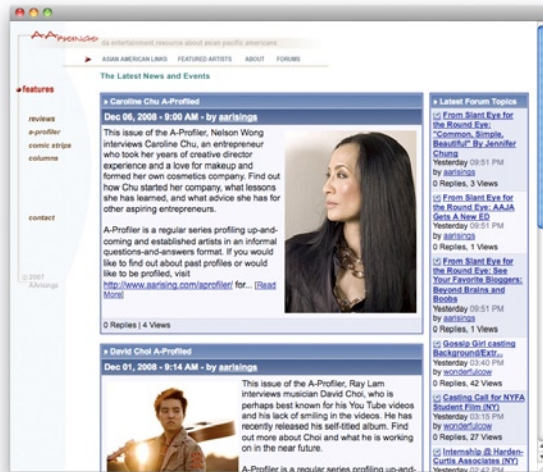


CAROLINE CHU



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"This issue of the A-Profiler, Nelson Wong interviews Caroline Chu, an entrepreneur who took her years of creative director experience and a love for makeup and formed her own cosmetics company. Find out how Chu started her company, what lessons she has learned, and what advice she has for other aspiring entrepreneurs.

A-Profiler is a regular series profiling up-and-coming and established artists in an informal questions-and-answers format. If you would like to find out about past profiles or would like to be profiled, visit <http://www.aarising.com/aprofiler/for> . . . [Read More]

Posted by Nelson Wong, aarising at 9:00 AM

This A-Profiler we bring you Caroline Chu, an entrepreneur who took her years of creative director experience and a love for makeup and formed her own cosmetics company. Find out how Chu started her company, what lessons she has learned, and what advice she has for other aspiring entrepreneurs.

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Growing up in Taiwan you were restricted in wearing makeup. How did those early years inspire you to start your own skincare and cosmetic company years later?

Freedom of expression has always been important to me. When I was young, I was constantly worried about my hair being too long for the school's "one centimeter or above the earlobe" rule. Knees had to be covered and makeup also wasn't allowed. I always felt a lack of confidence growing up with these restrictions in school, and that's what inspired my love for makeup as a form of self-expression later on. I want to create something that would make others feel great about themselves. My goal is to offer a great foundation for just that- basic and quality skin care, tools, and colors to bring out the best in people.

You moved to San Francisco at the age of 20 and studied art and eventually got a Masters in Industrial Arts. With 15 years of experience as a creative director in a number of high tech companies, how did those experiences and background in art help you establish your company?

It was hard work but looking back upon all of those years, time flew by quickly. The creative field had a lot to do with what I needed to do accomplish to start my company. I had to create a company image and come up with a brand that would last and that I'd be able to back up. Years of management experience were really essential for me: dealing with different personalities, resolving issues, meeting budgets and departmental and company goals. Working in a big corporation, I also met a lot of people. Collaboration is key to success, and with experience in assembling a good team, I couldn't have asked for better people to support me in building my company.

You have gone through some life-changing adversity and challenges, how have you been able to maintain a positive attitude and the drive to take care of yourself through it all?

Working 12-15 hours a day, 7 days a week can be very tiring with its ups and downs, but with help of friends it has been easier. Making the time to have lunch with friends or simply chat

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What do you think of the popularity of “how-to” videos on the internet which showcase how to use various cosmetic products? Do you see more high tech trends in reaching your target consumers?

“How-to” videos are definitely something of this on-demand age where people are becoming more and more busy. Social networking sites are something I have been taking advantage of to promote my products. The internet has become the forerunner of word-of-mouth information. That’s one of the reasons why I started my company as a web-based eCommerce business—it’s just so much more convenient for a lot of people.

Outside of your company, what do you do to make sure you are happy and healthy? What do you enjoy doing during your spare time?

Finding balance in life is very important. Eating right and being physically active—biking and going to the gym—keep me feeling healthy and good. I also enjoy my down time watching movies and cooking with friends. Read literature for inspiration and gardening is also fun, as new plants and flowers always brighten my day!

What have been the most important lessons you have learned from starting your own company? Where do you see yourself and/or your company in 3 years? 5 years? Are there other ventures you are looking at getting involved in?

Don’t procrastinate. If there are things you can get done today, do it today. Work piles up quickly as that has been hard for me to deal with as perfectionist. I’ve learned that I can’t get everything just right, but you have to move on and do what you can.

Make sure you have a well thought out plan, that includes a start-up plan, a general plan on cash flow, resources, and any of the unexpected. Always overestimate how much time something will take you, and aim to start early. Also get prepared to meet obstacles and disappointment, but don’t let it discourage you.

over coffee has always been the best remedy for me. Stress is all about mindset. I try to stay positive, and think I can either look at it as “the end of the world,” or simply tell myself, I’ll get through it. Accept the bad days and embrace the good ones, then there is always tomorrow or next to make it better!

I imagine the skincare and cosmetic industry is always trying to keep up with trends and fashions. How do you remain fashion forward with your line of products? Are you constantly doing research on new trends and products?

Yes, keeping up with the industry is a must. I’m always talking and attending conferences with experts and people in the same industry. I’m so grateful for getting the chance to meet and get to know so many people through networking. A lot of them have been in the beauty industry for over 30 years. I work with reviewers and listen to their feedback, as well as my customers so I can continue making new products with improvements in various areas.

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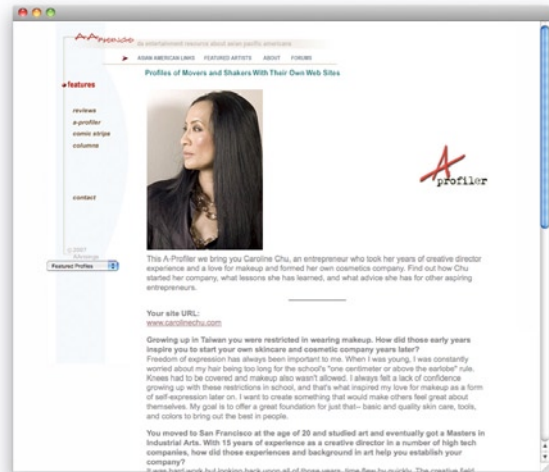
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Things might not come through 100% of the time even when you think otherwise, but continue to build respectful relationships with potential clients and customers.

My focus will be to continue creating a solid brand and products that effectively benefit my customers. I would like to expand into retail space, both the US and as well as overseas. I will be also working with doctors and experts on creating new products. Gaining market share is also important to me, which means I will need to put in a lot of effort into sales.

I've also invested in another company called Stockphotopro, a stock photography site (www.stockphotopro.com) with over 3.1 million images. In addition, I am also building a Creative Marketing business with some friends, and we will be launching early next year.

As for my skin care and cosmetics business, I want to help people that love quality skin care products but feel as if they cannot afford it. I'm in the process of coming up with special discount prices for those who write us and share their stories. We are still working on the details, and I welcome feedback and input.



What advice do you have for others who want to start their own companies?

Have plan A and plan B, talk with people that have done it before to give you advice. Be prepared to put in a lot of long hours. Ask yourself if this is something you would love to do 24/7. Don't expect to make a lot of money right away, because mostly likely it will not happen. Thus, have enough capital and prepare more than what needed, as the unexpected could always happen. But be brave on taking risks, as bigger challenges have great rewards of overcoming them. Discuss with your loved ones, family members, or close friends so they can be your front line of support. I have a great, lovely daughter that has helped me a lot, and she gives me the force and courage to believe that I can do it all.

This issue of A-Profiler is brought to you by Nelson Wong. Special thanks to Caroline Chu and Kevin Wing.

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