

Mentorship for Intangible Asset Transformation (MINT)



Scube Gift: Leveraging IP for Global Expansion and Innovation with MINT

Introduction

Kenneth Li knew that he always wanted to be an entrepreneur. That's why halfway through his undergraduate studies at Nanyang Technological University, he got together with two course-mates and founded Scube Gift – a corporate gift company. By the time he was 26, he had grown Scube Gift into a profitable business with an annual turnover of SGD 250,000. Today, products are sold in Singapore and overseas markets such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, and the US.

Kenneth believed that innovation is key to sustaining business growth. Hence, Scube Gift built a team of in-house marketing professionals, product designers, and product engineers to create novel and meaningful gifts. The company also collaborates with local research partners from NUS to develop, patent, and commercialize technology to give its products a unique edge in a highly competitive market.

Key Innovation

One such innovative product is SWANZ – a line of ceramic thermal ware products. Working with NUS material science researchers, Scube Gift developed and patented ceramic-based food containers that are more break-resistant than normal ceramic while having better heat retention than stainless-steel food containers. SWANZ containers that can be used to store, microwave, or oven-bake food, saving consumers the need to buy separate containers for storage and cooking. Based on this ceramic technology, Scube Gift has designed a whole line of bento boxes, food warmers, mugs, and bottles in different designs to cater to different customer groups. Products are sold both through in-store retailers and e-commerce platforms in Singapore and overseas.

Adversities in childhood made him more driven

ASK 20-year-old Kenneth Li if young Singaporeans lack drive, and he will say that yes, some do.
"Many of them are from well-to-do families and have not experienced hardship, so they tend to take the easy way out most of the time," he said.
But he, at least, is an example of someone who is not lacking in the quality.
In 2010, when he was at Nanyang Technological University's Nanyang Business School completing his undergraduate studies, he and two course mates set up Scube Gift, a company selling corporate gifts.



IP Journey

IP – including patents, trademarks, and registered designs – is at the heart of Scube Gift’s business strategy. Scube Gift’s IP is created in-house or in partnership with research institutions such as NUS. IP protection is then used to protect key product differentiators and secure a market edge. While there were challenges in the entrepreneurial journey, Scube Gift is dedicated to learning how to better protect and commercialise its IP for stronger growth and expansion

into new markets.

IP Management Challenges

Scube Gift joined MINT as it was bringing its innovative product overseas – it thus firstly needed an IP strategy that could help finance & facilitate this rapid expansion. Overseas expansion also exposed Scube Gift to competitors that looked to challenge or replicate its innovations; Scube Gift therefore needed how to cost-effectively protect its innovations in many jurisdictions.

Outcomes from MINT

Through MINT, Scube Gift worked closely with its assigned mentor to achieve these two key outcomes.

On IP protection, the mentor developed a cost-effective approach to help Scube Gift’s navigate around trademark squatters. The MINT program also helped Scube Gift resolve patent infringement allegations from a competitor. A patent evaluation suggested by the mentor facilitated a successful settlement agreement with the competitor, thus avoiding a costly and damaging lawsuit. The MINT mentor then provided extensive advice about what constitutes infringement and how to prevent similar incidents in the future.



On monetisation, MINT also helped Scube Gift craft a comprehensive licensing strategy for its operations in Taiwan. This led to a critical licensing agreement which saw a win-win relationship with one of its competitors in Taiwan to collaborate on the local manufacture and distribution of its products.

Looking Forward

Through MINT, Scube Gift was able to successfully secure a three-year licensing agreement for its products in Taiwan. Moving forward, it hopes to expand its market outreach and replicate this licensing strategy to other regional markets such as Japan and China. Scube Gift also intends to tap on licensing agreements to monetise its future innovations with research institutions, such as a more resource-efficient glass manufacturing method and its AI-powered robotic salon.

This licensing strategy will generate more revenue for Scube Gift via royalties while minimising the large capital outlays required for overseas expansion. Furthermore, the strict manufacturing standards and use of Scube Gift’s trademarks mandated by the licensing agreement is expected to further enhance Scube Gift’s brand recognition.

“With our enhanced IP strategy, we are able to more effectively protect our innovation while simultaneously forging stronger collaborations with partners to monetise our innovation”.

Kenneth Li, Director, Scube Gift Pte Ltd

This case study was developed through the [IP Management Clinic Programme](#), specifically the Singapore edition known as [Mentorship for Intangible Assets Transformation \(MINT\)](#). MINT is a collaborative initiative between the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (IPOS), aimed at promoting the strategic management of IP assets among businesses in Singapore.