

# TOP GLOVE: STRETCHING FURTHER WITH PRODUCT QUALITY AND INNOVATION

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*Tan Sri Dr. Lim Wee Chai, Executive Chairman and Founder of Top Glove*

After just 13 years in business, Top Glove Corporation Bhd became the world's largest rubber glove manufacturer in 2004, a remarkable achievement in such a short space of time.

Today, Top Glove is a textbook case of a Malaysia-based company that has gone global, serving 2,000 customers worldwide, including in its principal markets of North America, Europe and Asia. With 42 factories across Malaysia, Thailand, China and, soon, in Vietnam, the company has 682 production lines capable of churning out 63.9 billion pieces a

year, and commanding 26% of the global market share. Products range from latex and nitrile medical gloves to surgical, household and industrial gloves, with condoms and dental dams being recent additions to their range.

“We hope to grow our global market share for rubber gloves to 30% next year and become a global top 500 company by 2040,” says Tan Sri Dr. Lim Wee Chai, Executive Chairman and Founder of Top Glove.

Lim, whose parents were rubber traders, grew up on a rubber plantation. He obtained his degree in Physics from the University of Malaya before pursuing his MBA in the US. In 1991, Lim started Top Glove with his wife, with just one factory, one glove production line and around 100 employees. In 2001, the company was publicly listed on Malaysia’s stock exchange, Bursa Malaysia, followed by a secondary listing on Singapore’s SGX in 2016.

For the financial year ended August 31, 2018, Top Glove reported 24% growth, with a record US\$1 billion in sales revenue and US\$105 million profit after tax. Since the beginning, the company’s compound annual growth rate has been around 20%, double the average market growth of around 10%.

Lim attributes his company’s meteoric growth to joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions under a strong management team. “But more importantly, we stay ahead of competitors by investing in talent and embracing innovation and new technology. For us to become a global top 500 company, we will need to recruit more talent and our sales volume will need to increase by 30 to 40 times,” says Lim.

Top Glove currently has around 18,000 employees, with more than 400 involved in research and development. The company introduces at least six new types of products every year, and some of its recent innovations include easy-donning and bio-degradable nitrile gloves.

Rubber gloves are considered essential items in the health industry and are relatively resilient to political and economic uncertainties. “The fluctuating economic cycles and the ongoing US-China trade war have little to no impact on our sales,” explains Lim when asked about external factors affecting company revenues.

Lim firmly believes that good business ethics are the hallmarks of a successful company, and he encourages employees to be transparent and above board in all business dealings. Staff wellbeing is also a priority at Top Glove. Employee benefits include free access to a full-size gym and a medical and dental clinic at the company’s 23-story headquarters outside Kuala Lumpur. Lim himself plays golf and practises yoga regularly. When reminded that he will be 82 years old by 2040, Lim quips: “I hope to live to 120.”

*Forbes*