

POWER PROFILE

STAYING DRIVEN

Infiniti Motor Company president Roland Krueger tells **John Cremer** what keeps his engine running

HIGH-FLYERS

Seeing new car models come off the production line, working closely with the latest hybrid technology and having the chance to build sales in fast-expanding markets are just some of the reasons why Roland Krueger has found his dream job.

As Hong Kong-based president of Infiniti Motor Company, the luxury brand of Japan's Nissan group, Krueger is responsible for managing a global business, which now encompasses sales operations in more than 50 countries.

While the US is still the biggest market by volume, a strategic decision in 2012 to make Hong Kong the firm's global commercial headquarters signalled a determination to tap into the huge opportunities in Asia, especially mainland China.

That gives Krueger plenty to contend with. But his enthusiasm shines through, whether explaining the sensors used for autonomous drive technologies, describing key features of the Q30 – a crossover hatchback recently launched in Hong Kong – or outlining expected changes in market demand.

Brought up in southern Germany, Krueger took a four-year degree in industrial design at the University of Applied Science in Munich, aiming to pursue a career in the automotive industry.

"It is very simple – I love cars and always wanted to work with them," he says. "If you have a passion for some-

thing or a fascination, you should go for it. That is very important."

After graduating in 1992, he took another significant step by joining Mitsubishi Motors Europe as a designer for exteriors. Stints in both Germany and Japan preceded a switch to the Daimler Group, where he worked as senior designer for "smart" interiors and then on the company's strategic planning group.

"As a designer, you think with your pen to visualise your ideas – that's a skill I'm still using," he says. "You must develop something that does justice to the brand identity from the first look or touch. But to take the larger decisions, you also have to understand structures, organisations and how decisions are actually made."

To get the business credentials to com-

plement his technical know-how, Krueger completed an MBA at the Insead business school in 1998. The same year, he accepted an offer to join BMW Group as manager of strategic product planning. A subsequent series of promotions brought wider geographic, pricing and product responsibilities, culminating in the post of senior vice president and regional head of operations for the German market, before the switch to Infiniti early last year.

"For me, the main thing is to empower people, hold them accountable, and make sure the company has long-term vision," says Krueger, who doubles as senior vice president of Nissan Motor Company.

In certain respects, Hong Kong, with its high-density urban environment, is proving an ideal test ground for trialling hybrid models and detecting a change in driver needs and expectations.

"You have to differentiate between customer preferences and actual customer usage," Krueger says. "The market may be moving towards fully electric vehicles, but high-performance hybrids can give the best of both worlds."

Krueger is also lending his support to the Accelerator 2.0 programme. This initiative backs eight local start-ups with innovative ideas for "smart cities". The basic aim is to encourage, and then fast-track, inventions with the potential to make cities cleaner, more efficient and more intelligent. For example, one of the start-ups admitted to last year's programme came up with an outdoor air purifier which uses damp moss to filter out ambient pollutants.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Krueger has an interest in collecting vintage cars and is a big fan of Formula One, particularly the mental strength and physical courage of drivers like Ayrton Senna and Michael Schumacher.

"This season, Infiniti is a technical partner of the Renault Sport Formula One team, contributing its expertise in the area of hybrid performance and drivetrains," he says. "We have some specialists working with the team on the technology for next season, and that expertise will come back to our development centre in Japan."

For the full story visit www.cpjobs.com/hk/highflyers

TO INFINITI AND BEYOND

Roland Krueger's guide to success.

- Be inspired** "I truly believe you must have or develop a real passion for what you do. That can carry you a long way."
- Don't give up** "Building a career takes patience and persistence. You will have setbacks and will have to overcome obstacles."
- Stay focused** "You should always show a certain dedication to the job, whatever level you are in a company."
- Diversify your talent** "We have people from every field of expertise, from engineering to finance and marketing. Also, it is important to bring in recruits from outside the industry."
- Keep pace** "There are now many more 'touch points' and channels where you can engage with customers. The switch between preferred media can be very fast."

Photo: Gary Mak

NEWS BITS



New Massachusetts law bars hirers from asking for salary history
BOSTON – Massachusetts has signed into law a bill requiring men and women be paid equally for comparable work.

Women are currently paid on average 82 per cent of what men earn for comparable work in Massachusetts.

In what backers say is a first-in-the-nation provision, the new law bars employers from asking prospective workers to provide a salary history. Supporters say this can perpetuate a cycle of lower salaries for women.

The law also lets employees discuss their salaries with other workers without facing retribution from their employer. *AP*



Randstad bids US\$429 million for US rival Monster Worldwide
AMSTERDAM – Randstad, the world's second-largest staffing company, said it planned to acquire Monster Worldwide, which owns Monsterboard and Jobs.com, for US\$429 million.

For Randstad, which has struggled to grow in the United States, the deal would fit into a series of acquisitions to expand into online recruiting. The bid follows Randstad's US\$100 million purchase of US startup RiseSmart in September.

