



# THAT'S THE SPIRIT

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**Malaysian exporter shares something about his workday, his character, and why year-in-and-year-out, he's really into furniture**

Although Malaysia's furniture export market is a competitive one, people behind the scenes are just that—people.

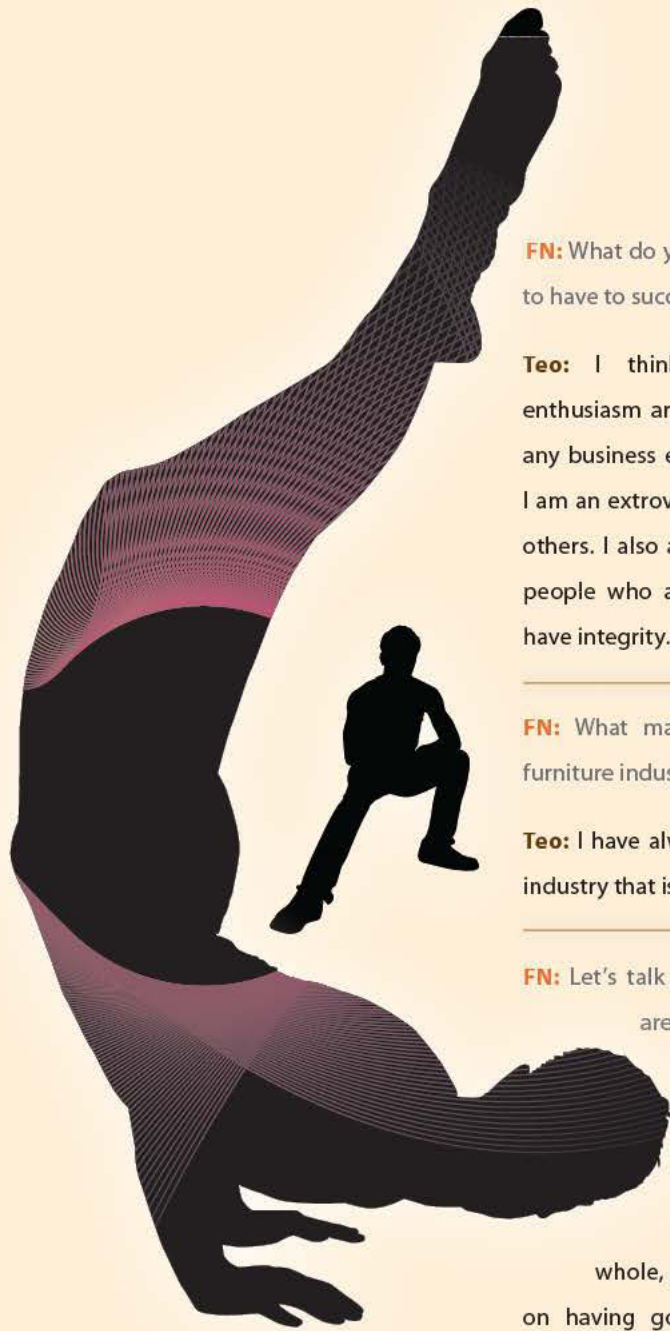
They're early risers. Many are passionate about design. And they listen, and willingly share the knowledge they have.

Tim Teo exemplifies the good spirit of Malaysian exporters.

As head of export for Batu Pahat-based Kuek Brothers Furniture Sdn Bhd, Mr. Teo recently shared some views on what it takes to succeed, and how far his company has progressed since it began manufacturing home furniture in the late 70s.

Tim Teo





**FN:** What do you think are the right traits to have to succeed in this job?

**Teo:** I think that confidence and enthusiasm are positive traits to have in any business environment. As for myself, I am an extrovert who interacts well with others. I also admire and work best with people who are of good character and have integrity.

**FN:** What made you venture into the furniture industry?

**Teo:** I have always wanted to work in an industry that is design-oriented.

**FN:** Let's talk about the company. What are your key selling points?

**Teo:** We always give emphasis on the design and high quality finishing of our products. As a whole, the company prides itself on having good relationships with its clients. We listen attentively to them, and follow up on leads and enquiries in order to expand the markets we are in.

**FN:** Where are your main markets?

**Teo:** We have been exporting to more than 45 countries in the Middle East, North and South America, Europe, Australia and Africa.

**FN:** What are the criteria for entering a new market?

**Teo:** Any country that has a young population base is a good place to start.

It provides a strong platform for us and its furniture industry has plenty of room to grow. Aside from that, you need to understand the business environment and of course take into account buyers' feedback. Strategic partnerships are also important; hence we work closely with buyers to provide the right products.

**FN:** What designs or trends are popular now?

**Teo:** It is hard to pinpoint any particular trend as it is different in every market. We never assume our customers are satisfied with our product designs so we do our best to follow up with them, and the feedback has provided valuable insight into the quality and characteristics of our products, especially when something hasn't gone right and you still have the opportunity to correct it on time. We often use the valuable insights during design and production meetings to help improve both the processes and products.



*Tim Teo*

**FN:** Having worked at the company for six years, what is a normal workday for you like?

**Teo:** As much as I could, I would have an hour of uninterrupted time in the early morning to plan my day. When I am in the office, I keep my door open to encourage my staff to communicate with me effectively. As I oversee the marketing, design, production planning and quality control, communication is vital. I love the constant feedback, energy and general activity in the office as well.