



Chen of Crystal Windows speaks at International Franchise Expo - May 31st

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Thomas Chen speaking at the International Franchise Expo.

Queens, NY The chairman and founder of national manufacturer Crystal Window & Door Systems, Thomas Chen, was a featured speaker at the International Franchise Expo on May 31st, held at the Javits Convention Center. Organized by the International Franchise Association, 350 companies exhibited franchise opportunities, and numerous workshops and seminars were part of the show's three-day program. While Crystal Windows is not involved with franchising, Chen was invited to share his past immigrant business experience with the show's attendees. His seminar entitled "How to Become a Successful Entrepreneur in the U.S." focused on strategies for startup and sustained growth.

During his presentation, Chen shared the challenges he experienced 29 years ago in launching and growing his window manufacturing company and how Crystal Windows overcame these challenges to be successful. "As an immigrant from Taiwan and new to America, my initial employees and I in 1990 had several additional challenges to overcome besides the typical issues faced by a startup entrepreneur," said Chen. "We had to develop better English language skills, adapt to American business practices and culture, build a professional organization, and develop a brand and image before Crystal could really grow."

With limited resources and a tight budget, Crystal developed very creative initiatives to address these obstacles. For example, to learn American business practices, marketing techniques, and organization development, Chen attended numerous seminars and enrolled in programs offered by business organizations, trade associations, and government entities. Working with local community colleges, he arranged for onsite English language classes for employees to improve their communications with customers and suppliers. Chen also hired industry professionals for key positions to bring expertise quickly to critical functions and train and develop employees. The local NYC manufacturing assistance organizations advised Crystal on streamlining operations and improving production efficiency. Several business associations facilitated introductions and networking between Crystal and potential suppliers, vendors, customers, and government agencies at their events. "I am very grateful to the many Queens and New York City organizations that mentored, advised, and helped Crystal as it grew from a small operation to a national manufacturer," said Chen.

In addition to keys for continued growth such as vertical integration, investing in new equipment, and seizing opportunities to expand, Chen offered what he considers the most important advice for entrepreneurs. "Building positive relationships and sharing with others are vital to the success of any business," said Chen. Putting this belief into practice has defined Chen and Crystal's growth, helping to shape the company image and build its brand across the country.

Chen presented examples of how Crystal continues to develop relationships and share its success with others. Among other items, he highlighted the Share-Trust-Unity-Family (STUF) United Fund initiative, the non-profit he founded which provides grants and leverages resources to alleviate suffering and uplift communities on four continents around the world. With photos of Crystal Park, a 200-acre outdoor art and nature preserve he is developing in Pawling, NY, Chen described the park as a place for Crystal employees, most of who live in New York City, to enjoy recreation and works of art in a natural setting. "I love to see employees and their families experiencing all that Crystal Park has to offer," said Chen.

Started in 1990, the Crystal family of companies has almost one million square feet of production space at its five manufacturing facilities and 780 employees across the country. Crystal Windows is perennially ranked among the top window and door manufacturers in North America by national trade publication Window & Door Magazine and among the Top New York Area Minority-Owned Firms by Crain's New York Business Magazine.

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