

# Starting anew – and succeeding

Retrenchment is not the end of the road. For some, it may be the start of self-discovery and a better future. Last Sunday, we reported how former Chatterbox chef Steven Low went on to start his own successful food stall after retrenchment. Several readers wrote in to share their stories, and we highlight their experiences here.

## Motivated by his hobby

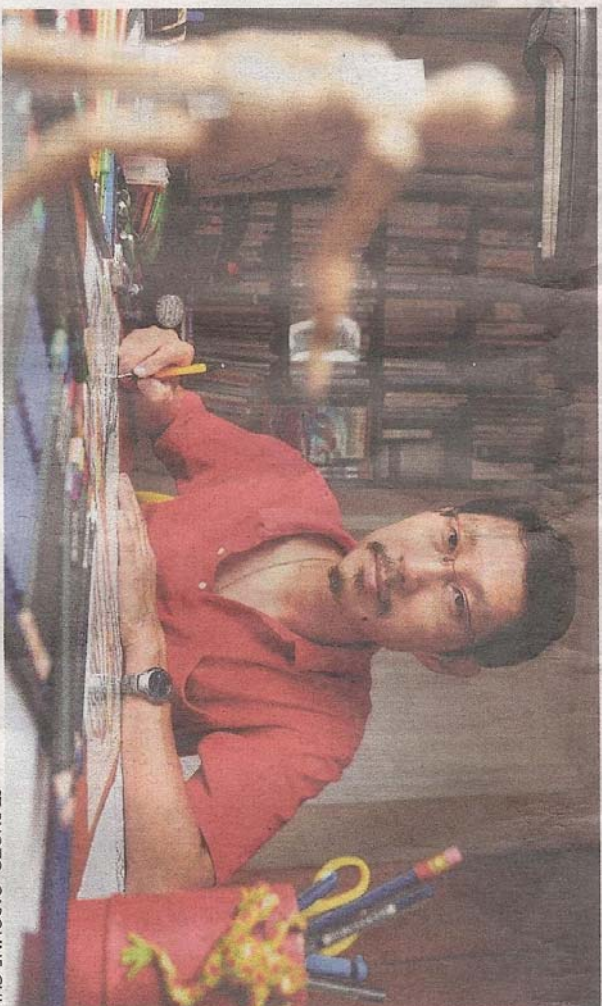
In November last year, barely five months after Mr Thum Cheng Cheong moved into his new semi-detached home in Kembangan, he found himself retrenched.

He was the head of the legal and credit administration department in the Singapore branch of a European bank, and the retrenchment was especially shocking as it took immediate effect.

Thankfully, Mr Thum, 46, said, his wife and two sons were supportive. His wife was retrenched as a human resource director in a finance firm two years earlier, but she has since found a similar job in an insurance firm.

The family took a five-day trip to Shanghai in December. They were able to do that as they had always been fi-

From attending workshops run by motivational guru Tony Buzan, Mr Thum now finds himself on the other side of the fence as a legal counsel and trainer with the group.



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nancially prudent, he said, such as paying for their house and car in full.

"For the first few weeks after retrenchment, it seemed like a good chance to de-stress because when in your life will you get such a long break from work?" he said.

But after many meetings with human resource consultants and sending out his curriculum vitae to finance firms with no success, the panic set in. It was then that he considered turning his pastime – attending mind-mapping workshops conducted by author and educational consultant Tony Buzan – into full-time work.

Earlier this month, he contacted the Buzan Centre Asia here and has since been hired as its in-house legal counsel, as well as a trainer.

His advice: "It's always good to have hobbies which enable you to pick up new skills and expand your network, so you don't become obsolete. Many Singaporeans neglect this because they are so caught up with working all the time."

**Debbie Yong**