Dear Huihui,

Thank you for the opportunity to become involved in your business.

I would like to share some of my insights from my time as a software engineer because I believe they could be directly relevant to your situation.

On a more macro level, ask yourself, “What the core values of your company?” I understand you are managing only the Shanghai branches of your company, so there is not a huge amount of room for determining the “soul” of your company, but I do think there is enough room for this question to have an impact if carefully considered and then applied.

For example, in the US, KFC’s identity could be reduced to, “fast, cheap, Southern comfort food.” In Singapore, where my friend Brett grew up, its identity is more akin to, “tasty, somewhat exotic food for special occasions like Christmas.”

Now is a point where you could determine the core values, or, to put it another way, the “regional identity” of your company is as it exists in Shanghai.

Do you want to be a classy, refined option like Blue Bottle Coffee? The everyman’s inexpensive, reliable brew like Dunkin’ (Donuts)? Or perhaps something new that caters to the unique tastes of Shanghai?

To answer that question, I implore you to examine the “Hedgehog Concept” that first originated in *Good to Great,* the famed American business book.

The Hedgehog Concept dictates that business leaders must answer three central questions to determine their next move:

1. What are I/we passionate about?
2. What can we be the best in the world at?
3. What does our society want?

I cannot answer the first two questions for you, but I can advise you on the third. My friend Brett recently did some research with his classmates on this topic. In broad strokes, Brett and his team found that their (admittedly small) group of interviewees valued:

* Luxurious surroundings.
* The ability to be “private but not isolated” within a store.

Given this data (and significantly more consumer research), I would advise you to pursue what you are most interested in and what you think your company would be competitive pursuing.

On a more general organizational note, once you have picked a direction for your branch of the company, I would advise you to build expertise in that domain and then share it with your employees. The more you teach them, the less you will have to do yourself – thus freeing you to learn more about your business. Moreover, cultivate a culture where expertise is freely shared. Your company will grow exponentially when all of its ideas are allowed to cross-pollinate.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any follow-up questions or would like to chat over a cup of Joe (your treat) ;)

Best,

Brenda