

HANGING *IN THERE*

Japanese architects have been going on and on for years about the strength and versatility of paper and cardboard. But it was Thian Ziwen who took a ballsy attempt at developing a recyclable alternative to plastic and metal – and the cardboard clothes hanger was born. Developed in 2008, they've not only managed to convince choice dry-cleaners to go green, they've taken their unique product one step further by pushing its advertising potential.

Tell us how the inspiration for bloomerHang came about.

It definitely didn't come to me as a flash in the sky – I wish I could tell you something exciting like that. It would be closer to the truth to say it was a combination of experience, opportunity and gut feel.

I have spend a number of years doing business development, and at working with plastics and paper. So when this business idea of replacing plastic hangers with earth-friendlier alternatives struck me, I jumped at the opportunity and started bloomerHang. I'd wanted bloomerHang to be driven by bright ideas – and bloomerHang®, our proprietary eco-clothes hanger that doubles up as a novel advertising platform, is our first product.

What was the initial reception like?

As with most things new, there's inertia to some degree. Given time and exposure, I believe Singaporeans will take to bloomerHang.

What is the usual response of vendors when you pitch bloomerHang?

There's the expected scepticism: Is a cardboard and paper hanger strong enough to hold up my clothes? With clever enough design and the right choice of paper materials, our bloomerHang can hold up a full business suit, and more.

Are there plans to take bloomerHang regionally?

We have got people calling in on us from Brisbane, French New Caledonia, Shanghai, even Kuwait, all wanting to import the idea to their cities. We're always open to talking with interested parties. We're hopeful we can export this idea overseas.

What about plans to make more items environmentally friendly?

Yes, there are. In fact, we were recently contracted by the Khoo Teck Puat Hospital to eco-design, and produce, their in-ward cardboard bedside amenities tray, door knob signage, clothes hangers. We will be putting up our new eco-designer ideas for a table condiment stand, and bathroom amenities packaging real soon, too.

Tell us about your proudest moment.

When we had our picture taken with President S R Nathan at the Istana. We were there as a proud finalist for our bloomerHang at the President Design Award. We didn't win, but we toured the Istana, and ate our body weights' worth of very delicious buffet food.

Is there anyone in particular that you would like to work with?

My future self. With the benefit of hindsight unique to my set of experiences – and mistakes, I figure I will have no better

teacher than my future self. I am very sure I would save myself and others around me, a lot of time, headache and heartache.

How much was your start up capital?

\$10,000.

Do you think there can be further improvement to your product?

Currently, our cardboard and paper eco-hangers work best in wardrobes – and not so great with wet laundry! We hope to develop a waterproof version of bloomerHang. This way, there would be no excuse not to 'green' your entire wardrobe, and throw out (recycle) those non-biodegradable plastic hangers.

Thian Ziwen, 29,
founder and director
of bloomerHang



Suit by **Massimo
Dutti**; Knit vest
by **Uniqlo**; Tie
by **Raoul**