

# Silent warrior

For its founder, steering the Jenjosh Group to success means keeping in touch with Chinese wisdom and earning trust

**NAME:** Jimmy Ng Hwee Khoo  
**AGE:** 44  
**CAREER:**  
 1988: Deck officer class 3  
 1992: Deck officer class 2  
 1994: Deck officer class 1  
**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY:**  
 1996-2000: Senior officer, Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore guest lecturer, Singapore Maritime Academy  
 2000-2004: Regional operations manager, Wan Hai Lines (Singapore)  
 2004-2005: Deputy general manager, Advance Container Lines; senior manager, Logistics, Pacific International Lines  
 2005: Started Jenjosh Marine Services  
 2005-2008: Expanded into Jenjosh Group of Companies, including Jenjosh Marine Services, Jenjosh Energy, Jenjosh Insurance, Jenjosh Marine Design, Jenjosh Developments and Straits Metal Industries  
**PRESENT POSITION:** Group managing partner/managing director, Jenjosh Group



By Jaya Prakash  
Staff Reporter

Capt Jimmy Ng Hwee Khoo, founder of the Jenjosh Group, might not consider himself to be a silent warrior – but together the words combine two important aspects of his personality and experience.

A former Singapore navy man, he still goes for reservist training; and he is moulded and cast in the traditional Hokkien (a Chinese dialect group) belief of silent achievement, making it clear that he considers deeds rather than words are the real judge of results.

He doesn't like to talk about his time in the navy, where he served with distinction, but it's quite unusual for someone who has fulfilled his mandatory obligations to sign on for reserve service. In a country where military service is mandatory for all able-bodied men over the age of 18, the reserve is consid-

ered to be the preserve of the squarest of the square.

Ng has translated his wealth of navy experience to the commercial sector and appears to be unflappable in the face of adversity. Speaking in his trademark deep voice, he seems remarkably at ease, emphasising what he considers important: "It is better to have a good name than a good bank account."

At a time when greed has been widely blamed for the continuing financial turmoil, his assertion of wealth as being "nothing without values" marks him out. Although in our interview he did not mention Mahatma Gandhi or his famous dictum that "the world only has resources for every man's need and not for every man's greed", the principles underlying his successful business decisions chime with this.

One such decision was not to list his company on the AIM in London.

Another decision based on consideration of lasting benefits for the world's shipping fraternity is that of pioneering use of compressed natural gas as fuel.

For such a pioneer, his unassuming mien appears almost like an art form. As he explained: "We have a saying in Hokkien – *Tiam tiam cho*. Loosely translated that means results are the best touchstone of one's capabilities and achievements, and that words by inference and in a manner of speech amount to grandstanding."

Jenjosh has certainly blazed a trail since its foundation in 2005. In that short period of time, during which the world has seen unprecedented increases in bunker prices, liner consolidation,

bouncing freight rates and other upheavals, the group has weathered them all. And, unbeknown to many, actually operates, owns and builds ships.

Its seven shipyards in China are on a rental or joint venture basis and it is looking increasingly hopeful that Ng's proverbial 'good name' may coexist with a good bank account.

## Ensuring a better future

The name of the company has its own importance for Ng, as he explained: "I have named the company after my daughter Jennelle, and son Joshua." He certainly appreciates that his partners in the company allowed him that luxury.

It also demonstrates some of the essential thinking behind Chinese precepts, as Ng explained.

"It is a Chinese belief that wealth would not go beyond three generations," he pointed out, while also explaining that in Chinese mythology names do not just denote 'sign-posts'.

They have to indicate something for posterity, such as a call to battle, or be

emblematic of something noble. Names are also about the need to be blessed with good omen in order to ensure what Ng described as "a better future for the next generation".

In what could be considered as masterstroke, Jenjosh is believed to be the only recent entrant to Singapore's shipping community to have its own naval architect. That is not just about being self-reliant but is also in keeping with the company's motto 'Efficient, Effective, Excellent, Exact'.

Ng himself has a very approachable

**Jimmy Ng believes 'it is for us to explain the wisdom of our decisions'**

To ensure that trust is gained, he makes a point of ensuring that company inspectors go to the extent of thoroughly checking the ballast tanks in vessels.

For a man who seeks perfection in everything that is matched by his idealism, Ng has not forgotten the importance of infusing a personal touch into his dealings with staff.

Far from what one might expect in a Chinese managerial set-up, Ng's approach is to allow a collegial spirit where every point of view is not only tolerated but also embraced within an open and democratic working environment.

"It is for us to explain the wisdom of our decisions," he emphasised, making it plain that success means embracing the best of all worlds.

In itself that too could be a master-stroke of sorts.

The last thing Ng would want with his penchant for peace and quiet is a cacophony of views, as that could breach one attribute that he holds dear – the price, and the value, that goes with being a silent achiever bereft of any fanfare. **F**

## Personal preferences

**Role model:** SS Teo, MD of Pacific International Lines (former boss)

**Most overrated value:** Commercial face value

**Most underrated value:** Business integrity

**Greatest dislike:** Hypocritical people who have the gift of the gab and the skills of office politics

**What seafarers lack:** Understanding of their role in the industry

**Most misunderstood notion:** That thrift and perseverance should win the day, rather than over-extension and spending of future money