

Asia 100: Asia, Asia Everywhere: Have you Had a Drop to Drink? (Part2)

Topic of the Week

In the CCTV world, Taiwan and Korea have been especially agile. Alan Everid, senior product manager for CCTVs at Bosch Security Systems Asia-Pacific noted that Taiwan is a country that is gaining on the U.S. and Europe. Robert Grossman, president of R. Grossman and Associates was also very encouraging. "Taiwan has come a long way in terms of quality and flexibility and stands out as a growth market," he said. Moving north, Everid observed that Korean products have improved in terms of both quality and aggressive marketing. Grossman said Korea has excellent, high-quality products and the companies provide good customer service. Korean products, however, he observed, are starting to get expensive. "Korea is now where Japan was five to 10 years ago." Watch out, Japan. Grossman believes that high-tech companies from this country will be replaced by Taiwanese and Korean ones as the latter catch up in terms of quality even while they refrain from adding zeros to the price tag and become more customer-oriented. "Although Japan has very good products, they are expensive and firms are unwilling to modify products at customer request," said Grossman.

There are a number of things that Asian-based companies can do to polish up on their performances. First, they should stop copying other people's work. "The problem faced by many Asian manufacturers," Grossman observed, "is inability to stand out. Rampant theft of intellectual property has led to many companies openly copying competitor features."

A greater focus on marketing, support and usability would also go a long way in differentiating products, but so far not many companies have done so. "As a result, buyers are confused and reluctant to try products

from these unknown companies except at the very low end of the market."

Grossman further pointed out product technology is generally excellent, while product delivery time is pretty variable. Innovation is generally excellent. However, technical support was described as satisfactory to poor by Grossman, Everid, Jeong and Moore. Sales service was all over the map. Low-level integration, such as compliance with published standards, is very good, but integration with other proprietary protocols is generally hit-and-miss.

User-friendliness suffers from language and cultural barriers since users in the U.S. are very different from those in Asia, said Grossman. On the bright side, it is an easy problem to fix. Once Asian companies understand the issue, they seem very receptive to make the needed changes. Another pat on the back is for fast response. "Asian companies are very much attuned to technological advances and willing to experiment."

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