

## **Spiritual Capital in the Fullness Social Enterprise**

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“Wealth is not about owning a lot, but being able to act.

Poverty is not about owning too little, but wanting to have more.

To live a rich life is to use one’s capacities to pursue one’s dreams”

We visited a number of the staff of Fullness, who changed their career paths from working for profit-oriented businesses to social enterprise many years ago. We interviewed Kee, the Chairman of the Christian Fullness Social Enterprise Association, its Director Kee, and the team. On a sunny morning, we walked in “Fullness Hair Salon” -- a simple, unassuming shop with clean windows, with music playing in the background. There are no ‘gossip magazines’ on the bookshelves. Other than books on hairstyles, the only reading materials are on living a spiritual life. The atmosphere is peaceful. There is a sense of love and harmony.

This shop seems to be quite ordinary, however, together with its sister salon in Sai Wan, it’s starting a revolutionary movement.

### **Investing “spiritual capital”, making love circulate**

The Fullness Vocational Training Centre started two hair salons as social enterprises in Sai Wan. The two names come from the Bible verse: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”(John 10:10)

“Fullness Hair Salon” is, of course, a salon that offers hair styling service. What’s more to it? In fact, it is not just a salon. From the perspective of service to society, it is a social enterprise. At an emotional level, it’s a place for the circulation of love. Unlike other hair salons, its mission is to help deviant youth to reintegrate into society through professional hair styling service. Drawing on the Christian faith, it hopes to lead these youth to reach the fullness of their life.

Up to now, “Fullness” has already trained more than 150 apprentices. Other than running the

business as a social enterprise, it also applies different methods to create life and spread blessings.

The moving force behind “Fullness Salon” is director Kee’s Fullness Social Enterprise Society, which is a not-for-profit organization that plays the role of an opinion leader in the social enterprise movement in Hong Kong. Through objective and applied research, publications and professional trainings, it offers advice, insights as well as managerial knowledge to people in the social enterprise movement in Hong Kong. The organization was the first social enterprise to successfully attract investment funds in Hong Kong in 2008, was the first social enterprise in Hong Kong to promote ‘responsible consumption’ (2009) and to advocate ‘knowledge volunteering’ in the social enterprise movement (2010). They have been running a “Fullness Auto Repair shop” in Kuan Tung for 27 years. In 2009, they opened two hair salons in Sai Wan. The hair salons are typical examples of the many social enterprises under the management of Fullness.

Kee and Ted are the ‘parents’ of the ‘Fullness’ family. Aside from running the business, they pay more attention to ‘nurture’ the seeds, make sure there is love in this ‘family’. Their warm smiles are the sunshine of ‘Fullness’ family.

Every Tuesday morning 10 am is Bible study time in the Salon. Of course, not all the staff participate because it is not required to be a Christian believer; it is a voluntary activity. During this hour-long study, the participants share their feelings, discuss enthusiastically and search for the meaning of life. There is also Fullness Christian fellowship, at which people pray together and spread blessings.

Toma, the executive director of Fullness, says: “ ‘Fullness’ is no ordinary social enterprise because it has a religious background. Everyone follows the teachings of the Bible. There is a sense of ‘family’ among the staff. Apprentices are treated very well by their mentors. It’s hard for you to imagine. When it is cold, mentors buy clothes for their apprentices and also cook nutritious soup for them.

Yes, in order to create a ‘family’ what is more important than blood ties is the love between the ‘family members’!

Ted says: “‘Fullness’ is a small neighborhood salon, what it cares about is people’s trust and willingness to listen.

This is how to empower an organization with ‘spiritual capital’.

## **What is ‘Spiritual Capital’?**

Kee explains the concept of ‘spiritual capital’ as follows: ‘capital’ means ‘the surplus that is accumulated for the future’; while ‘spiritual’ has three aspects: (1) the meaning of life; (2) wisdom about life; (3) one’s feeling toward the world. These three aspects can be reflected in three dimensions: 1. the dimension of knowledge; 2. the dimension of emotions; 3. the dimension of action.

