

## American Dream in China

**American Dream in China** Sam Flemming's first experience with China is with a Sino-American software company, where he trains Chinese employees for a life in the United States. A few years later Flemming, totally at ease in public relations and corporate communication, starts his own company: Internet Research for American companies. His source of inspiration? The unprecedented publicity that companies and their products enjoy on Internet forums and blogs. "This is a big thing. It's not just thousands of messages, it's tens of millions. Written by real people, sharing real experiences about real brands, products and services." Together with his Chinese co-founder and a team of what he prefers to call 'Internet Word of Mouth Analysts', Flemming now runs CIC, a company specialized in providing research and consulting based on consumer talk on BBSs and blogs. We're eager to ask for his experiences.

"Of course, being a pioneer is always a challenge. There are no manuals, no models, nothing about this industry. We can only rely on our experience and knowledge. The government here in Shanghai is always very supportive though towards new initiatives, towards anyone who creates new jobs. We've had nothing but good experiences. And there's also a great advantage in pioneering: the fact that we're developing by every step we take, means that we are flexible. That does come in useful, because this place is growing and changing so fast. When I first came here I used to try to count all the construction cranes on Pudong, and I could never succeed. Nowadays it's already hard to count the skyscrapers! The speed of development is absolutely incredible."

### Headhunting tactics

Just like other (Chinese) companies who depend on highly educated personnel, CIC experiences challenges in finding qualified employees as well. However, "one of the key criteria for hiring is enthusiasm for what we are doing. We used to apply the classic means to get to new employees: through advertisements on HR sites, and headhunters. We found that these agents weren't able to represent us as they didn't really understand our industry. So we have come to use other tactics that work very well. The people we need are often active bloggers themselves, and we happen to have the software that enables us to find them. We now invite interesting candidates ourselves instead of leaving it to an agent, to make sure we get introduced properly."

### Passion for people

Asking Sam Flemming about the main reason he still resides in China, immediately puts a smile on his face. "I'm very thankful to the people who work with me. This business is not about me, it's about the IWOM analysts and our engineers. They're the ones who are experiencing the online reality, who come up with new ideas. My Chinese colleagues are all very passionate about learning. They believe that if you work hard, you can do anything, and I know plenty of examples to prove the truth in this. I myself am from the United States. So in a way it's ironic for me to say: doing business in China is the new American dream!"

CIC is the leading Internet Word of Mouth (IWOM) research and consulting firm in China. They help clients make sense of the buzz found on blogs, BBS and other consumer channels.  
For more information, please go to: [www.cicdata.com](http://www.cicdata.com).

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