

# DUTCHCHAM MAGAZINE

2020 – Issue 5

**Volume 207**

**Start-ups & Entrepreneurs**

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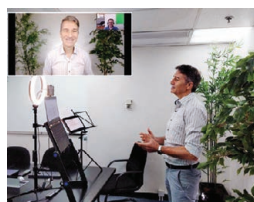




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## The next generation: Start-ups and Entrepreneurs



Amidst the COVID-19 turmoil and the geopolitical drama in which Hong Kong currently takes centre stage, we sometimes forget that Hong Kong is the place to be for business. But it really is, and will remain to be for some time to come!

Hong Kong is the premier commercial hub in Asia, if not the world, with unparalleled access to business partners, investors, suppliers, customers, employees and service providers in and from every corner of the globe. The effective mix of free trade, low tax, stable government, rule of law and close proximity to some of the fastest growing economies in the world has not just served large corporates, investment funds and banks well, it has also fostered a world-class start-up ecosystem. With an ever-increasing number of co-working spaces, incubators and accelerators, Hong Kong is clearly also the place to be for the next generation of entrepreneurs. Not even Donald Trump is going to be able to change that.

Unsurprisingly, the Hong Kong business community counts hundreds of innovative Dutch entrepreneurs with business ventures in a wide variety of industries and products ranging from supply chain solutions to payment systems and from sustainable consumer goods to algorithmic trading software. In this issue of our Magazine, we proudly shine a light on a number of these entrepreneurs.

Our Lead Story covers three Dutch entrepreneurs who recently set up their businesses, despite the challenging circumstances. They got in touch with each other through referrals within the Dutch Chamber and are now working together.

The Interview with a Chief is with Thierry Lohest, Partner at Loyens & Loeff, itself a very entrepreneurial firm. Thierry sheds some light on the importance of having a tax-efficient business structure for start-ups and shares his thoughts on the way Artificial Intelligence can improve the legal sector.

Sharing experiences and learning from each other is what the Dutch Chamber is all about. Hopefully, this issue will inspire you to look past the current difficulties, and maybe even spot some new business opportunities!

Enjoy the read and I look forward to seeing you at one of our events, whether in person or on a screen!

Jan Willem Möller

# Law and tax go hand in hand

Due to travel restrictions, it is the first time in years that **Thierry Lohest, Partner at Loyens & Loeff** has been in one place for longer than a month. However, we were still able to reach him through a video call, and we held an interesting interview about the world of law and tax.

■ By Zuba Adham-Bos

## Please tell us a bit about yourself

I am originally from Belgium, but I moved to Luxembourg about fifteen years ago. Then, eight years ago, Loyens & Loeff decided to (re)open an office in Hong Kong. The firm started looking internally for people who would like to go and work in Hong Kong – I was one of them. Since then, I have been in charge of the Hong Kong office but have always kept a foot in Luxembourg too, travelling a lot between the two places.



We mostly serve Hong Kong and Chinese companies that invest in Europe. Either those that have been present in Europe for a long time or new entrants in the market. Our clients are a mix of large industrial well-known clients, but also new clients, especially Chinese companies that want to expand into Europe. The latter have always found the Netherlands a very attractive place to invest and to be the gateway to Europe.

I have remained a Luxembourg lawyer, practising Luxembourg law out of Hong Kong. So are my Dutch colleagues who practice Dutch law from Hong Kong. We are in Hong Kong to serve local clients and mainland clients when they have needs in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg or Switzerland. Those are what we call our home markets.

## Who are the clients you serve?

The reason for Loyens & Loeff being in Hong Kong but also being in other large financial centres like Tokyo or New York is to be close to our clients. We understand the way they do business because we live here. In Hong Kong or China, the way they do business is different than in Europe, so we are the bridge between markets.

***If you come from Hong Kong or China and invest in Europe, you realise that taxation can be very burdensome. Besides talking to lawyers, it is beneficial to speak with tax advisors from the very beginning. We provide both these services under the same roof.***

## Why is that?

It is a combination of elements. It is seen as a very stable and reliable place for doing business, and it has a favourable tax environment. Besides, it is a neutral gateway compared to some of the larger countries in the EU. The Dutch government has always been very proactive in telling the world that the Netherlands is the ideal place to start doing business in Europe. At some point, people have heard it so much that it becomes a reflex for them to think of the Netherlands as the natural choice to start doing business in Europe.

## What sets Loyens & Loeff apart from other law firms?

We originate from a merger between Loyens, which was a tax firm, and Loeff, which was purely a law firm. We offer the combined services of tax and law – clients like this combination a lot. When you do business, you need lawyers, but you also need tax advice. Tax is not really on the top of the agenda for Hong Kong companies because the tax rules here are simple and you pay little tax. In China, it is slightly different because the rules are very complicated, but at the end of the day, companies do not pay much tax either. If you come from Hong Kong or China and invest in Europe, you realise that taxation can be very burdensome. Besides talking to lawyers, it is beneficial to speak with tax advisors from the very beginning. We provide both these services under the same roof.



### What can a tax lawyer mean for entrepreneurs and start-ups?

Nobody wants to pay too much tax. Companies or businesspeople need to make sure that there is careful monitoring of tax affairs. First of all, to make sure that the law is complied with. Secondly, to make sure there is no leakage as we call it – that not too much tax is paid.

For start-ups, it is a bit different. When you have a client that launches a new business, you can structure its business in the most tax-efficient way right from the beginning, which is ideal. You can be proactive in preventing problems and you can prepare the ground for future investments.

Start-ups often rely on external funding by venture capitalists. These type of sponsors are usually concerned about tax, so when investing in a start-up, they want to make sure that the structure of the start-up will minimise tax leakage.

### What has changed in the industry for the last few years?

Ten years ago, there were very few private equity funds. There were wealthy individuals, but that was not really structured in funds or family offices. Since we started eight years ago, we have seen an increasing number of Chinese private equity funds and family offices with a lot of money, that want to invest in Asia of course, but they also want to invest in Europe. It is a new breed of investors who are incredibly professional and an emerging industry.

### How has the recent pandemic affected law firms?

We can look a little bit back to what has happened in the first six months of this year. The pandemic has had an effect but

not necessarily in terms of levels of business. Most firms had to change their practice because there are fewer mergers and acquisitions, for instance. But that was compensated by other types of work, like insolvency and company restructuring. Overall, law firms have not been affected too much in financial terms, but the type of work has changed and there are fewer deals.

***AI will have a significant impact in many industries, including the legal sector. A lot of the work lawyers do can be done by a machine. This revolution will unfold slowly; it will not happen in the next two or three years***

### Which trends do you expect to see in your industry in the next five years?

I think there are two trends to watch. The first applies to the service industry in general, not only law firms, which is working from home. Now that many firms have been working from home for several months, they have found out that their efficiency has not been affected much. I think from now on people will be allowed to work from home, either by law or by choice, at certain companies. This will also have a large impact on our need for office space.

Secondly is artificial intelligence (AI). AI will have a significant impact in many industries, including the legal sector. A lot of the work lawyers do can be done by a machine. This revolution will unfold slowly; it will not happen in the next two or three years. Right now, the percentage of work done by AI is somewhere around one or two per cent. But each year it will increase slowly until we are at a perfect balance.

