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On top of continuing the family business, Morgan Yeo and his brothers are constantly working on keeping the vanishing carpentry trade alive

While Roger&Sons's director Morgan Yeo grew up knowing he would eventually be involved in the family business, he never thought that he would have to take over at such a young age.

In 2014, after graduating with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration at Singapore Management University (SMU), Yeo along with his brothers Lincoln and Ryan decided to take the reins of his father Roger Yeo's carpentry business. The decision had come after his father had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer early that same year.

"It was very daunting ... business had not been doing too well and I had to [quickly] learn to pick up carpentry as well as the [ins and outs of the] business and industry," Yeo explains, adding that his father was not able to be involved much due to his diagnosis during that period. During this time, the trio were only in their early 20s and late teens.

Founded by the late Yeo, the local brand was formally incorporated as JR & P Industries in 1999. The brand began as a manufacturer of system furniture for offices. When the brothers took over, they decided to rebrand the company after realising the need to adapt and restructure its business model. Today, Roger&Sons focuses on creating custom bespoke pieces and has since completed projects for various bars and restaurants including Candlenut, Aesop Singapore, The Warehouse Hotel and more.

From the bottom up

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From a young age, the trio had been exposed to the industry, with their father bringing them to work on weekends and school holidays to help out. That being said, Yeo clarifies that there was no pressure to join the family business. "[Our dad] always encouraged us to chase our dreams and do what we like. But, he always made it clear that the family business would always be there should we ever want to be part of it," Yeo adds.

Having grown up around woodworking, Yeo explains that he had "fleeting thoughts" about joining the family business. "The question was in what capacity and what role," he says.

When he decided to take over the business, Yeo had to start from the bottom—he began learning from experienced carpenters, watching YouTube videos and reading about the industry. "There's no right way when it comes to building furniture or objects, but there is always the best way. And even then, the best way evolves as your skills evolve," he says. On top of learning about carpentry, he also had to learn to lead as a boss and steer the business in its new direction.

Despite the steep learning curve, having the ability to share the same passion as his father and brothers made it worthwhile. Looking back, Yeo revealed that some of these tough times were also some of the most significant ones. From the late nights spent figuring out how to rebrand the company, Yeo found that "struggling together to gain respect in the industry and feeling the sense of achievement together" were some of the most memorable experiences working with the family.

Of course, feuds were also inevitable. "That's what makes a family. The more you work and interact together, the higher the chances of disagreements [happening]" he explains. Fortunately for the brothers, they have always been able to overcome their differences through communication and being understanding of each other's points of view. "Deep in our hearts, we know that we have each other's best interest. We just might not always see it," he adds.

Regardless of these obstacles, Yeo finds it a privilege and joy to work alongside his family—while the brothers had always been close, Yeo reflects that they have grown even closer since taking over the business. He continues: "There are not many who can say that they work together with their family."

The next step

Roger&Sons doesn't plan to modernise the carpentry trade. Instead, it plans to bring back the appreciation for woodworking as an industry. "It's not about the brand or the low price but the heart that goes into each piece of furniture that is made," he muses.

Beyond creating bespoke pieces, Roger&Sons also hopes to take the carpentry trade to the next level, focusing on sustainability and building a community. One of its sustainability efforts is the Local Tree Project where the brand gives a second life to fallen tree logs in Singapore. The brand embarked on the journey in 2018, turning these unused and abandoned logs into durable, future-proof furniture. From its sawdust to its shavings, every part of the tree gets utilised.

Yeo also shares the importance of educating the younger generation about the industry. Over the years, the brand has held various hands-on immersive workshops, allowing the public to learn more about the craft in a relaxed and non-intimidating environment. Rather than just "looking at furniture", he emphasises the importance for the younger generation to understand the creation process of each piece and how sustainability plays a role in it.

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Looking ahead, Yeo shares: "We try not to get distracted by doing too much, by keeping ourselves grounded. We are woodworkers and our focus is always to keep improving ourselves as woodworkers."