

# TRENDSETTER

# MARRYING FINANCIAL TECHNOLOGY WITH REAL ESTATE

A strong proponent of alternative and crowd financing, Julian's many ventures finally led him to setting up a major real estate crowdfunding platform in Asia.

Words by Mira Soyza & Isabelle Pinto



Julian Kwan, Founder and CEO of InvestaCrowd

**A**s covered in our previous issue, there has recently been a hype in real estate crowdfunding in Asia - now everyone can invest in property. Even investors with small amounts of cash can afford to invest in major projects alongside the best developers. Asian Property Review caught up with Investacrowd's Julian Kwan, CEO as well as Founder of this major real estate crowdfunding platform in Asia.

Born and raised in Sydney, Australia by parents of Chinese and English-Irish descent, Julian graduated from the University of New South Wales Australia with a degree in Construction Management. He then went to Beijing University where he obtained a degree in Mandarin. Later, he ended up in Shanghai staying for 13 years, unleashing the spirit of entrepreneurship within him by starting up a number of different companies.

His first venture was in the Mailman Group which he co-founded and sold in 2000. Still existing today, this is an alternative advertising business that started with sms advertising,

ads in toilet doors, postcard advertising and many other alternative advertising channels.

### Venturing into real estate

In 2006, Julian co-founded Space Development, a real estate investment and development business which expanded to become the Space Group. The group undertook many development projects including China's leading boutique property, URBN hotel which they built, operated and sold in 2007. Julian invests his own capital and maintains the role of a director, overseeing strategy and sales throughout the life cycle of the businesses.

Based in Singapore for 3 years now, his prime focus for the last 18 months, however, has shifted from developing projects to building his crowdfunding platform. "The focus now is not on developing, but on building my crowdfunding platform where we bring financing to real estate developers," says Julian. "So we look for really high quality, really large development projects and we look to break down those projects into smaller shares so investors of all sizes can access these deals, co-investing

alongside the best developers in any city that we're located in," he adds. Being a strong proponent of alternative and crowd financing, Julian has, in fact, successfully crowdfunded many of his own real estate developments.

Putting his real estate businesses aside, interestingly, Julian has also been the face of national advertising campaigns for Sony, BMW, Siemens, Nokia, Heineken and Martell. When asked about his experience filming for TV ads, he reminisced how it all started back in Shanghai where he met a Shanghainese woman, who had just started a casting company. "I met her at dinner and I was going to be her first client, so she got me a job filming a TV ad in Shanghai," he recalls. "The job was great - paid me money for silly, easy, and fun work," he laughed.

Filming for ads, however, is not something that he does full-time. "I've never had an agent," says Julian. "It's never been a focus of my time. I run my own company, so I'm very, very busy. But I still do it occasionally. If it's good money and a good team, why not?"