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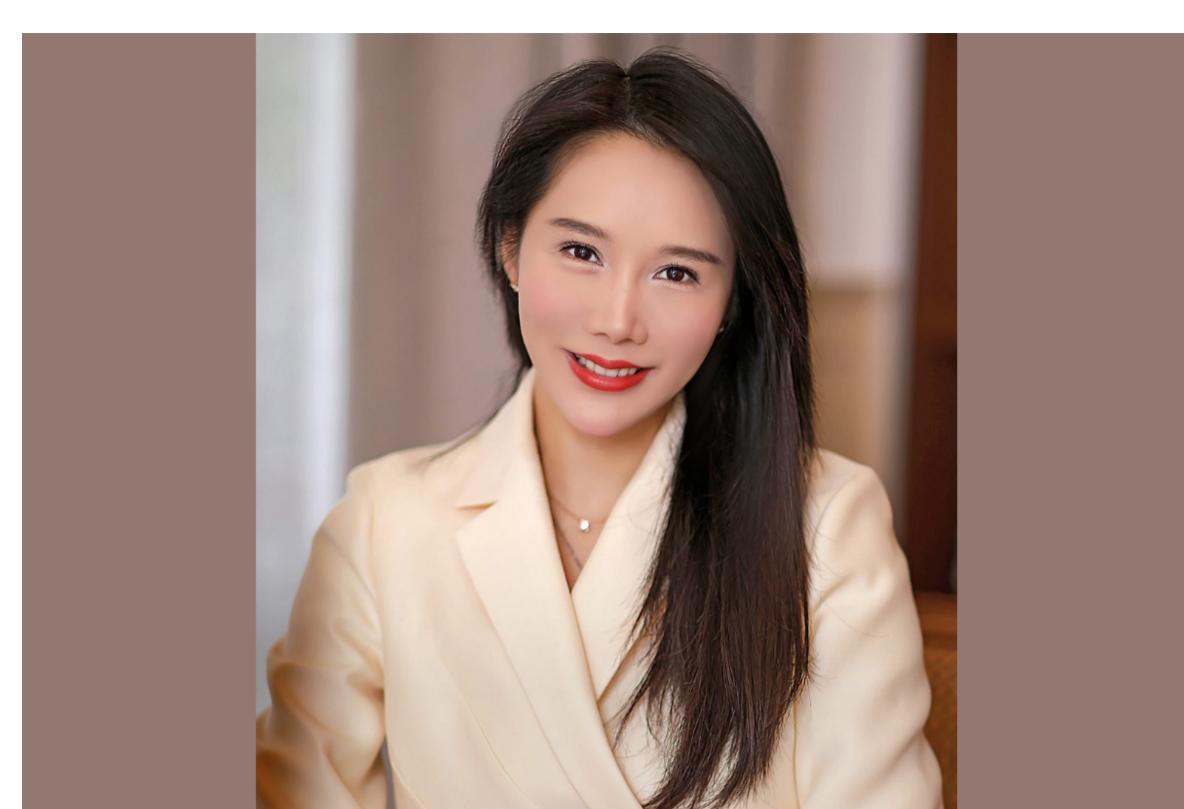
EXECUTIVE INTERVIEWS

