

CEO Unplugged oversubscribed by a 100%

The response was so overwhelming that a live webcast was beamed into an additional venue (LT17) where members of the audience were allowed to SMS in their questions to Start-Up@Singapore's invited CEOs.

BY JOANNA WONG

WITH two jam-packed venues and an astonishing turnout of over 350 guests, CEO Unplugged lived up to its billing as one of Start-Up@Singapore's (S@S') most insightful and inspiring events this year. Scheduled to run from 6.30pm to 8.00pm on 18 October 2007, CEO Unplugged was held at the NUS Business School's Hon Sui Sen Auditorium. S@S' invited CEOs were Mr Adam Khoo (Founder and CEO, Adam Khoo Learning Technologies Group) and Mr Ivan Lee (Founder and CEO, Thai Express).

After the opening address by Assoc. Prof. Quek Ser Aik from the NUS Business School and a short presentation by Veerappan Swaminathan from S@S'08, the stage was handed over to S@S' moderator for the evening, Assoc. Prof. Tan Hwee Hoon from the SMU Lee Kong Chian School of Business.

She proceeded to invite Mr Adam Khoo on stage and introduce him to the audience. Having graduated with an Honours degree in Business Administration from NUS, Mr Adam Khoo went on to become a self-made millionaire by the age of 26. He currently owns and runs three businesses with a combined annual sales of over \$20 million. He revealed that being a good entrepreneur required one to be extremely resourceful and open to new ideas. He also added that there was no need to be academically gifted. Only one who possessed the will to succeed and who dared to dream would succeed as an entrepreneur. In his opinion, an entrepreneur "should not focus on money, but on how to create value for the people around [him/her]." Emphasizing his belief that one should do what one loves doing, he remarked that only in doing so would one "be a 100% committed to it." Last, but not least, Mr Adam Khoo announced plans for a new book of his to be released sometime early next year.

Mr Ivan Lee was the next to be invited on stage. Having double majored in Philosophy and Economics at NUS, Mr Ivan Lee had gone on to launch restaurant chains such as Thai



MAKING A POINT: Assoc. Prof. Tan Hwee Hoon was the moderator in a lively and interactive session graced by Mr Adam Khoo (Founder and CEO, Adam Khoo Learning Technologies Group) and Mr Ivan Lee (Founder and CEO, Thai Express).

Express, New York New York and Xin Wang Hong Kong Café. He quickly made known his belief that an entrepreneur should never be egotistical and content with success since this would ultimately lead to downfall. He remarked that "a large part of succeeding in business has to do with being a good leader" and insisted that successful entrepreneurs should already know how to build, nurture and manage strong human capital in a company. As a result, he also believed in empowering the managers in charge of each of his restaurant chains and giving them the freedom to run these chains. Reiterating what Mr Adam Khoo had earlier said, he pointed out that entrepreneurship can never be learnt from books and that one's dreams and perseverance were far more important attributes. He even advised those in the audience to throw away their textbooks as "they do not apply to the real world".

During the question and answer session, audience members from LT17 were undoubtedly the most active with numerous SMS questions being sent in. All in all, CEO Unplugged was a resounding success with some members of the audience opting to stand in the Auditorium so as to be closer to the action. One audience member even went as far as to say that "by making it sound so easy, they made me want to start my own business."

S@S' next major event, the Youth Boot Camp, will be held from 14 to 15 December 2007. In this event, selected students from Singapore's secondary schools and junior colleges will be invited to learn the fundamentals of realizing their ideas commercially. Some of the key topics to be covered include idea generation, market analysis, financial projections, intellectual property and technology management. The Youth Boot Camp will culminate in a pitching contest that will see Singapore's youth put their presentation skills to the test in the hopes of winning an attractive cash prize.