

Science & Technology

Susan Chong, 39 CEO, Greenpac

Seven years ago, Susan left her husband's packaging business to start Greenpac because she saw an opportunity for cost-efficient, "green" packaging. "At that time many saw the industry as being in its sunset phase; packaging was thought of as the least important process – all you needed was a crate or box. But I believed environment-friendly packaging was the way to go," says Susan, who started her business with a \$30,000 government grant and two employees.

But it still took her three years to convince reluctant companies to take packaging seriously. "When more businesses started bringing in expensive cargo, such as medical equipment, they began to understand the importance of packaging. Packing efficiently or changing packaging material can help reduce the weight and cost of a shipment," she explains.

Today, Greenpac's clientele includes Fortune 500 companies such as ExxonMobil and Hewlett-Packard. The company, now with a staff strength of 20, has been recognised for its green, innovative use of technology. Last October, the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises named Susan Entrepreneur of the Year. Greenpac also received the Enterprise 50 Award, ranking fourth among 50 enterprising private companies in Singapore. It now outsources the production of packaging materials, and offers customised packing services.

Susan, who has four children aged between 11 and 27, two of whom are from her husband's previous marriage, is also one of 12 founding members of Creators of Tomorrow, an initiative that promotes creativity and the use of technology among local youths.

She says, "Being in a male-dominated industry meant I sometimes had to work harder than my competitors to earn respect. I had to lead by example. Once, I asked the workers to remove some packages that were blocking the passageway. When they ignored me repeatedly, I climbed onto the forklift and started moving the boxes myself. The workers panicked and started running after me, especially since I was six months' pregnant back then!"



GOLD RING WITH DIAMONDS: POH HENG