

MANA's Second China Study Mission Hits The Mark For Participants

A huge majority of the 47 MANA members who took part in the association's second Trade Mission to China report they made the effort for all the right reasons. Nearly 90% maintain they were seeking Chinese manufacturers to represent in the United States. In addition, 73% explain that they are in the midst of expanding their businesses and the mission fit well with their plans to locate new product lines to buy/sell. A few (21%) indicate they were seeking export opportunities for their U.S.-based manufacturers.



Clockwise from left: Peter Zhang, president of GBIC, and the panel of speakers address the crowd at the opening ceremonies in Guangzhou.

Photos compliments of MANA members Ernie Evans, Southcom Group, Inc., Peachtree City, GA and John Libby, JLA, Carlisle, MA.

This year's venture, 18 months after the first trip, included stops in the cities of Shanghai and Guangzhou. Five days were spent in Shanghai and three in Guangzhou, with the group returning to the United States in the middle of July.

This year's delegation included three agent members from Canada and one from Singapore. As a result of the promotion of the trade mission to MANA's sister associations, two AIM/R members; a member of the Great Britain agent association, Manufacturers' Agents Association (MAA); and three manufacturer members all made the trip.

Perhaps the best endorsement for the trip came from one rep who said: "This trip changed my business. We are in the midst of restructuring many things to accommodate what I learned and saw in China. The people on the trip were a great mix of individuals who seemed to be on the trip for all the correct reasons."

According to Helen Degli-Angeli, CPMR, MANA's vice president, who accompanied the group to China, those words capture the tone of the opinions expressed by participants. "All of the participants voiced appreciation for the organization of the trip and indicated their appreciation for how focused Chinese manufacturers were in their contacts with them," she explains. "They all pointed to the benefits of their interaction and networking opportunities with Chinese manufacturers.

"We learned quite a bit from last year's trade mission, which made this year's event even better. By providing our partners at China Council for the Promotion



Above, left to right: Mack Sorrells, CPMR, chairman of MANA's executive committee and district 7 director; Paul Pease, MANA member, Autocon, Hermosa Beach, CA; Helen Degli-Angeli, CPMR, vice president, MANA; Wenjie Liu, vice chairman, CCPIT; and Mingde Chen, vice mayor of Guangzhou.

Right: William (Bill) Turner, Turner & Company, Harper Woods, MI, meeting with a Chinese manufacturer.



Below: New MANA members receive their certificates at the opening ceremonies in Shanghai.





Clockwise from top: William (Bill) Devereaux, CPMR, R/B Sales Corporation, Marion, IA has an adventure with chopsticks.

An artificial waterfall makes a beautiful barrier between pedestrians and Guangzhou's East Train Station Square.

Bicyclers were a common sight on MANA's trade mission to China.

Jeffrey Goulet, PRN Corp., Feeding Hills, MA, conducts a meeting with a Chinese manufacturer.

David Sugg (left), Tec Rep Services, Inc., Cornelius, NC and Randy Rothenberg, Rothenberg Associates, Westbury, NY.



of International Trade (CCPIT) with a better description of the kinds of manufacturers our members were interested in meeting, our members met with fewer, but better-matched suppliers. The delegation met with 300 manufacturers in Shanghai and 200 in Guangzhou.”

Factory Visits Included

“The addition of a day for factory visits in Shanghai proved to be most beneficial,” Degli-Angeli continues. “As a result of their initial meetings, a minimum of 30 agents visited one or more factories in or around Shanghai.

“Last year the MANA delegation consisted mostly of members who were traveling to China for the first time. Although interested in having an introduction to manufacturers as possible principals, most were looking at the trip as a learning experience. This year we had a mix of first-timers, several members who attended last year’s trade mission, and others who already had relationships established with Chinese companies.”

Degli-Angeli continues that the initial feedback from participants thus far has been good and similar to last year’s. “Many of our members were impressed with how organized the Chinese manufacturers are in their operations, how advanced they are technologically, how focused they are in doing what they do well, and how experienced they are in doing business in the United States.”

Some additional views of the MANA Study Mission from participating members follow:

- “If I hadn’t been convinced 100 percent of the impact of globalization on the rep business prior to this trip, I certainly am

“My lasting impression of China is that it’s ‘eye-opening.’ It certainly convinced me that while the world is getting smaller, the opportunities being presented for business are larger than ever.”

now.” That’s how MANA and NEMRA member Bill Devereaux, Jr., CPMR, describes his review of the trip to China. Devereaux, R/B Sales Corp., Marion, Iowa, notes that he was aware of how China joining the WTO and the impact of the European Union would combine to impact world markets, but what he saw on the study mission convinced him that things are happening faster than he anticipated. “We certainly came away from the trip with some possibilities. In addition to that, I’d have to note that what I saw in China in terms of construction and business activity absolutely shocked me. I never anticipated much of the manufacturing to be as extensive and high-tech as it was. My lasting impression of China is that it’s ‘eye-opening.’ It certainly convinced me that while the world is getting smaller, the opportunities being presented for business are larger than ever. I fulfilled every goal I had for learning what is going on in China and understanding the business model I’m going to have to work with in the future.”

- Devereaux is hardly alone in that view. Another rep who had his eyes opened during the trip was Jeff Goulet, PRN Corp., Feeding Hills, Massachusetts. According to Goulet, “Prior to the trip, I’ll admit that I had a preconceived notion about what I’d find in China. I envisioned a backward, rundown, and maybe even

impoverished country. When I got there it was more like New York City than anything else. The amount of construction going on was just tremendous.”

He added that in general, “MANA and CCPIT did an amazing job with this trade mission. The professionalism of both organizations was great. Working with such a large group of companies, from both the United States and China, is no easy task. Everything appeared to go off without incident.”

Speaking of everything going well, Goulet used the talents of interpreters as an example. “The interpreters that were used in both cities far surpassed anything I could have ever imagined. Not only were they sincerely professional, but there was a level of care and attention to detail I don’t think we could have ever found on our own. My interpreter in Guangzhou actually came to the first day of meetings with my web site printed out in her folder, completely translated. She also had a list of questions about my

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company so that she could do a good job for me.”

• Commenting on how the study mission benefited him and his company, Ralph Taylor, L & B Worldwide, LLC, Victor, New York, said, “My ultimate goal in participating was to meet with qualified tool makers. My feeling was that I’d be lucky if I could

locate two tool makers that could meet the parameters of my business. I probably met with 20–25 tool makers and ultimately found three that could meet my needs.”

He adds that part of his requirement for conducting business with a company is that they have good English-speaking skills — and that’s exactly what he

found. “I can’t emphasize enough the importance of having good communication skills when you’re doing custom work.”

Overall, Taylor admits, “It was a grueling process, but you can’t find a better forum for getting the job done than a study mission such as this. MANA is to be complimented for its efforts.” □