



PHOTO: YEN MENG JIN

TAILORED SOLUTIONS

Co-founders Lyn Chan and Kenneth Chia of A Gentleman's Tale offer a mobile menswear service that brings tailoring services to the doorstep of time-starved clients

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TELL US HOW YOUR COMPANY STARTED.

Lyn: In 2015 when we first started, we looked at options on how to keep costs low. We chose to be mobile tailors, which will allow us to have minimal overheads. Then, we would travel around Singapore on public transport bringing along a backpack and cabin luggage.

In 2016, we got together sufficient funds to place a deposit for a van, which became our mode of transport as well as our office. With a van, we could see more customers in a day and we managed to save enough for three months' rental, renovation, fixtures and fittings – that was when we opened our showroom at River Valley. In 2018, we started to plan what's next for A Gentleman's Tale and realised that we wanted to expand our mobile side on a different level.

COULD YOU SHARE MORE ABOUT THE PEOPLE BEHIND A GENTLEMAN'S TALE?

Kenneth: We have a very small and trustworthy team in our showroom. Dexter the gatekeeper is responsible for processing all the orders, ordering the fabrics selected, monitoring the factory schedule and ensuring that the clients' items are produced timely.

The newest member of the team, Izen, did an internship with us last year; and he is now with us creating content for our various social media platforms, our in-house visuals, collaterals and being the third eye for details and currently trending styles.

Lyn spearheads the corporate side of our business and the ladies collection. She keeps us all in check and aligned to our company's vision, mission and rules.

Lastly, there's me whom some call the magician because I make the clients look good, feel good, do good.

Lyn: Kenneth and I both founded the business in 2015, the

idea of working together and creating A Gentleman's Tale started from a conversation. Our different backgrounds and experiences allowed us to find a balance, and we complemented one another's strengths and weaknesses.

Last year, we started growing our team to include Dexter and Izen to allow us to grow and generate new ideas.

HOW DOES YOUR FIRM DIFFERENTIATE ITSELF FROM ITS COMPETITORS?

Kenneth: We do not believe in competition as tailoring is something very personal. How are we different from other tailors is that we do a 18 points measurement to get a more accurate cut of the outfits. We are the first mobile tailor with a mobile showroom and now, we have a mobile walk-in wardrobe showroom which is equipped with a 3D scanner. We do a baste fitting, which is hand stitched prior to doing up the whole outfit.

We are local tailors, meaning we do not outsource to other countries. All outfits are cut and drafted in-house before sending to our local factory to manufacture.

Lyn: The relationship between a client and a tailor is very similar to that of a hairdresser, where the hairdresser knows what would suit the client's face shape, lifestyle and personality.

I like to think that one of our differentiation points is that we focus on building a relationship at that level instead of just a simple transaction.

WHAT ARE SOME LATEST TRENDS IN THE INDUSTRY, AND HOW DOES YOUR COMPANY PLAN TO KEEP UP?

Kenneth: We have a style meeting every two weeks where we sit down and watch TV! That's my favourite meeting. It

is basically 30 minutes of watching YouTube, FashionTV, reading news articles to see what are the latest styles, colours and trends that people are into.

Our next plan is to visit factories and tailors around the world to learn about work cultures, country styles to see anything we can bring back to our company or even Singapore.

Lyn: The tailoring industry is evolving – we have seen an increase in females looking to have their suits tailored instead of purchasing off the rack.

The education on how fast landfills are filling up with fast-fashion clothes have had people become more conscious of what they are buying. Instead of purchasing something that doesn't quite fit them right, there's a selection of the population that are turning to tailoring to ensure that every piece they own has quality and fit.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR CHALLENGES, AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

Kenneth: Tailoring is almost a dying trade. We can train someone to be proficient in his or her measurements; we can train them to have conversations with clients to understand their needs. However only a few know how to draft and cut – usually the older generation. That's the reason why we are exploring laser cutting where we key in the measurements, and the machine is able to draft and cut.

Lyn: Like Kenneth mentioned, tailoring is a dying trade. There is a difference between someone who understands the mechanics of a drafting and cutting process who takes the measurements versus someone who is only trained to take measurements.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THE FUTURE?

Kenneth: We have always established ourselves as a lifestyle company and not just a tailor. Our short-term goal is to own a small factory which has modern technology such as laser cutting innovation – for example, click a button on our iPad after measurements are taken from the showroom, or wherever we are, and the orders will be received at my factory. But the end goal is to own a craft village and a beach resort. ■