

# Min Sim Turns Running Out of Yoga Clothes into the Inspiration for Running a Company



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## Early Days at J.P. Morgan

I joined the Financial Institutions Group within Investment Banking in New York in July 2006, right after completing my MBA at The Wharton School. I was drawn to J.P. Morgan because of its strong brand, solid franchise, and the impressive team I met during the recruiting process. In particular, I connected well with and enjoyed interacting with everyone on J.P. Morgan's Wharton recruiting team who came to recruit on campus. Amongst them were alumni who were very generous in sharing their experience—and I wanted to be a part of the team!

When I think about my days with J.P. Morgan, it still brings a smile to my face thinking about picking up Seamless Web dinners from the lobby of our 277 Park Avenue office, before heading back up to the office for "Part II" of a typical day in investment banking. In the lobby, I'd run into

other Associates from my training class who were also there to pick up their dinners, and we'd chat for a bit. It was quite the highlight of the day!

I was fortunate to have had the chance to work with excellent people in FIG—they were very smart, highly focused, and dedicated to delivering nothing but the best for clients. I was with the firm for a year and a half before leaving in early 2008 to pursue another job opportunity in Hong Kong.

## Running Out of Yoga Clothes

At the height of the financial crisis in December 2008, I lost my job and suddenly found plenty of time on my hands. So I took the opportunity to pursue interests which I never had enough time for in the past. Top on that list was yoga and I started going to classes five times a week. Very soon, my laundry couldn't keep up, and I ran out of workout clothes. Not finding anything on that market that I liked, I started researching what it would take to start a yoga apparel line. The more I researched, the more I was drawn to it.

I also loved the idea of creating a job for myself, rather than waiting for a job to come along. And so I went ahead and started my own apparel line in June 2009. I wanted a name that one naturally associates with yoga. Very often, a yoga class starts with the instructor leading the class in chanting "Om—". So that's how the brand name came about.

Aesthetics-wise, I wanted to create a line with an Oriental edge, to reflect the Eastern roots of the brand. In particular, I drew inspiration from Chinese classical dance, which I practised throughout my teenage years. It is those sights, sounds and silhouettes – a combination of subtlety and fluidity that influence my designs. About one-third of the Om Republic line showcases this Oriental influence, be in the qipao-inspired trim or Chinese style frog buttons.

I've always been a supporter of environmental sustainability. If there's a viable eco-friendly option, I'd support it in any way I can. So in deciding what type of fabric to use, I naturally gravitated towards organic cotton, which is grown using a system of farming that maintains and replenishes soil fertility without the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. This minimizes our impact on the environment in

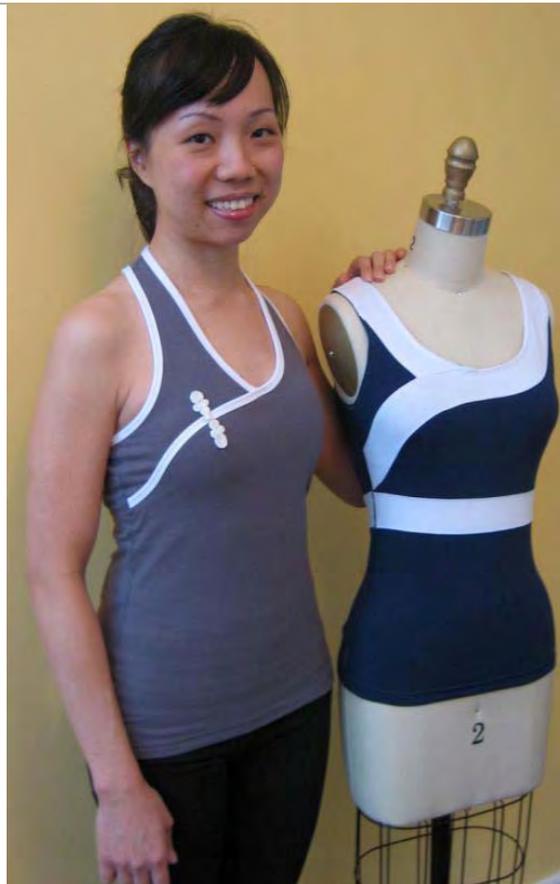
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the production process, while providing quality cotton for our customers.

Each piece is designed to provide freedom of movement and ease of wear. When I receive the fitting samples, one of the first things I do is personally put them through a stretch test. Not only do the garments have to look good, but they also have to feel good and allow for a full range of motion. I try stretches, bends, twists, inversions – you name it. It's a lot of work to put every design through these tests, but it's also a lot of fun. Of course, another advantage is that it helps me get better at the yoga asanas.

### Running an Apparel Company

Om Republic is the coming together of my various interests: yoga, dance, art, design, and doing our bit for the planet. Starting and running a business is very different from investment banking. But believe it or not, there were things that I learned in banking that have come in very useful for my business, such as paying meticulous attention to detail, and being comfortable juggling multiple balls in the air – from specifying garment details to cold-calling potential distributors to handling customer queries. So looking back, investment banking was a valuable professional experience and I'm thankful for all that I learned.



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As a business owner, I'm utilizing my skills and experiences in a way no other job has ever done before. My advice to any other alumni wanting to take the plunge into entrepreneurship is to talk to as many people as you can whom you can rely on to give you good advice. In particular, network and get advice from people who have started businesses in related fields. There's a lot that can be learned from tapping into their experience and wisdom.

I still consider myself a relative newcomer to the business, but I'm proud of the fact that I took the plunge and started Om Republic with no industry background and no previous entrepreneurial experience. I've been quite fortunate in that I haven't encountered any major stumbling blocks in launching Om Republic. The process from inception of the idea to product launch took seven months, and went reasonably smoothly. I believe the larger challenge lies ahead—increasing my distribution channels and growing the business. I'm always on the lookout for ways to increase distribution, and avenues to grow the business. This includes partnerships with potential distributors. If you know of anyone who fits the bill, please drop me a line at [min.sim@omrepublic.com](mailto:min.sim@omrepublic.com).

The complete Om Republic line is available at [www.omrepublic.com](http://www.omrepublic.com) and distributed through select retailers. We also ship worldwide.

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