Driving Toward an Electronic Future

Through continuous investment and growth, Continental Korea helps shape global megatrends

Continental Korea boasts an impressive number of firsts.

The Germany-based automotive supplier created Korea’s first smart key for cars in 2004. The company developed Korea’s first super ultra-low emission vehicle in 2002. The same year, Continental Korea became the first within Continental Group, which has 291 locations in 46 countries, to develop the powertrain control unit, a combination of the engine control unit and transmission control unit. And just last year, Continental Korea created the thinnest card key — 34 mm — in the world.

“We are one of the very, very successful countries [in which Continental operates] because the Korean auto industry has grown so much,” said Hyun Sunwoo, CEO of Continental Korea.

With a history dating back to 1987, when it was Bendix Electronics Korea Ltd. and established by Allied Signal, the company underwent a series of acquisitions until it was bought in 1997 by Continental, one of the world’s top three automotive suppliers. The impetus for the beginnings in the late 80s was the start of the electronic car trend.

Today Continental Korea has six manufacturing locations, seven sales offices, three joint ventures and a total of 2,303 employees across 13 business units. The company’s focus is on automotive and rubber components.

Main customers include Hyundai Motor, Kia Motors, GM Korea, Renault Samsung, Ssangyong Motor and other OEMs, as well as tier 1 clients. Sales last year reached KRW 2 trillion (USD 1.88 billion).

Continental Korea’s strategy is to integrate advanced technologies from Germany with the efficient production of Korea and to localize the entire value chain, from the marketing, research and development and sourcing to manufacturing and customer support.

As was the case in the beginning, Continental Korea is working toward realizing automated driving, which the company as a group considers the key to safer and more efficient future mobility. Last year, Continental became the first automotive supplier to be granted a test license for automated driving on public roads in the United States. The goal is to achieve partial automation by 2016, high automation by 2020 and full automation by 2025.

As a result, Sunwoo forecasts accelerated vehicle electrification for Continental Korea and continued rapid growth in electronic components.

“We will be the leader in futuristic vehicles,” said Sunwoo. “Our company goal has been [to be] the number one automotive electronics company in Korea.”

The CEO pointed to four automotive megatrends that his company helps shape: safety, the environment (clean power), information (intelligent driving) and affordable cars. Continental Korea has proven so strong in its manufacturing competency that headquarters is trying to double the number of engineers in one of its Korea business units to develop parts not only for Korea, but other areas of the world as well.

“We’ve proved that we are doing so well,” said Sunwoo.

But perhaps the greatest proof is in the parts: Every Korean-manufactured car is equipped with at least one Continental product.

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Did you know?

- Continental was founded in 1871 in Germany. Back then, it made bicycle tires.
- Continental Korea has maintained Great Work Place status for 11 years straight.