

Plans to take Le Ann Maxima overseas

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HE SEARCHED high and low in the worldwide web for experienced consultants based in the US and Europe who can help his company build a franchise system for a chain of women's fashion wear. "I bought a lot of books on franchise. I read Franchise for Dummies and searched the Internet for franchise success stories," said Francis Lim, one of the founders of ready-to-wear women's clothing brand, Le Ann Maxima.

For one year, Lim, who is E-Maxim Fashion (M) Sdn Bhd chief executive officer (CEO), was in the hunt for the right franchise consultant. It never occurred to him that what he was looking for was closer to home.

"One day, I came across an article in NST (New Straits Times) about Francorp Malaysia," he said.

By end of 2006, Francorp Malaysia - the master franchisee for franchise consultancy Francorp USA - became the consultant for E-Maxim Fashion, the franchisor of Le Ann Maxima.

"I have confidence in Francorp Malaysia CEO Affandy Faiz, as he understands me and he has a lot of patience," Lim said.

With guidance from Francorp Malaysia, Lim and his partners - Leann Yeap and Bryan Chang - took one and a half years to develop their franchise system.

"Every detail is important to us. We follow all the way what Francorp Malaysia told us," he said.

Having completed the Le Ann Maxima franchise system, E-Maxim is now looking for local franchisees, and plans to develop 30 franchisees by 2011.

Lim said the company has chosen six franchisees, who will open Le Ann Maxima stores between May and July.

"Our target is to develop 10 franchisees a year, but we now have 15 more aspiring franchisees that we need to evaluate," he said.

Plans are already in the pipeline to expand the franchise abroad.

"We're talking to Middle East representatives, it is going to take some time. Maybe by middle of next year, we will have some presence in Middle East," he said.

The company is also looking at Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand to grow the Le Ann Maxima franchise.