

## CAREER EVENTS

## A Hunger For Success

 Post on 04-Aug-10  
by Mark Lim T.T.


CHARLES CHEN

**Charles Chen is a winner of the Successful Entrepreneur Awards 2010.**

As the founder and Managing Director of FoodNet Consultants, Charles and his professional team of **food consultants** have assisted more than 250 food manufacturers, restaurants and food services, logistics hubs and cold chain, food caterers, canteens, packaging materials manufacturers, food grade sanitizing chemicals manufacturer, pharmaceutical manufacturers, supermarkets and farms in Singapore, Malaysia, Australia and China in their journey towards food safety.

*JobsDB chats to Charles to find out more about his entrepreneurial journey and how he overcame the odds to build up FoodNet Consultants to become a reputable player in Singapore's food safety industry today.*

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### CHARLES, WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO SETUP FOODNET CONSULTANTS?

After returning to Singapore upon completing my Bachelor (Degree with Distinction) in Business Administration (Marketing) at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia, I worked as a **Business Development Manager** for an Australian food safety company. It was not long after I started work that my Australian boss actually wanted to close our Singapore office as prospects weren't that good back then. As I had a passion for food safety, I decided to follow my entrepreneurial instincts and bought over the business from him. Thus, FoodNet Consultants was born.

It was quite tough in the beginning as business was slow and we only had a handful of clients in the first few years, and I even went by without taking a salary at certain times. However, I was fortunate to have a loyal team of **colleagues** with me and we persisted on. In 2004, things began to look up for us as food hygiene was a hot topic in Singapore and the importance of being **HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) certified for operators, directly and indirectly in the food chain** was becoming important, and therefore many companies in the food supply chain wanted to get HACCP certified. So from then on, our business has been steadily expanding and growing and we have not looked back since.

### HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WINNING THE SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR AWARD 2010?

Frankly speaking, I would like to dedicate this award to my fantastic team of hardworking and dedicated staff at FoodNet Consultants. I'm also grateful to the support from all our valued clients and the confidence that they have in us.

### WHAT DOES FOODNET CONSULTANTS DO?

We provide our clients with a wide range of services with the main ones being -

- HACCP (Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points) Food Safety System
- ISO 9001 / ISO 14001 / ISO 18001 for food industry
- ISO 22000 (an integrated system that combines HACCP & ISO 9000)
- Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) - Food and Pharmaceutical Industry
- Supplier Assessment Program (SAP) and Food Safety Audit
- Assistance in Statutory Submission for Food-Related Premises
- Productivity Enhancement Program
- Process Innovation Program

We have also launched our collection of food tools and equipment that caters to the food industries under the i-Clean, i-Measure and I-Care collection.

### WHAT'S YOUR JOB LIKE AS MANAGING DIRECTOR?

My job is very dynamic in nature as I'm usually flying around different Asia Pacific countries to meet up with our clients, so it's very interesting to learn different trends and new methods of doing business as well.

I'm essentially the ideas person who provides the strategic direction and targets to achieve while my consultants will take care of the technical aspects of the business. As our company is a one-person directorship (myself), I find it easy and fast to implement things as there is no delay when important decisions have to be made.

Some of my personal achievements that I take pride in are having personally designed seafood processing food factories, central kitchens and manufacturing of processed and ready to eat food facilities for my clients. Secondly, I have with me loyal and dedicated warriors whom have fight side-by-side with me in this journey towards entrepreneurship. Thirdly, I have build up a nice group of "Friends of FoodNet" whom are our clients that we regularly meet and update each other on the latest trends in the food industry and share ideas.


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#### HOW ARE JOB PROSPECTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE FOOD SAFETY INDUSTRY?

The prospects are good and getting better all the time. This is because Singapore is striving to become a food safety hub in the Asia Pacific region. So there will be good job opportunities for [food science graduates](#) who want to work as food safety auditors, food inspectors and many other related food safety job roles.

Many of our staff that I've hired at FoodNet Consultants are from [Generation Y](#) and are in their early and late twenties. I like working with them as they are vibrant and always think of new and innovative ideas and solutions to increase our clients' productivity.

#### WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE FOR BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS?

Here are a few pointers that I'd like to share -

1. **Keep on learning**
2. **Keep an open mind**
3. **Be willing to try new things**
4. **Don't be afraid of hardship**
5. **Cultivate a keen sense of foresight**

Sharing from my own experience regarding some of the above pointers, I've diversified into other businesses besides FoodNet Consultants. For example, I'm currently a **certified WDA approved trainer, course developer and assessor under the Advanced Certificate in Training and Assessment Program as well as a Practising Management Consultant under Institute of Management Consultants (Singapore).**

I've also established **Business Excellence Consultants Pte Ltd**, which focuses on general consultancy services in areas of Quality Management Systems and Good Distribution Practices for Medical Devices, and **Asia Capital Asset Management Pte Ltd** which is currently a venture capitalist and an investment holding establishment for food factories.

And one final important piece of advice that I have for budding entrepreneurs is... remember to have a banker, lawyer and a doctor among your close friends! Why? Well, the answer makes a lot of sense and I invite you to figure it out for yourself.



To find out more about FoodNet Consultants, visit [www.foodnetconsultants.com](http://www.foodnetconsultants.com)