

Hard work earns an award for Swedish businessman



Torbjorn Sternsjo, president of Sapa Asia, talks with one of his colleagues.

Lu Xiaofeng and Tom Qian

Torbjorn Sternsjo, from Sweden, was honored with a Magnolia Award from the Shanghai municipal government recently for his 10 years' contribution to the city's development. "I can't feel the rapid development of Jiading now as I have got used to the pace here," he said.

Sternsjo came to Jiading in 1999 to serve as general manager of Sapa Heat Transfer Shanghai Ltd. Prior to this, he was the manager of logistics in Sapa Group of Sweden. Sapa Heat Transfer Shanghai Ltd was set up in 1996 in Jiading District.

When Sternsjo joined Sapa Shanghai, there were only 30 employees. Poor performance and unclear targets troubled him at that time. But thanks to his management, his team has been led out of troubled waters. Now, Sapa Shanghai has 370 employees with a total investment of US\$142 million and an expanded facility of 53,360 square meters.

As business developed rapidly, Sapa Heat Transfer Shanghai Ltd faced a capacity bottleneck in 2004. Sternsjo lobbied the headquarters and obtained an investment of nearly 150 million yuan (US\$21.93 million), which enabled a doubling of capacity. In November 2007, he was promoted to president of Sapa Asia.

"We supply our products to car manufacturers. Now Jiading has been developed into a car city with complete industry chain, which is very favorable for our development," he said. "It can be seen not only on sales of products but also

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in talent recruitment."

In recent years, Sternsjo has established cooperation with aluminum industry associations and Shanghai Aluminum Trade Association to promote the idea of environmentally friendly aluminum and make contributions to China's sustainable development.

As the chairman of non-ferrous metal industry of the European Union Chamber of Commerce, Sternsjo has met the heads of related Chinese government departments in Beijing to discuss ideas and advice on how to continue the development of the industry in China.

As a leader of his company, Sternsjo cares a lot for his employees. Whenever an employee gets married, he will attend the ceremony so long as he is in town.

Most of the wedding ceremonies are held in the countryside since many of the workers are from rural areas.

"The traditional Chinese wedding ceremonies are interesting, so different from European weddings, so for me every wedding ceremony here is a feast," Sternsjo said.

In the past 10 years, one employee after another got married, but he

remained single.

"Maybe because I paid too much attention to the work, I forgot to find a wife," Sternsjo laughed.

To strengthen the relationship between employees and his company, Sternsjo suggested holding a family day every year with all the employees and their families attending.

Through the family day activities, he is able to pass on information about the company to employees and let their families know about their working environment.

In addition, the company provides training opportunities for employees. His company also provides car subsidies, and now more than 170 employees have their own cars. The most obvious and effective result is retaining talent with less than 5 percent of employees leaving annually, a statistic which helped Sternsjo receive a best employer award.

Golf, singing and gym are Sternsjo's favorite activities.

As he is busy at work, golf and fitness are luxuries for him.

When he's in a good mood, he would hum a tune and whenever he goes to KTVs with employees or friends, he will surely play the leading role.

Sternsjo is enthusiastic about charity work. Every year he joins in the Greatest Love under the Sky charity activity.

In 2008 Sapa Shanghai donated 70,000 yuan and gave another 200,000 yuan after the devastating earthquake in Sichuan Province in May, 2008.

Sapa Shanghai started construction of its new facility in Jiading Industry Zone in November 2008 despite the global financial crisis.

Cao Jianqiang brings his art to Jiading

Gu Jialan and Qian Tong

A PAINTING and stationery shop opened on Xida Street one month ago in Jiading District. The shop's owner, Cao Jianqiang from Leshan City of Sichuan Province, gave the shop an elegant name: "Bi Mo Tang," literally meaning "Pen and Ink Hall."

Cao, a painter of flowers and birds, sells paintings, picture frames, writing brushes, ink sticks, ink slabs and paper in his shop.

He used to be a carpenter, learning the skills from his father when he was 18 years old. He made wardrobes, built wooden houses and carved cornices with patterns of dragons, phoenix, birds and flowers, and often won praise from his neighbors. Before carving the cornices, Cao would paint patterns on woods with brushes first, and that was how Cao's

relationship with painting began.

"At that time our family lived on this skill. Whenever I finished carving a cornice, I would appreciate it for a long time," Cao said.

Cao served as a carpenter for eight years. At the age of 26, he took up another family tradition — paper making. The rice paper of Leshan City is well-known around the country for its excellent water-absorbent quality. This rice paper, as famous as the one from Anhui Province, is used in Chinese painting.

In order to make the paper more suitable for his customers, Cao started to study Chinese painting. In 1997, Cao went to Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, to sell the rice paper he made. He had the chance to learn from the painters there and made much progress during that period.

Jiading with its excellent cultural heritage was Cao's first choice as a place to live.

However, the most time Cao spent was mounting the paintings. After being mounted, a painting can not only look better but also be kept easily. Nowadays, machine mounting has gradually replaced hand mounting, but Cao still keeps to the tradition.

At first Cao practised on newspapers, but later when he had almost mastered the technique, he almost destroyed a work



Cao Jianqiang, a painter of flowers and birds, works on a painting of peonies.

by mistakenly mounting a painting upside down. After this, he understood that the process was a delicate affair and he cultivated a good habit of working carefully and cautiously.

Cao's dream is to be a painter and hold his own show.

In 2003, he moved to Nan-chong in Sichuan Province with his wife and opened his first Bi Mo Tang with the support of some art lovers.

With his and his family's hard work, Cao enjoyed a good business and reputation in the mounting industry. At the same time, he kept painting charming peonies and vivid birds.

In 2004, Cao painted a 4-meter-long picture of peonies, and it sold for 4,000 yuan (US\$586), which was a source of great encouragement to him. Painting didn't earn him enough to live on but he enjoyed it very much.

Cao and his family moved to Shanghai this year and Jiading District with its excellent cultural heritage became his first choice. He made up his mind to open a shop on Xida Street after one week's investigation.

"Xida Street is a street with a long history and culture heritage. Also it is close to Confucius Temple, University for Senior and other art facilities, so it is suitable for my shop," Cao said.