

Me&MyMoney

Finance exec banks on a time-tested wealth strategy

Invest as early as you can and always keep up with changing markets, says Kwan Yu Wen



Rosalind Ang

Finance executive Kwan Yu Wen has a one-two strategy for growing wealth – invest as early as possible and always keep up with changing markets.

It is an approach that has been tested over time, given that Ms Kwan, 32, started investing at 18, when her father helped her open a brokerage account just after she finished junior college.

She continued gaining experience at university, when she set aside \$10,000 of her own money to dabble in a range of investment products.

Ms Kwan is now the executive director of Luminor Financial Holdings, which undertakes property development and provides financial solutions to small and medium-sized enterprises across the region. Before that, she kicked off her career at industrial product supplier GRP as a management trainee.

Ms Kwan graduated with an economics degree from the Singapore Management University in 2015 after taking a gap year to complete a six-month internship at a Swiss wealth management investment bank.

She is single and lives with her family.

Q What is in your personal portfolio?

A My portfolio consists mainly of blue chips, dividend stocks, Reits, fixed-income products and some growth stocks – basically a portfolio that does not require much active monitoring.

Q Describe your investing strategy. Has it changed over the years? If so, how?

A In university, I bought more higher-risk investment products. The money I set aside for those investments was to be an investment lesson to myself, and I was prepared to lose it all if I were to fail. Without fear and pressure, about 70 per cent of my portfolio then featured higher-risk products like high-yield bonds.

I was able to grow my money but what I learnt from that experience



Luminor Financial Holdings executive director Kwan Yu Wen started investing at age 18, thanks to her father who helped her open a brokerage account just after she finished junior college. She learnt the value of hard work from a young age, and that you can be caught off-guard if you are unprepared. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

Worst and best bets

Q What has been your biggest investing mistake?

A My biggest mistake was not getting into the property market early. I have always believed in seizing opportunities amid adversity. During the Covid-19 pandemic, property prices were suppressed – that was actually one of the best times to enter the market.

Q And your best investment?

A One of my best property-related investments would be CapitaLand shares. I bought them some time in 2009 when the economic outlook was extremely pessimistic and the world was expecting a great recession.

I held on despite the lack of optimism in the market, and true enough, things turned around – the economy recovered and kept growing. I eventually sold the shares at almost a 100 per cent return. It was one of the first few stocks I purchased, and I consider it one of the most memorable and one of the best.

was the amount of time needed to analyse and determine the next best buy. A lot of time was also needed to monitor the market.

I could afford the time to monitor my investments during university but I had to switch to a different strategy when I took over the reins at Luminor Financial Holdings.

Today, I adopt a more passive buy-and-hold investment strategy with a long-term view. A certain portion is dedicated to fixed-interest income bonds and dividend stocks to generate regular income.

This fits my current stage of life as I have chosen to focus my time and energy on growing Luminor and do not have the time to invest as actively as before.

Q What else is in your financial plan?

A Nothing much other than basic insurance plans as I am still single and have no children.

Q How did you get interested in investing?

A I was first introduced to finance by my father. He is in mergers and acquisitions, and is extremely passionate about his work. Since I was young, he would always talk to me about doing business and investing and discuss his deals with me.

He helped me to open my first brokerage account just after junior college. I really started to develop an appreciation for what my father did and the knowledge he was trying to impart to me only when I entered university and majored in finance.

Q How are you planning for retirement?

A No thoughts on retirement at the moment, but I hope to be able to continue doing what I like to do without financial stress (through passive income in the form of dividends and rental income from a

property portfolio that I hope to build in the next 20 years).

Q Moneywise, what were your growing-up years like?

A While we largely lived comfortably and did not have to worry about basic living expenses, my dad doing his own business entailed taking huge risks. We all felt the strain during times like the 1997 financial crisis.

My parents did their best to shield us from it all, to make sure we were not impacted that much. Their success also did not come overnight and was a result of hard work over the years.

I learnt the value of hard work from a young age, that things can move against you very quickly and catch you off-guard if you are unprepared.

Both my parents made sure we lived comfortably, but were careful not to spend unnecessarily and

they constantly reminded us about the importance of managing our own money well and living within our means.

Q Home is now...

A I live near the Botanic Gardens with my family. I have my eye on a cosy apartment a few MRT stops away from Raffles Place. I plan to pull the trigger very soon.

Q I drive...

A I don't own a car and I get around mostly by train or Grab. The extensive MRT network in Singapore makes getting to and from the office (or anywhere else for that matter) extremely convenient.

I am not against owning and driving a car: I definitely see the perks! But for now, I am content taking the train or taking a Grab (car ride) everywhere I go.

rosang@sph.com.sg