



CHRIS ZAJAC
 CEO of Tarac
 Technologies pictured
 in their warehouse,
 which by the end of the
 harvest is filled to the
 roof with grape skins.

EXTRACTING THE FRUIT of OVERSEAS OPPORTUNITY

With China the sixth most important export destination for Australia's small and medium-sized businesses, now is a great time to build trade links and take advantage of the opportunities that exist in one of the most vibrant economies in the world. As part of its commitment to provide sound business advice, Telstra Business joined forces with Austrade last year to connect a group of Australian businesses with the prospects that lay in China.

The Win Business Gold in China Trade Visitation Program saw twelve innovative Australian companies fly to Beijing to understand more about doing business in the country, as well as seek opportunities for the future. The visitation program was used as a springboard to grow export opportunities through networking events, along with educational seminars with Austrade's China market experts.

Tarac Technologies was one of the businesses invited to go on the trip. A medium - sized business, it transforms wine residuals such as grape marc (skins & seeds) and other winemaking residuals into commercially

valuable products. The company is a 100% owned subsidiary of Tarac Australia Limited, which has revenues of around of AUD30 million. Chris Zajac, CEO explains how over the years, innovation was a critical part of this success and contributed to them being selected for the trip, as well as why it proved so useful...

Toasting their way to success

Whilst lacking the history and culture of other wine producing countries in the world, consumption per head in China had doubled in the last five years. However, the wine industry can be a very unpredictable market and, whilst a product may have been developed to meet

demand in one area, changing conditions has meant a different course of action for Tarac.

One of the first obstacles for Tarac involved the decline in demand for products in Australia that used grape alcohol, typically fortified wines and brandy. As Australia's leading supplier of grape alcohol, this was an issue. Even more so given that the raw materials used for making these products derived from the grapes used for making wine, which was on the increase in Australia. "We had a situation whereby our market was declining, yet the raw materials that fuelled that market were on the increase, because of the wine boom," says Chris. "The decline in



Although a provider of Information Communications Technology (ICT) solutions to Australian businesses, Telstra also prides itself on helping those that form the backbone of our economy with other value-added opportunities, programmes and award schemes. Some of these include:

- Win Business Gold in China
- Telstra Business Awards
- Telstra Women's Awards

The extracts they would take from the red skins of the grapes, along with the wine tannins, could be added to wine and improve the palate structure of the wine, thus improving the overall quality of the wine. "This is particularly important in a relatively young wine making country such as China. We see a real opportunity in this area, as well as helping China take advantage of our technologies, and using 100% natural grape products to improve wine qualities."

Chinese gains

Whilst it was the innovation in their business that saw Tarac selected to attend the trip, Chris' team got the opportunity to learn more about how to do business in China, as well as expanding their view of doing business there. "For my two sales guys, the trip proved to be a real eye opener in terms of how to do business in the country. So much so that we realised that in some cases our approach needed to change slightly to be more effective and successful."

"As with dealing in any foreign country, there is a requirement to understand the local way of doing business, adhere to local customs and cultures too. As part of the trip, Telstra and Austrade invited us to a number of seminars and functions that gave us a real insight and in-depth look at the ways of doing business in the country. Whilst language is the most obvious common barrier, learning about the Chinese way of doing business was very important, and will prove very valuable for us in years to come as we look to expand our activities over there."

The learnings from the classroom were able to be put into good effect as Chris' team, with the help of Telstra, were able to make time to meet with their Chinese distributor face-to-face. "Given geographical pressures and the current economic climate, meeting in person can prove challenging, but this trip actually allowed us to meet up with our partner in China. It was great to sit down and understand more about them, how they operate and what we can do to further each other's business."

Due to the nature of the Tarac business, innovation has played a large part in being able to communicate with overseas partners. With some sites in remote areas of Australia, accessing a reliable communications network is vital so that sales staff can remain in contact. "If we are waiting on a shipment order to head out, we need to be in regular contact with suppliers and partners to let them know progress – we work in a time sensitive business."

"Additionally, out of office hours and frequent overseas trips are a regular occurrence for many of our sales staff, therefore having access to emails and customer information is critical to ensuring the success of the business. Our sales staff are all equipped with BlackBerry® handsets which means they can be more productive when out of the office, and respond to emails and queries."

Over the years, the Tarac business has had to constantly innovate to stay ahead of an ever-changing and highly volatile market. However the prospects for the future are great according to Chris. "The Chinese market is an opportunity for us. If the trends stay as they are predicted to, then demand for our products will increase. I guess those market pressures ensure you stay innovative, which is why I believe our company is unlike any other in the wine industry. Certainly, we expect the trip to China will pay dividends for us in the future as we continue to learn and grow our business there."

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