

# Han Shenyao: Transformed by the CEIBS EMBA

■ By Lei Na



**H**an Shenyao has done a lot since his days of being among the first ever batch of students in CEIBS' just-launched EMBA programme in 1995. First he left his job in the offices of the Shanghai Municipal government after his EMBA and joined CEIBS as Director of the Management Committee office. Two years later, he entered the business world by becoming Vice President of Huateng Software. He later became the company's CEO and President. "I had worked in government, and I knew it was the maker of rules. But for me, rather than making rules, it's better to play well under the rules," explains Han. This insight into his personality has served him well professionally over the years.

In 2000, with Han at the helm, Huateng developed China's largest transportation card management system in Shanghai. "We later decided to promote the technology and application, resulting in the adoption of our system in more than 30 cities including Nanjing and Beijing," he says.

Then in 2013, after 14 years at Huateng Software, Han started his own business. He integrated Huateng Data and Huateng Smart to launch PNRTech, again partnering with former Huateng colleague and president of ChinaPNR Zhou Ye (EMBA 2000), who became a strategic investor in PNRTech. "For entrepreneurs, these are the best of times, and these are also the worst of times. You have to make a lot of changes, including changing methods that used to work

in the past,” says Han. This is why every couple of years he would be back at CEIBS for a refresher course. He would take short-term training courses as well as attend lectures and events organised by the school’s alumni office where there were numerous opportunities to learn from other CEIBS grads. He also sent members of his management team to CEIBS for further studies. He blended lessons learned in the classroom into his daily routine, turning CEIBS into a vigorous “fountain of learning” for himself and many of his employees. Han’s 20 years of continual learning has given him a noticeable air of rigour and self-confidence. In his story we see the influence of the CEIBS spirit and the fruits of China’s management education.

Read on for more of Han’s story in this exclusive interview with *TheLINK*.

***TheLINK*: You define PNRTech as a new Internet finance venture; what exactly does this mean?**

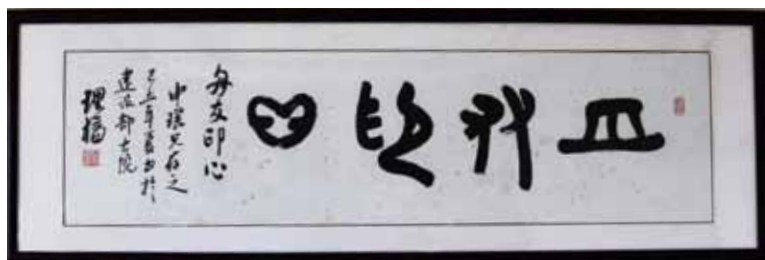
PNRTech is currently a provider of professional background accounts management. We hope to be a leading provider on the domestic market. We have two main business lines: one is technological management service. Clients do not need to buy the system or set up tech support departments; they just leave it to us to provide the fastidious, highly technological business of accounts management. Simply put, we are asked to manage our clients’ accounts. Our other product line is value added service: we help clients increase the value of their assets and resources. What this means is that we embed our tech in their business, which is a relatively difficult move, but we are working in this direction and

have already had many successful cases of value-added services.

This month we are going to complete our second round of financing, and investors see a bright future for our company. On the whole, PNRTech is very promising. With all the passion that fuels our entrepreneurial venture and steady innovation, our team will work towards using our platform service to add value to society.

***TheLINK*: One of your successes so far appears to be your collaboration with Guatemala. Tell us a bit about that.**

We exported buses equipped with card-swiping systems to Guatemala. At the end of every day’s bus service, the card-swiping information for that day will be transmitted back to



“Mates with one heart” is a calligraphic work that hangs in Han’s office. Han says this fits his entrepreneurial mind-set. “It reminds me, from time to time, that you must be brave and forge ahead, and an entrepreneurial team must work closely together and toward one common goal,” he says.



Shanghai and settled on our accounts management platform. Guatemala told us they were not lacking in money, but in talent and technology in this area. We have experience in this field, so we can provide a whole package of solutions for them. Overall, we're not focusing on the development of the overseas market right now; but if there is need, we are ready to provide our products and services overseas. Right now our value is in making the lives of local Chinese more convenient.

***TheLINK: With the development of mobile Internet, many payments are made on our smartphones, do you think there will ever be a day when***

***there's no need for bank accounts?***

I personally think the mobile phone is just a terminal. Now you probably have many cards on hand, like bank cards, transportation card, discount cards, each having its uses. In the future you may just need to take a mobile phone along, with a lot of virtual cards in it. Although the terminal is operating this way, in the background there are still lots of accounts backing the whole system. If you buy tickets on the phone, you are connecting to bank accounts in the background; if you use your transportation card to enter the metro station, you are connecting to your transportation card account. You're using your WeChat or Alipay accounts

when you give out red envelopes. No matter how convenient the terminal operation may feel, there must be tons of accounts in the background, and this is all "in the Cloud".

