

Sowell, an Engineering Firm that's an OEM

- **Founded by 5 Partners**
- **ISDB-T and DVB-T2 Receiver in 2011**
- **Overseas Offices in the Plan**
- **User Friendliness is Company Philosophy**

A team of five R&D engineers are the founders of the OEM company Sowell. The driving force and General Manager of the young company is Eagle Chain. He was, like his four colleagues, an R&D employee with a large receiver manufacturer but over time didn't feel so comfortable with that company. All too often he was assigned projects that had nothing to do with receivers. His four colleagues

felt the same way and so in 2004 they founded their own company Sowell.

We met up with General Manager Eagle Chain in Sowell's office in Shenzhen who started off by telling us how it all began: "All we had was the money we had saved while employed with that other company. We pooled



Shenzhen

Sowell's offices with their 70 employees are located on the seventh floor of this office building in Shenzhen. Receiver production takes place in Baoan which isn't too far from here and close to Shenzhen's airport. 200 employees work in the production facility. 200,000 receivers per month can be produced by one shift; if all three shifts are used, receiver production climbs to more than 500,000 boxes a month.



■ General Manager Eagle Chain working in his office in front of a painting of the Great Wall.







深圳市视维科技有限公司
Shenzhen Sowell Technology Co., Ltd.

SOWELL
OEM Receiver Manufacturer, China
www.sowell-tech.com

Company Details

Engineers in Research & Development | Total Number of Employees
0 50 100

Average Turnover (Previous, This, Next Year Estimates)
0 25 50 Mio US\$

Production Certificates
DVB
Main Products
Receiver for DVB-S/S2, DVB-T/T2, DVB-C and ISDB-T, Receivers with 3D graphics

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Receptionist Lisa provides a friendly greeting to all visitors.

all of our money together and came up with about US\$ 70,000 which we used as starting capital." The company's name in Chinese is actually Shi Wei; from that came the anglicized version Siwei and so that it would sound better in English, the name became Sowell. "That name actually matches our company philosophy", comments Eagle Chain, "we want to do everything 'so well.'"

The five partners originally founded Sowell as a software designing firm. "It took us only five months before we were able to sell our first software to a manufacturer", remembers Eagle Chain, "At that time it was a software solution for the Conexant chip."

But the days as a simple software provider lasted only a few years: Sowell started their own receiver production in 2006. Back then they manufactured DVB-S receivers for the Middle Eastern market. Sales Director Amanda gives us some more details: "Up until 2009 we delivered most of our products to the Middle East but in 2010 that began to change." Geographical product distribution was 80% to the Middle East, 15%

to Europe and 5% to Southeast Asia. "2011 will bring with it even more significant changes; we will start exporting to Eastern Europe and above all to South America."

Wait, did she just say 'South America'? That could only be ISDB-T receivers! This led us to Pan Smile. He is one of Sowell's five founding partners and is not only Vice General Manager but is also first and foremost the Director of the Research and Development team. Oh, and incidentally, he's also Production Manager. He gives us the latest Sowell product news.

Up until now Sowell's success product has been a receiver series based on the ST7101 chip. The product palette includes a DVB-S2 receiver as well as two combo variants: a DVB-S2 + C and a DVB-S2 + T. The newest receiver series is based on the NXP chipset and is introduced by Sowell in their TELE-satellite ad. "The advantage of the NXP chip is that it's not only more economical but also sports additional features such as multimedia and is also compatible with Linux", reveals Pan Smile the reason for switching chips.

But what's the situation with ISDB-T? Pan Smile tells us, "In the second quarter of 2011 we'll be coming out with a combo receiver with DVB-S2 and ISDB-T built on the Mstar 782X chip family."

But Sowell isn't just concentrating on the South American market; Europe is just as much in focus: "In the third quarter we'll be introducing a combo receiver with DVB-S2 and DVB-T2 based on the Mstar 785X chip family which is also Linux compatible." For the fourth quarter they're planning on a multimedia unit: "It will be based on the new Trident Apollo series chips with which the OSD can for the first time be presented in 3D." Since it will be a multimedia receiver, it won't necessarily be just the OSD in 3D; but games can be presented in 3D as can other applications that work with 3D graphics.

