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Headline: Making a million before 30

There is no doubt that Ms Pauline Ng was born to be anything but an entrepreneur.

At seven, she photocopied pages of her colouring books for five cents and sold them to her classmates for 10 cents.

At 17, she started her own event company that organised concerts, private events and themed birthday parties.

And at 20, while a business student at Singapore Management University (SMU), she was behind the SMU Arts Festival, which helped showcase student talents in music, dance, theatre, film and the visual arts.

It all came in good stead in 2009 when her beautician mum, Madam Jenny Teng, 50, approached her to help relaunch her facial business, which had tanked in 2004 after the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in Singapore.

Having just graduated from SMU at the time, Ms Ng thought helping out her mum meant driving her around in her free time.

But a few days in, she realised she could help in a more substantial way.

"My mum wanted to run a skincare business, but her strength was in her treatments and skills," recalls Ms Ng, who is married to a private banker and has no children. "When it came to technical aspects such as hiring people or planning logistics, she was often lost." Her retiree father teaches classical guitar and she has a younger brother, 27, who is not involved in the business.

Ms Ng knew she had it in her to run the business, but was slightly apprehensive given that her relationship with her mother had not always been smooth sailing.

"We both have strong personalities, which meant we didn't really see eye to eye when I was growing up," she says. "It made going into business together a tricky proposition."

Still, the two sat down and had a frank discussion, deciding to clearly demarcate roles from the get-go.

Ms Ng took on the position of founder and managing director, overseeing everything from marketing to procurement, while Madam Teng focused on doing treatments and training staff.

And though the business started small when they opened in July 2009 (Ms Ng would not disclose their initial investment), appointments at the two-room shophouse outfit in Cantonment Road quickly began picking up – at first thanks to Madam Teng's

loyal clients and later, by word of mouth.

Within months, Porcelain had become the skincare spa of choice among beauty insiders and appointments with Madam Teng were booked out five weeks in advance.

Now, its signature Quintessential facial costs \$374.50 a pop, but if you want Madam Teng's personal services, you must pay upwards of \$430.

Ms Ng did not let the success get to her head though.

She quickly began reinvesting the profits into the business – starting by launching Porcelain's own skincare line in 2010, hiring more skilled therapists for the business and, later, setting up an aesthetics arm, Porcelain Aesthetics, in July last year.

After consulting with skincare houses in the United States, Japan and Taiwan, the brand now has 18 exclusive products in their in-house skincare range, with three more slated for release by the end of the year.

The business became GST-registered and hit \$1 million in revenue in 2013 – the same year in which it was named Best Luxury Beauty Spa in Asia at the World Luxury Spa Awards. It won the accolade again last year.

And though success came quickly for Ms Ng, it has been a rollercoaster ride for the young boss, who now manages a team of 30.

"I had to adapt quickly with each challenge – such as learning not to scrimp on legal advice after dealing with employment contract issues or realising that, at some point, creating basic spreadsheets on Microsoft Excel just won't cut it anymore," she says with a laugh.

"But in all honesty, I wouldn't trade the experience for the world. I learnt from each mistake I made and it ultimately shaped the way the business turned out."

And despite the business being in a comfortable place, she is already pondering her next steps.

She lets on that she is already scouting locations for a new branch which will provide a retail arm for its skincare line and hopes to expand across Asia.

"When I started on this journey, I never imagined this would be a 'forever' sort of career," she says.

"But having grown along with the business for the past six years, I've definitely changed my mind. I couldn't be prouder of how far we've come."

**PAULINE NG, 29,
FOUNDER AND
MANAGING
DIRECTOR OF
PORCELAIN, THE
FACE SPA AND
PORCELAIN
AESTHETICS**



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