

**case 6-972-055**  
**September 23, 2026**

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## Restart Academy: Serving Second Chances

Just after noon in Bangkok, the food court at the Thailand Institute of Justice (TIJ) buzzed with the clatter of spoons on plates and overlapping conversations. From his desk near the entrance, Phoemporn Maneesin watched the queue at Restart Kitchen, a canteen run by Restart Academy and staffed by people who had once been behind bars. Less than two years earlier, this had been an empty hall in a new government building. Now, backed by TIJ as co-founder and seeded with grant funding to turn a project into a business, it was the public face of a social experiment about second chances.

On the surface, the outlet looked like a clear win: steady lines, satisfied diners, and a small group of formerly incarcerated people earning stable incomes in real jobs. Yet the numbers on Maneesin's screen told a harder story. The TIJ flagship was already "paroled" into stable operations, but newer branches and recently launched ventures—a salon and spa, a laundry service—and a growing pipeline of collaborations were still on "probation," needing subsidy and management attention even as more partners approached him with offers for new businesses.

As a lifelong entrepreneur, Maneesin was used to operating in unsettled circumstances and betting on the upside of future opportunities. But as CEO and partner of a social enterprise employing people with fragile lives and stigmatized pasts, he now had to think carefully beyond the numbers. What exactly was Restart Kitchen—a sensible business that helped a cause, or a mission that used business as its vehicle? And how loudly should he declare his team's histories in a market where such visibility could both attract support and intensify stigma? He knew these positioning questions would set the direction for branding, communication, hiring, partnerships, and ultimately the growth model he could responsibly pursue with limited resources.

And time was short. In a meeting soon with TIJ leadership, he would be expected to explain how Restart Academy planned to scale—how it could move beyond a few showcase sites to address, in a meaningful way, the reality that around 200,000 people left Thai prisons each year, many unable to find work and at risk of returning inside. As he closed his laptop and looked back at the bustling food court, one

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*Published by WDI Publishing, a division of the William Davidson Institute (WDI) at the University of Michigan.*

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