If you take a closer look at Sowell's product development, you'll realize that the company is very close to the customer: there's ISDB-T in South America as well as DVB-T and 3D in Europe – these are segments that will very soon become the talk of the town.

If you're that close to reality, a great

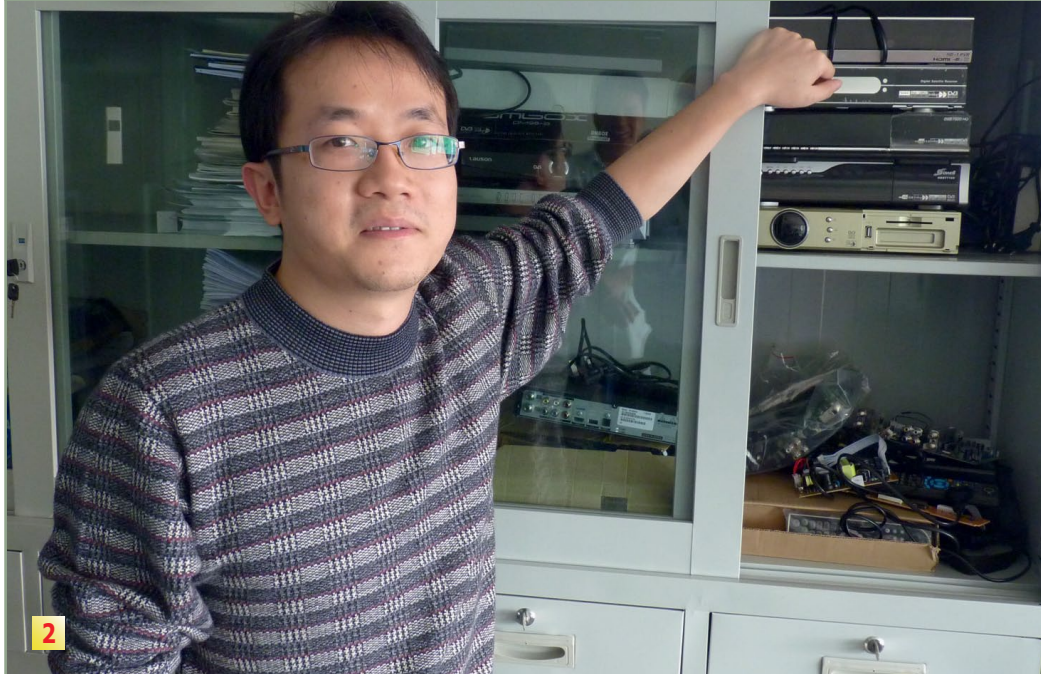
deal of thought must go into what features are currently in demand. In talking with Eagle Chain it's clear that quite a bit of observation and analysis is going on. Eagle Chain cites an example: "I'm amazed with Apple and their products. They are precisely geared towards the end-user and thus very successful." The conclusion according to Eagle Chain: "We have a similar view with our software development, namely a customer-friendly operation of our products." It is exactly for this reason that Eagle Chain is skeptical about how IPTV will develop; for TELE-satellite though, it's a subject that is being approached very ecstatically: "The large telecom providers all have their own agenda and that is selling their data packages to end-users; they are focused solely on that concept." He doesn't see that the user's point of view is considered regarding IPTV and wishes there'd be an approach similar to that of Apple: following a path based strictly on the end user without looking back at what the provider wants.

Sowell's General Manager Eagle Chain isn't just thinking about the further development of IPTV. The general future of the receiver is also on his mind. "Will the receiver transform into a multimedia receiver in the future", asks Eagle Chain, "or will the receiver's functions gradually shift over to the TV itself?" It's a question that's on all of our minds and for which we all don't yet have an answer.

But even if there aren't any answers, everyone at Sowell is still optimistic about the future. Pan Smile revealed to us that his current team of 40 engineers will be expanded to 80 in 2011. "We also employ five engineers from Europe here in Shenzhen who are primarily responsible for customer support", comments Pan Smile. Sales Director Amanda is also optimistic: "Over the past several years we were able to increase our sales 50% every year. In 2010 our sales were around US\$ 30 million and for 2011 we expect that to rise to US\$ 45 million." General Manager Eagle Chain added some more optimism: "In 2011 we are planning to open our own offices in Sao



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1. Sun Guanghua is also a Software Engineer and a founding partner.