“Other than making money”, says Kee, “people should also think about the meaning of life and seeking for wisdom. Life should not be simply about going about with one’s daily life – we should invest feeling, caring and love into the world – that is to invest in ‘spiritual capital’; we should not be cold and emotionless. From the perspective of Christianity, the Bible says: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:28-31)

Ted points out: “The three pillars of social enterprise include: (1) Financial capital; (2) social capital; and (3) spiritual capital. We hope that these three pillars can coexist to provide the steady support of the enterprise. A social enterprise has a social mission which compels it to always consider a lot more factors than a commercial business. In reality it is also harder to manage. ...”

“For example, modern management turns everything into quantifiable numbers, analyzes them objectively and adds regulations; orders from the superior are executed and implemented at each level, regardless of the staff’s will. This approach often neglects the human element; in the long term, the staff will definitely be unhappy, physically and psychologically they may not be healthy, and their efficiency may not be high. Loyalty is out of question. But for social enterprises or charitable organizations look at management from a different angle and using different values. For instance, they emphasize the value of each individual. Management of people is very complex; it can’t depend only depend on rules, regulations and the execution of orders. Instead, it takes loving care, energy and time to build a team, to express team spirit. The key to success is if the relationship among staff is harmonious, and if the staff are happy!

Therefore, the essence of the Fullness “people-centered culture” is: to treat procedures with numbers, to treat people with feeling, to treat each other with honesty and truthfulness, to care for each other and trust each other, to honour the respect and dignity of each person.

These are all the ‘spiritual capital’ that is missing from contemporary business management practice.

**Fullness’s central mission: the difference between social enterprise and commercial business.**

Fullness’s central mission is: through vocational training and staff training as well as the Christian Faith, to help marginalized youth, especially ex-drug addicts and ex-cons who have committed minor felonies. Help them to rebuild a life with discipline. Business activity is only a platform to provide opportunities for training and practice and to ensure the mission can be sustained through action.

But what is a social enterprise?

Kee points out the concept of ‘social entrepreneur’ advocated by the British Sociologist J. A. Banks in 1972 to refer to people who apply managerial skills to build society. He believed that social entrepreneurs can use business managerial techniques for the public good.

Social welfare groups with a ‘people centred’ approach are usually good at long-term planning, mobilization and inspirational leadership, but they don’t know how to calculate cost and profit, they are not good at innovation. All these require good management personnel to fill the gaps. The job of social workers is mainly fundraising and service provision. Therefore, entities that can utilize managerial techniques to raise funds are what Hong Kong people call ‘social enterprise’.

Kee explains: “generally speaking, a social enterprise is an organization that has both a social mission as well as a business purpose; it aims to create social value but it has to meet the pre-condition to survive, namely economic value. The minimum requirement is that its costs and revenues balance out in order to sustain itself in the long term. A social enterprise is 100% for its social mission but at the same time is a 100% profit making business. When a youth gains another opportunity to earn a living by working at the salon as an apprentice, he rebuilds a life with dignity and at the same time makes a profit for the salon. In the same way, the salon is fulfilling a social mission and at the same time a business purpose.

A lot of people think that social enterprises do not have much market value, that it’s hard to make a profit, and may end up in deficit. In fact, the purpose of a social enterprise is different from privately owned businesses. The success of a social enterprise is not to be measured by

its profitability but by the number of vulnerable populations it has helped, its social value. Of course, a business can operate for many functions, but a social enterprise is purely for the purpose of creating social value. It only takes into consideration how to utilize managerial techniques to advance society, how to use itself as the vehicle to transport ‘spiritual capital’.

In fact, vulnerable populations are often neglected or marginalized by society. Ordinary business organizations usually do not care; only charitable organizations are willing to deal with the difficult cases, to provide them with warmth and care. The mission of a charitable organization is humanitarian service, between advancement of what is already good and helping the disadvantaged, it chooses what other organizations do not want to do. Opening a social enterprise can allow vulnerable populations to earn a salary with dignity; it widens their social relations, allows them to learn new knowledge, to build a life, to become accepted by society. Vulnerable populations, other than those with low skills, due to their social background may have difficulties in socializing; they need guidance. That is why the social work profession deserves respect. In a city full of wounds, organizations that work to improve what is already good are worthy of support, but supporting social enterprises work on social governance is essential.

