



# YINTONG TALKS WITH...

David Denton and Weijie Tilbrook of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

**A**T the Cathay Pacific Airways' 2009 Business Award ceremony, I met David Denton, the Director of Business Development and his Chinese colleague Weijie Tilbrook from the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH). They are the worthy winners of the New Horizons Business Award.

Speaking about their work with China, David told me, "CIEH has been in operation in Hong Kong for more than 15 years and this historical link naturally encouraged us to look into the mainland market. Our membership in the UK had reached saturation point with 92 per cent market share, we had achieved much in food safety and health & safety qualifications with nearly half a million certificates issued in the UK. To develop further, we had to broaden our horizons which we were able to do with the strong support of our board."

CIEH's worldwide reputation proved to have strong appeal when introduced to Chairperson Madam Guo of the China Chain Store & Franchise Association (CCFA) on a mission to China organised by the CBBC and UK Trade & Investment in 2006. "CCFA is a large organisation with 900 corporate members and 160,000 outlets, including names such as Tesco, Walmart and Carrefour, as well as local chains. Despite its size, there was very little training provision with the food safety sector in China, so there was a significant opportunity to make a difference. In addition, CCFA was looking to raise its game and the society desperately needed a robust system place. Enter CIEH."

Partnering with the CCFA enabled



CIEH to tap into the large membership base through knowledge transfer. Within the first year, they had jointly set up the processes from scratch and the first course was delivered by the end of 2006. Now, six courses have been estab-

lished and 2,000 people trained.

How did they set up their first programme so quickly? Weijie told me: "In many ways, the pace was set by our clients. It was also a case of 'right time, right place'. There was a very strong inward investment trend at that time. For example, Tesco was setting up stores in China as part of its international expansion programme and they wanted to bring their own high calibre food safety system with them. CIEH moved quickly to support them in their vision."

On their own success David and Weijie are self-deprecating. "I'm not sure we can be described as successful. Commercially, we generated some income but a significant profit is still to be realised. However, we have seen many Western companies come and go, and this can undermine the confidence of Chinese customers in doing business with you. We don't want to make the same mistakes other companies have made."

CIEH are not blindly optimistic. They have done the calculations and know that, since it became compulsory in June 2009, for all food-related outlets to be trained in food handling, it is estimated there will be a demand of 11.5 million certificates in major cities to qualify the workforce. Moreover CIEH is principally a not-for-profit charity organisation and part of the organisation's vision was to help China to establish a rigorous health and safety system, particularly during a period of accelerated growth. They are delighted to be contributing.

CIEH continues to cultivate new relationships both in China and in the UK. Through their partner TVET, a government agency, they are also in talks with

another municipal city, Chongqing. Now new opportunities are emerging, they will develop new schemes to help China whilst generating income for the organisation. To reach a wider audience across this vast country, an online course is being developed to benefit the trainees.

Relationship building is the key to CIEH's success in China. How could other businesses learn from this? Weijie gave the example of how an initial friendship and bond with the president at CCFA was formed, and how it was critical that CIEH sent her to China for a year at the beginning of the project. Her personal relationships with the people in CCFA and within the related industries were given time to grow, with resulting trust being created.

This close connection is being nurtured still. Weijie is on the phone to her Chinese colleagues every day, some of whom are invited to work from CIEH's London office to share best practice and communicate freely. "To effectively engage with the Chinese market, the rules are simple – invest in the relationship, don't expect overnight success and build solid foundations. If you apply these principles, the rewards are great," David concluded.

[www.cieh.org](http://www.cieh.org)

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## Guide and website to support Chinese students in UK

Yintong Betser's latest venture to support the Anglo-Chinese community is *The UK Guide for Chinese Students* (留英指南), a practical handbook for any Chinese student studying or planning to study in the UK. Yintong comments: "After living and working in the UK for many years, I was struck by the fact that Chinese students often find it difficult to integrate into Western society. So I put together a guide to help them to get the most out of their experience."

Written in Chinese, the guide provides practical information for students settling into a new study environment, as well as preparing them for employment in the global marketplace. Yintong explains; "Everything in the guide is useful preparation for students and it also

provides educational establishments with benefits. I want to ensure that Chinese students are supported throughout their study – pastorally and academically. The publication can even be tailored by each university to offer specific support for its students. It will help universities to retain their Chinese students and encourage them to spread the word about their UK experience on their return to China."

The 80,000 Chinese students who study in the UK every year will be further supported by the book's complementary website which will provide up-to-date information and practical advice to help them maximise their time in the UK.

[www.studyaway.co.uk](http://www.studyaway.co.uk)