



IGI(HK)LTD

A Gem of an Idea



MARC BRAUNER – CEO, I.G.I Hong Kong



IGI(HK)LTD

Adding Value, Boosting Integrity & Filling a Niche

Serving an industry known in the past for its opacity, International Gemological Institute is ushering in an era of crystal-clear transparency that is already making its presence felt in the industry as with consumers. MARC BRAUNER, its CEO speaks on the value IGI is bringing to Hong Kong.



MARC BRAUNER: "More transparency results in more consumer trust, which will bode well for the progress of the industry and bring more value to the Hong Kong and China market."

Business of Passion

Marc Brauner is passionate about what he does best, which is – authenticate precious stones. Heading the International Gemological Institute in Hong Kong, Brauner is a keen industry and market observer. He understands the jewelry and gemstones business with an enviable clarity – something the industry and the market needs in order to flourish, particularly in these competitive times. It is this understanding of what buyer and seller need that is resulting in new levels of trade integrity and rising consumer confidence, both of which add value to Hong Kong as a whole.

Certification Concept

It is all about assessing value using the insight of scientific analyses says Brauner animatedly, showing us a certificate of a diamond recently graded at his laboratory in Central, Hong Kong. He also produces real photographs of that very stone showing a microscopic laser inscription of the certificate number. The case is iron-cast. A stone certified by IGI has a very definite value in any part of the world. This is a very welcome global assurance because as Brauner says, "jewelry is a business of passion and emotion."

"The industry too is growing ever more competitive, and authenticity is important when customers are constantly looking for brands of integrity. This is true particularly in Asia where successive generations of family members grow to trust and respect the family jeweler. Serious jewelers must keep this consumer faith by offering crystal clear transparency so customers can take their mind off the worry and

lose themselves in the magic of the moment, savour the beauty and craftsmanship and finally, purchase what they love most. You have to remember that the purchase of jewelry is a very personal decision. It isn't just an object of art and beauty, it is a symbol of security. It is also an excellent store of value. This is the thinking behind the IGI concept from a customer's standpoint."

Grading You Can Trust

"Today's internet-savvy customer is more world wise. Consumers have become more demanding and quality conscious about the products they buy. A jewelry buyer seeking an explanation of why two similar diamond rings are priced \$10,000 apart is not satisfied with being told simply that one is a 'better' diamond. He or she will want to know why it's better. Today's jewelry consumers are more familiar with the 4Cs than their parents were. Jewelers now consider supplying such information an integral part of any sale and modern retail training programs stress the importance of providing independent gemological reports for gems and jewelry in addition to educating the consumer."

"All this has led to an increase in demand for reliable grading or appraisal reports from credible organizations like IGI. Thousands of jewelers, retail stores, insurance companies, internet sales organizations, catalogue companies (mail order), and consumers rely on IGI reports."

Crowning Glory

According to Brauner, embracing accountability and boosting transparency not only works wonders for the image and subsequent profitability of the industry but also puts Hong Kong on a taller pedestal, making it a favoured destination for the purchase of precious stones and jewelry.

"As a city, Hong Kong is a regional competitor for international investment, particularly because we are on the doorstep of the world's largest factory, China, a country that has shown tremendous progress over the years. The world has expectations of Hong Kong and China and it's an open secret that in order for trade and industry to flourish, uniformity of standards must exist. The jewelry industry, for example, needs the implementation of procedures to ensure this uniformity and this is why certification is more a question of need, than choice."

Gemstone polishers, gemstone traders, jewelers and consumers alike submit their stones for certification at IGI after which



**"Jewelry is
a business of
passion and
emotion and,
first and foremost,
one of trust and
confidence."**



they receive a report with the date of certification and a description of the stone. Just how foolproof is the exercise? Brauner says: "nothing is totally airtight but gemology is far more accurate than medicine. The degree of accuracy is beyond imagination."

Established in Antwerp since 1975, and with its divisions in New York, Hong Kong, Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata, Surat, Bangkok, Tokyo, Dubai, Toronto, Los Angeles, Tel Aviv and Cavalese, IGI is the world's largest independent gem certification and appraisal institute and is renowned for its quality services, extensive experience and know-how. The IGI gemological reports enjoy worldwide recognition.

Symbol of Quality

IGI serves three main markets. "There's the export markets like Antwerp which is the largest exporter of diamonds. There's also Tel Aviv in that category. Then there are the manufacturing, export and domestic markets like India and then again, there are importing markets like Bangkok and Tokyo all looking for the insight that scientific analyses can bring their gems."

"It can be argued that the whole supply chain, so to speak, depends on grading. A globally accepted standard that grades and classifies gems adds immeasurable value to the trade and to the consumer and this is a significant value-add in the countries in which IGI operates. Our work is growing in importance in China where a huge industry demands our services. As affluence on the mainland increases we are seeing a massive glut of luxury products. The watches and fine jewelry industry is expanding exponentially in tandem with the rise in consumer sophistication. Newly affluent China buyers want to know what they are purchasing and this is where IGI is playing a pivotal role."

"As a name to trust, IGI serves as both a friend and a policing body to the industry; in doing so it ensures integrity and facilitates a common platform of trust. This is a catalyst the trade and the market needs and deserves. This is the niche IGI fills."

The editors and publishers congratulate IGI on being selected as one of Hong Kong's Most Valuable Companies 2011 and wish IGI every success. ■

For further information on IGI please visit www.igiworldwide.com