Kee points out that the problem of poverty in Hong Kong is very serious. Christian-inspired social enterprises need to have a “holistic mission”, that is to say, besides spreading the Gospel, they also need to participate in society and collaborate with people from the business world, religious institutions and other organizations. For example, we have collaborated in this way in the issues of fair trade and social enterprises.

Kee thinks: just like Christ Who possesses 100% of Divinity and 100% of humanity. Christ came in the flesh to save people; similarly, a social enterprise is helping vulnerable populations through jumping into the material world of business.

### **How to accumulate ‘spiritual capital’?**

Ken has his own views on how to manage ‘spiritual capital’. As the head of the Salon, a seasoned hair stylist, life mentor and supervisor of apprentices, he believes: “first of all, build up the concept of ‘holistic human education’. It cannot be like business organizations that only teach techniques or pure vocational training. Other than training apprentices, mentors also help the apprentices to build a healthy outlook, to build confidence and positive human relationships. Hopefully one day, apprentices will stand on their own feet.

Secondly, they need to understand selfless giving, because people who know how to give

receive more assistance from others. People must stay in harmony so that the spirit of mutual support can be realized, so that there will be more benefits.

Therefore, other than cutting hair, Ken also takes care of the apprentices' spirituality. He puts himself in the apprentices' shoes, and tries to be a model. For example, he is never late for work, and always cares about others. He "makes the apprentices understand that in your relationship with others, you cannot always put yourself first." In order to build up team spirit, someone always has to be the first to give, and then it will become a mutual win-win reciprocal relationship.

When 'Fullness' recruits stylists, it pays a lot of attention to find out if the candidates share the same values, if they would like to nurture the next generation; it does not only look at candidate's skills because skills can be improved later on. Whether he can teach the apprentice well depends on if the learner puts his heart into the work, whether he is willing to become a model to influence others.

Because 'Fullness' is 'people centred', continuously developing 'spiritual capital' within people, thus, its management style does not have bureaucratic execution of orders, nor does it pressure the staff to meet certain profit targets. As long as revenues balance out the costs, then they can put their hearts into using good quality products and provide quality service. Ken is grateful that this business is not only for making big money.

"If they have a profit target, they will have to put pressure on the mentor, then human relationships will be undermined."

In order to build relationships and accumulate 'spiritual capital', Ted, as a Board member, must build trust within the team. He invests his time in spending time with the staff and improve the communication better. Now, every week Ted always makes time to have breakfast with the staff. They talk about the business, their personal matters and even their private concerns. He realizes that "the staff often feel more relaxed outside the meeting room where is easier for them to open their hearts and share their thoughts with honesty".

It dawned to him that typical management methods do not work for social enterprises. Those quantifiable indicators and budgets cannot measure these unquantifiable elements such as the 'human factor'. Therefore, successful management also requires applying a humanistic approach to communication!

In fact, effective communication does not only require time, it needs to be built upon the

foundation of reciprocity and equality. The business paradigm often considers it the responsibility of the managerial department to give orders, in other words, to “save” the business and give guidance to the front line. This method does not work for social enterprises. Therefore, if the managerial team is sitting on the top giving orders, it will put pressure on the staff and makes it impossible for them to treat each other with honesty and openness. Therefore, it is the key to treat each other equally. Thus, Ted always puts his title aside, communicates with the staff truthfully, listens more and talks less. He is never like the other superiors who treat their subordinates in a condescending manner.

As the head of the salon, Ken feels this deeply: “instead of calling the Board of Directors as ‘the boss’, it is more suitable to call it the ‘management consulting team’. The Board has a weekly meeting with Ken where they respond to his questions and concerns, and teach him knowledge in management. Ken says: “actually, they are helping me to grow.”

The value of Fullness is not just giving but enabling members to stand on their own feet. This exemplifies the saying: “instead of giving fish to people, teach them how to fish.”

This is the ‘spiritual capital’ that Fullness has accumulated throughout the years with patience and love.

### **Life influences life... The story of Ken the hairstylist**

Social enterprises that ‘jump into the sea of business’ have definitely saved many people who were sinking in the ‘sea of turmoil’. Seasoned hairstylist Ken is a ready example. Other than shouldering the position of head of the salon, in the eyes of the Fullness family, he is a part-time social worker, as well as part time missionary. In his path of growth, he uses his own experiences and insights to set an example to guide others.

