

# A Win-win Relationship

## No choice but to Innovate

**"If we had not been innovative, we would not have survived. We had no choice but to take our first step,"** says Sonny Lee, the CEO of Life Power, a Dongguan-based electric massagers manufacturer. Admiring his company's business crisis four years ago, Lee was looking for a breakthrough, being discontented with just being a copycat of Japanese designs. Witnessing the growth of the Japanese manufacturers and the decline of their Taiwanese counterparts, Lee realised design was imperative and decided to hire Alan Yip, a renowned Hong Kong product designer, as his chief design consultant to develop original products. The collaboration has transformed Life Power's company culture as well as stimulated its business growth. It has also further boosted Yip's reputation in the mainland.

A massage chair usually takes six months to develop, going through stages from design, to prototyping and testing, before it launches in the market. To maximise the combined force, Yip concentrated on the design concept while Life Power's team built a life-size prototype based on the ergonomic data gathered from chair and seat-cover measurements. To give recommendations to engineers for immediate modifications, Yip personally tested the prototype. Despite different views at times, the interactions effectively lowered the production cost and ensured that customer's perspective was taken into consideration.

## Designed by Hong Kong

As the chief creative consultant, Yip has helped Life Power design several products and won numerous accolades. In 2007, the Life Power LP6500 "6 senses" series received the China Red Star Design Award and Hong Kong Awards for Industries. The massage chair features first-class in-flight seating and changeable colors on the side panels, which enabled Life Power to successfully penetrate the young consumer market. In addition, Yip also assisted Life Power in launching the first head massager with equal success, which earned another Red Star Award in 2008. All these trophies, showcased in promotion campaigns, have boosted the reputation of Life Power substantially. Besides, according to a market study, an award-winning massage chair can charge up to \$2000RMB more than those without any awards.



**Innovative product has to go hand-in-hand with innovative marketing in order to create greater impact.** Instead of just being the one who shapes the brand image, Yip has turned into a spokesperson of the massage chair. Every massage chair produced by Life Power is imprinted with "Designed by Alan Yip", which reinforces the professional image of the product. This marketing strategy has been well received by the mainland buyers.

## Effective Partnership

For SME like Life Power, Lee frankly admits that they had to face lots of obstacles when collaborating with the designer in the beginning. **"Our staff and organization structure had to be adjusted to support the works of the designer,"** he says. Over the past two years, Life Power has restructured its engineering team by bringing in innovative young engineers who are in their twenties. With such a drastic change in human resources could Yip realize his design. Although designer is crucial, Lee is aware of the significance of marketing and knows that success will not come without the marketing team's knowledge of customers' needs.

**Thanks to the fruitful partnership with Yip, Life Power passed through the glooming period.** Its business has also been staying robust amid the financial tsunami. Yip is now assisting the company to enact a product development plan to further enhance its growth in the future. At the same time, Yip is also riding on such a reciprocal relationship to expand his own business in China.



**Yip Design Ltd.**, led by Hong Kong based product designer Alan Yip. Established in 1990, Alan launched a product line under his brand "ALANYIP" with worldwide patents and engraved "CHINA DESIGN BY ALAN YIP" on every product. His works had won many awards and have been presented in many museums, books and media worldwide.

**Life Power (Hong Kong) Limited** was established in 1996 by Sonny Lee. They opened first "Brand Hong Kong" massage chairs stores in Guangzhou in 1997. In 1999, Life Power introduced German car technology in massage chairs. Starting from 2004, Sonny contracted Alan as the company product design and product image consultant. Thereafter, their products have been an awards and sales champion in Greater China.

"Design as a Turnaround Strategy" series is initiated by The Hong Kong Design Centre and the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce. This series of 4 roundtable luncheons are to enhance the role of 'design' in business, to raise awareness of design management and also help members from both design and commerce to upgrade their businesses through strategic design management. This is the preview mini case version of "Design as a Turnaround Strategy" Brochure to be published early 2010.