

INTRODUUCTION TO CYBERPRENEUR
(BEN2014)
INTERVIEW REPORT

GARY NG
(WWW.WANITA.NET)

MULTIMEDIA UNIVERSITY

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SECTION A: INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY

The Rationale of Interview Gary Ng

The world of business today is not about corporate giants, boardroom debacles or distant communications. Rigid structures take a back seat as technology, especially the Internet, brings on a creative wave of change to merchandising mindsets. Although e-business and e-commerce are relatively new concepts in Malaysia, the buzz is fast catching up among cyberpreneurs. This document is a detail report of an interview with Gary Ng as a young crop of cyberpreneur in Malaysia. It was written for “Introduction to Cyberpreneurship” class and investigates the various aspects of a cyberpreneur in order to operate effective online business.

At 30, this cyberpreneur oversees the operations and management of online entertainment store. Gary Ng is one the founder member of wanita.netTM Network during its launch on 1998. Over the seven short years, wanita.netTM Network (<http://wanita.net>) has become the leading Chinese entertainment channel & online store in Malaysia. Wanita.net offers original content, tools and interactive services primarily for Chinese literate women in Asia. This site had build a strong women-oriented net community in Asia (“wanita” means woman in malay language), and its diverse content has attracted attention from internet users in China with a base of over 60,000 visitors each month. Wanita.netTM E-Shop (<http://shopping.wanita.net>) is one of the e-commerce website under the network as a leading Internet source of Asian entertainment products in Malaysia. Apart from that, I*VOTE Global Chinese Music Chart ([wanita.netTM Music](http://wanita.net/IVOTE_Music)) is recognized as one and the only online music chart in the region. Moreover, wanita.netTM E-Shop (<http://shopping.wanita.net>) is ranked high by its customers with an emphasis on quality service, frequently new release updates and wide range of product selection.

As managing director of Mediaware interactive, Gary is an unassuming talent whose quiet demeanor believes the eight years of experience he has accumulated in the

entertainment business. Gary foresee the potential of virtual marketplace during the introductory period of e-commerce in Malaysia which he believes people are prepared to buy items online and certain products like books, movie and music tend to market well on the internet.

Methodology

Informal semi-structured interviews permit a greater degree of participation between the interviewer and interviewee. In addition, this interview format allows interviewees to expand on different issues and recount pertinent experiences. For these reasons, the interview was take place at Gary's home office after permission is granted. Before we met with Gary, a draft questionnaire was email to him for acknowledgement and preparation. We had research on his company background before meeting him in order to give a better impression and interaction during the interview. Tasks were distributed accordingly to the group members after group meeting. Interview task distributions are assigned as below:

Leader	: Wong Zi Jian
Photographer	: Wong Zi Jian
Interviewer	: Loo Hoe Tiang
Amanuensis	: Leong Kok Kit, Ch'ng Pei Feng
Video Recorder	: Wong Soon Foon , Beh Hwa Meng
Audio recorder	: See Zi Ping

SECTION B: INTERVIEW REPORT

Interview Session with Gary Ng

After all the preparations and studies done so far, finally there is a chance to meet and discuss with Gary Ng of his taught and experiences for our further understanding of Cyberpreneurship. The interview session took place in Gary Ng's Small Office Home Office (SOHO), and we spent around one and the half hour with him.

Steamboat : **“Hi, good morning!”**

Gary : “Good morning!”

Steamboat : “Thank you! First of all, we would like to thank you in advance for your kindness of spending the precious times with us early in the morning. We Steamboat, are from Multimedia University (MMU) Cyberjaya, with undergraduateship of Creative Multimedia course, greatly appreciate the opportunity of interviewing with a cyberpreneur that will benefit our comprehension and understanding of Cyberpreneurship. Nice to meet you.”

Gary : “Like vise.”

Steamboat : **“So, shall we begin?”**

Gary : “Great.”

Steamboat : **“Alright! Why you have started the business as your vision of the company?”**

Gary : “Then I think the story should begin in the year of 1998 when I was a media reporter. It was an intrapersonal conflict when I started to doubt about my current job and my goal of life. I realized that was not my interest and so I was wondering what will be my desired environment. Then, I decided to leave the company and signed up at an internet company. Internet was fresh, new and acted like a stranger to many people in Malaysia. During that time, I started to realize the importance of Internet and I know one day it will be the future, the most popular and efficient

media. My interest started here with a vision of a media that can change people life in the future.”

Steamboat : “That is impressive. What is your objective of the enterprise?”

