



SUVs fill gap for middle-aged boy racers

Sporty family vehicles, looking sporty but offering plenty of space, turn heads on supermarket runs. (Page 7)

Massive rally against screen quota cut

Thousands of film directors, actors and production staff held a rally to protest the screen quota cut. (Page 16)

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Loyal Korean workers attract the West

By Kim Ji-hyun

A human resources consultancy tailored especially for Asian nations, Swiss-Asia Consulting, has bucked the prevailing trend of moving to China. Instead, it moved its headquarters to Seoul.

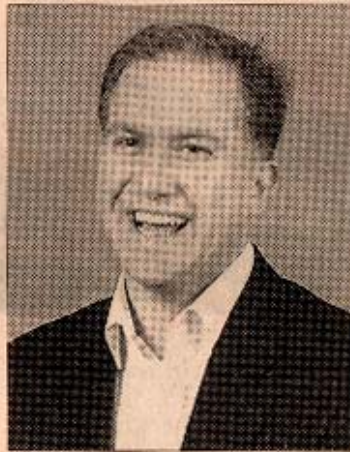
Contrary to some of the myths about Korean workers, Thomas Schurch, founder of Swiss-Asia, detects commendable qualities among them, namely loyalty.

"Koreans are very loyal, compared to Chinese, for example. They stick around even if they do have complaints and have a sense of stick-togetherness that Europeans find quite admirable," said Schurch.

The 37-year-old Swiss native says that all across corporate Europe, these qualities are increasing the popularity of Asian cultures.

"We are an international management company and we find in Korea very professional human resources. People in Korea are very bright, very educated and have very professional business standards," said Schurch.

Korean managers can hope to see even more opportunities unfold within the Asian region due



Thomas Schurch

to this favorable image, he adds. In comparison, Chinese executives — mirroring their current economic boom — tend to be bolder in making career moves and seek more changes of scenery.

The CEO has been in Korea for just over a year now, which may explain some of his euphoria over the Korean employee values.

But Schurch assures that his acquaintance with Asian culture dates back far longer. Prior to establishing Swiss-Asia in 2000, he worked at consulting firm PriceWaterhouseCoopers for seven years where he was

assigned to Asian operations.

Noting the difficulties of multinational companies trying to recruit personnel in their Asian offices, and also what hopeful candidates often overlook in selling themselves, Schurch decided to set up his firm.

Swiss-Asia's services center assesses candidates so companies can find the best matches. It also helps human resources departments adjust to the fast-changing market conditions.

Schurch believes he made the right move in relocating here.

Demand for the consultancy's services has skyrocketed since then, and it has won a wide clientele of both Korean and multinational firms of all breadth and sizes.

Having surpassed his sales goal for 2005, Schurch expects to see up to 30 percent growth this year.

"For the next five years, we expect high growth of between 25 to 30 percent. For the 10 years after that, growth should steady at 5 percent," he forecast.

Schurch's advice for local executives is to make adjustments to accommodate modern management styles, but retain their eastern values.

"Competition is not just about products, but also management style. Korea has to find its style," he said. "Korean companies should definitely stick to their culture and not try to copy Western methodology 100 percent."

But one change he is anxious to witness is the local human resources' attitude toward unions.

Schurch said he detects yawning gaps in the differing treatment of unions between the foreign and local corporate community.

Despite their complaints about local unions, foreign companies tend to be wiser and end up assuming a more proactive attitude to better communicate their demands, he said.

Schurch also cautions that Korean top managers are not only up against domestic competition, but rivals in China or Japan as well as more and more multinational companies are broadening their searches across Asia.

The advantage that Koreans have is that they are more flexible than their counterparts, Schurch said, but he wanted to see better communication skills and less emphasis on academic background.

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