

The 40 *Under* FORTY

Guide to Success

Whether it is restoring sight, fighting for justice or managing a \$300 million portfolio, these are the blueprints for making your way to the very top

By LAUREN TAN & LYNETTE KOH

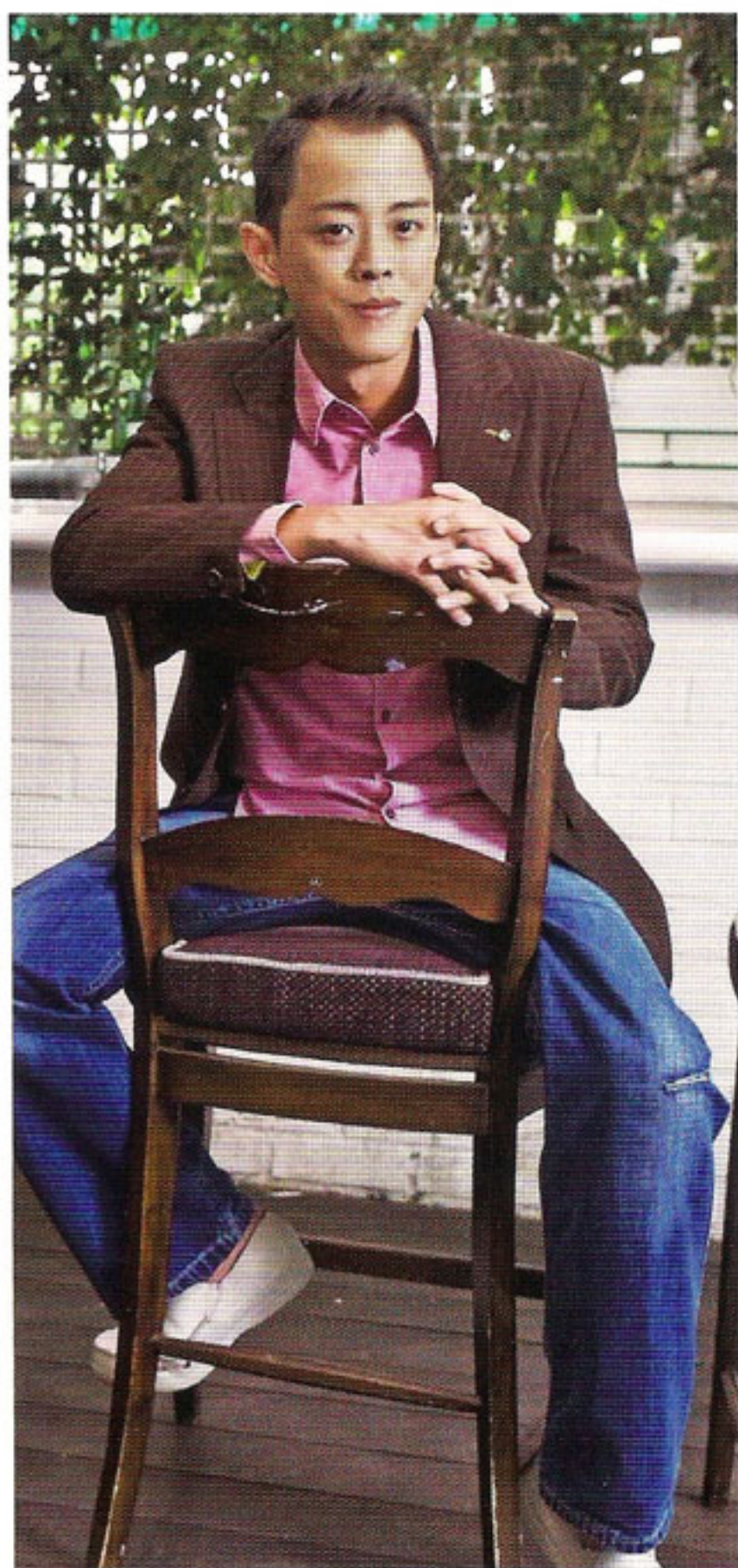
HOW TO PAINT AN
AFRICAN TOWN GREEN

ELAINA OLIVIA CHONG

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, REAL KAITEN



As the former owner of an investor relations consultancy, Elaina Chong has advised global corporate clients across a wide range of industries. Currently, however, she is taking on her most ambitious project yet as the CEO of Real Kaiten, an environmental engineering business with a focus on clean technology. This year, the 37-year-old and her team were awarded a \$1.3-billion deal to develop an eco-town in western Angola. Says Chong: "This project is Angola's first integrated eco-township development with social housing, an industrial park and a commercial zone of this scale — a self-sustaining ecosystem that gives homes and jobs to the locals." The drive that keeps her going? A belief in paying it forward: "Every person should have equitable access to empowerment. We need to enable people to help themselves. Green entrepreneurship and sustainability is one of the means to achieving this end."



HOW TO THINK
SMALL TO WIN BIG

RYAN LEE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, XMI

When he was 20 and still shaking off the remnants of teenage rebellion, Ryan Lee's dad made a one-dollar wager with him: That Lee would not be able to attain the level of success his "self-made entrepreneur and lawyer" dad had attained by the age of 33.

Says Lee: "I've come to realise that he said that to motivate me. But that day, I promised myself that I could lose every dollar in my life except this one." It's certainly been a decisive win for Lee, who started Xmi — the company behind the X-mini ultra-portable speaker — in 2006 with just \$30,000 and an Amex credit card. The ultra-portable speakers with outsize sound were an instant hit, earning \$800,000 in its first year. To date, Xmi has turned a profit every year, achieving revenues in excess of \$30 million in 2011.

Says Lee: "Last year, on my 34th birthday, my father gave me a little plaque with a \$1 coin. Beneath it he wrote, 'For Ryan, a dollar I cheerfully lost.' That is probably the proudest moment of my life to date."

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HOW TO GROW
A GREAT IDEA

TINGJUN ZHANG