Background accounts management systems, my area of focus, began with bank accounts: people put their money into banks, withdraw or spend from these accounts and banks will take care of the account management. Background accounts management is something like that. When I first joined Huateng, I was responsible for the non-financial-institution pre-paid card accounts management platform, one of whose most classic applications

is the public transportation card system. Behind this card there is a vast accounts system, which is closely linked to the particular interests of people in every corner of the society. In 2000, we developed China's largest transportation card management system in Shanghai, and later decided to promote the technology and application, resulting in the adoption of our system in more than 30 cities including Nanjing and Beijing.

We also did the ticketing system for the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. This system is particularly interesting because it's essentially similar to the transportation card system, but it can be linked to the reservation system for restaurants and travel agencies. And this is very helpful data to have when forecasting the size of the crowds visiting the Expo. At the time, our competitor was a foreign company, which claimed to have developed over 90% of the world's ticketing systems. Yet ultimately we won the

bid, and successfully completed our task. After the World Expo, we were among those praised by the World Expo Bureau.

***TheLINK: Is the data processing work you did at Huateng the same as the now-popular Big Data?***

Yes, a bit. But our work was basically B2B, business to business, not B2C, so we did not have high requirements for customers. Today, when we talk about "Big Data", we are trying to analyse the purchasing behaviour, experience in consumption and some cross-boundary actions in the background when we serve customers directly. For example you can link the sales of milk with those of diapers, or even beer. Men who stay at home caring for children may like to have a beer, so on store shelves you can put beer beside the diapers. This is cross-boundary thinking from the customers' perspective, which is a bit similar to our work – except we don't take it that far.

***TheLINK: You've achieved success in your field, as seen by your election as VP of Shanghai Software Industry Association. Drawing on your years of experience, what qualities do you think are the most important for a good CEO?***

I don't think there is a standard answer to this question, as opinions may vary. But I think first you should have perseverance. When you have an aim, you have to stick to it, and you must have a sense of historical responsibility because it's not just about you as an individual, it's also about your team. Sometimes you may feel tired and frustrated, and you may waver, but if you persevere you will have better results. Secondly, you should be open. In my company, I'm not the highest in IQ or EQ, neither am I the strongest in marketing abilities. But where does my value lie? If your employees are better than you, it means that you have some indispensable ability or



1. Han Shenyao presenting a gift to Professor Wu Jinglian on behalf of all his EMBA classmates
2. Graduation ceremony for CEIBS first Executive MBA, April 8, 1997
3. Group photo of CEIBS EMBA 1995 alumni, Han Shenyao is third left in the second row



Han Shenyao and Zhou Ye paint the eyes of the dancing dragon together during the opening ceremony for PNRTech.

“It is my alma mater that gives me the courage to keep challenging myself.”

character trait for success. Being open is very important. You have to be open to work with people more skilled than you, and those holding different views than yours. Thirdly, you have to have character. Basically it means you must have integrity, and be just. You must be the trailblazer, and take on many responsibilities on your own shoulders. You must communicate with others, and get yourself understood. Only by doing these things can you be open enough and have better people sticking around you until your collective aim is reached.

***TheLINK: As one of the first CEIBS EMBA students, what were the reasons behind your choice of what was then a brand-new EMBA project?***

That was in 1995, when China was still in the beginning of reform and opening up; it had just entered a difficult phase, a very hard time. I still remember those days, when Shanghai and the central government did their first ever “split revenues”. This meant that after the over RMB9 billion of central fiscal duties were paid, the funds left over from local revenues could be used in local construction. I was then technological manager in the office of the Shanghai

municipal government, hoping to combine my management skills with those of economic management. It was then that I heard of CEIBS’ EMBA programme which would teach management, so I decided to enrol.

***TheLINK: What was your impression of CEIBS then, and how different is it today?***

CEIBS has always had rigorous academic standards and requirements. We were the first EMBA, and the two classes in Chinese and English had only 42 students in total. Fellow students came from government departments, giant SOEs, foreign companies, and most of them had reached high management positions. The school had high standards for students, telling us explicitly within the first few days that no matter what our backgrounds, at CEIBS we were all ordinary students and we must have a good attitude towards learning. In class, professors taught us original Western economic theories; our own abilities determined whether we could make contributions to the country later on.

As for what’s different today, maybe it was that we were using foreign cases while now we can use domestic cases. Even so, our horizons were greatly broadened at that time. The spirit of learning at CEIBS has been constant, while the school has been making progress in its integration of management theory with China’s practices.

***TheLINK: Last year CEIBS held a gathering of its first EMBA students, where you delivered a “Thank you CEIBS” speech. What was the essence of that speech?***

I was representing the 1995 EMBA & MBA alumni, and the speech was jointly prepared by all of us. I really love CEIBS. After I graduated, I soon completed my professional transformation, abandoning my government position for a corporate career. I worked at Huateng for 14 years, 7 of which were spent as CEO. The business grew by over 500% during the period, and we did quite a number of remarkable projects. In 2013 I helped establish PNRTech, turning from professional manager to an entrepreneur. It is my alma mater that gives me the courage to keep challenging myself.