

Escaping the norm

Charmaine Ng meets Rick Woo, the founder of LOST, Hong Kong's first escape room

Inspired by video games, escape rooms gained popularity in North America, Europe and East Asia in the 2010s. 10 years on, the concept remains well-loved around the world, with its ability to bring together friends and family with teamwork challenges.

In Hong Kong, one of the biggest names in the business is LOST. Founded by entrepreneur Rick Woo in 2013, when escape rooms were at their height, LOST has fought off countless competitors and thrived despite the city's cutthroat business scene. Since the opening of its first shop in Causeway Bay seven years ago, it has expanded to eight countries with 13 branches across the globe.

"When I started LOST, online businesses were all the rage and everyone was setting one up. But, I could see

that the competition would be harsh and it would be hard to survive," Woo explains the brand's beginnings. "I went the other way and decided to set up a physical business without any online concept. Instead of following the wave, why not create the wave?"

And thank the stars Woo decided to go against the grain. If you've been in Hong Kong for a while, chances are you've tried out LOST's escape rooms at least once. But for those in the dark, the premise behind a game is simple – a team of players are locked inside a room with a pre-set scenario. To escape, they must discover clues, solve puzzles

and perform actions within 45 minutes. The goal is to excel their cognition, communication, cooperation and observation skills while having a great time.

It's not just play, either. As the game requires two or more people working together, it also lends itself well for team building activities. That's why LOST regularly caters for corporate training, birthday parties and hosts pop-ups at shopping malls, clubhouses, hotels and schools.

"Recently, we helped Regal Hotel, The Mira and W Hong Kong turn their rooms into an escape game," says Woo. "They are some of my favourite events as we had the freedom to expand beyond a single room. At W, for example, we organised the game like a scavenger hunt where players needed to follow clues to unlock gadgets from the first to eighth floor. We called it 'Escape Run'."


As if that isn't enough, just last year, Woo opened LOST Junior, targeting ages 6 to 14.

Like the original rooms, players are given a series of riddles and puzzles to solve. The only



difference is that the difficulty is adjusted for the younger escapers accordingly.

"LOST Junior contains STEAM elements and is great for birthday parties or family reunions. A game provides students with the opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills, at the same time raising their team spirit."

Having weathered seven years in the industry, LOST shows no signs of slowing – even with a global pandemic in the background. "LOST will keep expanding in different regions and take on collaborations with new venues," Woo explains his plans for the brand in the coming year. "We aim to bring LOST Junior to Southeast Asia so that children there can experience our play-based learning games for themselves, too." 

Find out more about LOST or book a game at one of its two Hong Kong venues at losthk.com