

## Brazilian Electronics Micro Firms Ready to Take on the Chinese

Contributed by Alexandre Rocha  
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Micro companies in the electronics and informatics segments from the city of Santa Rita do Sapucaí, in the southeastern Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, want to take their first steps in the foreign market. In order to start gaining a better understanding of how foreign trade works, especially in the Arab market, representatives of those companies visited the Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce in São Paulo.

The companies are part of the Municipal Business Incubation Program (Prointec), a business incubator established by the Santa Rita city hall, with the support of a series of other organizations, such as the Studies and Projects Funding Body (Finep), the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae).

"They have not yet broken out of the domestic market, but are aiming at the foreign market. Why not?" said the director at Prointec, José Alfredo Carneiro Filho. "They need training in order to open up markets, to become international," added Joaquim Teixeira Garcia, consultant for the group.

The companies aim at producing equipment with low production and operation costs, precisely to compete with products from other origins, especially Chinese.

The region of Santa Rita is known as the Valley of Electronics, a Local Production Arrangement (LPA) comprised of companies in the sector. Established in 1999, Prointec currently brings together 11 companies that are currently under consolidation. "In Brazil, the mortality rate for companies established in incubators is only 20%, whereas outside them the rate is 60%," said Carneiro.

All companies in the program operate from the same premises, and they complement each other. In other words, it is possible to purchase a package of products and services offered by more than one of these companies.

"The advantage of the LPA is the fact that it generates partnerships, you create a product and a third party can manufacture it," said Sergio Luiz Carletti of RPS Teleinformática, one of the companies in the group. "Different from the Chinese, we manage to integrate different products and services," stated Paulo Henrique Lopes, of CODEsis. Outsourcing also ensures a certain production scale.

Carletti's company manufactures equipment for controlling electrical charges from a distance. The equipment allows, for instance, for a hotel to control light in its rooms from a computer terminal installed in its management room. In turn, Lopes' company may create the interface for the same equipment to be controlled from an even farther location, using cellular telephony signals.

Company CODEsis also offers 3D monitors that do not require wearing special goggles. They may be used in the development of engineering projects, and also as a marketing tool, to show three-dimensional images of products in a supermarket, for example.

Company JRR Sistemas, on the other hand, develops custom-made software. "We develop technologies according to our customer's needs," said Júlio Resende Ribeiro, director for research and development at the company.

JRR Sistemas has supplied software for the company that manages the concession of Dutra highway, one of the main highways in Brazil, which connects the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Among the software developed by the company are the programs for charging and auditing tollbooths.

Company Neomera makes equipment for remote monitoring of premises. "The classic example of customers are cellular telephony operator companies," claimed the technical director at Neomera, Rogério Monti. Operator companies have premises such as towers, for instance, that are far removed from the managing centers, and which are subject to theft and vandalism.

The Neomera technology integrates motion sensors and cameras that will only be activated in the case of trespassing. Images are broadcasted using cellular telephony, but only when there is space available on the network, thus preventing disturbances to users due to overload.

In the medical field, company 3J Tecnologia has developed an ear diagnosis device that functions connected to a regular computer and printer. The equipment was designed for external examinations, but the company is already developing two other devices for analyzing the middle and inner ear. 3J is currently negotiating exports to Peru.

And for all those devices to function without electric network overload problems, company Electrotech manufactures network protectors to prevent the electronic equipment from being damaged. It also makes noise reduction filters for telephone lines, and is currently developing an air conditioning system for low power cars.

The Prointec, which supplies technical, logistics and financial support to new companies, has a portfolio of 26 "graduate" companies, i.e., which have been through the program and now sustain themselves. In order to enter the program, interested parties must meet the requirements in a selection edict and the project must be approved by a board of five members.

The maturation period for companies ranges from 24 to 36 months, but even after graduating, they keep on receiving help from the city hall, such as subsidies for renting a property, for instance.

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