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Multinationals embrace Party membership

Foreign firms encourage staff to join CPC to gain better insight into government policies

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Multinational companies in China are attaching greater importance to the Party-building process because a deeper understanding of the Communist Party of China's (CPC) latest policies can facilitate sustained growth in the domestic market.

West Nanjing Road subdistrict in central Shanghai, which is home to a large number of regional headquarters of leading multinationals, has witnessed the development of Party organizations.

According to Jiang Chunhai, deputy secretary of the Party working committee in the subdistrict, the committee is responsible for the operation of 93 Party organizations in multinational companies, including eight general branches, 51 independent branches and 34 united branches.

In total, these Party organizations oversee 1,587 Party members in 289 multinational companies.

The China headquarters of Mary Kay, a direct-sales cosmetics retailer from the United States, are in the subdistrict, and the company is one of the best examples of significant progress in Party building.

Since the Party-building project began in 2007, the number of Party members working for Mary Kay in China has risen to 111 from just six.

There are 58 members in the Shanghai headquarters and 53 at a branch in Hangzhou, capital of East China's Zhejiang province, accounting for 10 percent of the employees at the branch.

"Go Give, which is the core value of Mary Kay, accords with the Party's values — to give without requesting anything in return. That was how I convinced my boss to set up a Party branch in Mary Kay," said An Congzhen, secretary of the company's Party group.

That core value has seen Party members carry out a number of Party-building activities to aid under-

privileged people, including providing classes for students in rural areas, looking after seniors in local nursing homes and organizing charitable activities in local communities, according to An.

In the decade since Party building began at the company, many measures have been adopted to facilitate related activities.

When the Party branch was established at Mary Kay in 2007, the six CPC members held meetings in a corridor to exchange their opinions about the latest government regulations and policies.

However, the company set up a 100-square-meter activity room earlier this year, partly as a result of the rising number of Party members it employs. The company also allows members to hold Party-building activities during breaks at work.

"Our employees are always under quite a heavy workload. We have to make the best of their time, for example during the lunch break, to hold Party-building activities," An said.

"One of the latest activities is the study of the theoretical and practical issues related to Party building, which has received a positive response from our Party members," he added.

Feng Yu, 38, a product quality manager at the company, said the Party-building activities advocate many virtues and also provide a platform for each member to understand and realize their life values.

"Each of us works to a tight schedule, but we are always willing to take part in the activities, most of which are held in our spare time, because they are helpful to our careers and personal lives," he said.

However, it was not easy to make Party building a feature of Mary Kay's operations.

In 2010, the Party branch at Mary Kay worked with the human resources department to keep records of the number of Party members and asked each of them to place a red sign on their desk to indicate their membership of the Party, in the hope that



The Party group at Mary Kay, a direct-sales cosmetics retailer from the United States, holds a meeting to welcome new Party members at the company's headquarters in Shanghai. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Party members at Mary Kay celebrate sixth place in an orienteering event in Shanghai. Party members look to make rapid career progress.

they would become role models in the company.

"The sign also shows the Party members' willingness to be supervised," An said.

Individual members understand their role in the company and are looking to make rapid progress in their careers. At present, 72 percent of the Party members at Mary Kay work at the executive level as directors, managers and supervisors.

More important, the Party-building activities have helped the company to attain sound fiscal results.

"Our Party branch regularly invites professors from colleges and universities to explain the reports of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. The entire management team attends these lectures to help gain in-depth understanding of China and the latest policies," An said.

"A good understanding will help the management team to make the right decisions and therefore raise the company's profits," he added.

In 2003, the Japanese air-condi-

tioning manufacturer Daikin established a Party branch at its office in the West Nanjing Road subdistrict.

So far, 77 Party members have joined the branch, with one-third of them working in executive roles.

Zheng Jingjing, secretary of the Party branch at Daikin, said Party-building activities have become a good way of promoting the company's name.

On March 5, Learn from Lei Feng Day — a day set aside to honor the spirit of helping others — the company's Party members went to a neighboring community and taught the residents how to use their air conditioners more efficiently.

"In addition to bonding our employees via such activities, the company's name will be better known in the community," Zheng said.

Mao Xinya, an associate professor at the China Executive Leadership Academy Pudong, gives lectures to the Party members at multinational companies in the West Nanjing Road subdistrict.

She said Party members pay close

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attention to the country's latest strategies, which is important to the development of each individual and China in general.

For Mao, one of the most important things is to let younger Party members feel proud about China's rapid development and to understand their responsibilities.

To that end, she has to seek some common ground between the companies' development plans and government policies.

"The younger Party members will shoulder the development of the country. I have been greatly inspired by their passion for studying the latest policies and participating in Party building," she said.

Jiang, the working committee deputy secretary, conceded that there are still some difficulties in organizing Party-building activities in multinational companies, including the relatively low numbers of Party members and inadequate support from their employers.

"Party members in multinational companies should become the internal driving force. They should play their roles in the companies and become the leading force in the promotion of Party-building activities," he said.

He Qi in Shanghai contributed to this story.