In the 13-year-history of Fullness, from the early shop in a Mongkok building to the newer location in Sai Wan, Ken first started as hairstylist, then became a mentor for apprentices, and is now the head of the salon. He accompanied Fullness through its ups and downs; he is a founding staff member who has become a cornerstone of the organization, who now devotes himself to planting the seeds of love.

Ken has short hair, he is dressed in a neat and modest way with a sense of fashion and style. He has a special character as if just by standing there he can give people a sense of authority

without being authoritarian. He influences others. He has been in the hair styling business for twenty years, out of which he has spent ten years as a mentor training apprentices. Other than training and acquiring hair styling techniques, he also manages the personnel, and acts as the liaison with the Board, conveying the staff's opinions and the Board's instructions. He thinks it is important for management to emphasize on team spirit, so that the staff get along with each other and they can work together happily.

Ken can always understand the hearts of the apprentices best, especially those youth who were marginalized. Ken has unlimited patience, love and care, gently guiding them -- because he was once drowning in the "sea of drugs". Helpless, he lost many years of his youth.

When he first started taking drugs, he was only 15. He acquired a number of harmful habits at the same time, including marijuana, alcohol and other drugs, and he was also sexually promiscuous. Once, he was drunk and involved in obstruction of justice and attacked a police officer. He served years in a youth correction facility, and this was followed by eight years of depression. He attempted to commit suicide twice. His life was in a state of ultimate despair. But, relying on the power of faith and the support of his family, he changed and successfully recovered from drug addiction, and became a new person. Of course, other than the uncompromising support from his mother, Ken believes that what set him straight is Jesus' sacrificial love. Because of the Lord's blessings, today Ken has been transformed. Like the phoenix rising from the ashes, he single-heartedly wants to help others, to unconditionally embrace others who were once astray, and hopes to restore their lost souls.

At the moment, other than managing the salon, doing hair styling and mentoring apprentices, he also listens to their unhappiness in life, helps them to resolve their difficulties, and teaches them the knowledge and ability to live in this world. Although he never received any training as a social worker or in psychological counseling, he can understand the hearts of the apprentices. Therefore, he is their spiritual mentor; because he has been through so much in life, he can empathize with the apprentices in the setbacks and struggles they experience, and also with the feelings of anxiety and helplessness that they feel when they stumble on their path of growth.

As one pastor said, Ken is a 'wounded healer' -- he rose up from his own wounds and became a mentor for the apprentices. He has, in a true sense, achieved the state of breaking out his past limitations.

Ken's example demonstrates that a social enterprise not only provides employment opportunities, inspires the beneficiaries to rebuild their life and to reconstruct their self image,



helps them to accumulate social capital, to attain self-respect and self confidence, but also gains support from social service and religious groups, and even families and society at large. It helps them to continuously grow in their jobs, over time to attain greater professional knowledge and skills and greater maturity in social relationships, to constantly grow in self-knowledge and walk towards a more positive outlook of life.

### **Every mentor is a “wounded healer”: the story of Kee**

In fact, just like Ken, every counsellor or mentor in life is a wounded healer. Precisely because they were once wounded, they have the utmost empathy to other wounded people. They understand what it is like to be hurt. Precisely because they are able to face their own scars and to receive healing, they are finally able to become guides to other wounded ones.

Every hero in this world is a soul that has suffered pain. Precisely due to that reason, they reflect deeply on the meaning of life; they eventually free themselves from the shackles of fame and prestige, change the path of their life, and became new persons. They change their career and enthusiastically advance the development of social enterprises. The head of the Fullness Social Enterprise Society and Board member Kee is one such successful example.

Kee started to change the path of his life in 2006. That year he officially left the multinational corporation HP after working there for 26 years. In those 26 years, he started as an engineer and worked his way up to become vice director and Board member of Hong Kong branch of the company. While he worked at HP, within a period of 6 years he achieved a 10-time increase in the sales of communication technology services in China, which reached one billion dollars. Within 6 months, he turned the PC sales in China from deficit to profit making. When he was in charge of the Hong Kong company as its manager and Board member, he learnt how to turn the sales from a loss to a profit. Just when his career was advancing to its climax, he suddenly withdrew himself from it.

