

2016 ACBA Finalist *Orisis* Flourishes in China

ORISIS is a finalist for the Business Excellence Award for Agriculture, Food and Beverage as well as the Business Excellence Award for Innovation at the 2016 AustCham Westpac Australia China Business Awards. Michelle Jones caught up with AustCham Shanghai to discuss their China journey to date.



Describe Orisis' success in China to date.

Orisis was a start-up in 2011 who partnered with Blerick Tree Farm in 2012. Together the partnership has opened up a previously untapped niche in China, introducing new varieties of plants, while protecting the IP for foreign owners. Traditionally Chinese operations have not respected IP, however, Orisis has built their business model around this value, to open up a new market for themselves and their foreign partners.

This model is a win/win model and brings economic prosperity to its foreign partners, by offering them an ongoing royalty income stream, while Orisis receives the benefit from exclusive commercialisation rights.

This provides a pathway for many foreign horticultural companies including Blerick Tree Farm, to enter the Chinese market, without the traditional limitations that are associated with moving living plant material around the world and biosecurity issues.

What inspired you to enter the China market?

Michelle and Ron (Blerick Tree Farm) were approached by Orisis in 2011, to partner with them to help Orisis realise their goal of becoming the leading Horticultural Company in China.

There was instant synergy between the companies, and the realisation of what a partnership between the two could achieve, that neither business could achieve alone. We were the eyes into each other's worlds.

Four years on both companies, are enjoying accelerated success than what would have been possible if the partnership had never existed.

How important is it for your company to be recognised as a Finalist for the ACBA 2016 Program?



Recognition sends a very powerful message to individuals as well as companies. Being recognised as a finalist through the Australia China Business Awards has created a buzz across the whole work place and platform to celebrate its achievements during the last 4 years.

The recognition is an invaluable form of enhancing Orisis credibility on the global platform and within China. The power of this alone is huge, when our business model relies heavily on forming strategic alliances with western partners and historically there is cautiousness about trusting Chinese companies. This recognition helps break down these concerns and accelerates progress.

Finally being nominated as a finalist has increased our exposure within the Australia/China business community and further abroad

Why is it important that an event like the ACBA is held annually?

Having the event annually has many advantages.

- *It gives businesses just entering China an opportunity to launch their profile*
- *It provides wonderful networking and marketing opportunities*
- *The process of addressing the criteria for the submission is almost like an annual review process. It helps focus on what the company has achieved and can form the basis of setting new directions. It opens up internal communications focussed around broader topics rather than just daily operations.*
- *It is a wonderful forum for bringing the Australian and Chinese business communities together in celebration*

What is special about being in China during Australia Week?

Having attended the 2014 AWIC, I look forward to the atmosphere and buzz that is created when 1000+ Aussies converge into the one location to share achievements, learn from each other and seek reassurance from other Aussies about entering into what may be a new frontier. It is wonderful seeing Australians and Chinese unite with a common goal of fostering bilateral business relationships. Personally, I am also looking forward to being involved in the signing ceremony, where Orisis will sign a contract with three new Australian Business partners, who will also be attending the AWIC.

What were some of the key contributors to your success in China?

For both Orisis and Blerick, forming a partnership built on trust was fundamental to the success of both companies. We have to value and each other's opinions and be willing to act on these opin-

ions. For both companies, recognising that, what can be achieved as a sum is so much greater than what can be achieved individually. For example Blerick would never have been able to open up export pathways and navigate Chinese bureaucracies without Orisis and Orisis would not be aware or have access to untapped business potential outside the PRC.



How important are people to people relations when it comes to doing business in China?

I think it doesn't matter where in the world you are people relationships are the key ingredient to the success of any organisation of business relationship. Developing relationships is about getting to know people and developing a trust.

However in China, the trust relationships, is what will enable you to move forward when traditional western processes no longer apply or can be used.

What advice, if any, would you have for a business looking to enter the Chinese market in 2016?

If you are an Australia business, I would recommend finding a trusted Chinese partner. The business platform is very complex and almost impossible for a foreign company to navigate without local help. Try and understand how you may need to alter your product or service to assimilate with Chinese culture, values, lifestyle and beliefs. I often used to read this advice from others, but was always left with the question "how do you do this". My answer is live in China for a bit or at least run your ideas past people who do live in China. Attending as many networking events and tapping into others experiences, will prove to be invaluable.

It is also critical to find a good legal and taxation advisor, and have an understanding of their fee structures in advance. This will need to be factored in to your budgeting and negotiations. Also devise the best tax and legal structures from the beginning.

Be patient through negotiation processes. It takes time and the process in China, can very different compared to what you may be used to in Australia or elsewhere.