



The right number comes up for one firm

CEO of automotive franchiser says it takes courage and wisdom to succeed in Africa

By **ZHANG YUE**

The number two may turn out to be a lucky number for Zhao Hongwei, CEO of Wideway International (Zambia) Investment Co Ltd. On just his second visit to Tanzania in June, during the second session of the Tanzania-China Business Forum organized by the China-Africa Business Council, Zhao met two partners from a logistics company to expand Wideway International's network within the country.

WIDEWAY INTERNATIONAL (ZAMBIA) INVESTMENT CO LTD

Industry: Automobiles
Established: 2013
Headquarters: Zambia
Major business: SHACMAN and spare parts sales, technical support and service, special material transportation and bonded warehouse operation
Address: Plot 839, Sub Z100, First Street, Nkana West, Kitwe, Zambia
Phone: 260 964 733 440

PARENT COMPANY IN CHINA

CHINA STATE CONSTRUCTION HENGJI TRADE CO LTD, BEIJING
Industry: Investment
Founded: 2000
Headquarters: Beijing
Overseas operations: Zambia, the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo
Registered capital: 10 million yuan
Address: Room 802, Block B, Focus Square, No 6 Futong East Street, Chaoyang district, 100102, Beijing
Phone: 86 10 84785867
FAX: 86 10 64757564
Email: webmaster@chinanbm.com
Website: www.chinanbm.com

ZHAO HONGWEI



CEO, Wideway International (Zambia) Investment Co Ltd
 Chairman, China State Construction Hengji Trade Co Ltd, Beijing
Education:
 • MBA, Tsinghua University
 • Bachelor of Engineering in Management, North China University of Technology
Career
 • Chairman, China State Construction Hengji Trade Co Ltd, Beijing (2001-Present)
 • Deputy general manager, China Construct First Group Construction & Development Co Ltd, Material Supply Co (1998-2000)
 • Department manager, China Construct First Group Construction & Development Co Ltd, Material Supply Co (1996-97)
 • General manager, Lisheng Construction Material Trade Co Ltd, Dongguan (1994-95)
 • Materials supply department manager, China Construct First Group Fourth Engineering Division Corp Ltd, South Dept (1994-96)

Established last year in the Zambia-China Corporation Zone, the first economic cooperation zone China established in Africa, Wideway International is the African franchiser of Shacman, a producer of heavy-duty trucks for the Shaanxi Automobile Group. Wideway International promotes Shacman's trucks and car parts and is helping build its network on the continent.

In September, Zhao's two new business partners flew from Tanzania to Beijing to discuss business plans.

"They represent a logistics company in Zambia, and they want to work with us because we provide high-quality vehicles to Tanzania," Zhao says.

Zhao, 48, has learned a lot about business in Africa in a short period of time. Before the company came to Zambia in 2013, he founded a company similar to Wideway International in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2011.

Zhao says working at a small company such as Wideway International offers employees a good chance to further their careers.

Liu Jianfei, a 25-year-old business manager for Zhao's business in the Democratic Republic of Congo, began working with Zhao in 2012. He says he has seen his career develop dramatically over the past two years since graduating with a degree in French from a university in Hebei province.

"Leading a team and working with the local

people representing our company offers me a brilliant chance to improve myself as a business representative," he says. "It also helps you learn about local cultures and customs."

Zhao says starting a business in an uncertain area takes a lot of courage and wisdom, and he has enjoyed the experience. In the early 1990s, Zhao started a small commodity-trading firm in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, which at the time was transforming from a small fishing village to a special economic zone. He remembers being unable to understand the local dialects.

"But the experience instilled the confidence in me to explore new business opportunities in new places," he says. "All the lessons learned from that experience helped a lot in what I am doing in Africa now."

In 2013, Wideway opened a Shacman store in Kitwe, the second largest city in Zambia. The three-story store covers more than 5,000 square meters and received its first batch of accessories and tools in February 2014. It also has a 2,500-square-meter tariff-free zone for heavy trucks.

"The new store has a convenient location in the city, which I think will become a good foundation for the brand's future development in Zambia," Zhao says.

In May 2014, the company was named "Best Contribution to the Brand" by Shaanxi Automobile Group.

