

"Overseas Intelligence" Boosts Ningbo Manufacture's Leap-Forward Development

by Wang Xinyi

When I met Bertrand Le Claire, French deputy general manager of Ningbo Huaxiang Automobile Door Systems Co., Ltd.(NBHX ADS), he has just been awarded the 2020 Camellia Friendship Certificate. This year also marks his 12th year in Ningbo.

Meet NBHX, Meet Ningbo

"Camellia Friendship Certificate" and "Camellia Memorial Certificate" are certificates set up by the Ningbo Municipal Government for foreign experts who have made outstanding contributions to Ningbo's economic construction and social development. So far, nearly 500 foreign experts have won this honor. They have also become typical representatives of "Ningbo Community" in promoting technological innovation and enterprise transformation and upgrading in the city.

The relationship between Bertrand and NBHX ADS started in 2008, when a joint venture was set up by Door Systems and a Spanish company. Bertrand came to Ningbo as a representative of the Spanish company.

After working here for some time, he began to learn about the legendary stories of NBHX ADS and its founder Zhou Cimei, admiring the courage and wisdom of this Ningbo company to frequently stage the "snake swallowing elephant (which means that one is not content with the desire)": In China, NBHX ADS has successively invested in the acquisition of Luping Machinery Factory, Liaoning North Crankshaft Co., Ltd., Jiangxi Engineering Plastics Factory, and Fenyi Drive Axle Company; outside China, Huaxiang purchased the British Lawrence Automotive Interior Parts Company, which made total losses of 3.4 million pounds in several years.

"I kept in touch with Huaxiang's management team after going back to Europe in 2017. And after due consideration, I finally decided to come to Ningbo and become an employee of NBHX ADS." Bertrand said the reason why HX attracts him so much lies in HX's High-speed development where he could display his talent.



Mr. Bertrand Le Claire

Incredible opportunity

Bertrand still remembers a pair of data. In 2008, NBHX ADS had only 140 employees and its sales volume of was 80 million RMB Yuan; in 2015, this company came to employ a staff of more than 600 members and the sales surged to 1.4 billion RMB Yuan. This speed is hard to imagine in the European and American markets.

"The European and American markets are indeed expanded through mergers and acquisitions of other companies, but the expansion of Chinese domestic market is mainly due to the fact that we get related orders from customers, and with continuous increase in turnover, the company has therefore become powerful. For example, after seven years of development, now we can provide BMW with products and services. New customers bring us new products, new projects, and even new talents."

Today, Bertrand has settled in Ningbo and married a Chinese wife. He has to spend much more time in NBHX ADS, since the domestic market is worth it in his eyes.

China's annual car sales have shown an exponential growth. With regard to the global car sales in 2019, the annual car sales in the Chinese market reached 25.45 million, far exceeding the almost saturated European and American markets. What Bertrand can't forget is that when he first arrived at NBHX ADS in 2008, there were only 4 cars in the entire factory. Today, almost all parking spaces are full.

The Greatest Extent

On the other hand, Ningbo's profound industrial foundation is also one of the reasons why he chose to stay.

According to incomplete statistics, there were 500 to 1,000 auto parts companies in Ningbo around 2001. At this time node at the beginning of the 21st century, it has laid a solid foundation for the future growth of Ningbo's automobile industry. Today's auto parts giants in Ningbo market such as Shenglong, Joyson, Tuopu, Gaofa, Jifeng, Ai Cody and others were set up at that time, aiming at this huge market.

Big market means fiercer competition. To stand out from the industry, you must have core competitiveness, and talents have become a vital

part of it. The pressure of the global financial crisis and the needs of their own transformation and development have prompted private enterprises to become more eager for "overseas intelligence."

In line with this trend, Ningbo took the lead in the country in implementing the policy of introducing overseas engineers at the end of 2009, granting corresponding levels of subsidies to companies that bring in foreign talents with an annual salary of more than 500,000 RMB yuan.

As a port city, an open city with advanced manufacturing base, Ningbo's development is closely connected with the global market and relies heavily on the intelligence of foreign experts and international friends. They come from different countries, engage in a variety of occupations, and hold a wide range of positions. They support the construction and development of Ningbo with wisdom, sweat and enthusiasm.

As of the end of 2019, the Ningbo municipal government has invested a total of 247 million RMB yuan in funding enterprises to introduce 2,106 overseas engineers; this has promoted enterprises to directly increase output value of 41 billion RMB yuan, increased profits and taxes by nearly 3.8 billion RMB yuan, and helped enterprises to apply for 6,044 new patents. There were 18,877 product R&D and design projects, and a total of 18 foreign experts (14 of whom were from enterprises) were selected into the National Talent Introduction Program, ranking first in sub-provincial cities.

With regard to understanding of the Chinese saying of "Ningbo Community", Bertrand's words are plain but affectionate: "We are like a bridge connecting Ningbo and the world. Doing our own job well is to help Ningbo to the greatest extent."

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