This will free up much time for lawyers which they can then spend on getting to know their clients better. It would add value to the service we provide if we intimately learn the client's industry, the company, their history, what they have done and tried, what worked, what did not work, and so on. The best lawyers are the ones that know their clients inside and out. ■



Loyens & Loeff Headquarters in Rotterdam ©Ingenieursburo Linssen

# The next generation; influenced by the pandemic

We asked members their thoughts on the following statement: 'Many say that to survive and prosper through the current pandemic companies need to accelerate the rate of innovation and rapidly adopt new technology and ways of working.'

- a. Do you believe that start-ups and entrepreneurs are particularly well placed for this?**  
**b. Can you give an example of what your company has done on this front?**

■ Selected by Nerice Gietel

## Ester van Steekelenburg, Founder and Director at iDiscover and Urban Discovery

[www.i-discoverasia.com](http://www.i-discoverasia.com)

iDiscover is a Hong Kong-based social enterprise that empowers locals in cities across Asia to map, share and protect their culture and heritage before it is too late.

We offer online toolkits and a digital publishing platform for school teachers, university educators and community leaders, so they can map what matters in their neighbourhood.

- a. Yes, decisions are made quickly. What also helped is that we operate from a co-working space and work a lot with freelancers; this allowed us to reduce overhead costs quickly in the months we had to lie low.
- b. A typical workday for us would be to be out on the streets interviewing people, in community centres hosting a workshop or in the plane on our way to Yangon, Colombo, Jakarta or other faraway places to work with local NGOs. When the pandemic hit, all of this was put on hold and the way we work changed forever. We also had to cancel our fundraising events. We immediately started creating online toolkits to empower local community groups to run the mapping exercises independently and train a range of passionate young freelancers in various countries to become ambassadors of the iDiscover methodology. Taking ourselves out of the equation was always the plan, COVID-19 simply forced us to accelerate. Now we are looking for partners to upscale the operation.



## Sandra Wu, President & Chairperson of Association of Corporate Counsels Hong Kong

[www.hkcca.net](http://www.hkcca.net)

The Association of Corporate Counsels Hong Kong (ACC HK) was established in March 2003 as the pioneer association representing in-house lawyers in Hong Kong. The association was formed to provide a range of benefits and services for the Hong Kong in-house community, including continuing legal education, a platform for networking and the exchange of ideas, information and experiences.

- a. Since ACC HK is a not-for-profit association, we had to be resourceful, extremely nimble and agile. We pivoted to online webinars, interactive continuous professional learning, and seminars through Zoom meetings to ensure that we continue serving the needs of our members during times they need us the most. We are so proud that we launched our Asia Pacific Virtual conference during the height of the global pandemic.
- b. During what remains a global and generationally significant time, the importance of gathering and sharing past experiences and new ways of thinking was highlighted during our recent Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) Asia-Pacific Digital Meeting. Delegates at the event heard keynote presentations from regional in-house leaders including Joseph Chan, Chief Legal Officer, YumChina and Lam Chee Kin, Legal, Compliance & Secretariat, Managing Director DBS Bank. The ACC Digital Meeting attracted 300 delegates from 19 countries, the digital event encouraged delegates to reflect on the way business has changed, in legal departments, within organisations and across regions.



## Maarten van der Dussen, Managing Director of ProductIP BV in the Netherlands

[www.productip.com](http://www.productip.com)

ProductIP was founded in 2008; in 2009 offices in Hong Kong and Shenzhen were added. ProductIP is an international platform that enables companies within the supply chain to efficiently demonstrate to customers, authorities and end-users that their products meet applicable legislation and buying requirements.

Our web-based SaaS solution provides easy access to a complete list of applicable legal and company-specific requirements for non-food consumer goods. Already more than 18,000 users demonstrate that anybody can sell compliant consumer products at a competitive price - without hassle.

- a. Start-ups and entrepreneurs can switch much faster than traditional companies. As a small and agile company, we could swiftly adapt to the new situation. We have changed our marketing approach using communication technology and fast adding of new knowledge about products to help the market and authorities.
- b. At the start of the pandemic, we immediately changed two major items:
  - Our product and way of working (lots of personal contacts in network meetings) needed to switch instantaneously to online. This change required us to involve our customers/users to make them adapt to being online visitors, which was especially a challenge with German customers but we succeeded. Now, we have unprecedented visitor numbers for our weekly 'Compliance Tuesday' of over 50 companies in Europe and Asia!
  - We needed to revise the way we keep ourselves in the picture of retail, trade and authorities. Therefore, we started a campaign to actively engage in the technologies and support around COVID-19 related products. This proved to be a hit. On top, we decided to provide these services for free, which in the end brought us many new (paying) customers.



## Liesbeth van der Linden, Owner of GLTD Ltd.

[www.gltd.co](http://www.gltd.co)

As a Certified Leadership Coach, I work with managers and executives on maximising leadership potential and enhancing personal effectiveness.

- a. Yes, because start-ups and entrepreneurs have qualities that make a difference now and places them well in a market that requires innovation and responsiveness:

### HUNGER

Many entrepreneurs are driven by something they are really passionate about. They are often a bit rebellious, ignore what others say and it is that hunger, that fearlessness that makes them take action, that makes them want to win and create their future the way they see it, in contrast to larger organisations that are often forced to respond to changing market circumstances.

### CREATIVE MINDSET

Entrepreneurs often can think out of the box and develop a strong vision around something and are keenly focused and dedicated to making that vision come to life. They constantly make decisions in complex situations and often operate without full knowledge of the factors that can impact their business. Moreover, most start-ups are founded with scarce resources, high uncertainty and ambiguity and it is precisely this creative mindset that makes them always see opportunities in the midst of it.

### CONNECTION

An entrepreneur may be the originator of the idea, but almost immediately (s)he must connect with others to secure resources and engage with potential customers and suppliers. They position themselves close to the end-user which allows them to work quickly: they develop a framework, put a rough version out, to receive an almost immediate response through social media, allowing them to optimise their products in hours or days.

- b. As a leadership coach, I coach, facilitate workshops, train and speak at events. During the pandemic, I reached out to clients and asked them what they needed most, what their challenges were and what kind of support would be helpful. The content changed to more relevant topics: Resilient Leadership, Inventiveness, Creativity as well as 1:1 coaching to support clients through the crisis. Staying connected with clients, listening to what they need most right now and being flexible in my offers has created the most opportunities. ■

# The lean communications churn

Every day thousands of new companies are founded, but numbers show an estimated 90 per cent of start-ups fail in the long run. While a few start-ups stumble upon gold with a unique offering, most start-ups will enter a crowded playfield. Being able to tell exactly what you do in simple terms, but not your vision makes all the difference.

## Simplify

All start-ups need to be able to tell their story. While it can be easy to explain you are the 'Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn for XYZ', it takes away from your brand. Which unicorn or successful start-up do you know that describes itself that way? Indeed, what is most important for any start-up is to be able to explain the what, who, and why in simple terms. Just like Grab, Ant Financial and many others in Asia, these start-ups had to find their voice and place in the market by identifying the key thing they do and build their stories around just that.



## Media

It can be tempting to focus on advertising or media relations as a strategy to stand out from other start-ups. It can build a company when done well and at the right time, but it can also break a company. Suppose the entrepreneur is advertising their product as the solution to a problem, but the product is still in development. In that case, media cannot test the product, consumers cannot try it and ultimately, the start-up may sizzle out.

When the time is right, though, media coverage can help build public recognition, trust and even attract the attention of investors. For it to be successful, a clear purpose, goal(s) and key message(s) are needed. If the goal is to raise awareness with investors, trade media should be the target. While if the

goal is to go to the market and build one's consumer base, the entrepreneur wants to pitch the publications which their target audience reads. But becoming a successful start-up does not necessarily hinge on being able to score media coverage.