Actually, he had the idea of retiring from his work as early as in 2000. After struggling for years, he finally acted on it in 2006. His work forced him to live away from home in Mainland China for a long time. Other than coping with work pressure, he also had to sacrifice his family time. During the 10 years between 1996 and 2006, he only stayed in Hong Kong from Saturdays to Mondays, and most of these days he had to work. His daughter was born in 1996; he could not find time to spend with her until 2003 when the SARS epidemic broke out. Suddenly, he had 6 weeks without work, which he could finally spend with his family. They spent the time eating and watching TV together. He discovered a wonderful family time, that he had been deprived of in normal days. At the same time, he met a Christian

brother in the church, who, although an auto mechanic who earned a low income, but who could go home from work on time every day, and three long annual vacations that he could spend with his family. But for Kee, although he had six weeks of holiday per year, in reality he could only take one week off work. And even during that one week he often had to respond to emails in the middle of the night.

For the sake of spending time with his daughter and to regain the joy of a normal family life, Kee considered the idea of retirement and at the same time, he had a deep reflection on the meaning of life.

In 1986 there was a very popular movie in Hong Kong called “A Better Tomorrow”. The character Mark, portrayed by Chow Yun-Fat, has left a deep impression in peoples’ hearts. When Mark was in a very difficult situation, he had to swallow his pride to wash cars in order to survive while waiting for the day that would change his fate. Thus, when Kee changed his career path to engage himself in social enterprise movement, utilizing his skills in management in order to benefit society and apply the social enterprise approach as a vehicle to carry “spiritual capital”, the first enterprise he set up was the “Fullness Garage” in Kuan Tong to provide an opportunity for ex-cons to learn a new skill. The garage was dubbed “A Better Tomorrow Garage” by the media. Later, the social enterprise was expanded to the Sai Wan and Tsing Yi “Fullness Salons”.

Today, Kee looks back on this journey and said: “I regret that I retired too late. I considered retirement when I was 43 and I thought about it for 3 years before I could dare to bring it up to my boss and then it took another 3 years before I could finally retire. If I had been able to retire earlier then I would have more energy to work on social enterprise, and do better in this field.”

**Life should not be so poor that there is only money left; it should have a much richer meaning: Ted’s life story**

Ted started to change his path after the financial crisis in 1997, which made him reflect on the meaning of life. Before then, he had been battling in the field of real estate and finance. At that time, he had a firm belief in the academic conception of management, with its emphasis on cost and efficiency, and saw the role of employees as no more than doing their job well and making a profit for their employers. And he thought that if one wanted to serve society, the best way was through volunteering or donating money.

But, the financial crisis woke him up in a panic. Actually the dream to be rich is like the short-lived morning fog. The myth of the property market turned into a bubble over night. Then he turned to finance, which made him realise that people in their field are like pirates on the same ship, unscrupulously making money. They accumulate profits by sacrificing others. Therefore, he finally woke up, and decisively left the business world in 2005. In 2009 he joined the management Board of “Fullness Salons”.

Ted believes that life should not so poor that there is only money left to it. It should contain more meaning. A social enterprise should create social value and achieve its social mission through business practice, but where profit making is not the only goal.

### **Aspire to shoulder risk for the common interest, not for one’s own benefit**

The dictionary definition of “enterprise” is “willingness to undertake new ventures; in other words, it is a risk-taking spirit of innovation. Another way of saying it is that the company exists not just for buying and selling; it needs to be willing to take risks and engage in innovation. The adventurous spirit of social enterprise entails the willingness to transform society and to shoulder risks, not just for one’s own benefits but for the society.

No matter how lofty the ideal of the Fullness Society, the social enterprises it has opened are simply neighbourhood businesses that include the “Fullness automobile service centre” in Kuan Tong, the “Fullness Salon” and the “100% Fullness Salon” in Sai Wan, the Yap Ko salon in Tsing Yi, an Automobile Beauty Centre, and the already-closed “Fullness Air Conditioning Company”. What is the risk-taking spirit that these enterprises shoulder, that are “not for self-interest”?