Gary : “Since Internet will be people’s future as well as my future, I setup my objective and goals to achieve as being focus on Internet as a media, which connect people togetherness and in the mean time will bring up a lot of opportunities in the field of media. Therefore, my main objective of the enterprise was to utilize the Internet and lead people to visit frequently, a place to hang around while receive or contribute information and knowledge.”

Steamboat : “What is the profile of your target segment customers?”

Gary : “During that time, all websites was basically targeting male instead of female. I initiated to take a step further from the original place, to start a website that female will hang around, and in the mean time lead female to learn about Internet. Then the focus will on entertainment since I know that entertainment will be a big attraction to my main target user female. It became the first online media for women in Asia during that time.”

Steamboat : “When did you form your team and start up your promotion activities?”

Gary : “Basically, my team started with 5 people during September 1998. We formed up and started our planning and organizing for the female website. It took around 3 months to reach completion of the website, and therefore, we launched our online business on 1st of December 1998.”

Steamboat : “How did you generate revenue from the business?”

Gary : “A website, the amount of visitors were the key element that we made efforts and pay attention at. It was extremely important that website have visitors because visitors equal to revenues. In the other words, revenues led by visitors. At first, my company worked as a web consultant to generate some basic revenues to support the basic expenses of the company. There were client from US, China Press and some radio station. Beside that, we

offered online advertising by advertising banner and email marketing as well as some activities of E-Commerce such as selling album and some products. In the mean time, we worked for some big client such as Toyota and Honda to construct consumer behavior marketing survey in Asia through Internet before they design a car for Asian. Basically, we will do everything about Internet.”

Steamboat : “What are the hardware, software and network used, and domains to setup an online business?”

Gary : “We have bought our own server acted as a base located at Cyberjaya. It became our biggest investment during that time. Then, we bought computers with multimedia capabilities which equipped with visual, audio as well as network abilities. Actually, we did not buy any software except Microsoft as an Operating System. All the Internet applications used to setup the website, we coded the script ourselves. Then, once you owned a computer that installed network abilities, you can actually start to connect to the Internet and start your journey of exploration. The domain name as you all know was www.wanita.net and the reason why “wanita” is female in Bahasa Melayu. I wanted to feature female and entertainment both go alive online. Now, we actually possessed some websites that acted as affiliates for www.wanita.net, there were www.mediawave.com.my, www.erictoyoyou.net, www.dannytoyoyou.net, www.ivote.com.my, www.shopping.wanita.net.”

Steamboat : “What are the problems or obstacles you have faced and how did you encounter them?”

Gary : “Internet changes rapidly. We have to keep track with the technology because we knew Internet will evolve. We face very little problem technically because we have well planned our goals and objectives in the early stage which we will only focus on content instead of flashy or fancy design of the website. The content and information will be the main attractions and attentions for people to visit our website. A community site

was built to maintain visitors to contribute and receive information instead of pure media website. That was also a hard time when I started up my business, I have visited almost all advertising agency to actually teach them Internet such as what is Internet, how useful it is and so on to lead them to the Internet. Back to the business section, the major problem we faced during that time was actually the venture capital fund because we need to hire media editor, promotional manager and so on to make the business work. Therefore, we tried many ways to gain revenue to make our dreams come true. We initiated with RM 60,000 as our capital to run the business but the first and second year of our business was actually lead us to lost of few hundred thousands. However, we never give up the business and try a lot of method to get ourselves out of the situation. We make improvement bit by bit to suit the market taste. After all, we successfully get a job from a US Company, and we started our profiles and profits from the business.”

Steamboat : “What was the cost of initial investment and approximately operating cost per year?”

Gary : “As I mentioned just now, we started our business with the initial investment of RM 60,000. The cost like server, equipments and applications were actually distributed by the initial investment amount. I still remember the price of computer was too high compare to now during that time, if I am not mistaken; it is around RM 7000 to RM 10000 one basic set of computer. Operating cost per year was quite high in order to maintain server, websites, hardware, applications, and copyright issue, so on.”

Steamboat : “Then, how did you obtain your finances?”

Gary : “We have no business deal with some corporate to increase our business revenue because we do not like to restrict in the formal business compound. We prefer a casual working environment so that we can actually come out something more creative and fresh. Therefore, the only way to obtain revenue is by online activities that I have mentioned just now.”

Steamboat : “Then, what are the security arrangement or protection for safeguarding the enterprise from copiers/pirates and competitors?”