## Building a brand

Whatever the entrepreneur decides to do, remaining true to their brand identity is essential.

While Uber's promotions are by no means the only reason for its success, they do strike a chord with its target customers and land the brand some earned media. On-demand hot air balloon and boat rides in China, 15-minute puppy cuddles in select US cities, on-demand wine tours in Chile and the UberSloop in Amsterdam, are just a few of the examples of how it drew eyeballs. What made it so successful was that it remained close to its core offering of travel plus connecting people with activities or services they might want when travelling. Likewise, Airbnb continues to grab headlines with its occasional unique stays, including its latest promotion of staying in the last remaining Blockbuster.

Other companies focus on content and SEO to hit the message home. In Hong Kong, Klook has grown to become one of the more well-known start-ups the city has. One way it grew is through its online trendjacking, the use of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and providing informative and educational content.

What sets these successful start-ups apart is that they focus on the one thing they offer and are good at and continuously optimize their offerings and services to get better while staying true to their chosen identity. ■



■ By Annemarelle van Schayik, Client Management Director, East Asia at Telum Media  
[www.telummedia.com](http://www.telummedia.com)



# Start-ups are stupid

They burn cash like crazy and do not create real value; therefore, start-ups are stupid. This is what a former Hong Kong resident and fellow Dutchman in enterprise software sales told me.

**H**e was not wrong; we indeed burnt quite some zeros. And now while many have lost out, closed down and struggle, a new generation of entrepreneurs rises who takes inspiration from how we live our personal lives.

There is no doubt, surviving has been exceptionally challenging lately. Like many others, we had to reduce salaries, cut travel and expenses, and cash became our most precious commodity. When we opened our funding early this year, we inadvertently chose the worst time in decades. With sky-high uncertainty, everybody just sat on their hands, looking at each other on what to do next. But we did not have the freedom to be distracted and wait around. We, like many others, turned our focus to survival and longevity. And the business strategy we adopted followed closely what we as individuals tend to do in our own lives. Get in more money, reduce our expenses and simplify everything.

Let's call the people behind this new generation of ambitious start-ups the 'entrepreneurs 2.0'. As they are faced with new risks and uncertainty, they see opportunity. The most resilient players out there have implemented a laser focus with a survive-or-die mentality - something I am a big fan of.



Although obvious, too few of us focussed on their revenue in the last years. Now more than ever, cash is king and funding is challenging. So you better generate your own stash. We no longer have the luxury of tinkering into perpetuity and hoping there is a magical parabolic explosion in clients and revenue. Our saving grace has been our servicing business besides our software business. It is essential as a testing ground to validate our software and to provide insights on how to sell our product. But more importantly, it gives us annuity income.

It helped us to diversify our income sources from both services and software sales. Taking inspiration from our personal lives, businesses should diversify their sources of income.

We have advanced so far to a point where everything is done already. Personally, I am out of new ideas that would be truly unique. But instead of chasing the most original, we have committed to do the simple stuff exceptionally well. How often in your own life have you been frustrated that things do not work or are too complicated? We crave for simplicity and great user experience. That is what sets a business apart nowadays. If you can make a recurring annoyance just a tad less frustrating, you put a smile on your customer's face.

***How often in your own life have you been frustrated that things do not work or are too complicated? We crave for simplicity and great user experience. That is what sets a business apart nowadays.***

All the successful businesses that have still been growing do the simple things exceptionally well. With an abundance of choice, only a few manage to significantly increase our utility by being less. Zoom would be the perfect example of this.

The new generation of entrepreneurs will build companies that mimic the values we strive to achieve in our personal lives. Peace of mind comes from maximising our income while reducing our expenses. We love to diversify our income channels, and we want things to be simple but with a high quality of life. A new generation, yet oddly familiar. ■



■ By Paul du Long, CTO at Bluemeg  
[www.bluemeg.com](http://www.bluemeg.com)

# Postmortem - Start-up lessons learned

Of all new ventures, 95% fails. This number suggests that whilst there are things we can find out about the secret behind the success of the five percent, there is infinitely more that we can learn from the failure of the majority.

■ By Nerice Gietel

**W**e interviewed Jeffrey Broer, who amongst other things, is the Founder of the Postmortem – Start-up Lessons Learned Conference, where entrepreneurs share their personal lessons learned from start-ups.

## What is the (personal) story behind you organising this conference?

I started my entrepreneurship journey straight out of university. Some of my efforts ended up in successes, but most of them in nothing. At one point, I got an invite to an event where a Silicon Valley founder was coming to Hong Kong to speak about how he raised US\$ 5 million in funding (to expand into Asia). This was a paid event and the talk was so weak. His story of how he raised the money did not apply to Hong Kong at all and not in tune with the local audience, besides vanity and glorifying start-up life. At that point, I decided I should organise something to show the less glamorous side of entrepreneurship.

I held the full-day conference in 2014 and 2015. The next one is due to take place on November 21st, 2020. In the meantime, we have also organised multiple evening events called Start-up Lessons Learned Salons, for instance as an official fringe event to the RISE conference in 2019.

## Who is the conference for?

Everyone who is interested in start-ups. We attract everyone from entrepreneurs, lawyers, mentors, venture capitalists (VCs) to people who have no direct relationship with start-ups in their day-to-day life and work, but who have an interest in entrepreneurship.

## What can people expect from the conference?

The conference is a storytelling event and not a pitching or product presentation event. Attendees can expect to hear first-hand accounts of founders, investors, and more, about who they are, how they found themselves in the situation that they are or were in, and what they learned from it. The speakers will share their personal stories and sometimes confessions about something that went wrong.



## What are some of the most memorable stories that have been shared on stage?

"I cheated on you because you were always working on your start-up", said one of the speaker's girlfriend. Whilst this story seems very personal and might have a daytime talk show quality to it, it highlighted one of the harsh realities of being a founder. Namely, the process of bringing your idea into reality, raising money, and so forth is incredibly demanding. It may involve sacrifices made in all areas of life.

Another story that comes to mind was of a founder whose business partner completely emptied their bank account - resulting in the founder having to live for eight months without gas and electricity in London. The lesson here was to put checks and balances in place once you start talking about real money. Also, one of the biggest mistakes co-founders can make is not putting the details of the co-operation in writing. It can even be an email with: 'We discussed XYZ...' You are still friends when all goes well, but as soon as there is some headwind, you find out what really motivates people. ■

*As a spin-off from the conference, Jeffrey Broer also has a popular podcast called Mea Culpa Lessons Learned, with interesting guests: [www.mcp.fm](http://www.mcp.fm)*

# Speed is of essence

“I feel the need, the need for speed” – Tom Cruise, Top Gun

**R**ecently, McKinsey published an article called Ready, set, go: Reinventing the organisation for speed in the post-COVID-19 era. Trends of the next ten years are being compressed into ten months because of COVID-19. We must keep up.

Fortunately, I work in a small entrepreneurial organisation with a flat structure. My company, Black Isle Global, specialises in people development, organisational strategy, and leadership communication. Our slogan is Better People, Better Business, Better World. I believe those six words neatly tell our entire company story.

We have been able to pivot successfully during the pandemic and not only managed to adapt our material for online delivery, but we also added content. We unleashed speed. We decided to rethink our ways of working, reimagine our structure and reshape our talent.