Kee thinks that precisely because they are “small”, these small enterprises do not have a heavy burden and can afford to be flexible. Just like small laboratories, they can do many different kinds of experiments in order to advance the social enterprise movement. The way citizens care for their society should not be limited to donating money, volunteering and participating in home visits. A social enterprise is worthwhile because it invests “spiritual capital” which can generate a lot of positive energy, and have a lot of returns. The Chinese saying goes: “A just cause gains greater support”, if the essence of what you do is a “just” cause, in other words when you promote public welfare selflessly and are willing to shoulder social responsibilities, there will be very strong energy, it attracts people’s support. A lot of people in society don’t understand that. They always only think about themselves, only thinking about making money. If that were the case, people would not want to help, then there will be very little energy.

The target population of social enterprises' services are often groups of vulnerable people in society, such as marginalized youth, the elderly, new immigrants, the mentally handicapped... these can attract social impact investors, who care about both social impact and profit return. At the same time, they are able to attract volunteers, including those who can train "knowledge volunteers". Among them there are MBA and DBA degree holders, who apply their solid knowledge to create a caring culture. All these are forms of "spiritual capital" that can be cultivated.

### **The "easy pleasure" and "difficult pleasure" in a caring culture**

Prof. Nelson Chow of The University Hong Kong, who researches on poverty and welfare policy, believes that the assistance social enterprises provide to marginalized youth through vocational trainings and on-site training is not enough. "Teaching one to fish" seems to assist others to be self-sufficient, but in reality marginalized youth have their own limitations, it is difficult to succeed in getting back on their own feet. That is why a lot of social enterprises are unsuccessful. Social enterprises should not only teach them to 'fish' but also bring the 'fish' closer to the shore.

The "fishes" are responsible consumers; the "bait" is media reports; the equipment for fishing are provided by social impact investors; and finally, fishing also requires coaches who are knowledge volunteers; the business world can collaborate with social enterprises regarding the above four aspects, thus becoming the fifth resource. If these resources can be brought to social enterprises, then it is no longer "teaching people to fish" but developing a "fishing industry".

Therefore, other than helping marginalized youth through vocational training and on-site training, "Fullness" also uses many other methods to support vulnerable populations. Started as a social enterprise their caring culture is spreading and reaching out to the society in general.

Helping others is the essence of happiness; however, not everyone can be a social entrepreneur. There are basically two general methods that ordinary people can receive happiness through helping others: the easier method is called "easy pleasure"; the more difficult method is called "difficult pleasure".

In terms of "easy pleasure", "Fullness" promotes "ethical consumption month" in November, and the "10% Swap for Good": for each 10 purchases one makes, one of them should be a

form of “ethical consumption”. This is a way of turning faith into action, changing society through our behaviour.

Ethical consumption is not some extra purchase; it just turns 10% of what we consume for ourselves, into an opportunity for marginalized youth to earn a living, to earn respect and an opportunity to grow.

“Ethical consumption” is a movement to build a responsible society, at the same time it is also a wakeup call for people to realise that we are living in this world, therefore we cannot only consider our own selves but also think about others and society. It needs to be understood that peoples’ satisfaction comes from more than just money, there is an inner dimension. The “lower self” needs to transform into a “higher self”.

“Easy pleasure” is a wisdom from the book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible, which says: says to “live in the present.”, enjoy food and wine, dress in clean clothes and oil your hair, live a happy life with your wife. What this describes is the “easy pleasure”, which is the kind of pleasure that is easy to get and can be purchased by money.

“Difficult pleasure,” on the other hand, is to “lose money to buy suffering”. The Fullness Social Enterprise Association has introduced a membership programme in which each member pays a HKD2000 membership fee to be trained as a knowledge volunteer; up to now there are 23 members. Besides this there are over 100 regular members, their membership fee is HKD200 and they can participate in regular activities such as seminars.

Regarding “difficult pleasure”, it says in the Book of Ecclesiastes: “the preacher asks people to try their best to challenge themselves and enjoy the “difficult pleasure” therein -- because in the netherworld there is no work, no rational calculation, no knowledge, no wisdom. The netherworld he described was not the torment of the flesh with fire, but the eternal meaninglessness that tortures people.”

