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## Get money tips on TikTok? S'pore influencer, blogger, website owner make understanding finance fun



Mr Willis Lau's aims to entertain and share financial insights with his followers using what he calls "edutainment". ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN



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UPDATED 2 HOURS AGO ▾



SINGAPORE – Let's face it, financial concepts can be awfully boring for many people, but there is a wealth of online sites that break down the jargon and dry stuff into short, entertaining snippets of information.

Influencers, bloggers and financial education sites have gained wide appeal, with some boasting tens of thousands of followers.

Their reach means they can shape opinions and drive investment decisions.

The Straits Times learns what motivates them and how they ensure that they dispense financial advice responsibly.

## 1. A licensed financial adviser who is also a content creator on TikTok and Instagram

Mr Willis Lau has been a certified financial planner with Great Eastern since 2009.

Mr Lau did not want to stick to the “usual route of meeting his client” to discuss financial issues because it “can get boring”, so he ventured into social media in 2020.

He began by creating short video clips to share his financial insights, aiming to entertain and teach his followers with what he calls “edutainment”.

“People find it daunting to start. I am able to break it down into different steps so that it is a lot easier for them,” Mr Lau says.

He takes the conversation further offline if prospective clients show interest because social media is “a public platform” and he would not know what investment product suits each individual until he gets to know the person better.

“Everyone has different situations, whether they are married and have kids; all of us are different,” he says.

Clients sometimes ask him interesting questions on a topic that Mr Lau feels would be beneficial for others to know about.

His online/offline presence allows him to create a general-interest piece based on the topic that can be shared with all his followers, who now number 20,000 or so on TikTok and about 5,000 on Instagram.

“I enjoy the conversations with my clients and the questions they ask. If I think this is something that a lot of people may want to know, I will produce a video on it,” he says.

“Trust is fundamentally the key pillar when it comes to money.

“We want to work with people who we can trust, especially when it comes to our personal finance and money-management matters.”

## 2. Financial concepts told through comics

The Simple Sum, a personal finance content portal with 300,000 followers on Instagram, uses comics to demystify financial planning, budgeting and life for people between 18 and 35 years old, says founder Shirley Crystal Chua.

“Comics were clearly a way that found a footing with young people. They were able to capture their attention quite easily, quite quickly,” Ms Chua adds.

Managing editor Seow Kai Lun says the comics present different real-life scenarios to kick-start thinking about financial issues that concern young adults.

“When you get your first job, or if you have got a raise, do you immediately think about, ‘how do I treat myself?’ Or do you think about, ‘how can I put this towards my future instead?’” Ms Seow notes. “At the end of the day, we are not telling you what to do. We are really just asking you to think in another way.”



The Simple Sum founder Shirley Crystal Chua (in red) and her team (clockwise from top left) Nicole Ng, Tracy Dela Cruz, Priscilla Lam and Seow Kai Lun. ST PHOTO: RYAN CHIONG





The Simple Sum uses comics to explain financial concepts to young adults. ST PHOTO: RYAN CHIONG

The Simple Sum, which started in 2020, also deals with financial topics in long form, such as articles, videos or podcasts.

With so much information online, Ms Seow has this tip for young adults: “It is very important to do your own research and your due diligence, even for the stuff that we put up.

“Anyone who gives you advice, you should never take it wholesale. That is really what we advocate even within our content itself.”

### 3. Blogging and sharing about his financial experiences

Heartland Boy is a personal-finance blogger in his late 20s who calls himself a “true-blue heartlander who hopes to attain financial freedom before he turns 40”.

He started the Heartlandboy.com blog in 2016 to document his personal experiences so that his peers can learn how to tackle similar challenges.

He was motivated to do so as he saw his family struggling with their finances when he was younger.



The Heartlandboy.com documents the blogger's personal experiences so that his peers can learn from his examples to tackle similar challenges. PHOTO: SCREENGAB FROM HEARTLANDBOY.COM

Heartland Boy said in an e-mailed response that he wanted to avoid going down the same route.

These days, Heartland Boy blogs regularly on banking and insurance topics, retirement and investments such as in Singapore stocks and real-estate investment trusts.

He still consults his financial adviser on insurance coverage for his family.

“My financial adviser is there to help me keep a lookout for blind spots that I might have missed,” he replied in the e-mail.

Heartland Boy is not out to win fans. He says: “It takes a while to know who is authentic and credible.

“Spend time to understand the influencer better, and always cross-check with other credible sources.”