

Business success through mobile

By CHAN SWEE KHUAN

WONG Hong Ting, 26, will be in Kansas City, USA from Nov 17-19 to pitch his business plan to a panel of international judges at the 2010 Global Student Entrepreneurship Awards (GSEA).

Mr Wong will be representing Singapore at the GSEA, after being selected from 1,700 student entrepreneurs here.

The GSEA is hosted by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and is part of the Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW) from Nov 15-21.

Mr Wong's business plan is no mere academic exercise, but a real business with seven employees. He cofounded 2359 Media with fellow NUS graduate Zhou Wenhan, 27, in February 2009. The company became profitable this year.

They met at the NUS Overseas College in Silicon Valley, where they spent a year working on projects together. They saw a huge opportunity in mobile when Apple launched the iPhone.

They started out by creating 40-50 mobile apps across different smartphone platforms to help



Teamwork: (standing, from left) Mr Zhou and Mr Wong, with part of their team. Mr Wong has been selected from 1,700 student entrepreneurs to represent Singapore and pitch his business plan at the 2010 Global Student Entrepreneurship Awards (GSEA) in the US next week.

businesses connect to their consumers.

When a productization opportunity came up, they developed a novel mobile ad creation platform called mobdis for ad agencies.

mobdis is an HTML5 editor with a drag-and-drop interface that allows rapid creation of engaging mo-

bile ads across different platforms like iPhone, Android, BlackBerry and Nokia - much like building a PowerPoint deck.

According to Mr Wong, they see no competitors on the horizon except Adobe, which just announced a prototype of something similar to be launched a year from now.

"We have been busy pitching non-stop for the last one-and-a-half months, hoping to raise another round of investment funding to accelerate the development of mobdis before others catch up," he said.

2359 Media received their initial funding from SPRING Singapore's Young

Entrepreneurs Scheme for Start-ups (YES! Start-ups). The founders raised \$12,500 of their own money to receive a grant of \$50,000.

They also receive support from NUS Enterprise, which provides rent-free incubator space at Prince George's Park Road for one year.

Mr Wong, being the business guy, said he's fortunate to have great mentors like Tom Kosnik at Stanford and Joe Rouse at NUS.

Mr Zhou, on the other hand, is the tech genius. Both are keenly aware that to scale globally, one of them has to be based in the US in Silicon Valley next year.

Grads set up Asian paintings portal

They sell original works by artists from Vietnam, Indonesian and Singapore

By CHAN SWEE KHUAN

THEY may not be artists themselves, but these recent business graduates are already making headway in debunking the myth of the "starving artist".

Ng Cai Lin, 23, and Shannon Lim, 26, have set up Asia's first community for Asian artists to sell their original works online.

"They paint, we market and sell," explained Mr Ng, who was classmates with his partner at the Singapore Management University.

Since the beta version of "Artyii" - which is also the name of their company - was up in August, they have managed to get on board 140 artists, putting up 500 pieces of art for sale. Some 70 per cent of their artists are from Vietnam. The rest come from Indonesia and Singapore.

A brand new version of their portal is set to launch on Nov 15, just in time for Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW). The opening ceremony of GEW will feature a showcase of projects funded by Young Entrepreneurs Scheme (YES!) Start-ups.

YES! Start-ups is a Spring Singapore scheme to provide youth entrepreneurs with start-up funding. Artyii got their YES! grant in December 2009.

To get a \$50,000 grant from Spring, Mr Ng and Ms Lim had to raise \$12,500 on their own. The road to getting Artyii started is paved with "a little luck and lots of persistence".

Knocking on doors to sell their business idea was what the founders had to do before they incorporated their company in July this year.

Although they were given the cold shoulder countless times because of their youth, they never considered giving up an option.

Besides the YES! grant, Ms Lim loves to tell the story of how a chance

encounter with an angel investor after a networking event led them to another source of funding - this time from the National Research Foundation (NRF).

Leveraging on technology to promote Asian art, NRF was convinced by the scalability of the Artyii portal and the potential market size due to the rising popularity of Asian art.

Artyii employs one full-time programmer and a full-time designer. It also has two part-time translators to liaise with Vietnamese and Indonesian artists.

Mr Ng is the one with the business mind and makes connections with artists and art advisers. Ms Lim is the operations and the ideas person.

With no direct competitors at the moment, they hope to grow Artyii through sales and an expanding user base. Their portal signs up artists on a referral and invitation basis.

In so doing, Artyii hopes to realise the potential of emerging Asian artists.

SINGAPORE ROUNDUP

Nominations open for environment award

NOMINATIONS for the President's Award for the Environment 2011 are open from today to Jan 17, 2011. Members of the public are invited to nominate individuals and organisations that have contributed significantly to Singapore's environmental sustainability efforts. For details, go to www.mewr.gov.sg/presidentsaward

Tie-up for children's mental health

THREE facilities supporting children's mental health - Reach, the Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences' Neurocognitive Development Centre and

KK Hospital's Department of Child Development - have come together in one location to carry out early intervention and research into the mental health and development of children. The tie-up will better facilitate collaborative efforts. It will be located on the 11th floor of Saint Andrew's Community Hospital in Simei.

Hotel managers commit to productivity

SENIOR managers at 71 hotels here, gathered at the Hotel Transformation 2010 Conference, have affirmed their commitment to enhancing productivity. The commitment was made via a pledge witnessed by Heng Chee How, Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office.