Regarding “easy pleasure” and “difficult pleasure”, commentator Lim Pai Lee elaborates: “difficult pleasure” is to challenge one’s limitation, such as a marathon which challenges one’s limits of body strength as well as one’s mental perseverance. Another example is challenging one’s limits by completing an important work project. “Easy pleasure” is easy to get and also easy to forget. Although “difficult pleasure” entails pain, once achieved it brings great pleasure and excitement, which lasts for a long time. The learning gained from the experience can be shared with others and still have a long-lasting effect. “Difficult pleasure” makes people grow and break through their existing limits, bringing inner fulfilment.

Other than challenging oneself, another kind of “difficult pleasure” is winning others over: walk into other’s lives and have a positive influence on them. For instance, becoming social entrepreneurs assisting the vulnerable populations in society, becoming knowledge volunteers assisting social enterprises, or becoming alternative entrepreneurs or producers... all of the above are examples of paying money for “difficult pleasure”, a unique spiritual exercise that requires a lot of effort.

After all, no matter whether it is “easy pleasure” or “difficult pleasure”, just like Kee said: “a truly meaningful life is to enjoy making others happy.”

### **Fullness’ history and long road of growth**

The Fullness Social Enterprise Society was established in 2011 by the Fullness Christian Professional Training Centre; its history can be traced back to 1987 when the Fullness training Centre was established. It was registered as an interdenominational charitable organization, which was one of the earliest social enterprises in Hong Kong. Christian actress 喬宏, Dr. 蔡元雲, Pastor 朱耀明 etc. raised \$1 million plus a low interest loan of \$ 200,000 from the bank as a starting fund to open a car repair garage as means to teach ex-convicts to learn a new skill. The media referred to it as the “Better Tomorrow” garage.

The origin of the Fullness garage can be traced back to a group of Christians who went to a prison to preach and realised that although many inmates regretted the crimes they had committed, they had still lost hope for their future. Some of them, after serving their time, were released from prison and yet could not be accepted by the society. They could not find jobs and felt directionless about their future. Then they went back to their con friends and eventually went back to prison. Because of that experience, a group of pastors and members of the church established the Fullness Professional Training Centre in September, 1987, specialized in providing vocational training to ex-cons at a car repair shop while spreading the Gospel, in hope that the apprentices would learn to understand the meaning of work and regain their self-confidence.

“Fullness” expanded in 2001 when it opened the first “Fullness Hair Salon” in Mongkok; at the end of 2004 it moved to Sai Wan where it is now located. In the middle 2007, the Yap Ko Salon was opened in Tsing Yi. In 2008 the Fullness Social Enterprise Co. Ltd. was established to manage the hair salons, which was the first public stock company to be established under the control of a charitable organization. In 2009, another “Fullness Salon” opened in Sai Wan.

In 2009, the Society launched the “responsible consumption” movement. In 2010, it promoted the concept of “knowledge volunteers” participating in social enterprises. At the 2012 “Social Enterprise Summit”, the “Business with a Mission” Forum was launched for religious people. Churches, Christian organizations and individual Christian businessmen share their experiences of business management, preaching or social innovation as well as how to balance their social and economic effectiveness.

### **Hardship in Fullness’ development**

The development of Fullness is not always smooth. The first hair salon in Mongkok closed down due to lack of business; in the first few years, the revenue at the Fullness Garage was able to cover its expenses but it had a long period of deficits after the Asian financial crisis hit Hong Kong. Around that time, Kee came in as a consultant while still working for HP as its Deputy CEO for China. He used a number of methods including cutting down costs. Within a few months it was able to turn a profit. Thus, Kee was referred to as the “Social Enterprise Doctor” by social media.

Kee points out that: “ A lot of people hold the opinion that social enterprises do not know how to do business, this is only a half truth. Social workers who do business obviously can never compare with Lee Ka-shing, but they are as good as anybody else. Social workers are especially good at finding people to help them. Therefore what social enterprises need is to re-brand themselves. This is not empty talk; it is to bring out its positive influence.

The difficulties in running social enterprises mainly consist of two challenges:

Human resources management: this is the most difficult managerial challenge, just like in business institutions.

The capacity of the employees: this will directly affect the quality of the products and service.

