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CEH to cement presence in China

By Chris Drake

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Singapore-based CEH Group has acquired a wealth of experience and knowledge of the Chinese market, thanks to Oei Han Siang, the group's president and chief executive officer (CEO), who spotted early business opportunities in China.

"Because Singapore's market is so small, it is natural for businesses to look abroad for markets and China is a clear focus for Singaporean businesses," said Oei, who brought the company overseas together with his brothers Oei Han Tjing and Oei Hun Toe after taking over from his father.

During a trip to China in the early 1970s, the CEH CEO noticed a lack of refrigerators in the country and stepped into that niche market in cooperation with several Chinese partners. About a decade later, CEH joined a Beijing trade fair in partnership with an Italian company to introduce urethane to that market.

That venture into urethane technology for refrigerators eventually led to the establishment of a full polymer division, whose products are marketed under the GMA brand.

Taking aggressive measures, the polymer division has become one of the Asia-Pacific region's leading manufacturers of polyurethane equipment. It currently provides equipment and services to the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) subcontractors of General Motors, Hyundai, Toyota, and major Asian refrigerator makers.



Oei Han Siang

Following a similarly bold business model, CEH Group has scored much success in its two other business divisions - automation division, and trading and property division.

Partnering again with an Italian company, CEH in the mid-1990s introduced Nitti, a brand of safety footwear that has gradually gained recognition in the Asia-Pacific region. The footwear is designed by renowned safety footwear designer Franco Losio and part of the company's trading division.

Although CEH manufactures and sells Nitti shoes in China, it has made Singapore, the launch pad for its newest products. Since its introduction in the country five years ago, Nitti has slowly increased its market share and annual growth is expected to be between 20 and 30 percent.

"Industrial companies throughout China, particularly in the off-shore oil industry, are showing increased interest in Nitti footwear. People who like and appreciate quality buy our shoes and our target clients are companies who wish to protect their employees to the best of their ability," Oei said.

Meanwhile, the company expects a huge return from property it purchased in 1997 in Shenyang, capital of Northeast China's Liaoning Province.

The planned CEH-Shenyang Shoe Industrial Park will provide all the upstream and downstream facilities needed in footwear production, allowing companies to simply "plug in" and immediately begin their operations. It will be the group's manufacturing base in China.

"In order to have any type of growth within the industrial sector, you need to have convenient access to transportation and a reliable logistics system, which is now ready in Shenyang through Dalian Port," explained Oei.



The CEH-Shenyang Shoe Industrial Park will provide all the

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upstream and downstream facilities needed in footwear production.

market for the company.

CEH's Automation Division has also seen sharp growth as the number of manufacturers in China rises and their facilities are modernized. The situation will provide a consistent and long-term

"The Chinese market will not only be a strong exporting and manufacturing base but also a domestic marketplace with a very strong consumer base, much like the US. Companies cannot neglect this market if they wish to be successful in today's global economy," said Oei.

"I see China as full of opportunity. CEH Group can help companies to become competitive in China and Asia with our dedicated management team and vast overseas network of sales and supply. Anyone, whether they are No 2 or No 3, can join with us and become No 1 in China or Asia."

For detailed information, please visit: www.cehgp.com

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