



What's my line?

Give him some face

Mr Wilson Lim makes people look and feel better. Here's what he does:

- Works with his hands a lot
- Took up this job because he didn't like the routine of working from nine to five
- Meets many people in his line of work
- Recommends his job to his friends

Is he a:

- A) dentist**
- B) aesthetician**
- C) make-up artist**
- D) pharmacist**

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Pores for a moment

BY SOLOMON LIM
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MR WILSON Lim, 28, has been an aesthetician working at the men-only skincare centre Face of Man for the past two years. He gave up his job as a technician in the Singapore Armed Forces to work in the beauty industry.

What do you do in your line of work?

As an aesthetician, I provide consultation and skincare treatment for clients. I also help in managing the operations of the centre.

What qualifications do you need?

I had a diploma in electronics engineering before joining, but Face of Man accepted me as an aesthetician even though I had no proper qualifications. After I signed on, Face of Man sponsored my training at a local academy and I now have a diploma from the International Therapy Examination Council (Itec).

Why did you choose your job?

I don't like routine work and a schedule that goes from 9 to 5. This job gives me a wide variety of

experiences because each client I meet has different requirements. Each day is unique. Also, I used to have mild acne when I was younger. So I know it is important to take care of your skin from an early age.

What are the main challenges in your line of work?

Some people, especially new clients, expect to see results in a single session. I need to manage these expectations. Depending on the severity of cases, we'll need 12 or more sessions to help clear up a client's complexion. For those who just need regular maintenance, a monthly or fortnightly visit is enough. Sometimes, I meet demanding clients and their criticisms and comments do help me improve my service. Working in the service industry, I have to swallow my pride and be prepared to serve. The customer always comes first. But when I encounter unreasonable people, I'll try to resolve the matter. If not, my manager will be on hand to back me up.

What do your friends think?

I have recommended this job to them. Some of them think that the line I'm in is for *ah kuas* (local slang



FACE VALUE:
Men need aestheticians like Mr Lim to keep them primed to face the world.

for effeminate men) but I feel that there's no shame in my job. These comments aren't important because I'm confident that there is a need for people like me. Men have to take care of their skin too!

What's the pay like?

An aesthetician who's just starting out without a diploma gets about \$900. I earn about \$2,000 a month.

What's the best part of your job?

Job satisfaction for me comes from seeing my clients' complexions improve. But the best part of my job is when some clients, after completing their treatment, they come and compliment me on my professionalism.

Face of Man has four outlets in Singapore. Mr Lim works at the Ang Mo Kio branch. For more information on employment opportunities, visit www.faceofman.com.sg

What men do to 'save face'

These two men are beauticians and they've seen every sneaky trick men pull when it comes to skincare. They tell CAROL LEONG about the petrol, Dettol, sand and pimples they see in their business



A MAN and a pimple have a straightforward relationship.

Pop it and to heck with scarring and infection.

But if it's really bad, some have rougher and rougher solutions on hand.

Like petrol, Dettol and sand.

Adam and Chris Chua roll their eyes.

"I asked my client why he used petrol and the fellow said his father told him to," said Adam, 34, in despair.

The two brothers, who have complexions as clear as baby's bottoms, run a men's only salon, Face Of Man. "The word beauty is taboo here."

Their shop, which they opened in 1991 at in a quiet corner of Raffles Square.

Men like the shop's discreet quietness.

"They like to come in and out. They don't want too many people to see them," said Chris, 33.

"Once they are in, we get them straight into one of our three cubicles to cut down the chances of their meeting someone they know and getting embarrassed," said Chris.

"Men are a lot more bold than they were 15 years ago, but they still have a tendency to think it's a bit womanly to go for facials."

Some of their older clients take sneaky to such extremes, they won't even leave their telephone numbers or addresses behind.

In fact, when the brothers first started their shop, they were cracking their heads to figure out ways to get men to come for facials.

One tactic was to hang outside fella! (the Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute) and wait for the simply National Development (Fultions) (NSF). "If I printed 100 flyers, only two would get taken."

The brothers never relied on word of mouth. "They'll never tell each other," asserted Chris. "Only if they were really close would they open their mouth."

But the brothers hang on. Now the bulk of

their customers are escapees from unisex salons or those who read their ads in the newspapers.

"I feel more comfortable talking about my skin to another guy," said a very shy site surveyor called Mr Tan.

"Can I not give you my full name? I don't want people to know I'm doing this. They might make fun of me or something."

Mr Tan, 25, who has an acne problem, which is aggravated by his hot, dusty work conditions, has gone for facials before.

"When I talk about going for field camp, they know exactly what I mean because they go through the same thing," said Mr Tan. Ironically, it was the army that made the brothers decide on their chosen careers.

"We saw a lot of bad skin during our army days," said Adam. "I thought, surely, something can be done to help them. They didn't have anywhere to go. We felt a definite need for a salon just for the guys. So we went to London in 1981 for a one-year training course."

The brothers say that 70 per cent of men have sensitive skin.

This is aggravated by outdoor exposure plus a slapdash approach to skincare, which basically means reaching out for any bar of soap.

When the men come in for treatment for the first time, they usually do so because they have an acne problem or they are beginning to see saggy skin.

Most of their clientele who are willing to pay the average \$30 for their facials are professionals, with a sprinkling of students and army boys.

In the safety of the cubicles, they unload their questions. And they have a lot.

"First, they want to know what their skin problem is and if we can improve their appearance," said Chris.

"Then they'll ask if we're trained, and if we practice sanitation and sterilisation."

The clients also question if the sponges are shared or disposable, if the products are "chemical or biological" and at each step of the treatment, they ask: "What are you doing?"

The brothers consider it a triumph if they can get their clients to cleanse, tone and

moisturise properly.

"Before I went to them, I would use any soap and the hardest pimple cream I could find," said Mr Kevin Chiah, an insurance training manager and Singaporean Marketing winner. "I thought the more a pimple cream burned, the better. But now, of course, I know different."

The skincare products are designed with men in mind, being simply packaged and easy to use.

"The guys wouldn't use cotton wool to apply toner," laughed Chris. "It's too fussy (embarrassing) and womanly! Can you imagine them dabbing their faces with little cotton bits? But they will spray their toner on."

For those who are going to field camp, where water to wash your face may be scarce, the brothers have a last-resort facial cleanser that doesn't need water.

Chris, who is getting married soon, said his occupation was a bit of laugh in his lessons.

"He thought it was funny. Now, she wouldn't be more supportive."

JUST A TOUCHUP

"HOW can I look good on that day?" a groom-to-be asks.

The brothers recommend:

- Tying up the eyebrows by trimming off bushy ends or clearing up the bridge.
- Then a light touch of the moustache wax on the brows.
- To make the lips look better, a dab of Chapstick.
- And to round off, a few taps of concealer on the problem areas and some loose powder.

"Most of them are amazed at the difference. They say 'Wah, I can't see it!' Touch me, touch me!" Men asking for "touchups" are still a minority. "Maybe 1 per cent of bachelors," said Chris.



Illustration by Alex Tan. Photos: Alex Tan. Photo: Alex Tan. Photo: Alex Tan.