Therefore, before employing vulnerable populations, marginalized youth and ex-cons to join the organization and become apprentices, they have to go through a process of being interns. During the period of internship, the mentors will observe their conduct and temperament; if the mentors approve, the company will offer contracts of apprenticeship. What Fullness emphasizes is the staff’s working attitude: whether they are willing to put their own heart into their work.

Up to now, Fullness has trained over 150 apprentices. After completing the training and mastering the technical skills, eventually they go into the business world to continue developing their skills.

Besides the above challenge, the most severe suffering Fullness went through is its internal conflict. Sometimes there is pressure on the performance of the business, conflicts within human resources, some people would want to leave and set up their own shop or leave to work in another place. For instance, towards the end of 2004, the Fullness Salon moved to Sai Wan where it is located now. Because in 2009 the business was doing extremely well, there was some pressure on the staff and cash flow, which led to conflicts among the personnel. The head of the salon suddenly quit and eventually opened another salon, the “100% Fullness Salon”. One Fullness salon split into two salons.

Kee says: “the objective of a social enterprise is to fulfil its social mission. However, the prerequisite for its success is to fulfil its economic mission. Therefore, it is very important to find out how to properly manage it and run it as “a normal business”.

### **Use life to influence life, serving people in need**

The business culture of Fullness is “caring love” -- using life to influence life. Many of Fullness’s stylists provide free services to the elderly and children. And there are around 10 volunteers helping out. More than 1/3 of the clients are Christians, they are willing to support meaningful efforts and engage in meaningful consumption.

### **Sharing successful experiences**

Due to the principle of “A just cause gains greater support”, the Fullness team is ever expanding. Up to today, it has trained over 150 apprentices. Besides the business, they use many methods to create life and spread the blessings.

Kee points out that the mission of Fullness is to create life, not preaching. However, when the staff interacts with the customers, they often build personal relationships, and in the process they learn to communicate with others. He realised that the more important task for a social enterprise or social service is to teach people how to “love”: to be capable of loving and to be loved, one starts with caring for oneself, caring for others, treating others with love and spreading love.

### **The Story of Hair Stylist Jess**

Jess is a hairstylist at the “100% Fullness Salon” and the head of the Salon. She also mentors apprentices. She said at the beginning that she was not aware that Fullness’s vision is to guide



marginalized youth back on their path of life. Later she realised that many of the apprentices are young ex-cons and felt inclined to help them; now she has been working at Fullness for 5 years.

Back then, Jess was not a Christian. She was just a “job hopper”, although she had been a hairstylist for over 7 or 8 years. She could not stand her previous employment culture where the bosses would pressure her to meeting sale targets and her fellow hairstylists would fight for customers; people treated each other with selfishness, hostility, manipulation and ill motives. She says: “Before joining Fullness, I had just left a salon where I had worked for a year, plus I had just had a baby, so the financial pressure was great, I was feeling very low. In the past I often changed jobs, so I doubted if I was capable of sticking to one job and do it well.”

In the blink of an eye, she has already worked at Fullness for over 5 years. Because she can feel caring and love here, when she helps the apprentices she also helps herself; she has become much happier. She cares for the apprentices to the smallest details. For instance, if her apprentices are sick and dare not see the doctor, she buys medicine for them. If they have problems, she helps them to come up with solutions. She is like their mother; everyone listens to her. She says: “After spending a lot of time together I realised that they are very pure. Their inner essence is not bad, it just needs encouragement. Here they can retrieve their selves and the meaning of life. Once a person is not ignored, she will then care for others. What is more important is that they can learn how to care for themselves.

Jess says: “As a “mentor”, she does not have any big moral lessons, all she does is to accompany her apprentices. There is no need to “cut off” their weaknesses, just to give them caring love and encouragement, to allow them to discover their own strengths. While caring for others, Jess has also established herself. She accepted her co-workers’ invitation to attend Fullness’s twice a month Bible study. She also reads the Bible that is placed on the book shelf. Eventually she decided to convert to Christianity. She goes to Fullness’s gatherings and met more people that are in need of help: “I remember once I met a young girl, very young, she had been abusing drugs for 4 years, and could not quit. Our group prayed for her and supported her. Eventually, she gradually gave it up and regained her health. She also became beautiful!”

All these are the kind of love that spreads around at the Fullness family; it is full of powerful “spiritual capital”.