

Mini Sensors to Grab a Piece of 15.6 Billion-dollar Market

Sensor-automated systems are all around us. The most common ones can be seen as automatic glass doors in malls. Recently, they have also appeared in the form of motion sensing game consoles – widely known as Wii. Behind the convenience and fun brought about by these systems, sensors are the key to automation. A company has launched the world's smallest integrated motion sensing device to prepare itself for a piece of the sensor market, of which annual sales revenue is worth as much as 15.6 billion Hong Kong dollars.

Bluetooth embedded; PSP Control Application

Virtus Asia is an incubatee of the Incu-Tech Programme of Hong Kong Science & Technology Parks Corporation. Louis J. ROSS, its President & CEO, showed the company's newly-launched Micro Sensing Mote Kit (MSMK), which is the world's smallest integrated motion sensing device, on the product launch yesterday.

The product is only one-fifth the size of similar products on the market. It is equipped with Bluetooth and can transfer data to specified processing systems. The estimated retail price is USD 500 to 1,000 (around HKD 4,000 to 8,000).

Louis J. ROSS explained the application of MSMK with PSP motion control as an example, "MSMK can be used to develop motion control features for portable gaming devices. With motion control features enabled, players can control the movements of the game characters' simply by shaking the gaming device. "

Wen Jung LI, Director of Virtus Asia, added that the applications of MSMK are very broad indeed. It can be applied for the research and development of consumer electronics as well as in industrial, medical and robotics aspects. Medical and safety applications are considered as the most significant ones.

Safety Air Mat for Elderly

Li cited that there are in average 4 million fall-down accidents of elderly every year; MSMK can be used to develop sensor-equipped safety air mat – when one falls down, the sensor detects the fall and triggers the air mat to inflate, "these mats will be a relief for our worries over elderly who live alone. We foresee a huge demand on the market for such application."

Other than the MSMK, Virtus Asia launched V Logger – a compact data logger which

measures acceleration, temperature and humidity. V Logger is expected to benefit the logistics industry with its enhanced capabilities to closely monitor the conditions of delivery packages. Its estimated retail price is USD 100 to 400 (around HKD 800 to 3200).

Li explained that by attaching V Logger on the delivery packages, the various sensors in V Logger can measure the vibration and impact of the goods as well as the temperature and humidity of perishable goods. V Logger can thus help assure clients that goods are well delivered.

To Explore Business Opportunities in Coming Spring Electronics Fair

According to an estimation made by the company, the annual sales revenue of the sensor market is as high as USD 2 billion (around HKD 15.6 billion); Together with applications developed with sensors, the annual sales revenue can reach USD 20 billion (around HKD 156 billion). Li remarked playfully, "We will be doing really well by obtaining a market share of only 1%."

He considers the coming Hong Kong Electronics Fair Spring Edition in April as the company's first opportunity to attract orders. They will then set off to Shenzhen Canton Fair and Japan's Electronic Fair to seek more business partners.

Li claimed that they will focus on electronic gaming applications at the moment as the market for consumer electronics is large. They will also target the markets of US and Japan for now and will expand into the domestic market in the future.

Hong Kong as R&D Centre to Expand into Mainland Market

Virtus Asia, a developer of sensor applications, joined the Incu-Tech Programme of Hong Kong Science Park last year. Louis Ross, Virtus Asia's President & CEO, mentioned that his choice of basing the company's R&D operations in Hong Kong is to target at the Mainland market.

Hong Kong as Platform for Access to Mainland Resources and Market

He believes that the rapid growth of the Mainland market is bringing many companies huge opportunities; Hong Kong is to become the platform for them to expand into the Mainland market, "backed by the world factory - the Pearl River Delta Region, Hong Kong facilitates our manufacturing operations."

The US and Japan currently dominate the sensor market. After obtaining his master degree in the US, Louis J. Ross went to Japan to study the Bekkasei programme. In Japan, he came across the country's advanced sensor technologies which eventually inspired him to start his own sensor business.

He later established Virtus Asia to focus on the development of sensor applications. Driven by the recent trend of miniaturization of electronic products, he decided to develop and launch the world's smallest integrated sensing device – Micro Sensing Mote Kit.

Support for R&D Operations from Hong Kong Science Park

He emphasized that the Hong Kong Science Park plays an important role in supporting the company's product development work, "The Science Park provides us with the advanced facilities and essential services to ease our application research and development processes." The Incu-Tech Programme at the Hong Kong Science & Technology Parks Corporation is open to all technology start-ups registered in Hong Kong to apply. Once a technology start-up has passed the selection processes, it will be entitled to subsidies for R&D work.