CO-FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, THE
CHAIN REACTION PROJECT

In three short years, The Chain Reaction Project (TCRP) has helped raise some \$220,000 for disadvantaged women and children and has been described by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Jose Ramos-Horta as "a bridge of solidarity and compassion that connects us as fellow human beings." And to think, it all started because a group of four women, including ex-national netball player and Channel NewsAsia journalist Tingjun Zhang, wanted nothing more than to have fun riding their bicycles. All had signed up for the 450km Tour de Timor, and in meeting for the first time, realised they had "a shared passion for adventure and people," says Zhang. "We wondered if it was enough for us to go [to Timor Leste], and simply ride our bikes and take pictures when the people there have nothing. It seemed very selfish. So we thought let's see what we can do." Using the race as a platform, they ended up raising funds and awareness for Dili-based malnutrition rehabilitation centre Hiam Health. "When we returned, there were friends who said 'Where is your next adventure, can we be part of it?' And we thought, if people are keen to use adventure as a platform to give back, then why not?" says Zhang. Since the formalisation of TCRP as a registered non-profit organisation, the quartet and their fellow adventure seekers (or catalysts, as participants are called) have run marathons, climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, biked over rough terrain and even water-tubed down snake-infested rapids all in an effort to raise funds and awareness for adopted charities and causes. "We start first from the cause, then we work back to the adventure. This year, for example, we found that a lot of people had interest in human trafficking, so we decided to build on that. From there we chose the country and the adventure," says Zhang. In December, they take the fight against human trafficking with them to Siem Reap, where they will run the Angkor Wat Half Marathon in support of Salai Bai, a hotel and restaurant school that provides free training to impoverished Cambodians. For one catalyst, the Angkor race will mark his third trip with TCRP. "Why we're getting repeat 'customers' is because it's fun to train together and meet people. By the time you go on the trip you've not only bonded but gained a better understanding of the cause. It's about empowering all those who come with us to be catalysts of change," says Zhang.

