

PRESTIGE

ALL IN THE EYE

Seeing opportunity in the midst of a disaster is a gift, we say. For Andy Ong, it's all to do with shifting perspectives

IN LIFE, WE MEET TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE: THE OPTIMIST and the pessimist. Then, there are people like Andy Ong — the one with “the eye”.

“It’s all about the eye — the eye to find positivity in negative situations; the eye for differentiating good from bad; the eye to find a brilliant work of art even!” Ong points out.

Andy Ong, CEO of the Entrepreneur’s Resource Centre Holdings, is not your average dream-chaser. He chooses to channel his energy into educating people and helping others improve themselves. But this isn’t surprising — through his experiences and observations, he believes in “creating value to life so that one can leave a legacy behind”. Having come from under-privileged circumstances, he vows to provide others with the necessary skills needed to be a successful individual — skills that go beyond papers on a spine. “We have met with some of the brightest people who have no money for further studies and at ERC, we want to create that ‘university of life’ to mould them for business, and this goes beyond academics,” explains Ong.

Call it an act of charity or contributing to the community, because that’s exactly what he’s doing.

Like a doting second parent, Ong is dedicated to providing education to less privileged students like himself during his days in school — and even beyond the shores of Singapore. Among his major projects is the proposed construction of a school in Cambodia, a place he admits has had an effect on him. “When I went to Cambodia and looked at the people around me, it just dawned on me that they deserved better. So I’m doing something in return for a place that I have such fascination for,” he proffers.

Ong had his first taste of the working world in the kitchen of a pizza eatery, where he cut vegetables to put himself through school. “I’d start work at night and head back to school in the morning, bringing leftover pizzas for my classmates,” Ong reminisces. It was one of the many challenges that was to come for Ong, who’s had to

bang on some highbrow tables to get people to listen.

But for someone who worked hard in less than desirable conditions, one reckons he’d be the least likely candidate for optimism. Ong credits his success to a sheer streak of luck and his knack for “identifying solutions from stress”, which is what he counts as his “one and only strength”.

“In business, 15 percent comprises the right business concept, the right planning and the right people to implement it. The other 85 percent is luck. Having said that, luck can be created — that 15 percent is within your control; so the harder you work, the more luck you’ll get. It’s an inverse strategy that’s guaranteed for success. Besides, good things come to those who work hard,” offers the self-confessed workaholic.

Classic advice that only a true entrepreneur can give, we say.

