Riding out the storm

Rasel Catering Singapore’s managing director Alan Tan and creative director Chris Loke make bold moves to succeed

By Angel Cheong

IT WAS not easy leaving their comfort zone as financial planners but they have challenged Mr Alan Tan, 48, and Ms Chris Loh, 40, to think beyond what they have always done.

After observing that there was a market demand for halal food, the duo set up catering firm Rasel Food Fourstar in 2003.

Business was slow during the beginning, but the firm managed to swim against the current.

They took the bold step of setting up their own halal, mass catering firm and changed their business name to Rasel Food Fourstar.

The business was certified halal by Muis in 1999, “says Mr Tan, the managing director of the firm.

To outwork with clients, he attended funeral wakes to get to know the who’s who in the hardline community.

“During the networking sessions, the customer can tell at a glance how (Mr Oon) should follow them and they can call it off at the right moment,” he says.

The Shun Zhou Group stocks and distributes wide-ranging Catering was to marine, oil and gas industries. Mr Oon was a packer in a warehouse building and is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

The road to entrepreneurship was not easy and they learnt valuable lessons along the way.

They found that while it was one thing to be confident of the business they were running, they needed to be more confident when it came to business opportunities and take calculated risks.

“Sometimes, the sustainability of a business will be threatened and can be easily forced out of the market,” says Mr Loh.

They also found that work also does pay off as they applied Dr Bert’s “trick” to gain the appropriate insights and information needed at any step of the business.

For instance, after two decades, Mr Loh joined the technical team, or a packer who is interested and capable of doing the job.

The duo then put in place both internal and external staff plans to combat the crisis. They included pay leaves for staff and renegotiation of longer credit terms with suppliers.

After pulling out of the crisis, the company continued to differentiate itself in branding exercises.

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