

An Old Tradition, the Trading Company Comes to CeBIT

Written by Bob Snyder
09. 09. 2008

Inside the ICP@CeBIT pavilion in Reseller Planet at CeBIT, we were surprised to see the stand of Al-Futtaim Electronics.

We recognized Al-Futtaim from their position in the Middle East market where they represent brands like Volvo, Alactel, Toys R Us, Toshiba, Panasonic and more.

A part of the nature of the Middle East market reflects the nature of their dominant trading partners: the factories of Asia. In Korea, they have chaebols and in Japan the zaibatsu. These are generally family owned trading companies that grew into conglomerates with diverse interests.

Al-Futtaim's growth (more than 70 companies in the group) reminds us of Mitsui Trading and other Asian traders. Today Al-Futtaim has inside its conglomerate, an impressive group of electronics companies. Maybe you recognize the high street retailer, Plug-Ins. Or the pan-MEA product service company, Tech Serve. There's Panatech, the exclusive Panasonic distie.

On the retail side, there's IKEA, ACE HARDWARE and Toys R Us in the Al-Futtaim group.

So which company of the group has a stand at CeBIT?

Gouri Shankar represents the Global Trading Division of Al-Futtaim Electronics. GTD sells branded electronics from CE, IT, home appliances and telecom industries.

And when Shankar says "branded," he really means "big brands." In CE and home appliances, we're talking Sharp, Sony, Sanyo, Samsung, LG, Nintendo, Apple and, of course, Panasonic. In mobile phone, the brands are Nokia, Motorola, LG, Samsung Sony Ericsson and even HTC. For IT, Al-Futtaim sells Intel, Seagate, Toshiba, HP, Acer, Hitachi and Western Digital.

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