

Achieving Success in China

– a UK project management company

by Chengde Chen

Chairman, Sino Infrastructure Partnership
(*SIP*)

SIP

- *SIP* – Sino Infrastructure Partnership.
- a British construction project management company operating in China.
- helps western investors build their facilities by managing the process – planning, designing, construction, and approval.
- helps the Chinese construction industry develop international relationships.

Founding

- 1993, by Geoff Mills – civil engineer, Fellow ICE, ex-director of Alexander Gibb
- A group of UK construction-related companies tackling the China infrastructure market together:
 - Taylor Woodrow
 - Alexander Gibb
 - Ward Structures
 - (later) Hyder Consulting
- They jointly funded SIP to set up offices in China to seek foreign investment projects.

Achievement

- A well-established project management company with an annual turnover exceeding £4million.
- 120 staff (15% expats), offices in Shanghai, Beijing and Suzhou.
- Helped over 100 western companies build facilities in China, including American Standard, 3M, ECC, Unilever, Volvo, Siemens, Metro, IKEA, Glaxo Wellcome, Nexans, Boral, Akzo Nobel, CBRE, Macqarie Goodman, Autoliv, ESAB, Donaldsons, etc.
- China client base is growing; chosen as the western team member in the management team for the “2010 Shanghai Expo” pavilions.

Experience: the partnership approach

- The partnership of a group of UK companies who came to China together.
- The partnership between a British family and a Chinese family.
- The partnership between SIP and Chinese professional organisations.

1. A synergy-based UK alliance

- *A group of companies who shared the interest towards the market and had sufficient business synergy. To work together wasn't easy, but achievable with sincerity and efforts.*
- *Focus on the foreign investment market. No major player in the world could ignore China; when they came and wanted to build their facilities, they would need specialist help.*
- *Combining local knowledge and western expertise in managing construction projects, we met our clients' expectations.*

2. A reliable family alliance

- *The partnership between Geoff's family and the Chen family, as a "cultural foundation", brings loyalty and stability that are crucial for the business to endure changes and hardships.*
- *A Chinese staff member once commented on Geoff by saying "To serve a boss like this I wouldn't even complain about working myself to death." All relationships are man-made: from dying for killing you to dying for you!*
- *What is the difference between patriotism and racism but a question of pride versus condescension. The human animal, like all others, is essentially territorial, while globalisation is about human intelligence.*

3. A cross-border professional alliance

- *Building relationships with Chinese contractors and designing institutes through training, including training in the UK.*
- *Insisting on using FIDIC and the best international practices, but teaching the contractors to protect their interests.*
- *Establishing ICE (The Institution of Civil Engineers) in China, recruiting Chinese members.*

Philosophy

- *Because we valued relationships more than short-term financial gains, we have done well financially as well.*
- *Successful business is about enjoying the difficult art of working together, whether domestically or internationally. This philosophy has been around for thousands of years, but is always fresh in reality.*