Though Randstad has grown to rival global No. 1 Adecco in market capitalisation, it trails US market leader Manpower in North America. *Reuters*



City of London job vacancies drop after Brexit referendum, study shows
LONDON – Vacancies in the City of London finance hub sank 12 per cent in July following the shock Brexit vote, a study by consultancy Morgan McKinley showed.

The impact was, however, less than expected after the June 23 referendum to leave the European Union.

The study also highlighted a 14 per cent drop in the number of jobseekers in July from June, which could be partly due to seasonal variations during a relatively quiet period for financial markets.

Pro-EU campaigners have argued that jobs could be put at risk if companies choose to relocate to the EU. *AP*

Photos: AFP, AP

CASE STUDY

Pre-empt legal pitfalls by ensuring equal pay

The Background
According to the World Economic Forum's 2015 Global Gender Gap report, it will take 118 years until the global pay gap between men and women is closed.

Figures published by the Census and Statistics Department show that, in 2014, median male monthly employment earnings were HK\$15,000 in Hong Kong, while median female monthly employment earnings were HK\$11,000.

Hong Kong does not have legislation that explicitly provides for equal pay in the workplace. However, if a woman is paid less than a man for doing the same job – or for doing a different job of comparable value – and the difference in pay is based on a prohibited ground, such as sex, this

might constitute unlawful discrimination under one of the four discrimination ordinances. These ordinances prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex, pregnancy, family status, marital status, race and disability. In the context of pay, however, the focus tends to be on gender and the pay differential between men and women.

The Implications
The simple fact that a female employee is paid less than her male colleague who performs the same role does not automatically mean that she is the victim of pay discrimination by her employer. The burden of proving that a pay differential is not discriminatory rests with the employer. This means that if an employer is unable to show that a difference in pay is due to a valid reason other than gender, an inference of discrimination may be drawn in relation to the pay disparity.

Of course, there may be a number of reasons for differences in pay which are unrelated to gender. The most common

It may be best for new employers to disregard current salary and instead pay for what the job is worth

reasons are length of service, performance, experience, qualifications and market factors, such as response to a skills shortage. It is important, however, to ensure that what appears to be a neutral reason for a pay differential is not indirectly influenced by gender.

For example, research by Linda Babcock, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University in the US, has shown that men are more likely to negotiate their starting salary than women, with the upshot that male starting salaries tend to be higher. In addition, women's starting salaries can suffer from anchoring bias, where a manager takes into account the candidate's current salary and thereby perpetuates an existing gender bias.

Since an individual's starting salary can have a long-term impact on pay equality, it may be best for new employers to disregard current salary and instead pay for what the job is worth.

Many employers use salary bands or grades when determining pay progression during employment. Discrimination risk

can arise in these systems when decisions about pay progression are discretionary. Employers should monitor the distribution of male and female employees within each pay grade; if women are largely clustered at the bottom end, this may indicate a problem.

To minimise risk of discrimination, employers should use guidelines to ensure pay progression is determined objectively.

The Advice
The Equal Opportunities Commission is a long-time advocate of equal pay and has published detailed guidance for employers on achieving pay equality, including an equal pay self-audit kit.

An equal pay audit involves comparing the pay of men and women who carry out equal work to identify and investigate difference. If a pay gap cannot be explained, the employer should rectify it. They should also conduct periodic audits to review pay practices.

HR practitioners should adopt a systematic approach to determining pay

that is free from gender bias and applied consistently to all staff.

Pay policies which are transparent and well understood by staff should be implemented; such policies are much less likely to be challenged. Do bear in mind that, although discretionary pay systems can be an important tool for rewarding employees, they are particularly prone to bias and at risk of challenge by employees who feel unfairly treated.

Document the rationale for pay decisions in writing and retain a record on file. Consider making a commitment to pay equality between men and women via an equal pay statement or policy.

Consider introducing unconscious bias training for managers responsible for pay decisions, and endeavour to make an express commitment to pay equality for men and women via an equal pay statement or policy.

Finally, monitor pay outcomes across all employee groups and take corrective action whenever pay disparity is identified.

The information contained in this article should not be relied on as legal advice and should not be regarded as a substitute for detailed advice in individual cases. If advice concerning individual problems or other expert assistance is required, the service of a competent professional adviser should be sought.



Sarah Berkeley is a partner at Simmons & Simmons and has extensive experience in advising on employment and discrimination issues.

Contact us

Editor
Tom Eves
thomas.eves@scmp.com

Subeditor
Deva Lee
deva.lee@scmp.com

Senior Content Manager
Yvonne Luk
yvonne.luk@scmp.com

Assistant Project Editor
Kenice Kwok
kenice.kwok@scmp.com

Production & Design Editor
Jun Cambel
jun.cambel@scmp.com

Classified Ads Sales 2565 8822

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