Pods conducted a workshop for parents with Chaoyang School, run by the Association for Persons with Special Needs, which focused on understanding children's behaviour and intervention that can be carried out at home.

It collaborated with the Institute of Technical Education to create a soccer programme, Football Friendship Fun, for children with special needs.

Says Mr Liao: "Small and medium-sized enterprises like Nurture Pods spend most of our revenues on labour and rent, leaving us little financial resources to carry out branding exercises. The grants by Spring Singapore help subsidise the cost of such badly needed studies, yet we can still have a very professionally run branding research project by the UOB-SMU AEI team."

### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR SMES

The Capability Development Grant (CDG) is a financial assistance programme that helps small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) develop capabilities across 10 development areas by defraying up to 70 per cent of qualifying project costs such as consultancy, manpower, training, certification and equipment. To encourage more SMEs to build business capabilities, the application process for grant support of \$30,000 or less has been simplified. SMEs can look forward to simpler application forms and reduced documentation requirements for such projects. Visit [www.spring.gov.sg/cdg](http://www.spring.gov.sg/cdg) for more details.

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