

WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE

WEN KEN GROUP'S ULTIMATE GOAL, SAYS ITS MANAGING DIRECTOR **FU SIANG JEEN** (ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES '97), IS TO ADD VALUE TO SOCIETY. BY WANDA TAN



“INHERITED MORE THAN THE FAMILY BUSINESS from my father, and his father before him. They also passed down

the importance of giving back to society, and of treating others the way you yourself want to be treated. Indeed, Wen Ken's core values of 'Love and Gratitude' have been a guiding principle for the company since my grandfather and his friends founded it in 1937.

As a child, I used to visit my dad at his office and spent time there during the school holidays. Seeing how he treated his business partners like friends and how he conducted business affairs with integrity left a deep and lasting impression on me. He even lent money to acquaintances so they could pay for their children's studies.

My father wasn't the only generous person in the family, either. My grandmother once helped to organise a food drive for earthquake victims in China even though she had already migrated to Singapore and was not very well-off at the time. Over the years, my family has also financially supported a school in our ancestral hometown in Fujian Province, China and we go back every year to visit it.

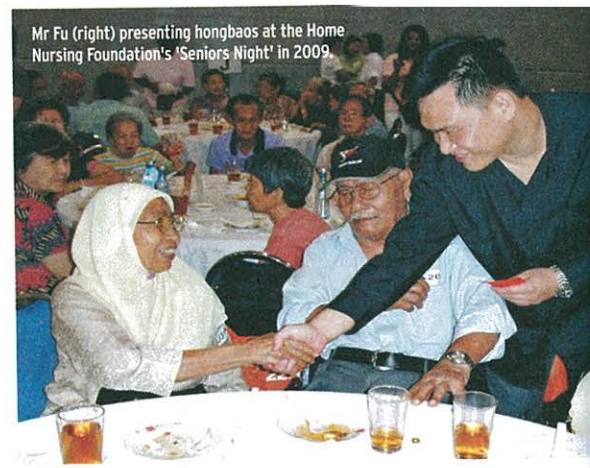
My first formal experience of community service was during my National Service when I gave tuition for free to children from poor families. The experience was humbling and enlightening. It made me realise what less-fortunate kids have to go through and how blessed and privileged I was. It was also very rewarding to contribute to another person's life. On my way home after each session, I always

felt a great sense of fulfilment and satisfaction that surpassed my other accomplishments.

In my mid-20s, not long after joining Wen Ken in 1997 as a Business Development Executive, I served as a volunteer at a weekend camp for underprivileged kids. As much as I enjoyed my job, I felt that something was missing – that there had to be more to life than work. This is a belief I have continued to uphold since becoming Managing Director in 2010, following my dad's passing.

On the business side, my current priority is to leverage our Three Legs Brand and branch out from our core Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) products into new health-related products such as our latest line of over-the-counter health supplements. This will enable us to better look after consumers' general well-being. I am also deeply passionate about

interested in Asian philosophers like Confucius. His emphasis on self-cultivation – that you have to improve yourself first before you can take care of your family and the community – particularly resonated with me.



Mr Fu (right) presenting hongbaos at the Home Nursing Foundation's 'Seniors Night' in 2009.

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FU SIANG JEEN (ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES '97)

inculcating 'Love and Gratitude' – remembering and appreciating the help and support that has been given to you, and giving back in whatever way you can – into our corporate culture.

TRUST AND STRONG BONDS

While at NUS, I pursued a Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in Philosophy and Psychology. I was

For corporate social responsibility (CSR) to be sustainable in the long run, 'Love and Gratitude' must be practised within the company first – and that means being kind to our staff. Otherwise, any initiative to help the community would be hollow or hypocritical. At Wen Ken, we make sure all 200 staff members across Singapore and Malaysia (where our



Mr Fu (middle) with Wen Ken managers at the 2009 'Hair for Hope' event.

factory is located) are well taken care of. This has resulted in relationships built on trust and strong bonds, which in turn have helped us to weather various crises.

I also took a module on Industrial and Organisational Psychology during my undergraduate years. It gave me better insight into how interpersonal relationships at the workplace can greatly impact the success or failure of a business. To best motivate employees, it is also

critical to know what matters most to them. More often than not, the issue goes much deeper than money – namely, to fulfil the basic human need for appreciation, trust and respect, whatever one's station in life, by giving back to society.

In 2007, after years of sponsoring medical seminars and educational activities in schools, a HR manager and I decided to ramp up our CSR efforts. These included visits to old folks' homes, cash donations to the Home Nursing Foundation and a collaboration with a local radio station in which our staff engaged members of the public to pledge volunteer hours for a number of charities. We – myself included – also shaved our heads at the annual *Hair for Hope* event to raise funds for the Children's Cancer Foundation.

To further encourage employee volunteerism, we now have a bottom-up rather than top-down approach to CSR. A few years ago, we selected several staff members

Fu Siang Jeen, 42, is a third-generation member from one of four founding families of the Wen Ken Group. Famous for its flagship Three Legs Cooling Water, the company develops, manufactures and markets a range of TCM and health products across Southeast Asia. At *The Entrepreneur of the Year Award (EYA) 2011*, co-organised by the Rotary Club of Singapore and the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, Mr Fu was presented the EYA for Social Contribution for his active involvement in CSR.

to organise our CSR initiatives based on causes close to their heart, with management providing the necessary moral, financial and logistical support. For example, a company-wide fundraising campaign was held for victims of the April 2015 Nepal earthquake.

'Love and Gratitude' is, I believe, fundamental to Wen Ken's survival. CSR activities unite staff members across different departments, promoting a sense of belonging and renewing their commitment to the company. Indeed, I've noticed a positive correlation between employees' passion for giving and their work attitude.

It would be very sad (if not fatal) if we were to lose sight of our core values. Wen Ken would lose its 'soul' as it were, and it would only be a matter of time before its decline. Hence, when grooming professionals to join our management ranks, it is not just their entrepreneurial aptitude that counts – their values must also align with ours. ■