2. Software engineer Peng Yi is one of Sowell's founding partners.

3. What magazine is laying there on Designer Zoe Lee's desk? Yes, she takes care of Sowell's ads in TELE-satellite. She also works on the graphical layout of a receiver's OSD as well as the packaging, user manual and everything else at Sowell that involves graphics.

Paulo for the South American market, in Dubai for the Middle Eastern market and in Europe – most likely in Germany – for the western and eastern European markets.”

The young company Sowell, founded more out of necessity rather than a conscious decision, has maybe because of this developed itself extremely fast and dynamically. The five partners are fixated on the success of their company and immediately invest any profits back into the company. That’s why Sowell is growing so fast. “We are currently looking for a new and larger office here in Shenzhen”, revealed Eagle Chain just before we left. Sowell: a company firmly on an expansion course that does everything ‘so well’.

Sowell’s Sales Team



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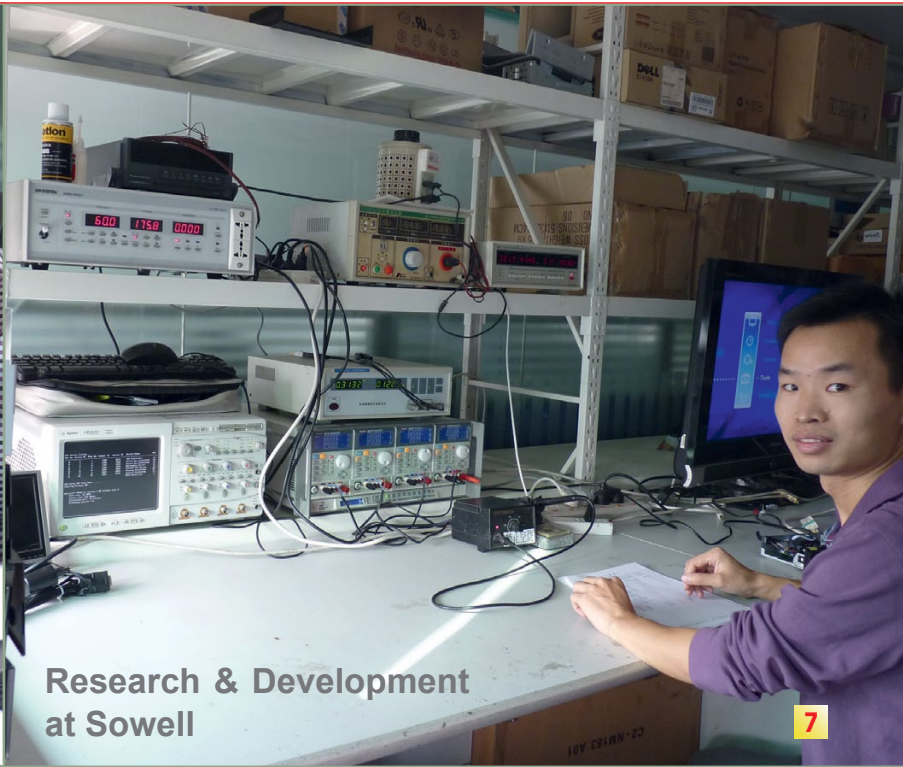


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1. Sowell’s Sales Director Amanda. You’ll run into her at trade shows such as CABSAT in Dubai. She says, “All of our managerial staff have many years of experience in this area because they all previously worked successfully in this sector with other companies.”

2. The customer is taken care of here in the Sales Team. For every region there’s one responsible employee.

3. Always busy: Roger Xu is responsible for the European Sales Team.



**Research & Development
at Sowell**



4. Pan Smile is not only one of Sowell's founders and partners, he is also Vice General Manager. But above all else he's in charge of the R&D team and is also a Production Manager on the side.

5. Sowell's software engineers work here.

6. Six test engineers check out the software here in the Test Center. Liu Xiongzi is seen here testing the functions of a receiver's OSD.

7. Even the hardware has to be tested. Six engineers work in the Hardware Test Center. Satellite antennas are also available here; one is pointed to AGILA at 146E, another is aligned to TELSTAR at 138E with a third one pointing to CHINASAT at 115E.