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Henry Ko, Managing Director, Greater China Flexport

Freight Forward Thinking

Silicon Valley-based forwarder Flexport set up regional headquarters in Hong Kong to fulfil its global expansion plan

Backed by some of the top investors in the world such as Google Ventures, First Round Capital and Bloomberg Beta, Flexport is a freight-forwarding and customs brokerage startup with a mission to put technology in a much more pivotal role in what is considered to be one of the oldest industries in the world.

In Flexport’s terms, they are here to “redefine how companies manage their global supply chain”.

“Our core service is freight forwarding, but the added-value that we offer is much more than that,” said Henry Ko, Managing Director of Greater China, “we use technology to solve pain points in the complex logistics process, with an ultimate goal to upgrade the industry.”

Flexport is a technology-driven forwarder which hopes to streamline end-to-end freight management, providing easy and highly visible management services and tools to shippers. At the core of its logistics solution is an integrated platform aiming to speed up workflow and facilitate resources management. From a shipper’s point of view, it is a one-stop dashboard that shows real-time data from freight tracking to billing to analytics.

Last year, Flexport announced that it had raised US\$65 million in venture-capital funding for its global expansion plan, while its regional headquarters was set up in Hong Kong in the same year. Henry appreciated the support provided by InvestHK, especially in identifying office spaces, networking, work visa advice as well as media exposure.

“As our regional headquarters, the Hong Kong office not only serves local clients, it also covers Mainland China and South East Asia region,” Ko said, “we need a team that stations in the right time zone so as to improve our service quality and timeliness.”

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Ko agreed that the talent pool in Hong Kong is crucial for Flexport’s development in the region. “Hong Kong provides a rich talent pool where you can find an abundant supply of individuals with international background as well as a global vision. With the company’s pioneering business model, we need to hire people who are extremely open-minded and hungry for knowledge, and Hong Kong is never short of such talent,” he added.

In Ko’s views, Hong Kong’s location and professional advantages can facilitate the central government’s Belt and Road initiative. “With more infrastructure and investment brought to Asia by the Belt and Road initiative, we foresee a rapid growth in trade demand and transactions in the region. Hong Kong can reach most of the key Asian cities within five hours. It is an important hub to connect these cities to the rest of the world,” he remarked.

“The sophisticated professional services that Hong Kong offers such as finance, accounting and compliance also further strengthen its position in international trade,” Ko concluded.

Flexport

- Founded in San Francisco, California in 2013, set up its regional headquarters in Hong Kong in April 2016
- New offices launched in Shanghai and Shenzhen, both headed by the Hong Kong office

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