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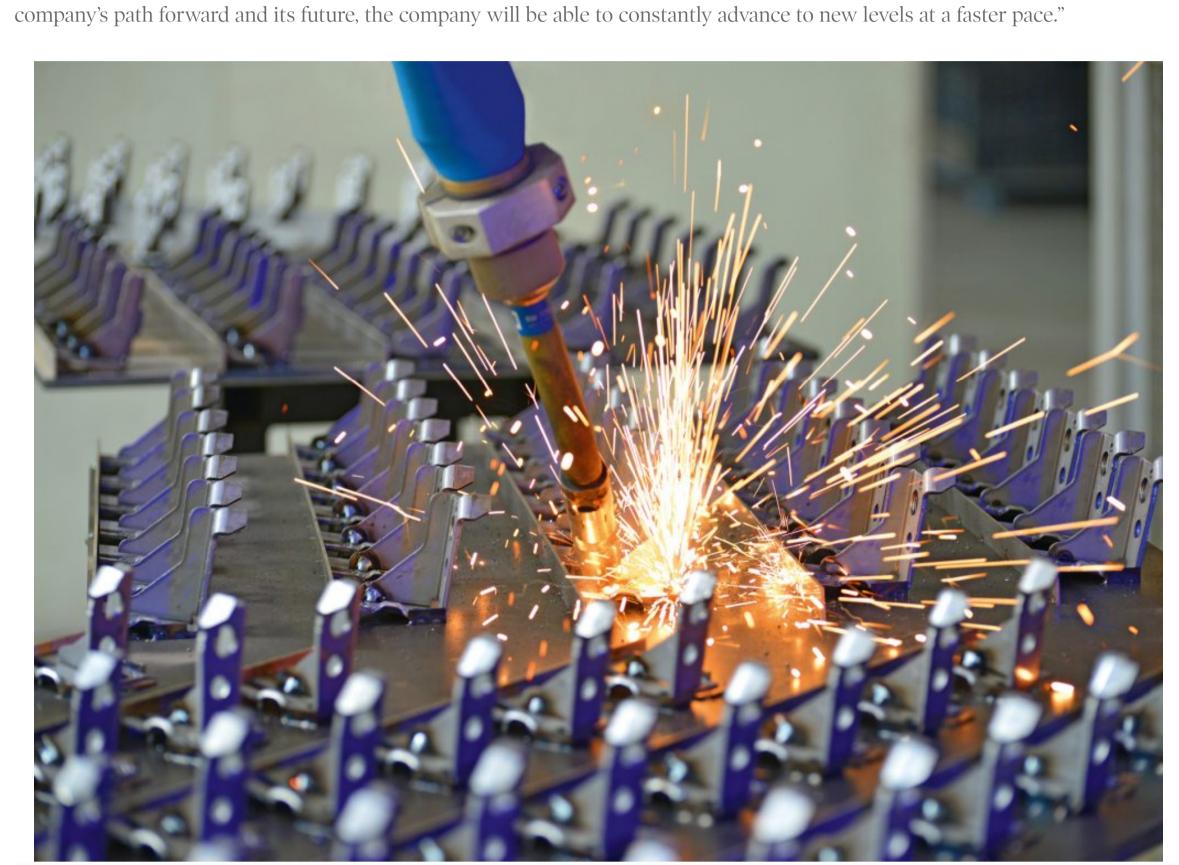
MANUFACTURING ASIA Designs on Metal: Coco Feng

For Coco Feng, the classic motto, "I shall either find a way or make one", best reflects her philosophy of life. From business operations to attitude towards life, her philosophy manifests a style of women in the new era. "We must learn from the past, from personal experience, and from the experiences passed on to us from others," she says. "But these past experiences cannot dictate our future. I prefer to be more proactive when making decisions for my own future."



Founded in 2005 in Suzhou City, Fengshi Metal Technology is a small- and medium-size enterprise (SME) specialising in metal plate technology and manufacturing. In 2014, Coco took the helm of the company. In the spirit of breaking through the glass ceiling, she has been striving to improve the innovation capacity of the company to achieve industry automation and digitisation. With a firm resolution to overcome all obstacles, she leads the team to open up new business paths.

Looking back on this journey, Coco says, "Fengshi 2.0 has been of great significance both in terms of performance and the progressive realisation of our strategic vision. I firmly believe that as long as the team and customers have complete faith in the



Corporate culture, core strengths

Shouldering the responsibility of a leader, Coco has delivered fruitful results. Amid the harsh environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Fengshi's performance excelled against the prevailing trend in 2021.

With regard to one of the achievements that she is most proud of, Coco says that back in the early days of the company's reform, key customers readily acknowledged the company's changes, which encouraged it to further promote reform. "Some customers took the initiative to help us build capacity and to take the maturity of our processes to new heights more rapidly."

Coco believes that today's business leaders need to be highly sensitive to the overall trend to maintain their respective advantages in the highly competitive global market. "Fengshi, as an SME in the global market, must compete with others of its kind at home and abroad to acquire multinational companies as customers," she says.

"This requires the company to not only give full play to its advantages as a flexible and diligent private SME in China, but also further upgrade its process maturity as a means of meeting the expectations of knowledgeable multinational customers for



Without integrity and honesty, it is impossible to gain trust from employees, suppliers or customers. Without trust, any business relationship or employment relationship cannot last long.

From her perspective, the five elements of Fengshi's corporate culture – customer focus, quality, integrity, continuous improvement and sense of ownership - are the company's core competitive advantages. At the same time, they are also aligned with her business philosophy of integrity and professionalism, and her focus on personal commitment.

Honesty is the core of China's moral culture, the cornerstone of enterprise development and the foundation of self-cultivation and life, so Coco pays special attention to it. "Because without integrity and honesty, it is impossible to gain trust from employees, suppliers or customers. Without trust, any business relationship or employment relationship cannot last long," she

"If the business relationship you establish with your customers is only a general buyer–seller relationship, once the industry enters a downturn or a global crisis breaks out, you will fall into a situation of isolation and helplessness."

