

Publication: MSN Online

Date: 20 June 2019

Headline: These S'porean Student-Entrepreneurs Are Proving It's Never Too Early To Start Up

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© Provided by Vulcan Post student entrepreneur singapore startup founder business owner

Singaporeans today are better equipped and more motivated than ever to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams, especially with many young people longing to reject the corporate path and hoping to do something they get more satisfaction out of.

But taking the plunge is also a huge, scary step, and this causes many people to end up waiting indefinitely for 'the right time'.

Still, even though entrepreneurship comes with many challenges, some startup founders prove that they don't hesitate in the face of uncertainty.

Here are some entrepreneurs behind 8 startups in Singapore, who've already set their gears in motion even before they're out of school.

1. Alexander Lim and Sean Lam, Cudy

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© Provided by Vulcan Post Image Credit: Singapore Management University

Alexander and Sean are undergraduates at Singapore Management University (SMU), but they're also running a startup to help young Singaporeans improve their studies at the same time.

Almost every parent in Singapore sends their children to tuition—that's nothing new.

But they noticed that not all families can afford the rising fees from tuition centres, which contributes to unequal learning opportunities for students from different economic backgrounds.

At the moment, Alexander has taken a pause on his own studies to focus on their online tuition platform Cudy, where they hope to "democratise education".

The pair has hired over 500 freelance tutors (and counting) to livestream tuition classes online, and recently raised funding to upgrade their services.

2. Julian Lim and Uzen Tan, Nineteen95

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© Provided by Vulcan Post Image Credit: Nineteen95

23-year-olds Julian and Uzen are currently attending different universities, but their love for coffee bonds them together.

In an interview with Vulcan Post, the childhood friends shared that they pumped in \$8,000 to form Nineteen95, a mobile coffee bar that travels to events across Singapore, brewing fresh cuppas for customers on the spot.

Although Uzen's parents were initially concerned that he should get a "proper job" after graduation, it only spurred them on to prove their business can really make it.

After debuting at a friend's baby shower, it wasn't long before the duo went on to serve at large scale events for clients like Newstead, Carousell, and Michael Kors.

Not resting on their laurels, Julian and Uzen raised their balancing act between school and business to the next level, when they created a second brand, FrothTea, to cater to the bubble tea lovers!

3. Earnest Lim and Fuxing Loh, Munch

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© Provided by Vulcan Post Image Credit: Munch

“What to eat ah?” is an oft-repeated question that Singaporeans exchange with one another.

SMU undergrads Earnest and Fuxing, both 24-years-old, decided to develop an app that uses artificial intelligence to solve this quintessential Singaporean problem.

They launched Munch in January this year, a platform that learns users’ personal preferences and delivers weekly curations of food suggestions made just for them.

To them, being in school while they started up wasn’t a bad thing.

In fact, it helped them out greatly as they managed to get a \$10,000 grant and receive guidance to build Munch under SMU’s incubator programme.

4. Kyle Malinda-White and Cally Cheung, Prout

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© Provided by Vulcan Post Image Credit: Prout

Kyle and Cally are both in their final years at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), but it hasn't slowed them down from creating a business they believe in.

As proud members of the LGBTQ+ community together with their co-founder Wakka Kong, they started up Prout to build a safe and inclusive social app.

When we spoke to the student-entrepreneurs, they shared that they aspire to provide a better avenue for queer Singaporeans to find friendship and support, moving away from the unhealthy 'hookup culture' that apps like Grindr promote.

Even before forming Prout, Kyle had been bitten by the entrepreneurial bug a long time ago and started the digital youth publication Popspoken when he was in polytechnic.

He and Cally are still managing it today along with their new venture!

5. Mandy Chan, BOW

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© Provided by Vulcan Post Image Credit: Digital Senior

Mandy was only 19 when she took a gap year after Junior College to create BOW, her own line of functional travel bags together with co-founder CK Koh.

Back in 2017, she shared how they survived an extremely tumultuous 12 months of R&D, disappointing trips to factories, drying up their savings, receiving negative feedback, and nearly throwing in the towel.

At the end of it, their efforts paid off in an extraordinary turn of events when their first product, Quiver, was fully funded on Kickstarter within just 3 days.

With her gap year fulfilled, Mandy enrolled into SMU, where she's currently studying while she continues to manage BOW.

6. Vivian Ong, Uncle Jimmy's

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© Provided by Vulcan Post Image Credit: Uncle Jimmy's

24-year-old Vivian Ong is half of the pair behind Uncle Jimmy's, a snack brand that celebrates homely, familiar Peranakan flavours.

Together with her co-founder and boyfriend Jonathan Goh, they make a quirky couple on a mission to honour Jonathan's late uncle (Jimmy) who served up amazing family meals at every gathering.

Instead of making potato chips or following the trends with fish skin crisps, they stick to traditional homemade tapioca chips to stay true to local tastes.

While Vivian currently studies at NTU, she juggles her time with the countless trial-and-errors they conduct to recreate flavours like laksa, hae bee hiam and gula melaka.

As just a small 2-man operation, they were surprised at the response when they sold 200 packets in 2 days once they launched!

7. Vera Sun, Janessa Sim and Moh Moh San, KpopKart

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Provided by Vulcan Post Image Credit: KpopKart

The Korean wave has hit global fans hard. While there are vast communities who spend lots of time and energy adoring their favourite idols, these three SMU students went further and turned their passion for K-pop into a business.

Founders of KpopKart Vera, Janessa and Moh Moh joined a hackathon in 2018, where they pitched their idea for a K-pop marketplace.

Back then, they got slammed down by judges who didn't believe it was something needed.

But being in the scene themselves, they knew its problems, like the lack of regulation and the common scam risks that people encounter when buying fan-made merchandise.

As they built up credibility, they later won the grand prize at UNICON's 2019 hackathon, and now sell products to over 20 countries.

8. Rafael Soh, Robert Xiu, Chai Jiacheng, Ng Mun Hin and Heng Teng Yi, Bridge

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The youngest ones on the list, Rafael, Robert, Jiacheng, Mun Hin and Teng Yi are students at Raffles Institution, and already co-founders of finance management app, Bridge.

Only between 15 to 16-years-old, it's an impressive feat that they've constructed a mobile payment app to serve the peers of their own age group.

Noticing how many students were often busting their budgets, they want to give them more control over their spending by easily tracking their pocket money.

The young team doesn't shy away from taking on different aspects of the startup, from programming and UX/UI, to business development, reaching out to get parents, schools and merchants on board.

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These student-entrepreneurs are showing us what it means that it's never too early, or you're never too young to pursue your dreams.

And just like them, there are many more inspiring Singaporeans who make us proud.

If you know any other student-entrepreneurs who deserve to be recognised for their incredible drive, tag them in the comments or share them with us on our Facebook page!

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