

The qualities that will be required by future humanity, that robots and machines cannot offer: empathy, creativity, collaboration—are the qualities that female professionals are pretty strong at, Riga TechGirls

Riga, Latvia – **Gina Heng**, Co-Founder of Marvelstone Group. Interviewed by **Evita Lune** and **Joanne Chng**.

Marvelstone Group is a private investment group that develops and invests in growing businesses. It was founded by Joe Seunghyun Cho and Gina Heng and joined by managing partner, Joel Ko. One of the projects is LATTICE80—the Global FinTech Hub kickstarted from Singapore and now expanding its network in many other cities. Gina is very passionate about women and financial empowerment, and is currently developing misskaya.com as a lifestyle and financial platform specially for the modern women.



Evita: First of all, I wanted to ask a personal question: how did you come up with becoming an entrepreneur in a tech space? Was it initially planned or did life bring you to this? Can you share a little bit about your personal motivation?

Gina: I wanted to become an entrepreneur since young, having been exposed to my father's business. I grew up learning about business, seeing and observing, understanding how it works. After I graduated from the university, I wanted to do something of my own and that's how it kick-started

and led along the way.

I embarked on first job as an asset management research analyst. I was covering the Asia-Pacific markets in terms of understanding what's happening with the mutual funds and institutional funds markets and was privileged to be able to gain access to the CEOs and top management to explore the landscape in Asia, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and China. I learnt from the top guys and understood in terms how to develop new business in new markets, formulating their business strategies, and managing various regulatory landscapes.

In my second job I went in-house to work at a top Japanese bank based in Singapore, and that's where I understood the difference between the working culture at the US based consulting firm and a Japanese bank with a tight structure. It was a fruitful experience as I learnt more in terms of the fundamentals of different business segments and financial needs in Asia, for example, in terms of commodities, telco, and infrastructure development.

After my work experiences in the asset management and banking sectors, I joined my then-boyfriend who's now my husband in setting up our own hedge fund business.

We were just two young people trying to see how we can do own fund, own business. We didn't plan too far, we just said: let's try and move along. We did all the applications for licences, we tried to do our own marketing, tried to do our own outreach, so we learned things the hard way, at a high cost.

We evolved and adapted over time. From our first hedge fund, we expanded to offer other investment options such as private investments or property related opportunities to reach new audiences and of course we gained more experience over time on how to deal with various types of investors in Asia and elsewhere.

Since we are entrepreneurs, we also understood the pain-points that the Start-ups might be facing. We tried to work on new ventures like co-working space, and incubating in new start-ups. We also broadened our experience with regards to the venture capital market as we helped an Israeli VC to develop in Korea.

With LATTICE80 as one of the projects, we curated it as a FinTech and Blockchain specific platform. We knew that content to our community are very important in terms of creating a good eco system—this really is not just about space or real estate business—but actually creating the community to bring the right brains to the table, to actually collaborate and add more value to the whole growth.

It has been a great market development platform where we are able to observe many opportunities and trends being developed within just a short span of time. We knew we made a good decision to kickstart it as an independent project, when it created more impact globally than we have expected. When we take on a new idea, it is always with a long term vision in mind. It's only been almost 2 years now, and we're taking it overseas. We moved our headquarters to London and we are reaching beyond Asia such as in European markets at the same time to bring all the different stakeholders such as start-ups, regulators, corporates, and we also try to engage the public to understand what is FinTech, or how it's actually impacting in their day-to-day life, what sort of business opportunities these are, applying different innovations within the financial space.

Being able to adapt and to be flexible to changes is important to us and I think that's a part of being entrepreneur not just in a tech space but in general. This is what we've been doing for past several years.

We saw how different technologies that have been developed such as AI, and how they intersect with the developments in FinTech. So, I would say that lot of technology innovations are blurring the lines with regards to how tech are applied to the different business segments.

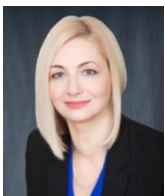
We don't try to think within the box, we want to be innovative, we are not afraid to try new things, for us it's really about being nimble.

We keep it very lean and light—it's just myself, my husband, and we have another Korean partner. We try to work very independently at the same time and we come together to see how can we make use of each other's networks or experience to extend the business. And we're very open to collaboration to various parties and partners, whether they are corporates or start-ups because we know that in this time and age it's really not about pure competition but actually growing the whole ecosystem bigger and stronger.

Evita: And how would you classify yourself? Would you consider yourself now finance expert, or technology expert?

Gina: I don't think I'm any (laughs). But I do have a better understanding of financial side than the tech side. It is very exciting to know what's happening in the tech space and how different technologies and innovations can be applied in the financial world, because ultimately what we want as consumers is really convenience and ease of use.

Read the whole interview [here](#).



Evita Lune is a Partner who drives the firm's Global Digital Economy. She has completed over 50 senior level assignments in 29 countries within this practice, out of her total portfolio of over 600 assignments. Ms. Lune works extensively with FinTech clients from the Baltic sea region (Scandinavia, Baltics, Poland) and supports their global expansion plans in all continents by providing effective executive search solutions. As a team leader and regional director, she manages Pedersen & Partners teams in Poland, Baltics and Belarus. Her previous experience includes three years with the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga as the Executive MBA Program Director and six years with Shell in international and regional marketing management functions in Riga, Budapest, and Brussels.

Ms. Lune was a speaker at the CEE FutureTech congress in Warsaw - one of the most important business summits in Central and Eastern Europe and participated in Blockchain Pre-Accelerator Program at University of Latvia. She is also a blogger for RigaTechGirls and a Jury Member of CEE Capital Markets and FinTech Awards. Ms. Lune was recognized by Forbes as one of the top 25 most influential women in Latvia for two years in a row.



[Joanne Chng](#) is a Client Partner at Pedersen & Partners, based in Singapore. Ms. Chng has over a decade's worth of experience in senior-level Executive Search in the Financial Services, Information Communication Technology, Industrial, FMCG, and Healthcare & Life Sciences sectors for global brands across APAC. She pairs this track record with 10 years of enterprise sales experiences in the IT industry. Ms. Chng has in-depth understanding of the technology landscape, and an extensive recruitment background in both technology and enterprise solutions for corporate customers.

Before transitioning to Executive Search, she gained experience in the Financial Services and Insurance industries while holding several top managerial sales roles at local and regional key market players transforming sales and service operations for strategic accounts through end-to-end high quality hardware, software, and services solutions aimed at establishing enterprise-wide intranets.

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