It’s okay to fail and try again

TenCube CEO
Darius Cheung talks about the people who inspired him to be an entrepreneur

1
His father
Buy a light bulb in China and there is a chance the box that it comes in is printed by Leaders Printing Company – a printing factory started by Cheung’s father in the 1960s in Foshan, China.

Now run by Cheung’s elder brother, Cheung Leung, 59, the factory produces boxes and other cardboard products. This early exposure to a business that has lasted two generations instilled the entrepreneurial spirit in Cheung.

It was not an easy road for his late father, who had failed in other ventures prior to achieving modest success in the printing business.

But it was his father’s attitude of inquiry that left the deepest impression on Cheung.

“It was curiosity about how things work and can be improved. But it can’t just be an intellectual pursuit as it needs to be profitable too,” he said.

“I also learnt that I should be always thinking about the business reasons behind things.”

2
Stalwarts in the industry
Cheung also looks to industry stalwarts for inspiration. They include people from Bill Gates to the founders of Google. Local heroes include Creative Technology’s Sim Wong Hoo and Ong Peng Teo of Encrentuate fame.

“They are inspirations to what I want to do,” he said.

3
His neighbour
The man who gave Cheung his “aha moment” was his neighbour at Foster City in Silicon Valley. It was in 2000, when he was spending a year in the United State’s under the NUS Overseas Colleges scheme.

“He looked a little silly and clumsy,” recalled Cheung. The absent-minded man would leave his car lights on and Cheung would have to help him jump start his car. Or he would forget his house keys.

However, over beer at a barbecue, Cheung’s neighbour revealed who he was: one of three partners of a business that elby bought for US$50 million ($67.5 million).

As Cheung recalled, his neighbour claimed no special attributes except being stubborn and not giving up.

It made Cheung realise that many successful people in Silicon Valley were ordinary when they started their business.

“They are no smarter than NUS students and no better-equipped or connected than us in Singapore,” he said.

“The only difference is that they don’t give up. For them, it’s okay to fail and try again.”

By Tan Chong Yew