

# Navigating Environmental and Entrepreneurial Challenges



## Cayden Chia-Hui Tan

MPhil Graduate in Environmental Engineering

Malaysian Cayden Tan found his experience as a graduate student at HKUST taught him more than just how to expand his academic knowledge. It deepened his awareness of his personal strengths and enabled him to develop the skills necessary to launch an entrepreneurial career.

### Choosing HKUST

With a Bachelor's in civil engineering and an expanding interest in sustainability in Malaysia, Cayden decided to pursue environmental engineering for his postgraduate studies.

*"HKUST was a good option for me. It was close to my family in Malaysia and there was no language barrier as I was fluent in English, and had learned Cantonese from watching television dramas since childhood, which offered added convenience for my life in Hong Kong. The university was also situated in an important Asian business hub, so a good starting point for a prospective entrepreneur."*

Beyond the academic and career opportunities afforded by studying at HKUST, Cayden was also attracted by the facilities and location of the campus.

*"After Googling the university and seeing its setting I was even keener to go. There was just one word to describe the campus - amazing!"*

### Support When Needed

During Cayden's two years at HKUST his studies proved challenging, given the lack of preparation from his undergraduate degree in the demands of a high-powered research university it took time to adapt. However with the support of supervisor Prof Chii Shang, who coached him in conducting and presenting impeccable academic research, he was able to flourish over the course of his studies.

Along the way, Cayden discovered how essential it is to have someone ready to listen and provide encouragement, as long as you let them know that you need help.

*"In Asia, your supervisor is usually regarded as a lo baan (boss), but I came to realize at HKUST this was not applicable. Your supervisor is more a guide and mentor, with a parental interest in helping you succeed."*



### A Degree with Special Meaning

As a result of his thesis research, Cayden developed a deep understanding of the impact of seawater on sulfide generation, as well as invaluable knowledge of HKUST's cutting-edge water treatment research. In addition to this expanded academic portfolio, his time at HKUST equipped him with the transferable skills and qualifications to succeed in the workplace. This combination of intellectual development and practical application, his time at HKUST was a key asset for prospective employers.



### Work and Entrepreneurship

Since Cayden graduated he has continued to embrace a variety of opportunities and overcome many challenges. The skills and experience he gained during his time at HKUST enabled him to seize a remarkable variety of career opportunities that were available to him.

*"A lot of miracles have happened to me over the years in my studies and the way my work has always moved forward. I think my strength is that I believe if I keep looking ahead, I will be successful."*

After graduation from HKUST with a "dare to try" attitude, Cayden first founded a trading company with partners he met during his MPhil.



He moved on to assist a prominent Chinese marketing executive to access the Indian market. In this role, he was entrusted with the challenging responsibility of leading a team of 20 professionals tasked with understanding the key penetration methods within a new market. In addition, Cayden was given the responsibility of handling the logistics of the monthly visits of up to 100 prominent Chinese businesspeople.

This essential experience enabled him to seize the most unique opportunity of his post-HKUST career, a contract to work for the Shen Zhen Media Group, who were in India to film The Amazing Race. Using his local contacts with Chinese speakers in India, Cayden provided and organized 20 interpreters who were essential to the on-the-ground logistics of the production of the globally-renowned television series.

Now back in Malaysia putting his extensive marketing experience to full use, he is seeking to combine his MPhil knowledge, sales skills, and entrepreneurial dreams to start a business related to stormwater management or water treatment.

