

SoulKids & SoulCentre – Making children & adults happier!

An interview with Sally Forrest, Managing Director of SoulCentre Pte Ltd

By J.J. Lavigne

FLA: Tell us more about SoulCentre Pte Ltd (SC)

Sally (S): SoulCentre and SoulKids are the 2 brands of our company, and were established in Singapore 10 years ago. Our company was founded by Vikas Malkani, a best-selling author and teacher, and me, with the intention of bringing inspirational life-skills training and effective personal development to adults and children alike.

We currently have 4 academies in Singapore: Orchard, East Coast, Toa Payoh & our own Head Quarters at SoulCentre Academy & SoulKids Academy in Sunshine Plaza. We are also launching one more academy in the CBD this month.

We are delighted that SoulCentre has been recognised as Asia's premier centre for personal development by press and media.

FLA- What is SOULKIDS?

S: SoulKids is a unique training program that gives essential life skills for happiness and success to children. It empowers them to grow into confident and well-rounded adults.

At SoulKids we seek to bring out the best in every child. We feel that current mainstream education puts 20 to 30 children in a classroom with one teacher and expects all children to be the same. Uniqueness is not developed. Every child is expected to behave uniformly, while in reality, each and every child is different and this uniqueness should be brought out.

SoulKids was created after Vikas had worked with many adults helping them to enhance their life. He soon realised that most of their issues stemmed from the mind-sets and belief systems they had received when they were children themselves. He dedicated himself to creating effective tools and techniques that children could adopt at a young age, which would support them to create happy and successful lives as they grew into adults. And thus SoulKids was born.

FLA – Is that one of the elements that leads to the so called Mid-life crisis?

S: Yes, it could be. When we live a life that's not aligned to our strengths, not in tune with our inner passions and potential, it creates a chronic sense of stress and unhappiness.

At SoulCentre, we work with numerous clients who wish to enhance their life; to make it more successful, more fulfilling, more productive. With society and lifestyle the way it has become, many wake up each morning feeling stressed, unhappy, chasing unfulfilling career paths, raising children, and juggling multiple roles. And their inner passions and real potential is put on hold in the meantime.

We work with them to help them understand and appreciate the fact that in life, we always have a choice. We help them to identify their strengths, discover their passions and also show them an effective method of turning their passions into a successful and fulfilling life.

FLA- How did you get into the personal development and life-skills business?

S: I come from a small village in UK. From childhood I understood that to progress in life I had to work hard and get good grades at school and University.

I graduated as a pharmacist, and started my career as a manager with Boots pharmaceuticals. To be a manager in Boots, one needed a Pharmacy degree, and that became my goal. I also went on and completed an MBA. My focus was about growing myself and being promoted into more senior roles. Eventually I was transferred to Asia to open retail stores for Boots in Thailand. This was the first expansion out of the UK for Boots.

My mind-set started to shift whilst in Asia and I realised that the externals of life are simply not enough for happiness and inner contentment.

After 3 successful years in Thailand, Boots asked me to return to the UK to be part of downsizing the corporate head office. This was a big wake-up call for me as I witnessed people who had given their entire life to the company suddenly made redundant. So, after 18 years of senior management roles in Boots, I decided to quit as my heart was no longer in their role.

I decided to return to Asia as I had a dream to open an orphanage in Chiangmai, which I accomplished along with a missionary friend and his wife. During this time I also started to see and meet people with completely different perspectives on life and this took me on a journey of self-development and inner discovery. I also made a trip to India to understand the mind and this is where I met Vikas.

FLA- Why do you call your company SoulCentre?

S: The word 'Soul' stands for ones greatest potential. It's a word that defines the highest part within you; your highest abilities, your greatest growth.

And this is what our company helps individuals to achieve - it helps every child and adult to bring out their greatest potential and make it real in their life. Happiness and success follows naturally.

We do this through proprietary training programs that we have developed and copyrighted. Our brand names are trademarked and protected internationally and our licensed trainers conduct our unique programs for children and adults around the world.

FLA – So how did you decide to grow the business?

S: Our growth was essentially organic. We initially started to teach our programs to children and received very positive feedback. Then parents noticed such a huge positive difference in their children that they too wanted to learn how to teach & inspire others. So we started to teach adults the same skills.

Singapore is a great base for our business as so many nationalities live here – and as a result, we have now taught people from over 35 different countries.

Over time as people moved back to their own countries, we also started to get requests to grant licenses to teach our proprietary programs there.

So both Vikas and I decided to train ourselves, and become CFE's so we could understand how best to support our future licensees, and grow the business professionally through licensing/franchise models.

Since then our expansion has been very positive and our training programs are now reaching adults and children in UK, USA, Indonesia, Malaysia and Australia. We are also in talks to expand into Thailand and Vietnam.

We have also expanded with more Academies locally in Singapore.

FLA – How do you replicate, and is replication difficult without the right people?

S: As I mentioned our growth has been essentially organic, so most of our licensees are people who have trained with us earlier, and know the brand well. They have benefited from our training programs and have seen the results in their own life. And now they want to become part of our growing brand.

If licensees are totally new to the brand, we offer a very comprehensive training program with both Vikas & myself to cover all aspects of the brand and its values.

In addition we have recorded many training sessions, so licensees can constantly be refreshed and updated, no matter where they are in the world.

All our training programs are evaluated through feedback mechanisms, so again it allows us to maintain quality.

We have also invested in Intellectual Property and protected both brands SoulCentre and SoulKids in over 30 countries.

We also produce our own books, many of which have become international best-sellers, and again these support the learning for all students.

We believe in high quality of training, and high level of support, for all our licensees. With this to guide us, replication and growth is smoother.

FLA –Who are your clients?

S: The majority of the people who come for our training programs are adults, or their children. Our clients are from all walks of life – we have CEOs, business professionals, princesses, house wiveseven Hollywood stars. They all come to learn how to discover their potential and live life in a happier and more rewarding way. We work with children to help them to do so also.

This is the secret of life – to find what makes you wake up each morning feeling inspired, and then to follow this, get excellent at it, and make a career doing what you love!

FLA - Thanks Sally, and we wish all the best for SoulCentre.

S: Thanks JJ, we are proud to be a part of FLA, and the support it provides.