

## **A Bridge between Vietnamese and American Businessmen**

**Trinh Viet Trung, a Vietnamese American, who graduated with bachelor's degree from the Law School of the University of Saigon (South Vietnam) before 1975, has been working in various professions in the US: from a Human Development Specialist in Fairfax County Government, Virginia to President of a 200-employee building maintenance company in Washington DC, so he is well aware of the value of the human resource in business development as well as the American culture.**

In a warm and friendly atmosphere of Que Huong (Homeland), a cozy restaurant on Ba Trieu Street in Hanoi, Trinh Viet Trung shared with us his experience and commitment in working with Vietnam. Right after the US government decided to lift the trade embargo with Vietnam in 1994, Trung decided to form a private consulting firm named "Vietnam Resource Group, LLC" which specializes in facilitating business development and co-operation between Vietnamese and American companies.

The company's objective is to combine resources both in Vietnam and in the US to identify, develop and facilitate business opportunities for mutual benefits. These resources include not only capital, natural resources but also human one.

The very first project that Vietnam Resource Group developed and operated in Vietnam was to co-operate with the Foreign Trade Development Center (FTDC) of Ho Chi Minh City to set up The American Product Showroom to market American products in 1995. Then it went on to co-operate with a number of Vietnamese organizations to organize numerous Vietnamese business tours to the US and also American business tours to Vietnam. Trung said that by working on these business tours, he has developed a well-established network of companies and professionals who are interested in developing businesses in the US and in Vietnam.



*Trung and the trainees from Saigon Tourist Tourism and Hotel School.*



*Fred Golightly (right), Director of Vietnam Resource Group's business development section signs a co-operation contract with Hoang Long Hotel and Tourist Training Share-holding Company, with the witness of Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Thien Nhan (1st left, standing).*



*Attendants to the training course on business leadership organized by Vietnam Resource Group at California State University in June 2010.*

Based upon these networks in the US, Trung and a number of American business executives have formed a US Vietnam Business Association (UVBA). The UVBA is a not-for-profit organization which was set up to create and maintain a network among those who are interested in working with Vietnam. Currently it has 175 members located in various cities in the US, mainly in Los Angeles, Houston, Seattle, New York and Washington DC.

With his experience in being a bridge between Vietnamese and US businessmen, Trung expressed that while introducing potential partners with each other, he was very concerned of the cultural differences between the parties. Language barriers can be overcome easily but the cultural understanding is very critical to the success of business co-operation. A misunderstanding in body language and/or behaviors could send a wrong message to other party of the possible partnership.

To address that cultural aspect in doing business with each other, lately, Vietnam Resource Group has co-operated with the California State University in Long Beach to organize short-term training programs for Vietnamese business executives. These training programs cover different training topics: from Human Resource Management, Leadership to Business/Hotel/Tourism Management, Business Cross Cultural Training, Logistics, Transportation Management programs. These programs also include a business exploration working schedule to introduce Vietnamese executives with American business persons and to visit American companies to learn of their operations and management.

So far, these short-term training programs have been participated by 25 Vietnamese executives in co-operation with the Export Promotion Center of the Ministry of Industry and Trade and with the Vietnam Tourism Administration.

In addition, Trung also organizes a 4-month internship program for Vietnamese students. Under this program, Vietnamese students will be working as interns for three months in a hosting US companies so they can develop their professional skills, to learn of American management style and to improve their English speaking skills. These programs are being implemented in Vietnam in co-operating with different educational and training organizations.

Over the years, through practical and fruitful activities, Trung has made worthy contribution to promote the trade exchange and understandings between Vietnam and the United States.

"My utmost concern is to make a small contribution to the new economic development in Vietnam so our people will be richer and our country stronger," Trung confided.

**Story: Long Nguyen**  
**Photos: Hoang Ha – File**