

Sand man

INNOVATION TRAINER ALVIN LEE,
TAMPINES GRC

Drenched in sweat and knee deep in wet sand, Alvin Lee, picks up a zigzag-shaped plastic tool and in one stroke, makes perfect semi-circles in the sand. "This one, a kid taught me how to do," he guffaws. Watching him, it's easy to see how much alive the child is in this 45-year-old man, as he gleefully plays in the sand.

In his hand is a mould he designed to help make sandcastle stairs. But used in a different way, it also makes a grand entrance for his sandcastle. And that is exactly what Alvin expounds at the creativity and innovation seminars he leads today – to think out of the

box. "It's not the hardware. It's what you make of it," he says.

He uses his natural gift of the gab, his experiences and his exuberance to inspire others. His favourite catch phrase is "I don't know. Let's find out together."

Almost 10 years ago, Alvin quit his job as a general manager of a factory to pursue what at first was a hobby but which soon became an obsession – to sell his patented sandcastle moulds.

Speaking to 'experts' in the industry was a disheartening exercise. But instead of being discouraged, Alvin was plagued by the

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question, "Why not?" He headed for USA to hunt for a manufacturer who would support his idea – to make "The Lego of Sandcastle Toys". With only US\$5,000, he gave himself three months to make it or break it. Thankfully, straight-talking Alvin got his way.

He now uses his sandcastle moulds as tools for team-building workshops he holds for corporations. He also gives talks on entrepreneurship. "Just like Bill Gates created Microsoft so others can create great software from it, I make tools so that others can use it to be the best they can be," he adds.

– Sharon Lim



SPRINGROLES

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