## Rethink ways of working

We managed to speed up and delegate decision-making. We hold fewer meetings and keep them small. The use of video conferencing technology has been fantastic to facilitate this. It is easier to get together and nobody wants to sit in a video call too long.



We stepped up execution excellence. One of our clients asked for a coaching module around resilience. We produced client-specific content within 24 hours, which amazed the client. We did not get to do the job, but the HR department from the organisation loved us for it. They appreciated our responsiveness and asked us for many more modules we did get to deliver.

We cultivate extraordinary partnerships. Because of our responsiveness, we have become trusted advisors to our clients. Recently, we were asked to provide conflict resolution

in Korean. We can do it in many languages but not in Korean. However, our network can, so we successfully linked our clients with Korean coaches.

## Reimagine structure

We flattened our own curve and dropped hierarchy. Unfortunately, not everyone agreed (the CEO subsequently left), but we are now a partnership with five equal partners. This proved to be the right structure, especially in April when we all took a one-off pay-cut to weather the storm.

We unleashed nimble, empowered teams. We work together successfully in small teams of 2-3 people to move things quickly. Signal became a valuable tool to do this: we create small subgroups that share relevant content. Once a week we all come together and then we cross-fertilise. It works socially and it works professionally.

We made hybrid work, work. We invested in great IT and our main meeting room now looks like a full-fledged studio, to facilitate online course delivery. Certain virtual conferencing software proved too clunky, so we divested it. We decided to meet our clients where they wanted us to meet, be it on WebEx, Teams, Zoom or Hangouts.

## Reshape talent

We are fielding tomorrow's leaders today. In the past six months, we have learned more about the people we work with than in the past six years. Some have proved to be incredibly adaptable to the crisis environment.

We have learned how to learn. We have been agile and adopted a 'can-do' attitude towards anything that has been thrown our way. This mindset shift has made us thrive.

We managed to rethink the role of CEOs and leaders. From command and control, our senior staff have become coaches. This role reversal from telling people what to do, to teaching people what to do has suited all of us, especially newcomers who benefit from a wealth of knowledge and history.

Black Isle Global is thriving after facing the COVID-19 storm head-on. Not only that; we are speeding up. Follow the steps above and you can unleash speed for your company too. ■



■ By Case Everaert, Partner at Black Isle Global  
[www.blackisleglobal.com](http://www.blackisleglobal.com)



# The expert-novice dilemma of founders and entrepreneurs

As a founder or entrepreneur, what would you do if, by chance, an employee discovered that more than two-thirds of your clients were unhappy with your product and services?

**W**ould you (a) take this on board in future product/service design and development or (b) formulate excuses and justifications to completely disregard this information, because it is coming from someone who is 'merely' an employee and you know better?

A famous Harvard Business Review article by Chris Argyris said that 'because many professionals are almost always successful at what they do, they rarely experience failure. And because they have rarely failed, they have never learned how to learn from failure'. With almost ninety percent of start-ups failing within the first five years, one could assume that founders are better geared to deal with failure. However, founders, such as myself, can often face contradictory demands on how they should present themselves. I believe that this can lead to founders missing opportunities to learn.

Being the founder of a new venture implies - even for experienced founders - doing something new or different. It requires founders to acquire new knowledge about the market, potential customers, the competition, the product, new technology, and more. To successfully achieve this knowledge, founders may need to 'unlearn'. This means letting go of preconceived ideas, ways of doing things, and having the openness and eagerness to learn as a complete novice.

At the same time, founders may need to convince various stakeholders of their technical or business expertise, leadership skills, and business acumen.

I believe that it is in this tug-of-war that some may struggle to use all the learning from opportunities that present themselves. This is because some may get stuck in one of the two modes referred to above. Some may feel that they constantly have to present themselves as competent, visionary leaders of a potential multimillion-dollar venture that can convince the toughest venture capitalists (VCs) to part with their money. In doing this, founders may see critique by anyone - other than that of official advisors, mentors, and VCs - as a threat to self-perception and credibility. Even if this means remaining in constant 'fake it till we make it-mode'.

On the other hand, some may be crippled by the self-doubt that can creep in through constantly struggling to overcome the feelings of vulnerability and discomfort which come with learning new skills. Fear of failure may lead to procrastination and even complete paralysis.



The good news is that founders can develop the skills and agility to quickly move between these competing roles of expert and novice. Part of this is recognizing when your actions are based on an emotional, instinctive response of self-preservation. A founder who convinces themselves that it is rational to dismiss critique from subordinates, might discover that they are simply trying to avoid the embarrassment of 'not knowing it all'. And a founder who convinces themselves that it is perfectly rational not to launch a product or service until it is perfect, may realize that they are actually avoiding precisely the same vulnerability.

Raising self-awareness is the first step to understanding the drivers behind your own actions and behaviours in different circumstances, and reconciling the competing roles of expert and novice. One way of achieving this is to work with a certified coach who can help to bring shifts in perspectives that can positively influence founders' actions and behaviours. ■



■ By Nerice Gietel, Founder and Certified Coach  
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# Let's bloom together

One of the goals of the Dutch Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong is to facilitate business in Hong Kong. Through referrals in the Dutch community, three new entrepreneurs, **Kathelijn de Beer**, **Madelon van de Ven** and **Evan Horsman**, found each other and are now working together.

■ Interview by Zuba Adham-Bos, Photography by Rinske Kuiper, GM at SofaSale HK

**Madelon van de Ven** arrived in Hong Kong nine months ago. One of her first impressions was how green the city is, especially compared to Shanghai, where she lived before. "However, I noticed that the greenery was only outdoors. Hong Kong has a low score on well-being, so my mission is to improve citizens' well-being by bringing awareness about the positive effects of being surrounded by health beneficial plants indoors." In June, she set up **PLNTY**, a business focusing on both residential spaces with a curated online plant shop as well as commercial spaces. PLNTY offers monthly plant subscriptions which also includes bi-weekly plant care for offices, retailers and restaurants.

**Kathelijn de Beer** and her husband moved to Hong Kong about a year and a half ago. "The idea to become an entrepreneur was always present when I was in the Netherlands, but I felt that something was holding me back. Here in Hong Kong, I suddenly had carte blanche." Kathelijn has a background in e-commerce and marketing. This background and her love for flowers seemed like the ideal e-commerce concept. Inspired by a Dutch company that she used to buy flowers from, she conducted market research that showed there was room for

her business idea to bloom. She started **Sprouts & Sparkles**, a web shop that offers unconventional and stylish bouquets made with fresh seasonal Dutch flowers at competitive prices. With the subscription you can get Dutch flowers regularly or you can do a single purchase to flower up your home (office).

**Evan Horsman** has been in Hong Kong on and off since 2012. He has always worked in the food & beverage and hospitality industry, and lived and worked in several European countries before coming to Hong Kong. His Hong Kong journey started at Aqua, a renowned restaurant in Tsim Sha Tsui. Within a few months, he got an offer to work at The Peninsula. Hospitality is Evan's passion, so when he received an exciting offer from a restaurant in Beijing, he jumped at the opportunity. However, it was hard to combine the job with seeing his partner, who was still in Hong Kong. In July 2018, he moved back to Hong Kong and from that moment the idea to become an entrepreneur stayed in the back of his head. Following a move to Stanley, he noticed there was room for a place with wine and great cheeses. The idea to start his own wine room, **Bubbles & Wines**, was born.