Broad and long-term view

explains.

Despite there being nearly 4,000 metal processing enterprises similar to Fengshi in China, Coco hopes to make every effort to enhance the company's future position in the industry.

She has formulated short- and medium-term development goals for the company, with a view to maintaining a healthy profit growth over the next three years, and improving its capacity, driving it to become one of the best SMEs in the domestic metal technology processing industry within the next five years.

"For customers, the company's scale, growth and profitability are often of secondary importance," she says. "What customers value most is a company's optimal performance, which needs to be driven by a precise and feasible corporate culture."

As a leader, in addition to keeping the team on the right track, Coco believes you must always be vigilant about potential risks. "In my opinion, we must remain sober, expand our customer base in multiple industries and regions, and minimise dependence on specific customers in order to reduce risks and increase revenue-generating opportunities," she points out.

What customers value most is a company's optimal performance, which needs to be driven by a precise and feasible corporate culture.

In advancing the expansion plan, she admits that the biggest challenge is the sheer number of uncertainties, one of which is the unpredictable, evolving pandemic. To avoid falling into a state of passivity, the company implemented a series of risk-control strategies very early on, maintaining close and consistent communication and coordination with customers and suppliers.

"This included keeping customers informed of the company's situation at all times and jointly developing long-term plans, such as increasing production shifts and reasonably distributing transport, reviewing price trends, and controlling crisis-induced costs," she shares. "Through active collaboration, we achieved growth against the trend in 2020 and performance growth was up 40 per cent in 2021. In such difficult times, few enterprises are able to achieve such results."

The importance of information

Entering 2022, as the global environment remains volatile, Coco believes that "information is king" if managers want to turn a crisis into an opportunity. "It is most critical to obtain a deep understanding of your customers and suppliers, and to fully understand their impact on you," she says. "If we lack this insight and merely act unilaterally, we may face unpredictable consequences. Making planned and pre-emptive decisions quickly will allow you to control your own destiny."

The power of female leadership

As a leader, how does Coco spend a typical day? "All the actions in my life revolve around the development of the company to achieve strategic vision, arranging on-time payment for goods from suppliers, caring for employees, and even caring about employees' personal affairs – all of these issues require the CEO to make decisions," she states.

"Priorities vary from day to day, but one thing is certain: a CEO's day starts very early and ends very late, being on standby 24/7, and especially in this current climate, it is even more necessary to maintain this state."

Coco's perseverance and outstanding leadership qualities have earned her a place in the 'Outstanding Business Leaders of 2021', a recognition award organised by The CEO Magazine International Chinese Edition. Coco has made it onto the 'Power Female Leaders' list.

Speaking of the trend of a rise of female leaders in this new era, she said, "I think the rise of female leaders is a long-overdue phenomenon and an inevitable result of global social change. It is the arduous effort of generations of female predecessors that makes us who we are today."

Women may have different ways of communicating than men, which is sometimes helpful, but is not inherently good or bad. I think the personal traits of leaders always trump gender traits.

Coco also believes that the advantage of female leaders lies in the way they communicate. "Women may have different ways of communicating than men, which is sometimes helpful, but is not inherently good or bad. I think the personal traits of leaders always trump gender traits," she reflects.

In her eyes, there are three important aspects of excellent leadership traits: being capable of establishing a medium- and longterm overall strategic vision that everyone can understand and implement; having open and credible communication, including internal and external communication; and formulating clear goals that are practical and feasible, and providing corresponding support.

Coco adds that another key is to exhibit high emotional intelligence, or emotional quotient. "I don't think we should underestimate the importance of maintaining sincere communication. For example, the Fengshi team recognised my sincere efforts from the very beginning, which helped me become a better leader," she says.

"It is on the basis of frank communication that I can make good use of my leadership ability to lead the company to achieve

"To maintain good communication and trust. 'Let the world recognise Made in China', shows the spirit of perseverance, positive struggle and the entrepreneurial spirit of promoting the development of the industry. Motivated to strive for excellence in service and pursue higher quality." - Yu Wei, General Manager, Shanghai Tanyuan Metal Material Co

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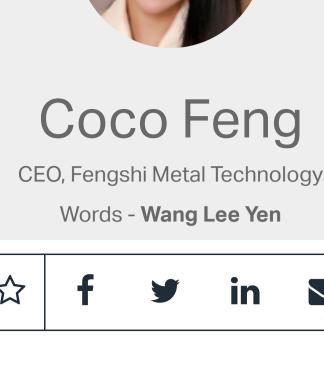
FAQ





Words - Wang Lee Yen





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