Gary : “We trademarked the logo of wanita.net, and then registered the entire related URL. However, bear in mind, everyone able to do something exactly like yours, the only one stand out who are the one more creative and more efforts putting on it. We have no way to control copier but to outstand them by community features, provide more interaction to the users such as forum, blogs and so on. This is more like a two way sharing communications where you can receive and contribute information on our website. Anyway, we have actually reached 6 millions of visitors per month, and that is a really huge amount.”

Steamboat : “Do you offer any franchisees and what are their arrangements?”

Gary : “One is more than enough in the Internet business, so we do not have any franchisees.”

Steamboat : “It is alright. Then how did you promote your business?”

Gary : “I have a lot of ideas on this, but not every of it is workable in Malaysia. Basically it is all about online advertising and activities to approach my target audience. Customer relationship management is very important in order to achieve good results from visitors. We provide goods that target audience needs because we understand our customers. The goods like album, VCD, Korean or Japanese Movies, for example, Malay album is really hard to find on the website, it can be a market as well. Then, we had provided sponsors to get more exposure on the entertainment field. One interesting way of promoting was the Star Chat. We have collaboration with Taiwan artists and invited them to sit in front of computer to have an online chat conversation with the fans lively. We get very good responses from this promotion activities. However, not everyone in Malaysia get to complete stuffs through Internet like bill payment, fund transfer and so on, obviously it evolve too slow here. I will recommendation to create a portal site for Malaysian such as Kimo, Yahoo, and Google and so on. However,

it is still too hard to find information in Malaysia because Google.com.my does not contain everything about Malaysia. So, it is good to own a portal site but the limitations will be ability and financial because that need a big bucks of investment.”

Steamboat : “What competitions you are facing and how the company overcoming it?”

Gary : “The major competitor was Octopus that has big capital over the industry. In order to overcome our competitors, we put ourselves focus, and at the end of the day, we get lesser and lesser competitors because when you are focused, you will realize that the things you are doing is actually different to them.”

Steamboat : “So, what are the future plans of your company?”

Gary : “We plan to expand our company to the market; “wanita” is not only limited to online business, but a brand. Our attention is shifting to artist industry as a strategy to attract more people to browse our website. Therefore at the end of the day, online will become a tool to intercommunion.”

Steamboat : “Lastly, what advises will you provide to the young enterprenuer?”

Gary : “Think! One word from me for the young enterprenuer is to think creatively and come out something different. There are a lot of opportunities over the Internet but only the creative people will stand out of it.”

Steamboat : “Thank you so much for you advises, and that will be the end of our conversation today. Once again, we appreciate the time we spent today, and thank you!”

Gary : “It is alright, you all are welcome”

Steamboat : “See you and have a nice day!”

Gary : “You all too, bye!”

Learning Outcome

From the interview we had with Gary Ng, the founder of Wanita.net, an e-commerce based website which has been established for more than 8 years; we had learnt a lot from this brilliant guy who actually started his business alone and at the same time managed it very well although there was a critical moment for e-commerce during the economic recession of 1998-1999. With his experience, we have no doubt that he will survive very well for another decade or even more. We also found that most of the things he does has been taught in our Cyberpreneurship class. Gary Ng started his e-commerce business during the recession, when most of the e-business went down. From this point of view, he must be a person who is brave and dare to take risks, or perhaps in another way of saying, he manages risks well; which is a very important factor in order to become a successful entrepreneur. Most people would never choose to start their business during big fall in 1998 because many large e-commerce website went down or bankrupt, but Gary Ng has a different perspective in business compared to many ordinary people; to him, it was an opportunity at that time and he grabbed this golden opportunity to start his business online.

He was a media reporter, who has the experience in almost everything in the press industry. This is because he chose to switch from departments to departments just to gain more experience in editorial works. These were a few years before he started his Wanita.net. He expanded his contacts and gain his reputation in the media field and therefore when he started his Wanita.net, he already have a very strong influence and background in manipulating media; and it is believed that Gary Ng's strong foundation in press media is very critical and important in running his e-business. Back in 1998, there wasn't any Chinese language based website in Malaysia. In fact, not many people know what were the internet and the usage of this new media for transmitting information to their specific groups of user. During our interview, Gary Ng said that he believe in the more risk he take, the more opportunity there will be. Therefore, he started to plan his business very carefully to minimize the risk and possible lost. A 'failure to develop a strategic plan' is one of the ten deadly mistakes that an entrepreneur should

avoid; therefore, after the proper planning, he invested a server in Cyberjaya and some hardware like computers and laptops. He start his business small which only have five worker including himself; the surviving skill of keeping Wanita.net alive is to run the business in small scale. As we learnt from the class, an uncontrolled growth is a deadly mistake of entrepreneurship; it is clearly that he did not take this false step.