### Who are your ideal clients?

Although she has an ideal client in mind, ultimately anyone could be Madelon's client. They range from individual consumers to art galleries and law firms. Her ambitious goal is to make every room in Hong Kong green as that benefits each person and every space.

Kathelijin focuses on consumers of all nationalities in Hong Kong. As her website is English, she has noticed that her clients are mostly international. However, during her 'Save The Tulips' action, her flowers reached deep into the New Territories as Hong Kong people were buying them for their parents too.

Evan: "My focus is mainly on residents of Stanley and Tai Tam to build up a network of regular customers. But I target everyone that is looking for a good glass of wine, nice cheese and charcuterie, and excellent hospitality in a relaxed living room-style ambience."

### How do you reach your clients?

For all three entrepreneurs, networking, referrals and social media are essential parts of their business development.

Madelon: "I offer my plant subscriptions usually to companies and retailers that I find via my network. I work with construction companies and interior designers so I can get connected to their networks as well. This year my goal is to become the number one service provider for architects and project developers, where I will become their plant expert and take care of biophilic design of the spaces they develop."

In the weeks prior to the opening of his restaurant, Evan started promoting Bubbles & Wines. Word of mouth is one way, but social media is also incredibly important to him. When he created his Facebook page, he had 75 followers within two days.

Kathelijin has experienced that Hong Kong is an excellent breeding ground for entrepreneurship. People are open and focused on networking, many are happy to make connections and refer you to others, also on social media.

They each noticed the power of social media in Hong Kong. "I am still getting sales from a Facebook post from four weeks ago", says Madelon. Evan has documented the road to his restaurant's opening on social media, to get customers involved from the beginning, and Kathelijin often gets referred to in Facebook groups.

### How has COVID-19 affected your business?

Kathelijin set up her company a month before COVID-19 hit Hong Kong, while Madelon and Evan started during the pandemic. Many entrepreneurs have been struggling during this time. Naturally, we were curious about their experiences during this challenging time.

For Kathelijin's Sprouts & Sparkles, the pandemic has given her a couple of opportunities that otherwise might not have happened. The global flower export market took a hard hit because of COVID-19 and many flowers had to be destroyed. Kathelijin set up a 'Save-the-Tulips' action: she offered tulips for an attractive price in Hong Kong. This action helped her reach a large audience. She was then approached by the Dutch Consulate in Hong Kong to offer tulips to hospital personnel in Hong Kong. "This was a project in the background, which did not necessarily create brand awareness, but helped me acquire experience and positive cooperation in the Dutch community. Also, many people are spending much time at home; they are looking for ways to brighten up their space and opt for flowers. The largest downside is the decreased number of flights and increased airfreight costs."

***Hong Kong is an excellent breeding ground for entrepreneurship. People are open and focused on networking, many are happy to make connections and refer you to others, also on social media.***

Evan: "Early on I had my doubts, but then I thought if I don't go for it now, nothing will happen after. Luckily, rental prices have dropped and I was able to arrange a good agreement. Of course, it is still quite a risk and I have been more cautious with my budgeting. But I also believe that people are looking for an escape as soon as the government measures get more relaxed. People won't be travelling much or not at all this year – the wine room will be a new discovery and an escape from the ordinary."

Madelon had to make a choice for herself; looking for a job with an employer or make her entrepreneurial dream a reality. With her extensive network and knowledge in the horticulture/plant industry, she decided to set up PLNTY and has been ambitious and working hard ever since. The coronavirus pandemic has made people more aware of their health and well-being, which ties in perfectly with PLNTY's mission.





Kathelijne de Beer (left), Evan Horsman and Madelon van de Ven.

### How did you start your cooperation?

It started with the furniture for Bubbles & Wines. Evan got in touch with (board) member Rinske Kuiper, General Manager at SofaSale HK, who has custom made most of the furniture for the wine room. As Evan mentioned, he was also looking for plants, Rinske referred him to Madelon, who then introduced Kathelijne as well, to provide fresh flowers for the wine room.

Kathelijne and Madelon had been introduced to each other on the hockey field earlier this year. Since they are in a similar industry, they have been cooperating a lot and they offer each other's services at companies they are working with.

Madelon: "For Evan, it is a good concept that he can work with both of us. I'll be visiting Bubbles & Wines bi-weekly to take care of the plants. At the same time, I can deliver new bouquets from Kathelijne, which will save time and costs for all of us."

### Do you have tips for new entrepreneurs?

The learning curve is steep for starting entrepreneurs and tips are often welcome. The trio shares their tips.

Madelon: "You should be prepared and have a strategy. When you are goal oriented, you will achieve more. I have just been

***Kathelijne set up her company a month before COVID-19 hit Hong Kong, while Madelon and Evan started during the pandemic. Many entrepreneurs have been struggling during this time. Naturally, we were curious about their experiences during this challenging time.***

accepted into the accelerator program of Silicon Valley's Founder Institute, a program that focusses on all aspects of entrepreneurship. You should have enough flexibility in your plans to pivot if necessary and evaluate what works well and what doesn't."

Kathelijne: "Before I decided to start my own company, I was worried about all the potential pitfalls I would come across. But I went for it anyway. There will be hurdles, but you will find ways to overcome them along the way."

Evan kept it short and simple: "Just follow your dreams and make it happen!" ■



# GUIDE TO SETTING-UP A BUSINESS IN HONG KONG



2020

Including our list of useful service providers in Hong Kong  
[www.dutchchamber.hk/guide-setting-business](http://www.dutchchamber.hk/guide-setting-business)

# Chinese start-ups: Apprentice vs. Survivor

“Never attempt to win by force what can be won by deception.” - Niccolo Machiavelli

**D**uring ‘The Apprentice’ heydays, it shared the airwaves with another show which, on the face of it, looked like an entirely different concept: boardroom vs. elimination camp(fire), business suits vs. loincloths and PowerPoints vs. obstacle courses: ‘Survivor’ could not have been farther apart.

Yet they were very similar in their exposure of interhuman behaviour: two teams pitted against one another, a weekly elimination of the weakest link and the ultimate winner being the last one standing. Darwin could not have designed a more poignant display of the survival of the fittest. The Apprentice may have been the better fit to the moniker ‘ultimate start-up challenge’, they had a high Machiavellian content in common: the end justifies the means, sod the human cost. Never mind the hugs and tears at the end of each show, this was predatory behaviour at its best.

Speaking of predatory behaviour, the US government is currently running on what many hope are its last legs. American voters have a golden opportunity to get even for four years of corporate backstabbing, playground bullying and barefaced lying that would befit both shows, by turning the ‘celebrity apprentices’ favourite phrase against him. What a headline “You’re fired!” would make.

***If not caused by, the new Foreign Investment Law was at very least accelerated by the recent international pressure, but as so many Chinese laws before, it is high on soundbites for a gullible audience and low on concrete, meaningful changes.***

For all its faults, however, this is the first US administration that has had the courage to call out an even more Machiavellian rival for world domination. If China’s continued arguing for ‘developing nation’ status under WTO Rules, its spurious ‘nine dots’ exclusion zone claims in the South China Sea and the ‘guaranteed non-military’ build-up there, can still be explained away as mere symptoms, its lack of an independent judiciary, effective mechanism for challenging government decisions and other basic guarantees for fairness are firmly part of the core designs of its rulers.

