

## Success Stories

### HK business platform surpasses quality test (01/06/2007)

AsiaInspection, a quality control company dealing with product inspections and factory audits, was set up by French entrepreneur Sebastien Breteau in Hong Kong on the first working day after the Handover\*.

"I thought it was as good a day as any to bet on the future of Hong Kong and China," he said.

Ten years later, AsiaInspection won the China SME 2007 Award from the French Chamber of Commerce in China. The criteria for this award included sales turnover, financial results, innovations and adaptations developed in entering the Chinese market, and quality of the commercial and industrial approach.

Currently, AsiaInspection has a network of over 300 experienced inspectors throughout Asia who will have performed more than 20,000 product inspections in 2007, and counts big international players like Tesco, Carrefour, Philips and Somerfield among its 900 plus clients. The company has an office in Hong Kong with 15 employees and about 70 across the border in its Shenzhen office.

#### Destination China

A trained mechanical engineer, Mr Breteau was working in an electronics company in France in the 1990s when he felt the urge to relocate. "I had always wanted to broaden my horizon and China was a great destination so I started developing relationships in this part of the world."

He came to Hong Kong in 1996. "I knew I wanted to start a business in Hong Kong as it is the most attractive city in China. I didn't want a trading firm as the market is getting highly competitive and I found that more and more overseas business people wanted to source directly from China. This gave me the idea of doing quality inspection to help them secure their supply chain".

Mr Breteau started AsiaInspection with HK\$15,000 (US\$1,928) from his savings and for eight months worked from his 450 sq ft apartment in Tokwawan. The company now has 10 offices globally, including London, Paris and New Delhi.

The turning point came in 2003 when he raised enough money in Hong Kong to launch the online platform. "AsiaInspection is the only inspection company in the world that offers solutions that are exclusively web-based. We position ourselves as the 'eyes in the factory' of our clients," he said.

#### 24-hour turnaround

"For as little as US\$288, you can book online an inspection in any factory in Asia, upload your specifications and receive a detailed report within 24 hours. Business has taken off since we launched our online platform. We have had 200-300 per cent growth per year and this year we are targeting and expecting 200 per cent growth.

With 900 plus clients from 58 countries on his client list, AsiaInspection has certainly come a long way.

"Clearly, Hong Kong's economy and business friendly environment have helped. Hong Kong is efficient, encourages new entrepreneurs, has a good support system, very efficient infrastructure and everybody is so focused on business. It is easy to open an office here and easy to get all sorts of permits," Mr Breteau said.

"You call people in the morning and by the end of the day you get to meet with them. In Paris or London, you are lucky to see them three weeks later and I am not even talking about people in very high positions. On top of that, you get good quality people especially in web design, accounting and legal and finance."

Backed by these positive factors, Mr Breteau said AsiaInspection's simple booking and processing and its transparent pricing were the secrets to the company's success.

"This internet platform is a new way of managing clients and it is constantly improved and broadened by our six full-time engineers and IT developers. At the end of the year, on top of organic



AsiaInspection CEO Sebastien Breteau receives the China SME Award 2007 from Mme Lagarde, Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade

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growth we are targeting acquisitions in China and Hong Kong," he added.

\*"The Handover" refers to Hong Kong's return from British to Chinese rule on July 1, 1997.

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