The snap bottles that clicked

Idea to use magnets to join bottles earns Singapore team third spot in competition

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THREE is a lucky number for Jenalyn Liu and her two team-mates. Together, the trio formed The Pinnacle — the Singapore team that came in third at this year’s L’Oréal Brandstorm international grand finals.

Their winning idea? A “fit” marketing concept for three Youth Capital products under the Vichy Capital Soleil brand. Ms Liu and her team suggested designing the bottles for a facial wash, a sunscreen for the face and a sunscreen for the body with a magnet built in. This would allow the three bottles to be joined together to form one unit.

Now a Shu Uemura management trainee at L’Oréal Singapore, which distributes Shu Uemura here, Ms Liu told TODAY: “With this idea, we tried to reinforce the concept that all three Youth Capital products are used in tandem with one another.”

The Pinnacle’s marketing concept, which Ms Liu describes as “relevant and refreshing”, won the team an all-expenses-paid trip to a city of their choice worth $5,000.

Launched in 1993, L’Oréal Brandstorm gives tertiary students all over the world the opportunity to play the role of marketing manager. The competition started here in 2002 but already, two Singapore teams have garnered first prize at the international finals — in 2003 and last year.

According to Mr Nicolas Pautrier, human resource director at L’Oréal Singapore/Mean, L’Oréal Brandstorm is also an invaluable experience for aspiring marketers as it challenges participants to put theories into practice, to take charge of a brand, to create viable marketing propositions and to successfully negotiate the international marketplace,” Mr Pautrier said. L’Oréal Brandstorm 2009 will begin in December this year, with the national finals taking place next May. This time, contestants will have to step into the shoes of a brand manager and develop a new perfume for Maybelline New York from scratch. This is the first time that L’Oréal Brandstorm contestants have to work on a product that does not exist in the brand’s current portfolio.

Contestants will work closely with creative agency McCann Erickson and be mentored by L’Oréal executives. This will allow both the contestants and L’Oréal to assess the former’s job fit seen as a great advantage for anyone involved in the recruitment process.

What advice does Mr Pautrier have for would-be contestants, who hope to get their foot into the marketing industry? “We want people who are curious about what is going on around them and who are sensitive to the values of sustainable development, ecology and sociality. We are looking for people who can have a great career in L’Oréal.”

But he also stressed that while the competition requires a lot of hard work and talent, it is a “fun and exciting” journey that contestants should enjoy.

Besides gaining an advantage in the recruitment process, The Pinnacle’s Ms Liu also benefited from a substantial learning experience. The NUS graduate explained that in school, much of what she learned was theoretical. “Working closely with L’Oréal executives allowed us to learn more about the cosmetics industry and what makes it tick. We had to go through the entire marketing process, from the pricing to the packaging,” Ms Liu said.

“We also picked up grooming and presentation skills along the way. This transformational experience has definitely given me an additional stepping stone in my marketing career at L’Oréal.”