

Building Farms in the Sky

Roc Koh Chit Song

Co-founder, Corridor Farmers

Roc's entrepreneurial spirit has always been evident, even as a kid. While in primary school, he used to fold paper crafts, put them in attractive boxes and sell them to his classmates. When his neighbours visited his home, he would try to sell them a couple of old books.

When Roc's father was retrenched during the 2008 financial crisis, Roc realised that having a job did not guarantee a secure life. The sense of security would come from running one's own business where one is able to create value. So, while Roc was studying Information Engineering and Media at NTU, he decided to do a Minor in Entrepreneurship (MiE) to learn the basics of starting up a business.

It was during the course that Roc had the opportunity to meet a diverse group of classmates from different backgrounds, with different skills and different competencies. It was also during the course that Roc learned a valuable lesson which he has kept close to his heart. This was a question the instructor of his first MiE module asked, "For a business to be successful, is the idea or the team more important?"

Through discussion and experience, Roc came to the realisation, "Team dynamics in terms of competency is more important than personal relationships. Then, the whole company can move forward." He also learnt the importance of building an extensive network for knowledge tapping and having the humility to ask for help when needed.

After graduation from NTU, Roc got a job even as he was involved with several start-ups on the side. Although those start-ups did not last long, Roc held on to his entrepreneurial spirit. He was not discouraged. "Sometimes it's okay to fail fast. It's actually smarter to fail fast. It is when you don't pivot that you are not smart."

Then, Roc became involved in community gardening. At first, he did this to get his mother involved in a meaningful activity that would help expand her social circle. Soon, he was drawn into the community of aunties and uncles who managed these gardens. "I felt this kampong spirit was really worth treasuring", Roc said. "I wished I could do something to give back to these uncles and aunties who put in so much effort and money into the soil."

He came up with an idea for a mobile app that would bring together community gardeners who wanted to buy and sell plants. But soon, it became clear that the app would not work in the Singapore market essentially because community farmers were generally not tech-savvy. Instead of forcing the idea, Roc and his partners decided to pivot to a business which could also essentially achieve similar aims without relying heavily on technology.

That business is Corridor Farmers. It is a business specialised in building customised micro farms, spreading education about urban farms, and aggregating produce from community farmers and selling those produce to private chefs and restaurants.

Today, as co-founder, Roc is deeply involved in the daily running of the business.

While the business is still in the process of growing and finding its way, Roc is proud that he and his team have been able to face challenges head-on and find solutions to these challenges. He finds continual joy in engaging with partners and clients and building strong community bonds through the business.