

# Garment maker weaves success

The Hong Kong company with a multinational team is expanding its global operations rapidly

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**A**PPAREL MANUFACTURER and supplier Must Garments is expanding its operations in Hong Kong to drive its global growth.

The company, which employs professionals from the mainland, Egypt, Bangladesh and the United States, is looking for more merchandisers, managers and directors who can manage its international operations.

"We want to change the style of management a little because of our global expansion," said managing director Sanjeev Mahtani.

The company, which was founded in 1979 and employs more than 6,000 people, has global retailers such as Abercrombie & Fitch, Gap, Marks & Spencer, Tommy Hilfinger and Wal-mart as clients.

Must Garments has expanded capacity in its factories in Bangladesh and Bahrain, and opened new facilities in Egypt and the mainland.

As its overseas activities have grown, operations have become more complex. The company wants to make each department more specialised to reduce the potential for overlapping functions in different parts of the company.

The firm's Hong Kong office is primarily responsible for product development, sales, merchandising and accounting, while manufacturing is done overseas.

"We need more people to manage things from Hong Kong and to have a better global picture of what is going on," Mr Mahtani said.

The company is looking for three global directors with more than 10 years of experience in garment manufacturing. They will head quality assurance, technical development and production planning departments.

In addition, there are openings in the company for a textile sourcing manager, a merchandising manager, a senior merchandiser and three merchandisers.

The company is also looking for a chief financial officer to look after its operations there

Working in the garments industry required an ability to act fast and see things from a global perspective, Mr Mahtani said.

He added that a global perspective was necessary to understand people from various cultures and deal with them in an effective manner. Even when people spoke the same language - in this case, English - they might not understand each other immediately as people from different countries often perceived things differently, and only someone with a lot of international exposure was likely to detect the nuances.

Mr Mahtani said China would continue to have a major influence on the global garments industry.

The mainland's lower costs have already led to the relocation of manufacturing operations from Hong Kong and elsewhere, and a significant number of managerial and technical jobs have followed as a result

Catherine Yu, Must Garment's director of personnel and human resources, said: "The new regulations related to the WTO [World Trade Organisation] and Cepa [Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement] are making it easier for Hong Kong people to work and invest in the mainland."



Catherine Yu and Sanjeev Mahtani are globalising. Photo: Domini Nahr

Mr Mahtani said many industry professionals saw their long-term future in the mainland. That sometimes made it difficult to find good candidates in Hong Kong.

Nevertheless, he said, there was still no better place than Hong Kong to base a company with global operations.

"If you are manufacturing only in China, it makes sense to be there," he said. "But since we are working in so many places, Hong Kong has many advantages in terms of communication, travel and the general business environment. That's unlikely to change for a long time to come."

## DRESSING UP

- The garment manufacturer is expanding its Hong Kong headquarters because of business growth.
- Structural changes in the company will make internal departments more specialised.
- Positions are available for global directors, managers and merchandisers.
- Candidates should be ambitious, and have the global vision and cultural sensitivity to work with a team with diverse international backgrounds.
- Good communication skills are vital to avoid misunderstandings and perform effectively.
- Hong Kong remains an ideal base for overseeing a business with a global reach.