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Looking beyond Thailand

Young entrepreneur Sunhavut Thamchuanviriya is going regional

The name Sunhavut Thamchuanviriya might not ring a bell (yet) in business circles other than the fact that this young entrepreneur operates a successful BMW dealership and built what was once the world's largest Mini showroom located at Sukhumvit soi 63.

But quantum leaps in business growth are about to occur after Sunhavut restructured his core business units into an integrated car service provider under the parent company Master Group Corporation (Asia) or MGCA, which consist of the following: 1) Millennium Auto BMW 2) Millennium Auto Mini 3) Master Certified Used Cars 4) Master Car Rental and Master Driver and Services (Thailand) 5) Master Motor Services (Thailand) 6) Maxi Insurance Broker 7) Master Automotive Training Center 8) I24, which is an information and call center.

Simply put, Sunhavut is going regional. This means that MGCA's annual revenues of 8.5 billion baht in 2011, up 28% when compared to the previous year, is expected to generate revenues of approximately 15 billion baht by 2015.

A key factor that will propel MGCA as a regional force will be MGCA's car rental business unit which recently joined forces with Sixt, a European car rental company with 4,000 service stations in over 90 countries and is Germany's largest car rental company; MGCA also has plans in the pipeline to list its car rental business unit in the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET).

Sunhavut, 39, who has a PhD in Organisation Development from Assumption University, is known for his aggressive hands-on management style and has an uncanny ability to crunch out numbers in his head — without a calculator.

"My father is a real-estate developer and I learned a lot from him. I grew up with the construction business so I know how much profit margins contractors should make and it's impossible for them to take advantage of me," said Sunhavut.

Sunhavut honed his business skills by starting out with Millennium Auto BMW and gradually built it into the best-performing BMW dealership with annual sales of 1,500 units in 2010, and is expected to grow 35% by year's end; his Millennium Mini dealership sold 350 units last year and is expected to grow 28% this year — and was once the talk of the town a few years ago when he

built what was once the world's largest Mini dealership.

Shifting gears back to MGCA's Master Car Rental business unit's tie-up with Sixt, which will serve as a bridge to Asean markets Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, Sunhavut said, "Currently we have 20,000 car rental customers but our partnership with Sixt will give us access to a potential market of 600 million customers in the Asean region instead of the 60 million customers in Thailand."

Sunhavut added that the car rental business unit will account for 50% of its revenue in Thailand by 2015, while the Asean market is expected to contribute about 10-15% of MGCA's projected annual revenue of 15 billion baht by 2015.

Another potential star of Sunhavut's expansion plan is the Master Automotive Training centre (MAT) which is a joint venture with Assumption University that provides training and technical know-how in both automotive technical and non-technical areas; MATC plans to evolve into an academic institution and incorporate a mini-MBA course specialising in producing graduates for the automotive industry.

"The problem of expansion is effective management of the organisation. Growing from annual revenues of 100 million baht to billions is not an easy task but I am confident that our MAT centre will provide the necessary training required for effective management systems,

"We are like a 12 year old child. All our business units are synergistic and have experienced organic growth. My mission is to make MGCA a regional leader of integrated automotive retail and services for the Asean market. We are also hoping to invest in vehicle distributorships in Asean markets outside Thailand."

Sunhavut clearly belongs to a new breed of visionary entrepreneurs who will be making a name for himself beyond Thailand.

