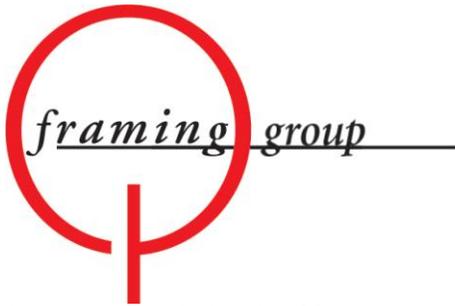


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Elevating a Thing of Beauty: **Q Framing Pte Ltd**

Q Framing Pte Ltd was set up in February 2002 as Q Framing Unlimited. What began as a Fine Arts Framing business has evolved into a full-service business offering not only Museum Quality Framing but also Arts

Conservation, Collection Management, Fine Arts Maintenance Services as well as local Fine Arts delivery and installation service.

The company is helmed by Steven Yip and Zoe Kew, who collectively possess over 50 years of experience in the Fine Arts Framing industry. Currently, Mr Yip is the only Certified Picture Framer in Singapore. The certification, which is awarded by the Professional Picture Framers Association of America (PPFA) after passing a stringent written examination, is testament to the level of professional knowledge and experience a customer can expect from Q Framing.

Q Framing is instrumental in introducing museum-standard framing services to Singapore, and is currently the distributor of specialised products used in an array of Museum Framing packages. Ninety per cent of the company's revenue is derived from Singapore-based customers – including the city-state's national museums and galleries, private art galleries, educational institutes and corporations. The balance 10 per cent of revenue comes from its overseas customers, who say they are unable to find such quality services in their respective locations.

Having received particularly good feedback from satisfied customers in Southeast Asia and China, Q Framing is exploring the possibility of setting up a marketing office in a neighbouring country. Additionally, it is looking at plans to consolidate its three main business activities into a one-stop service catering to the Fine Arts community. Through UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Alliance (AEI)'s flagship SME Consultant Programme, Q Framing was looking for an objective brand audit to determine if the company's marketing strategies were optimised to bring the company to the next level.

Fit for a museum

The brand audit project was undertaken by a group of student-consultants under the supervision of a Project Adviser, and supported by a team from UOB-SMU AEI.

Drawing upon their classroom knowledge, the student-consultants utilised methodological approaches to analyse their data. Their primary research involved interviews with customers and industry personnel, and secondary research was done online and through existing industry collateral.

The Porter's Five Forces framework was used to obtain an understanding of the industry, and it also ascertained Q Framing's standing relative to its competitors. Applying the same framework to the customers, the student-consultants determined their needs and motivations, and what factors influenced their purchase decisions.

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Turning to the company, the Value Chain analysis was used to identify the value-generating activities of each of Q Framing's functions. This information was essential to identify the SME's existing and potential sources of differentiation, as customers may be willing to pay for something that is not offered by other framers. A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis was then used to refine and corroborate the information, and discover any relevant findings for Q Framing's branding strategies. For example, the research revealed that the company did not have much of a media presence in the arts and interiors industry space. This finding could suggest a marketing strategy gap in reaching out to new customer segments.

Analysing the industry and company enabled the student-consultants to craft the vision and mission statements for Q Framing, after which they proceeded to develop comprehensive recommendations to achieve them.

Framing a prized asset

The brand strategy is akin to a building block from which to launch a series of brand marketing activities. In addition to a business-level strategy that focused on enhancements to Q Framing's product offerings, the team also provided a marketing strategy that would raise its profile among its existing and potential customers through a series of initiatives.

The key steps for the marketing activities were outlined, along with the manpower requirements and proposed budgets, venues and timelines. Where there might be capacity limitations, feasible alternatives were also provided.

The team also provided a corporate identity package for Q Framing to strengthen its corporate brand image.

A picture says a thousand words

Q Framing's Managing Director Steven Yip said he came into the project "without much expectations" as previous experiences with other consulting programmes with other agencies "did not go very well". He was "pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm" of the student-consulting team and the Institute's support team. He commended them for their diligent and timely follow-up, and also their quick understanding of the "unique industry and also our position in the industry".

The use of a methodological approach is the hallmark of the SME Consulting Programme. For Q Framing, this objective method had identified some of the shortcomings of the company's operating model, which the SME is now looking to address. "What the team has done is to reinforce some of the ideas we already have of our branding and brand value," said Mr Yip. "They used their knowledge to dissect our brand and company, and offered suggestions to enhance our existing strengths and plug some of our weaknesses."

"I am extremely happy with the findings... the team has definitely delivered on the objectives of this project," he said. The company is keen to implement some of the recommendations, and has taken concrete steps to make them a reality. Other suggestions would have to wait as the company is in the midst of rolling out its own initiatives.

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The student-consultants had wanted the opportunity to “gain a better understanding of the consulting industry”, and also obtain different perspectives of looking at business strategies. They were happy to have achieved their objectives. The team appreciated the guidance of Project Adviser Victor Kwan, who provided salient suggestions and feedback, but also allowed them to “express their ideas freely without micro-management”. This enabled them to have the “full experience of being a student-consultant – fully engaged in the project from research to meeting with the SME to providing solutions (to the problems)”. Mr Kwan described the team as being “very professional throughout”, and commended them on the “practical” action plans for Q Framing.

Project Advisor: **Mr Victor Kwan**
Student Consultants: **Kenny Koesoemo**
Bachelor of Business Management, 2013
Maria Stephanie Natawira
Bachelor of Business Management, 2013
Wiky
Bachelor of Business Management, 2013