



Getting her just desserts

After spending years in the finance world, a chance discovery of a Japanese dessert not yet popular in the UK led FCA Vivien Wong to set up Little Moons

Why did you set up Little Moons?

I worked in the City of London for four or five years and always knew I wanted to set up my own business. Japanese food popularity was growing. My parents had a bakery producing traditional mochi for 30 years and then my brother and I discovered ice cream mochi in the US.

Why is this dessert different?

It's unlike anything else you've ever eaten - a new texture that's sort of chewy. With western cuisine, we don't really eat things just for texture, more for flavour and taste. The mochi adds a different dimension to ice cream.

How did your chartered accountancy training help?

It's important to have a basic

understanding of financial statements, so it held me in good stead. If you're a good accountant you know how to run a business and how to hire a good salesperson. If you're a good salesperson you may not necessarily understand the mechanics of the accounts.

I've been hiring bright people. A decade ago they would be applying for roles in the City. There has definitely been a shift in people coming to work for small companies, taking that risk and not necessarily following on a corporate path.

What was the transition from financial services like?

It was a steep learning curve. I found working in finance to be quite one-dimensional. When you start your



own business you've got to be mindful of things like marketing, creative elements - Instagram for example - as well as customer service. As an owner you've got to manage a much bigger team on a much wider scale than an audit team. Then you have to think about the culture of your business.

Why do you think that might be?

We offer a very different culture. As much as corporates offer benefits, such as dry cleaners in the office for instance, I don't need one here as we're not working such crazy hours that we can't make it to our normal one. There are now different values for people looking for work.

So you're confident despite Brexit looming?

We are not at all confident about business growth with Brexit looming, but we have signed to move into a new, larger factory. I did seriously consider looking at a site in Holland, but given the pressure to grow we decided to sign up a site in the UK.

A lot of our customers are based in Europe and I am hoping that whatever deal is signed, we will still be able to export to Europe - even if it is with a lesser margin if they put tariffs on. However, I wouldn't say that Brexit is looking good for the economy at all. It puts so much pressure on a lot of small business.

I am part of a business networking group and it is going to affect everyone, so we are trying to make contingencies as best as we can. It's very difficult given the uncertainty when even the government isn't sure of the outcomes of the negotiations.

Did you want to set up any other businesses?

This is taking up 100% of my time. Maybe in a couple of years. I'm always being approached by people to help them with their businesses, to give them ideas, but in terms of me starting another business - no, it's definitely not on the cards. ●