

LEADERS

January, February, March 2025

Volume 48 Number 1



RECHLER



DUFFY



KNOX

PURPOSE

JERRY INZERILLO

NEW YORK CITY FC



ADEYEMI



HIMMEL



CHUNG

UHS' MILLER

WOMEN LEADERS

NORTHWELL HEALTH



DIAMANDIS



KATHWARI



SYMS

BUSINESS
ROUNDTABLE

HOSPITALITY

Under Promise And Over Deliver

An Interview with David C. Chung, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, iLABS

EDITORS' NOTE David Chung is a serial entrepreneur with more than 25 years of experience in beauty and skincare R&D innovation, contract manufacturing, and premium brand building. Chung continues to be inspired by his mother, Judith Ehm Chung, a Korean immigrant who helped establish Koreatown in New York City. In honor of her entrepreneurial and philanthropic spirit, he created the Judith Ehm Foundation to support public charities that help Korean Americans, Asian Americans, and the broader community with education, social services, and healthcare.



David C. Chung

with Sephora to innovate sustainable, ultra-concentrated hair treatments using biotechnology that supports stronger, healthier hair and cuts down on weight and waste.

I currently own research and development labs and contract manufacturing facilities called iLABS in New Jersey in the United States, and in South Korea where we service over 125 brands with award-winning OTC sunscreen, skincare, body care, and hair care. I also founded Morae Packaging, a U.S. company with a

glass factory and plastic injection mold facility in South Korea to provide turnkey services for beauty, wellness, and fragrance brands.

Did you always know that you had an entrepreneurial spirit and desire to build your own businesses?

From a young age, I witnessed my mother's incredible work ethic and determination. She was a strong, intelligent woman who started with a small shop and transformed it into a

cornerstone of the community, playing a key role in establishing Koreatown in New York City. At the same time, she prioritized taking care of the community she helped build. Her example – and the legacy she left behind – inspired my own entrepreneurial spirit and desire to create something meaningful, not just for myself, but for others as well.

Do you feel that entrepreneurship can be taught, or is it an ability that a person is born with?

Entrepreneurship is a skill that can be taught, and that's why I'm passionate about what I do. As I mentioned, I recently acquired Amare Global because I wanted to help others build their own successful businesses. Amare is unique because the sales force takes ownership and I am passionate about helping them transform this opportunity into a path to becoming successful entrepreneurs.

How do you describe Amare Global's mission?

Amare's mission is to offer exclusive, clinically proven products that help to optimize

Will you discuss your career journey?

I had an interest in business from a young age, but I opened my first official business at around the age of 25. It was a fashion distributor called Nova Imports that eventually led me to create my own brand. After expanding into premium cosmetic retail stores in New Jersey and California, I was inspired to create my own effective skincare. This led to the launch of 3LAB, a high-tech, award-winning skincare line that quickly gained popularity at Barneys New York.

Working in the prestige beauty space with my own brand, I saw a huge gap in high-quality skincare manufacturing. I opened my first manufacturing business, Englewood Lab, with one chemist and one kettle. Truthfully, I didn't know what a kettle was before I made the decision to go into manufacturing, but I knew what it took to build a business with a strong reputation. I grew Englewood Lab to service not only my brand, but over 150 brands before taking it public on the Korean Stock Exchange.

Each step of my journey has been guided by my philosophy of prioritizing innovation and quality. Seeing the demand for clean beauty grow, I worked with Sephora to launch the first farm-to-table concept skincare brand called Farmacy Beauty. I am proud to say that our Green Clean Meltaway Cleansing Balm became the #1 cleanser for the retailer. I then sold it to Procter & Gamble.

In January 2024, I acquired Amare Global, The Mental Wellness Company, to provide innovative and efficacious products to support wellness and a balanced lifestyle.

In the beginning of 2024, I launched the hair care brand called The Rootist exclusively



iLabs facilities (above and opposite page - bottom); Amare Global and Rootist products (opposite page - top)



wellness. This was why I was drawn to Amare, to help others' overall wellness and to leave a positive legacy in this world. My responsibility is to build Amare on a strong foundation that thrives beyond myself so future generations can benefit from a happier, healthier, and more balanced lifestyle.

What is your vision for Amare Global to continue to lead the mental wellness category?

My vision for Amare is to have an exceptional customer experience from end to end. This means efficacious, innovative products with clinically backed studies, operational excellence, and a robust IT platform.

I have significantly invested in our IT, R&D, marketing, and manufacturing to establish a strong pipeline of innovation for the future, including a product roadmap, a new scientific advisory board, and compliance training for all of our global markets.

What led to your passion to build beauty brands?

When I daydream, my mind always wanders to problem-solving or innovating. For example, I came up with the idea for The Rootist when I thought, "why are we shipping shampoo all around the world in huge plastic bottles that can contain up to 80 to 90 percent water? This is just crazy, and not sustainable."

The Rootist innovated ultra-concentrated hair treatments that replace water with a superfood ferment to help support healthier, denser hair, while significantly reducing waste and weight. The small, yet powerful doses are ideal for traveling too. I am like a mountain climber – once I reach the top of the mountain it is not long before I am thinking of the next mountain to climb. Building businesses are my mountains and I am truly excited when I am working hard and putting together all the pieces to a successful business.

What do you feel are the keys to effective leadership and how do you approach your management style?

I live by the mantra "reputation, reputation, reputation." Reputation to me means "under promising and over delivering." Whether it's iLABS or The Rootist, or now Amare Global, I approach all of my businesses with this philosophy. I believe that when you focus on building trust and a good reputation, everything else will follow – like nature.

What are the characteristics you look for when hiring talent for your businesses?

Business is all about people, and you need A-players to be successful. An A-player leads with integrity, humility, and, of course, under promises and over delivers. It's not about showing off but committing to help those around you be successful. I believe leadership should be like clean water at the top of a mountain – clean, accessible, and given to support those in need. In my experience, I have found that A-players attract other A-players, and you can build a successful team on this philosophy.

What advice do you offer to young entrepreneurs beginning their careers?

My advice to young entrepreneurs would be to have a hungry mindset and stay humble. It is important to work hard and be passionate, but if you are not helping others then what is it all for? For myself, when I focused on helping others, I was the most successful. ●

