



Photography: Ching, GreenPlasticSoldiers Styling: JC Hair & Makeup: Sharon Poo from Living Beauty Wardrobe: H&M

# TOWARDS A STRONG FINISH

sector, for example, are still going through tough times.

Retail is another sector that has seen lacklustre performance in 2017. In this issue's Top Story, we argue that the doomsday declaration on the demise of retail in Singapore is perhaps more alarmist than reality.

We find out what SMEs are doing to cope with the challenges assailing the sector, such as e-commerce and changing consumer patterns. Their forward-looking strategies include the use of augmented reality, an omni-channel approach, and customer service chatbots among other things.

Our Towkay this month is Pek Lay Peng, owner of multi-label store SocietyA and executive director of family business Shingda Group of Companies. This wonder woman shares how she straddles the two very different worlds of construction and fashion without breaking a sweat.

In Budding Entrepreneurs, meet a startup that has presented businesses in South-east Asia with the opportunity to go global; and for consumers, the ability to get products from famous markets such as Bangkok's Chatuchak to your doorstep – all just a click away. Zilingo's founder and chief executive officer Ankiti Bose shares her journey.

In Smart Capital, we go back to the

basics of retail: customer service. Customer experience, or CX, is increasingly rising to the top of the priority list of many SMEs, and brands must work harder to create experiences that are relevant and foster customer loyalty.

Building on the theme of retail, this issue's Space shares three key guidelines for brick-and-mortar retailers to future-proof their business.

In Legal Adviser, find out about employment law issues that every SME needs to know. If handled wrongly, a business and its owners may suffer a range of unpleasant consequences – from crippling law suits to sanctions from the authorities; not to mention the damage to the SME's reputation.

Finally, we also have a series on the outlook that SMEs have for 2018 and what some of their plans and goals are. Companies such as Smile Inc, EpiCentre, Julian Tan Heart Specialist Clinic and Desmond Jason Academy share their views.

With that, I wish all readers a wonderful year-end break. Let's all do what we can to finish the year strong.

**Vivien Shiao**  
EDITOR

**N**OW, firmly in the last quarter of the year, it is possibly time to reflect on all that has transpired in the past year. 2017 has been a mixed bag for most businesses – the economy has been recovering steadily, but not all small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) benefited. Those in the offshore and marine



## ON THE COVER

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