He was very sure as he targets the women for his e-business; it is believe that female has more prohibitive consumption ability than the male. Without a proper investigation, he could not have been so sure about his target user. His creativity in inserting entertainment element in Wanita.net is very important to attract more users to browse his website. As we mention, Wanita.net is not only selling CDs online, it is also planting new local artists. The merging of these two elements is considerably new and has not been done by any other e-commerce website; therefore, it is proved that he is a very creative and innovative cyberpreneur.

We have learnt a lot from the interview with Gary Ng. Although we do not agree some of the point he mentioned. For example, he does not like to wear proper attire when having business meeting and such. But his positive spirit and confidence of believing in himself portrayed a strong example of a good entrepreneur and cyberpreneur. We have learnt that proper planning is very important in starting e-commerce. Without proper planning, unwanted result and unpredictable result will occur and may lead to failure of an entrepreneurship or Cyberpreneurship.

We also learnt that a good entrepreneur will have control over the company's growth. If a company grows too fast, and uncontrolled investment keeps coming into the company, there is a chance that the company will end up failing. www.octopus.com.my is one of the examples. With well-planned investment and management, the business will run more effectively and efficiently. As a matter of fact, creativity and innovation in entrepreneurship and Cyberpreneurship is very critical and important. We should apply more creativity and innovation into a business if we wish to start a business or e-commerce; such details should not be taken lightly.

From the interview with Gary Ng, we realize the importance of forecasting future trend. The key reason to Wanita.net's success is because they were one of the pioneers

in e-commerce. Since the government's support in e-commerce and information technology in the early 2000's, in addition, the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project, more and more user began to learn the importance of internet and the internet gradually became the main platform for entrepreneurs to start up their company. This proven that the ability to see potential in future development and opportunity is very important for a successful entrepreneur or cyberpreneur.

Suggestions of Improvement

We learnt that the founder of Wanita.net does not like to wear formal attire in meeting possible business partner. We think that it is very important to wear proper attire depending on the situation and people whom we meet. It is a form of respect and we should practice this all the time. Therefore, we have made a suggestion of wearing more appropriate attire depending on what client or business partner we're meeting in future business opportunity.

During our interview, he mentioned that flash elements were never been use in his website because it is very hard to maintain. As designers, having the knowledge in handling flash elements, we disagree with him because we think that flash is very important for websites nowadays because it will act as a form of visual upgrade users. In fact, flash elements add character to the look and feel for a website. If u study any websites for successful companies all around the world, flash is unavoidable and definitely a plus for their website. Therefore we would definitely suggest the use of flash elements, to add the feminine touch to Wanita.net, and also to enhance the features and interaction between users.

We also learn that Wanita.net is selling a lot of items and not all items sold are targeted for female users. The fact that Wanita.net is targeting mainly on female users, therefore we think Wanita.net should maintain its stand on focusing on female users because this will strengthen its identity as Malaysia's number one female website. A proper study on female consumer behavior might be necessary for a better growth in terms of Wanita.net's branding identity. If a company's direction is not clear, there is a

possibility that Wanita.net will be heading in different directions and end up not reaching anywhere.

A study on design layout is needed at least once a few years. Layout design which users find appealing does not necessarily works for younger users nowadays. Because they have exposure to more sophisticated and interesting websites, we think that Wanita.net's layout is too informative and text based, which we believe is hard to attract younger generation users. Perhaps Wanita.net would like to try to change the overall touch and feel for its website. Since their main target audiences are female users, maybe they can choose a more suitable color scheme. Something soft from pink to peach or violet might works well for female users. This will strengthen their stand as a female website and users will feel more comfortable browsing through a website where they feel belonged to.

SECTION C: EVIDENCE

Brochures

Online news below which found on asia.internet.com shows that wanita.net had been partner with Japan's AIP who planned to develop surveys over the internet in the Asia Region during year 1999.



Figure 1: Print Screen e-news from <http://asia.internet.com>

Photos

Picture 1: Managing director of Mediaware interactive, Gary Ng was interviewed by Hoe Tiang.



Picture 2: Gary was answering the interview question.



Picture 3: Groups members was covering the task distributed during group meeting.



