

A STRONG HOLD ON THE TOP SPOT - FORBES

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Top Glove powers ahead with a steady commitment to top quality and solid work ethics.

The global demand for disposable rubber gloves has been increasing, given the growth of the medical sector and pressing healthcare needs around the world. The spread of the Ebola virus, for instance, makes high-quality protection in handling patients a top priority.

And the Top Glove brand has become the gold standard for high-quality disposable rubber gloves.

Top Glove Corporation Bhd, a Malaysian homegrown company, is a leader in the disposable glove manufacturing industry. With a 25% global market share for rubber gloves, it is the world's largest rubber glove manufacturer. Since its beginnings in 1991, Top Glove has amassed some 2,000 customers in the medical, industrial and household sectors from 195 countries for its 15 kinds of natural and synthetic rubber gloves.

Top Glove has the capacity to produce 42 billion gloves annually, on 464 production lines in 25 technologically advanced factories, most of which are in Malaysia.

Not content to rest on its past successes, the company is committed to innovate and change to meet higher expectations from its customers, as well as meet global demand, estimated to be rising 8% to 10% annually.

Moving forward, Top Glove plans to add one new factory each year to boost production capacity even further, and it hopes to achieve 30% of the global market by 2020.

Brand Aid

Sound business direction and strong work ethics account for Top Glove's success, according to Tan Sri Lim Wee Chai, executive chairman and founder of Top Glove. "Each day we strive to add positive value," he says.



Tan Sri Lim Wee Chai,
Executive Chairman and Founder,
Top Glove Corporation Berhad

Over the last 23 years, the company has invested in smart operations, innovation through research and development (R&D), and manpower training.

The result: an impressive return on investment of 2,082% since the company's IPO in March 2001 through August 2014. Top Glove has also recorded strong financial performance every year and estimates it will reach US\$711 million in revenue at the close of financial year 2014.

Still, being a leader has its challenges—namely increased market competition, stringent healthcare standards, currency fluctuations, rising raw material prices and utility costs. As an industry, rubber glove manufacturing is relatively resilient, yet overcoming these challenges means focusing on core areas. Not surprisingly, the first area is quality.

"We innovate to get ahead of competition. Research is needed for innovation. That way, there's value creation, which improves the product and lowers cost. No research, no future," explains Lim.

With a focus on R&D and innovation,

the company will widen the current pool of researchers from 45 to 100 by the end of this year as the company increases its investment in this all-important area. Top Glove additionally awards tertiary scholarships to students and its employees to ensure they are able to stay on top of cutting-edge sciences and engineering.

Another top priority for the company is its machines. Top Glove's machines are nearly eight times more efficient than before. The company can now produce up to 36,000 gloves an hour, up from 4,000 gloves an hour when it first started business along its new 1,400-meter-long production chains. Pushing ahead, Top Glove will continue upgrading its machines and acquiring new and advanced models in order to maintain its pole position in the industry.

With industry competition mounting, Top Glove has also made a more concerted effort to better market its products. Toward that end, explains Lim, the company has developed its own dedicated marketing team.

Over the years, Top Glove has steadily built its reputation for top quality and reliability. As he leads his company into the future, Chairman Lim and his staff will continue to reaffirm their commitment to the company's business ethics of honesty, integrity and transparency, as well as its business direction of consistently producing high-quality gloves at low costs.

"Getting to the top is hard, but staying there is even harder. So we must continue to innovate fast to stay relevant in the future," he says. ■

