

The story of FutureBridge Incorporated and its recent break into the Chinese market reads like something out of Ripley's *Believe It or Not*: Adhering to traditional business practices, the company president didn't even incorporate his company until after he had identified the

wide range of integrated systems, such as building automation, cabling, telecommunications and wireless, LAN/WAN, security and alarms, and remote metering.

Hearing about the project, Ruan put together an experienced team, a strong proposal and, once the oppor-

(FutureBridge just missed the deadline) — was not being convinced of the capabilities of just one Canadian company. FutureBridge does not possess the technology itself, but will be playing a coordinating/managing role in outsourcing the work to local Ottawa companies.

"What set us apart as one of the bidding companies was that we came along to say we have the network of Canadian companies with the expertise and the technology, and there was Team Canada to back us up, to give the message that Canadian business is reliable. That was what was needed from our end to secure this agreement. The value for us on the timing and input of Team Canada is immeasurable."

Team Canada facilitator in China Bridge to future for Ottawa high-tech company



solid \$30-million opportunity in China. Securing the agreement was then facilitated by the fortuitous timing of the February 2001 Team Canada Mission to China, on which FutureBridge wasn't even a participant. And then there's the fact that other local Canadian companies stand to benefit from the project — the Ottawa high-tech start-up's first.

tunity looked solid, the company itself. FutureBridge's five staff members have been working hard ever since.

Incorporated just last November, FutureBridge, which specializes in systems design for "intelligent buildings," is definitely a young company with a bright future. Securing that future has, however, taken past careful planning by company founder and president Shemin Ruan. Rather than following the current, high-risk trend of seeking venture capital to finance a new technology, Ruan followed the more traditional business model of pursuing a business opportunity.

Solid opportunity paves way

The search took Ruan to China, his country of birth, where he learned from business associate Zhongshi Liang that the Peking University Zhong Guan Yuan Landmark Investment Co., of which Liang is president and CEO, was looking for a partner to supply integrated systems for an ultra-modern international student residence complex to be built at the university.

The project calls for the design and provision of equipment in a



Integrated Network Agreement signing ceremony, from left to right, Zhigui Zeng, General Manager, Peking University Zhong Guan Yuan Landmark Investment Co.; Shemin Ruan, President, FutureBridge Inc.

Mission creates right atmosphere

Complementing their hard work was the fortuitous timing of the Team Canada Mission to China this past February. "The mission created the right atmosphere for negotiations and sent the right signals at the right time," says Monica Bodurka, FutureBridge manager. "It had a profound effect on the Chinese business people we were dealing with. They basically got the message that Canadian technology is good — that we have the expertise to design and equip something very modern and intelligent."

The Chinese company — which was a participant on the mission

Cultivating relationships

Cultivating relationships with their Chinese partners was also important to securing the agreement. "We put together a strong team and a strong proposal, but spending time with the Chinese delegation was also key," explains Bodurka. "Relationships are very important to the Chinese people."

In late March, the delegation flew to Ottawa to sign the agreement at a special reception attended by, among others, the Honourable Rey Pagtakhan, Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific).

FutureBridge is currently in the process of completing the designs for the various systems and is actively seeking partners and alliances for the various components of the project. Construction on the Peking University residence is set to begin in early May.

Word of mouth brings work

In the meantime, word about FutureBridge is spreading in China, and the company is already exploring two other opportunities — and will soon be opening a division in Beijing. The company's bridge to China is looking solid indeed.

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(For the unabridged version, see www.infoexport.gc.ca/canadexport and click on "Roadmap to China and Hong Kong")