

# meta

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Editorial

## China: first hardware, now software

“Come and see for yourself!” Chinese operators keep inviting us.

So we did visit them at the World Management Forum in Shanghai on 17-18 September 2005, organised by China Enterprise Confederation, the Chinese equivalent of Italian Confindustria. About a hundred consultants coming from all over the world – Australia, USA, India, Europe (of which 9 from Italy) and Asia – under the flag of Forum co-organizer ICMCI (International Council of Management Consultant Institutes). What a great company we had! Over 500 participants listening to speakers including outstanding guest Ma Yue Coo of Lenovo.

Still the dynamics of this Forum prompt considerations going far beyond news reporting: quite significantly, after reaching their well-known current competitive levels in terms of production cost factors, Chinese companies are now also investigating on how to provide solid foundations to their manufacturing organisation, therefore prioritising the management area by involving businesses, universities and consultants at the same time and synergically. Besides looking for models, the Forum aimed at operational confrontation, the companies focusing on management training courses held by international consultancy tutors and the universities arranging classes on management consultancy with 80 ICMCI consultants from all over the world for students at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

Surely some considerations are needed when talking about “comparative management”: the World Management Forum was organised in Shanghai as the

presentation of cases of excellence, mainly non referable to the US experience, useful in building a sustainable development process in Asian countries, China foremost. *Family business* and SME development models, together with fashion and design, were among the topics related to the Italian System that raised interest: ICMCI Vice Chairman Franco Guazzoni chaired a Forum session on *family business* besides holding a class on the SME development model at Tsinghua University.

500 people joint by the need to learn, meet, develop networks. The Forum was presented acknowledging the participants’ role as actors rather than spectators, consultants and managers participating to development. A session on international networking was also held by APCO consultants, so for the occasion we also organised in Shanghai the second edition of “Consultants Meet Consultants”: about 250 bilateral meetings involving over 100 consultants coming from 18 different Countries who exchanged knowledge and opportunities with incredible enthusiasm and determination.

Competing successfully implies a deep understanding of what’s happening and of the dynamics ruling the society and the market. It’s a cultural more than a professional need, the same need encouraging us to host in this Meta issue a number of essays and stories on the World Management Forum of Shanghai.

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