

The success story DIGI-TEXX and GHP Far East

By TUYET AN

(SGT-HCMC) DIGI-TEXX Vietnam and GHP Far East are two of the few German companies investing in Vietnam's information technology sector. For Frank Schellenberg, founder and chief executive officer (CEO) of the two companies, these are bonds tying him to Vietnam and his beloved Germany.

Two-in-one

Although the two companies operate in the same field, their activities are not identical, Schellenberg explained. DIGI-TEXX is a data conversion and management company. It takes data in any form and transforms it into valuable, easy-to-use digital information.

GHP Far East, meanwhile, is a specialist in data digitalizing and software development. It takes charge of large-scale data entry projects, managing databases with 50,000-70,000 records.

Schellenberg said the ultimate requirements for the businesses were quality and on-time delivery, and meeting them was the only way to have durable partners. "Our commitment to customers is quality, security and punctuality. We will grow to become the best data digitizing services provider in Vietnam," he said confidently.

The companies also outsource customized soft-

ware with proprietary data entry solutions such as software that translates images of text into machine-editable text, web applications and design software. Ninety percent of their customers are from Germany.

With business flourishing, Schellenberg has started concentrating on software outsourcing and call center services since last year. He hoped to expand his business beyond Germany and Europe to other big markets, especially the United States.

In search of new opportunities

In 2000, Schellenberg decided to move to Asia to work. Having been to Vietnam many times, he believed the country's economy would be developing fast. He started working as a network administrator for Au Viet Design Co.

Two years later, he decided to establish DIGI-TEXX Vietnam, with only five employees. "Despite being a small company, I believed strongly in my business opportunity in the information technology field here," he recalled.

"HCMC has open policies. The authorities see software enterprises as a positive propulsive force to the city's economy. Doing business does not require a big investment in infrastructure and Vietnam has a young workforce with good training and working spirit," he said.

The company grew and the number of employees increased to almost 100 in a year. To expand business scope and because of its good infrastructure, Schellenberg moved DIGI-TEXX into the Quang Trung Software City (QTSC).

The birth of GHP Far East

In 2003, DIGI-TEXX recruited 100 more employees. Its biggest customer at that time, GHP GmbH, an international group that provides integrated marketing and customer management services, proposed to buy the company to expand their business in Vietnam. Schellenberg refused the proposal outright, but agreed to join hands and GHP Far East Co. was established.

Schellenberg remembered how he could not write a clear job description because data digitizing was too new to the Vietnamese. Data entry requires computing skills, not normal typing skills. So Schellenberg invested much effort in training the staff so they are able to meet the German customers' strict demands. Now the two companies employ 350 people in total.

"In comparison with the European markets, Vietnam has a low labor cost. But it is not a decisive factor for my success. The important thing lies in the quality service my staff offers to the customers. This is our advantage to our



Frank Schellenberg

competitors," he said.

Schellenberg said living in Vietnam has given him an experience to look for business opportunities with an optimistic eye.

"I have found the two things I need in Vietnam. Life here is quite comfortable and you have many ways to enjoy it. If I have nothing to do here, I will leave the country. But if the life here has not been attractive, I couldn't have lived here for a long time," he confided.

To Schellenberg, DIGI-TEXX and GHP Far East are not just places where he earns his living, but where his German

friends come to see him whenever they visit Vietnam. "I have more chances to see them here than in Germany," he said.

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