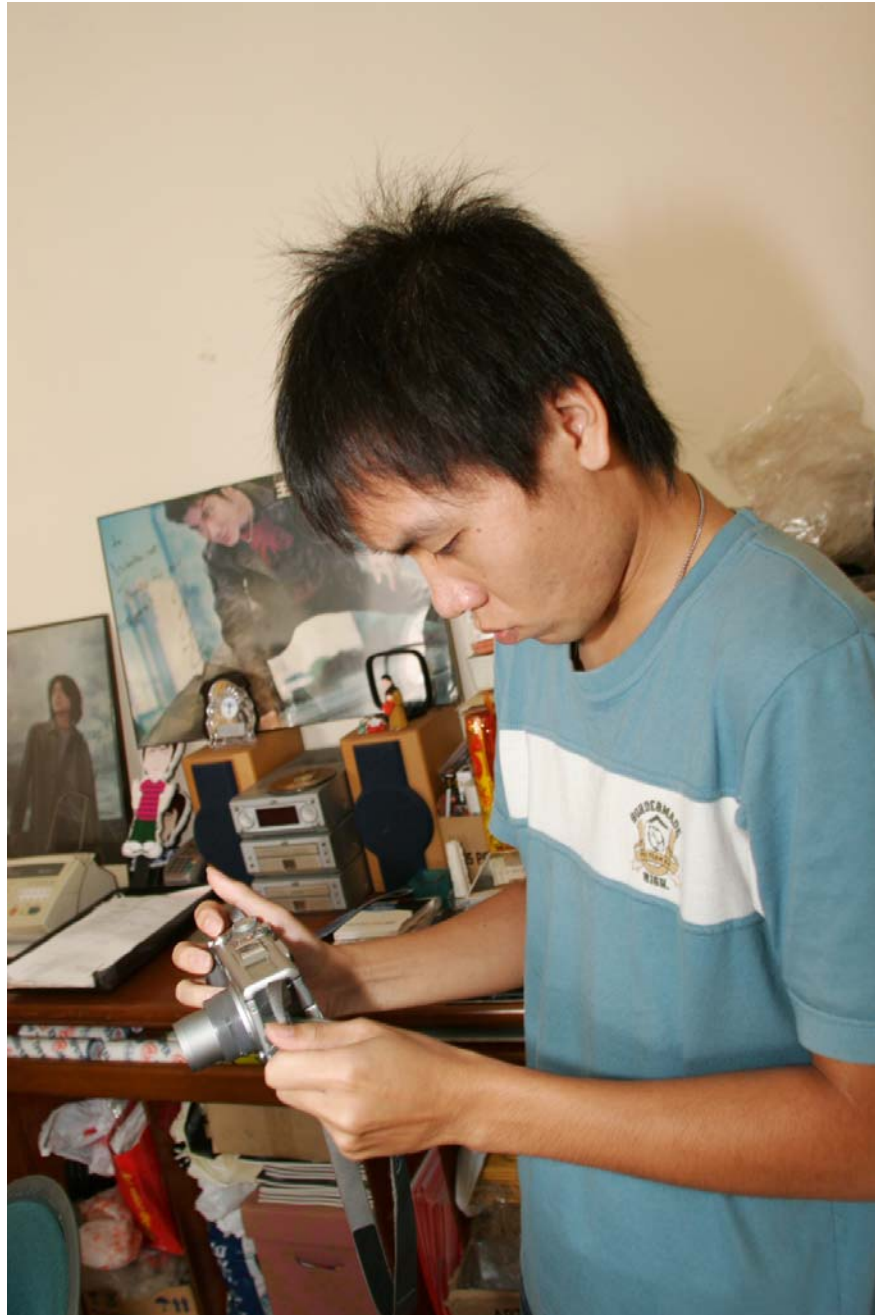
Picture 4: Kok Kit was writing down the key point of the interview.



Picture 5: Soon Foon was recording down the interview process using digital camera.



Picture 6: Another shot of our video recorder, Soon Foon.



Picture 7: Another video recorder, Melvin was trying to record down the interview from another angle.



Picture 8: Hoe Tiang, the interviewer of this interview.



Picture 9 : Zi Ping who in charge of voice recording was recording down the dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee.



Picture 10: Group members were concentrating in listening how Gary starts up his online business.



Picture 11: Kok Kit was listening to the key point answered by Gary.



Picture 12: A group photo of our members and Gary was taken at the end of the interview session. Our group leader, Zi Jian was excluded in this picture because he was the one who taking this picture.



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