

# Parents'GUIDE<sup>®</sup>

Helping parents to guide their children in education choices

## Willy Loh

A big fan of MOOC, I am intrigued by how technology has transformed education and makes learning fun again.

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## My Entrepreneurial Journey – Terence Pang

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### What made you choose to become an entrepreneur?

I was an engineer in a Forbes Top 500 company that focuses on the Oil & Gas industry. The pay was great and welfare was good. I also enjoyed the job as it involved the application of engineering concepts.

However, I felt that I needed something more. I was doing part-time tutoring at that time and I realised that many of my students faced certain issues in school:

1. They found learning tedious and boring no matter how hard they tried to keep at it. The lecture-style teaching simply does not work for them.
2. They were discouraged in school due to words and actions of certain teachers. For example, a teacher once told the student that she is glad she did not have a daughter like her as she would be
3. They dreaded going to school as as there wasn't a strong meaning or purpose.

So I listened and tried to understand. Then I helped by discussing possible solutions with them. I took it as a mini-project on my own to figure out what engages, motivates and drives a student. Each student is different so each process took a while but once I worked it out with them, things changed for the better.

I had students coming in with F9s, feeling hopeless and dejected. Through months of coaching, they achieved better clarity on why they are studying and how they can do better, which, in turn, removed their mental obstacles and increased motivation. As a result, they improved by many grades, some even attaining A1s.

It was then I realised that each minute of helping these kids delivered a greater meaning. The engineering work I did at my full-time job was fulfilling but I felt I wanted to do something for people directly. When my students informed me that they had been given awards for 'Best Improvements' and that they now have much greater hopes in their own futures, I started to believe that I can do more in self-actualisation.

So I took the leap of faith, quit my job and began teaching full-time. Back then, my part-time student base was not sufficient to cover my day-to-day living expense and it was a struggle. I remember being awake at night wondering how I could pay off my bills as I watched my savings deplete. month by month. Thankfully, it was the strong belief and vision that pulled me through all of it. It helped me to put aside the worries and focus on what was important – achieve greater meaning in life by helping students.

*“ It was a journey with interesting experiences that led to a strong vision and realising that living a life goes beyond satisfying material needs.*

Six months down the road, the hard work paid off when more students came in as people started to see results and how much good I was doing. That was when things started to pick up, classes became larger and nights became less sleepless.



Terence Pang is the Founder of [Aspire Thinking Learning Center](#).

Today, I have a place of my own – a hub where I can pool resources to help students better, a place where they can dare to dream and become better versions of themselves. I want to continue this work and create greater impact in people's lives for a long time.

This was not an overnight event but rather a gradual process. It was a journey with interesting experiences that led to a strong vision and realising that living a life goes beyond satisfying material needs. All of these slowly transformed me into an entrepreneur.

### **What are the skills required to become an entrepreneur in your field?**

I believe that one needs to constantly understand and innovate – figure out what people need and develop your business from there. Very often, myself included, we tend to focus on what we can provide and lesser on the demand of the market.

Also, good marketing is important. Finding the right media to advertise will ensure the right people know what your business is all about. Social media is the go-to channel these days but there are so many choices out there that it's difficult to know what works and what doesn't.

### **Tell us about your business. What inspired you to come up with this idea?**

[Aspire Thinking](#) is a place to help students do well not only in school but also in life.

On the academic side, we provide students with everything they need to learn smart – Study Guides, Step-by-Step Strategies and Props, videos and Tools for enhancement of understanding. There is less emphasis on lecture-style teaching, reading and memorising, but more on discussions and engagement. As a result, students become proficient in higher order thinking, which is the essential key to doing well in exams.

This is why Aspire Thinking is different. We are not looking to just see students to the finals but rather beyond it.

I was inspired to develop such services due to the many issues students are going through in life. Somehow, they have gone through experiences that tells them that they can't do anything great in life. All of the services I mentioned is meant to tell them that they can.

### **What are some of the biggest challenges you face in creating this business? How do you deal with them?**

When I talk about what I do, people often asked me if I am a MOE teacher or if these services is part of a franchise. Parents have a perception of branding and it's good for them because it helps them to choose. On the other hand, it's challenging for me because I have to find a way to convince them without the backing of a brand.

The fact is, I have none of it. Most of my services were developed based on direct feedback from students. I try what works and discard what doesn't work, and along the way, develop a series of teaching tools that I believe will benefit the student the most.

To deal with the challenge, I shared testimonials of past students and provide trial lessons. I let my results show that my services provide immense value and benefits without the need for any form of branding.

### **What other plans do you have in your pipeline?**

I'm looking to start on a project in a few years' time that involves product design where I will gather interested ex-students to come back and develop useful products that will help the community. For example, mechanical aids for the elderly, apps for the handicap or learning aids for those with special needs. This will also help students to build their resume so that when they graduate from tertiary education, they will have an advantage in looking for jobs.

### **What advice do you have for people who wish to become entrepreneurs?**

Discover a vision that is strong – one that keeps you awake at night because you can't stop thinking about it. This has to be going on for months before you can verify that it is indeed authentic and not just a simple desire.

Your network is also important. This is because your friends and family are potential partners or customers to the business.

Lastly, stay humble and always be on the lookout for good advice, recommendations and support.