

# theSME magazine

THE BUSINESS TIMES

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“LIKE WEDDING COMPANIES, WE ARE AN EVENT COMPANY, BUT IT'S FOR MORE SOLEMN EVENTS.”

— JENNY TAY,  
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF  
DIRECT FUNERAL SERVICES

# WHAT A YEAR

**I**DON'T think it would be too much of a stretch to say that it has been a intense year – intense (albeit on both ends of the spectrum) from the passing of our first prime minister in the first half of the year, to the year-long SG50 celebrations which culminated in the National Day celebrations; but also intense in terms of the difficulties faced by businesses as they continued to toil and struggle under an unforgiving economic landscape both regionally and globally.

It has been, I believe, a time of great introspection for individuals and companies – thinking of how far each has come and the role that the nation has played in it. At the same time, however, the stress of doing business continues to take its toll.

But even as companies fight fires – as is often the state of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – others have taken stock and are choosing to tackle their problems in more sophisticated ways. Some, by moving up the value chain; others by expanding overseas; and yet others, by choosing to tackle the problem within – either through taking the first steps to craft a mission statement and create a more defined branding and presence, or by re-embarking on a branding journey.

In Top Story, timber flooring installer Perswood shares its branding journey – from one where only older customers recognised its brand, to developing a brand positioning and visual system to appeal to a new and younger clientele. Brand consultants also share tips and tricks to get started on the branding or rebranding journey.

Elsewhere, Jenny Tay, managing director of Direct Funeral Services, is looking to not just professionalise the family business, but the entire undertaker industry. Bringing in experience gleaned from other industries (Ms Tay was previously in advertising, for instance), and by leveraging the experience of experts from countries more advanced in this field, she is upping the ante in the industry. Read more about Direct Funeral Services in Towkays.

Yet other companies are turning to collaboration to up their game. Pacific Integrated Logistics (PIL), for instance, has worked with a client to move up the value chain. In doing so, PIL moved beyond



Photography: Ching, GreenPlasticSoldiers Styling: Dan Foo Hair & Makeup: Ganeil Loh, using Clinique Wardrobe: Salvatore Ferragamo

what is generally understood to be the scope of third party logistics providers to render value-added services to its partners. Its story is in Technological Edge.

Meanwhile, Legal Adviser takes on what has been defined as a new breed of investors – corporate venture capital investors. What do they look for and what are their legal considerations? How can SMEs be made more attractive to these investors?

As the year winds down, I hope that you have the time to take stock of your business – where you would like to take it in the new year, and what can be done better. While businesses cannot be regarded in a vacuum, it is nevertheless a good idea to take a step back once in awhile, I think.

**Mindy Tan**

EDITOR



## ON THE COVER

Photography: Ching, GreenPlasticSoldiers  
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