To be sure, I do not wish to argue that the recent Executive Orders, visa restrictions and sanction regimes are either fair, just or well thought out. Nor do I wish to suggest that the US is devoid of Machiavellian designs in adopting these measures. After all, the ‘A’ in USA derives from the name not just of a contemporary of Machiavelli’s, but of a fellow Florentine of his, no less.

It hardly takes a rocket scientist to figure out that pussy-footing around does not work in the land of Sun Tse. US foreign policy since the Nixon era has not exactly lived up to its rocket science prowess though. From Deng’s plan to send students overseas by the hundreds of thousands, to the calculated isolation tactics on Taiwan, to the amassing of know-how and IP rights needed to build up China’s military might, bar a few blips Uncle Sam largely stood by and watched.

China’s accession to the WTO in 2001 was aimed at a rapid removal of trade barriers. It beggars belief that only now, close to its twentieth (!) anniversary, the law removing the need for formal government approval to set up a foreign-invested enterprise (FIE) in China was finally adopted.

If not caused by, the new Foreign Investment Law was at very least accelerated by the recent international pressure, but as so many Chinese laws before, it is high on soundbites for a gullible audience and low on concrete, meaningful changes. MofCom approval may be gone but continue to expect major barriers on the path to starting a business in China. Tax registration, security bureau clearance, employment bureau approval and the good old product licensing requirements mean most of the new FIEs are only truly ‘in business’ some 12-24 months from date of establishment.

And predictably so. Chinese laws are a tool for exercising control, not creating level playing fields – ask Hong Kong. The Chinese language, guanxi and capital controls are formidable entry barriers by any standard. Add State ‘guidance’ with banks instructed to direct funds as Beijing decides ‘or else’, courts to decide against FIEs if ‘local social factors’ so dictate, and currency controls giving a choice of excuses to unwilling debtors. In China, start-ups are more ‘Survivor’ than ‘Apprentice’! ■



■ By Ralph Ybema, Managing Director at China Law & Tax  
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# Worldwide web of tax

Understanding your tax as a next generation start-up entrepreneur.

**E**lectronic commerce (e-commerce) or digital business has become the new business model worldwide for years. The outbreak of COVID-19 appears to have accelerated e-commerce development. Compared to traditional business, a digital business has relatively low start-up and maintenance costs. More and more young entrepreneurs have been starting up their own e-commerce businesses, and market, promote, display and sell their products or services via the Internet.

Running a business will potentially result in the payment of tax. Entrepreneurs are therefore suggested to understand the tax position, exposures and obligations of their business. This article shall shed some light on how the profits derived from e-commerce business are taxed in Hong Kong.

## Relevant tax rules in Hong Kong

Currently, the Hong Kong tax legislation, namely the Inland Revenue Ordinance (IRO), does not contain any specific provisions governing the taxation of e-commerce businesses. As such, the general charging provision [i.e. Section 14(1) of the IRO] and the common laws shall apply to determine the taxability of e-commerce profits. As a rule of thumb, Section 14(1) of the IRO stipulates that profits shall be subject to the Hong Kong profits tax if all the following three conditions are met:

- (i) A person, including but not limited to a natural person and a corporation, carries on a trade, profession or business in Hong Kong;
- (ii) The profits are derived from such trade, profession or business carried on by the person in Hong Kong; and
- (iii) The profits are arising in or derived from Hong Kong (i.e. sourced in Hong Kong).

Usually, condition (iii) above (locality/source of profits) is the most disputable between the IRD and taxpayers when determining the taxability of profits, which is therefore further discussed below.

## Locality/Source of profits

In general, the IRD will apply the totality of facts test (i.e. looking at all the factors and business activities relevant to the generation of the profits) when determining the locality/

source of those profits. Typically, when determining this, the IRD will:

- (i) Look into the core operations (i.e. operations which produce the profits in question) of the e-commerce business and the place where those operations take place;
- (ii) Focus more on the place of the human functions affecting the e-commerce business, rather than the location of the server or the electronic functions; and
- (iii) Look into the place of other non-automated business functions, such as storing and distributing products, logistics arrangement, marketing and sales, after-sale services, product value enhancement and maintenance services.

Following the above, in case the server of an e-commerce business is located outside of Hong Kong and/or certain electronic functions take place outside of Hong Kong, one cannot simply conclude that the resulting business profits will be non-taxable in Hong Kong.

## Conclusion

In Hong Kong, the general charging provisions [i.e. Section 14(1) of the IRO] are applied on determining the taxability of profits derived from e-commerce business. Although the operations under e-commerce are in general automated to a significant extent while the physical activities are comparatively reduced, the place of core operations carried out by the humans – instead of the place of server/electronic functions – is still the important factor when determining the locality/taxability of the profits.

Same as the traditional business, it is sometimes not straight forward to determine the locality/taxability of profits, in particular if the business activities are principally carried out outside of Hong Kong but have certain elements taking place in Hong Kong. In case one would like to review the taxability of its e-commerce profits or obtain an advance ruling from the IRD, it is suggested to contact the tax advisors for assistance. ■



■ By Willem Jan Hoogland  
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# Start-ups and entrepreneurs in a green world

There is a difference between entrepreneurs and start-up founders. Which one you reckon will get us closer to a Green World?

## Who is an Entrepreneur?

An entrepreneur is an individual that looks for business opportunities and creates ways to make those businesses profitable. Entrepreneurs often invest without the major responsibilities of running the companies as they focus more on earning money from them. Entrepreneurs try hard to create a viable business, not one that has a vague hope of succeeding. There are entrepreneurs all over the world. Even in poor areas of the world, people are entrepreneurs as they sell or trade goods to survive.



## Who is a Start-up Founder?

A start-up founder is different from entrepreneurs as they found a start-up company. They create a business that will someday become successful. While they sound similar to the entrepreneur, their goal is different. Unlike an entrepreneur, a start-up founder does not have a major financial motive. They create a product or a service to change the world. They want to become famous or show others that anything is possible. While there can be a major payday in the future, they do not start off with the goal to make millions.

It might be useful to distinguish the two, but certainly from a Green World perspective, not having a major, short-term financial motive, is key to building more long-term sustainable businesses. The idea to contribute to a Green World, and to use technology to achieve this, needs a long-term vision and foremost, a lot of patience, resilience, persistence.

So, basically, the fundamentals to become a Green World, needs vision, belief, laws, regulations, enforcement, technology,

communication, social responsibility, a sound business case and next to that a lot of convincing that we cannot go on as we do.

At the moment, to run our economies, we need per year 1.6 times the resources that the earth can produce in a whole year. So, there will be a time that our economies run silent as resources are gone. It simply means we need to rethink how we use our resources.

We need new, bright-minded, non-conventional thinkers who want to start a new company to contribute to saving the earth and ourselves. But it also means we need to be able to fund these ideas and technologies, not only for proven scale-ups but also for start-ups that might grow into large companies someday or licence their technology to the benefit of other companies and humankind.

So, if we really want to grasp the opportunities ahead, we need to get serious. That means:

1. An inventory of good ideas and qualify them thoroughly against market willingness to buy;
2. Create an Investment Board, partly with Government, with Private Investors, Equity Firms, etc.
3. Support these start-ups to manage their idea to businesses for solutions to the environment, for employment (new jobs), and use experienced advisors
4. Create partnerships, an eco-system, as in the Green World there is a need for chain marketing: create a functional chain to will really produce results.

We need to organise this. And not only the big companies can help, but the small ones may also have unexpected ideas and technology. You will be surprised. ■



■ By Bernard Scheffens, CEO, WSS Asia Ltd  
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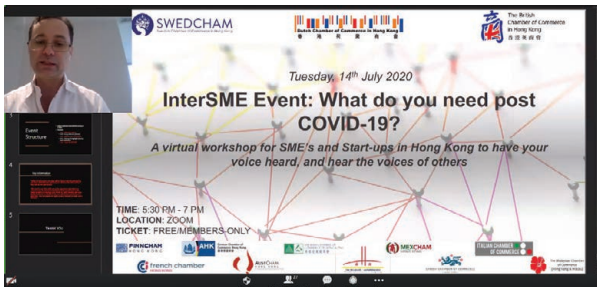
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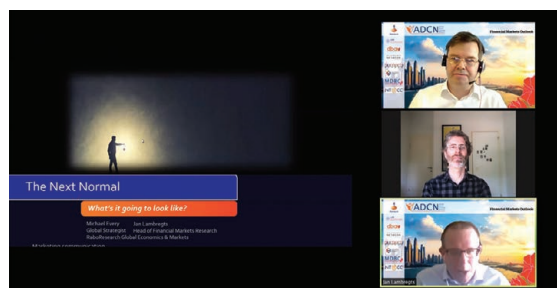
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# An overview of support for emerging technology businesses in Hong Kong

Establishing a startup in the current economic climate is daunting, but there are government and private resources in Hong Kong to help. Here is an overview of policy and funding support available to startups in Hong Kong.

## Public policy and funding support

The three main financial regulators in Hong Kong – the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the Securities and Futures Commission and the Insurance Authority – have adopted a facilitative approach to fintech innovation. They have developed dedicated contact points for fintech companies, and have introduced regulatory sandboxes to provide safe harbours for fintech and insurtech innovation.

The Hong Kong Government has made it easier for start-up founders or employees to obtain work visas. Under the 'Investment as Entrepreneurs' scheme, the Immigration Department will consider a visa application favourably if an applicant wishes to join a start-up business that is supported by a government-backed programme. These include the StartmeupHK Venture Programme by InvestHK, and the Incu-App, Incu-Bio and Incu-Tech programmes by the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks.

Hong Kong also has a number of startup-specific loans and funding schemes run by government bodies and public entities. They include:

- i. The Innovation and Technology Fund with different programmes under it, including the Innovation and Technology Venture Fund targeting innovation and technology start-ups, and the Enterprise Support Scheme to fund R&D projects on a matching basis;
- ii. The Patent Application Grant;
- iii. The Research and Development Cash Rebate Scheme; and
- iv. The CreateSmart Initiative for creative industries.

## Private Funding and Incubation Schemes

Hong Kong has an active venture capital community, especially in the area of fintech. Hong Kong also benefits from the strong presence of family offices, which are increasingly interested in investments in technology start-ups as a means to diversify their portfolio and to obtain higher returns.

Investments in start-ups may take the form of debt or equity investment or a combination of both. Equity investment will

typically involve a subscription for Preferred Shares in the start-up, with preferred rights that may include preferential dividend rights, information rights, anti-dilution protection, and board representation.

Sometimes investments may be made in return of future rather than present equity. For example, a start-up may issue Convertible Loan Notes, which are debt instruments that carry a right to be converted into equity at the next equity financing round or on a liquidity event trigger. Another instrument used by start-ups is a Future Equity Deed, which is a promise by the start-up to issue shares at the next equity financing round or on a liquidity event trigger.

Sometimes VC funds may also invest in start-ups in the form of mezzanine loan financing, a hybrid form of debt and equity financing.

Regardless of the type of investment, given the relatively low-risk appetite in Hong Kong, start-ups should expect that investors will conduct due diligence. This may include independent verification of the facts and assumptions in the start-up's investment proposal, enquiries about its founders and key management team, and full disclosure by the start-up in respect of its financial, legal and operational matters.

Hong Kong has several incubation and acceleration programmes that provide intensive advising and mentoring. A list of such programmes can be found at the Startmeup website maintained by InvestHK. Prominent incubators and accelerators in Hong Kong include Betatron, Brinc, and various industry-specific programmes run by the Hong Kong Science and Technology Park. Law firms experienced in helping start-ups will also be able to advise on corporate set-up, funding documentation, immigration and employment advice, and regulatory advice. ■



■ By Padraig Walsh  
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# Education with a religious touch

Following the signing of the Treaty of Nanking in August 1842, (one of the 'Unequal Treaties' in Chinese history) by which Hong Kong became British colonial territory, missionaries soon arrived in Hong Kong and established schools.

**T**he first one of the schools was opened in 1842, which was in fact an existing missionary school in Macau which promptly moved to Hong Kong. Hong Kong's education therefore primarily came from Protestant and Catholic missionaries who provided social services. Italian missionaries began to provide boy-only education to British and Chinese youth in 1843, soon followed by French, British, German and missionaries of various other nationalities.

The missionary schools forced the government to react, and in 1862 the first colonial government school was established, Queen's College. It still exists today, in Causeway Bay and is considered a top school.

Fast forward to today: roughly half the schools in Hong Kong are run by Christian organisations (Protestant, Anglican or Catholic). For example, in 2018 no less than 248 Catholic schools were serving over 140,000 students.

There are a select number of very prestigious schools in Hong Kong which have the reputation of providing a first-class

education, and alumni are always very proud to mention that they went to these schools. The names of the majority of these elite schools which are difficult to get into to (not necessarily private schools) reveal their Christian roots: St. Paul's College, DGS (Diocesan Girls School), DBS (Diocesan Boys School), and La Salle College are good examples of this, but by no means the only ones. As a result of their reputations, real estate near the schools has an added value, because living in the districts makes entry to these schools easier.

St. Pauls College, situated on Bonham Road was established in 1851 and is the oldest continuously operated school in Hong Kong. It was founded as an Anglican day school for Chinese boys, and that is still the case today. Its official aim is to "provide a liberal education to Chinese youths in the English language upon Christian principles". The school motto sounds a little bit stern, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. Its College Council has a unique status and position in Hong Kong, as it is incorporated by local ordinance, and is therefore written in the laws of Hong Kong.



DBS Main Building

RAPHAEL HU 2006



La Salle College in 1971

The alumni list is very impressive throughout the school's history. Names that are well known today include the world-famous architect I.M. Pei (Louvre Pyramid in Paris, Bank of China Tower HK), Jasper Tsang (former Chairman of the DAB political party and former head of the Legislative Council), and Joseph Yam (former chief executive of the HK Monetary Authority).

DGS, one of the oldest girl's schools in Hong Kong was founded in 1860 by the Anglican Church. The school motto is 'Daily Giving Service' (of course, D G S). In 1913, the school moved to its present site at 1 Jordan Road, Kowloon, which was a rice paddy field before construction of the school buildings. During the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong in World War II, the school was taken over as headquarters of the Japanese Kempeitai, the military police of the Japanese Imperial Army, notorious for its brutality. It was re-opened in September 1945 by Ms. Gibbins, then headmistress. She had been interned at the Stanley prison-of-war camp during the occupation. One of the notable alumni of DGS is Rebecca Chan, who was a United States World War II veteran nurse with the famous Flying Tigers Squadron, and the United States Army in China. After World War II, she became a nursing educator and a leader of the nursing profession in Hong Kong.

DBS is the 'brother' school of DGS, founded in 1869, a few years later than DGS. Jointly the two schools are referred to as the Diocesan Family. For over 90 years the DBS campus with extensive sports facilities has been situated on top of Kadoorie Hill, near Mong Kok. It has a liberal education in which students are taught to strive to be the best in their respective fields, whether this is music, painting, academia or sports. For the 80 places available for admission each year, the school receives over 1000 applications! Another surprising fact is that the school hymn of DBS was written and composed by non-other than the famous author Rudyard Kipling. The DBS

Orchestra is one of the oldest orchestras in Hong Kong and goes on international tours regularly. In 2015 the Orchestra even won the Gold Prize in the Washington D.C. International Music Festival. The most famous DBS alumnus in Asia must be Sun Yat-Sen, the politician and philosopher who served as the provisional first president of the Republic of China and the first leader of the Kuomintang (KMT). Modern alumni include Benny Tai, initiator of Occupy Central, Michael and James Tien, brothers who are both members of the Legislative Council, and Canning Fok, the Group MD of Hutchison Whampoa Group.

***During the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong in World War II, the school was taken over as headquarters of the Japanese Kempeitai, the military police of the Japanese Imperial Army, notorious for its brutality.***

La Salle College was founded in 1932 by a Catholic religious teaching order (which itself was founded by St. John Baptist de La Salle, a French priest who lived during the turn of the 17th century and focused on education reform). It has a reputation not only for academic excellence but also for having a focus on sports: the school has won more intra-school championships than any other school, especially in athletics. The school motto is in Latin, 'Fides et Opera' (faith and zeal). Notable alumni include John Tsang, (the former Financial Secretary and aspiring Chief Executive candidate), and perhaps the most famous Hongkonger in the world, Bruce Lee.

The Christian missionaries' legacy in Hong Kong is the successful development of an inclusive education system, which has endured almost 180 years and laid the foundation for the overall education system in Hong Kong. The schools have also provided a lifelong network for its former students, who have been able to reach out to other 'old boys' or 'old girls', notwithstanding different social backgrounds or even political differences. The liberal values that many in Hong Kong cherish and the embracing of the best of the West with the best of the East has surely been a result of these schools and their unique system. ■



■ By Daniël de Blocq van Scheltinga, Managing Director  
at Polarwide Ltd  
[www.polarwide.com](http://www.polarwide.com)



## Where the streets have a sense of humour

I love this city. Having lived here in the mid-90s, when I was still in a full-time design job, I decided to return in 2015, this time purely as a photographer. It proved to be a serendipitous move – in my first week, I discovered Hong Kong's shop cat phenomenon and ended up making a series of photobooks about these. It offered me a chance to capture the old traditional (and eventually disappearing) dried goods and medicine stores. They are visually captivating places that often employ a cat to keep the mice away.

The photo series caught international attention, enjoyed much media coverage and strong book sales. And while I work on other specific series concurrently, one thing I never grow tired of is simply roaming around the city's streets and alleyways in a quest for small visual nuggets, things that make me smile.

"De humor ligt op straat", we say in Dutch – humour is on the street. This is totally true once you open yourself up for it. Here I share some of my finds. If only just for the fact that this year, more than ever, we need to see the humour of the day-to-day, and appreciate the small things.

Keep smiling. ■



■ By Marcel Heijnen, [www.marcelheijnen.com](http://www.marcelheijnen.com)  
Instagram @chinesewhiskers



Took the blue pail.



Heart hat.



Everything in its right place.



Live relationship status update.



I'm on a roll.



The 2020 Fall collection.



Insert killer, just add water.





Piggy bank.



Nothing really mattress.



Quartet.



A whole lotta glove.



Ground control to Major Wong.



Birdwatching



Hop in.



Boss, what shall we call our shop?



Ring my bell.



Keep smiling.



**Iki Chan**

*Manager, HKU Business School*

The best thing about being young is that you do not know enough to be prudent, and therefore you attempt the impossible. The youth of a Nation is the trustee of posterity and I see them as the future of our nation. This is also my calling to devote myself to youth work and work for The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (HKFYG) since my graduation from The University of Hong Kong, to empower youth and to advocate for the creation of social capital/ ventures through innovation. I am now working in the HKU Business School on External Relations and Student Affairs. I am looking forward to connecting with other members, exchanging resources, developing partnership and having fun together!



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**Hilton Chu**

*General Manager, Ewig Industries Macao Commercial Offshore Ltd.*

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**Ammar Katib**

*Managing Director, Gisser*

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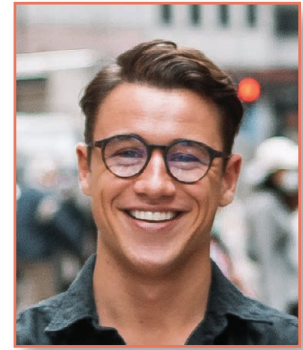


# Passing the Pen

**Name:** Daniel van Dalen

**Organisation:** Daniel Dalen Design Limited

**Email:** info@danieldalen.com



Daniel van Dalen

### Who am I?

I am a multi-disciplinary maker of useful, unique and beautiful things. I was born in Rotterdam, and have lived and travelled between Asia and Amsterdam since the age of ten.

### My professional background is:

With a very diverse skill set of software development (front- and back-end) and branding/design, I am focusing on identifying problems or demands in society and solving them through digital products. Being multi-lingual (Dutch, English, German, Spanish and Chinese) allows me to extend my business globally.

### I moved to Hong Kong because:

Growing up partly in mainland China and Europe, I have always loved Hong Kong. Since the age of ten, I wanted to move here.

After spending much time in mainland China, I decided to move to Hong Kong to base my company here and to retain the efficiency of travelling to the mainland.

### I work for:

I run my own start-up, Daniel Dalen Design, employing myself.

### My most remarkable work story is:

After finishing my course in Chinese Mandarin and business in China, I had the pleasure of operating in some leading global companies, such as Alibaba Group (HEMA 盒马鲜生). My experience was growing, but for some reason, I still couldn't figure out what to focus on; principally because I was so passionate about everything being connected and making sure to get the most out of every online and offline experience.

I started to identify problems and map them out. This process made me realise I have solutions to such problems which will hold substantial value to individuals and corporations alike. One of the problems which I identified while working as a freelancer were packaging briefings. This led to my first product called 'Pabel',

Providing a proper packaging briefing can be quite overwhelming since it comes teeming with information such as symbols, warning phrases, translations, dyelines, nutrition labels, mood boards, photography, type of packaging and many more details which all come with regulations. This can be extremely difficult, even for experienced product designers to grasp. Pabel is a module that guides you through this process and provides you with a complete packaging brief including all the elements (barcode, symbols, instructions) in a ready-to-use format according to the official regulations of respective authorities. By leveraging machine learning (A.I.), Pabel is able to learn from its data and improve suggestion accuracy and user-experience to an unparalleled level, an industry game-changer.

### I find most of my business contacts through:

Most of my clients are obtained by word of mouth delivering high-quality work, high value and online presence.

### One day I will be:

As happy as I am now - doing what I like most, being a bridge between cultures and different disciplines such as software, design, and automation, allowing the older generation to maximise results in the new tech-driven generation. ■



We are an independent, member-driven, non-governmental, non-profit business association which serves to facilitate business in Hong Kong and Greater China for its members by providing networking, knowledge sharing and company profiling opportunities.

As the representative body of Dutch business in Hong Kong, we maintain close relationships with both the Dutch and the Hong Kong SAR governments.

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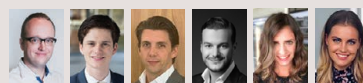
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