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The competition in the LED market has intensified in the recent years as brand companies continue to undercut each other to gain market shares. The reshuffling of the market has become more frequent not only in the downstream sections of the LED lighting supply chain but also in the mid-stream and upstream sections.

Among the key components of an LED lighting system, LED drivers and power supplies do not attract as much attention compared with LED chips and packages. On the other hand, the market for LED drivers and power supplies continues to admit new entrants into the competition despite the high degree of market share concentration. This situation has resulted in a dazzling array of new products being offered to the customers.

While speaking of this subject, a well-known brand that has to be mentioned is MEAN WELL.

This company has been in the LED driver and power supply market for more than 30 years. Even after numerous industry shakeouts, MEAN WELL has been able to maintain its position as one of the leading and most competitive suppliers worldwide. In 2017, MEAN WELL generated a total annual revenue of NTD 22.37 billion (RMB 4.8 billion) – a new record high. Again and again, the company has demonstrated excellence in its field.

LEDinside had the incredible opportunity to interview key representatives of the MEAN WELL Group at the 23rd Guangzhou International Lighting Exhibition that was held in China during 9-12 June 2018. The topics covered in this exclusive interview included the secret behind MEAN WELL's success, the current state of the LED driver and power supply market, and the company's future plans. Alex Tsai and Yvonne Chen, respectively the director of the product planning department and the manager of the marketing center of the MEAN WELL Group, together with Kevin Chen, the operation general manager of the company's Guangzhou office, were available for interviews at the event. They revealed much about the inner workings of the company and market trends.



Key representatives of the MEAN WELL Group were present at the Guangzhou International Lighting Exhibition. From left: the director of product planning department Alex Tsai, the manager of marketing center Yvonne Chen, and the operation general manager of the Guangzhou office Kevin Chen.

MEAN WELL moves closer to its revenue target of USD 1 billion as it unveils new products and explores new markets

Throughout its history, MEAN WELL has shown consistent growth in all aspects of its operation, including revenue. Director Alex Tsai said the secret behind his company's success is its two-pronged strategy of introducing new products for high-end applications and expanding into new regional markets. In terms of product development, MEAN WELL has its own roadmap and is constantly devising new solutions. Tsai noted that the company would launch a new product series every 10 days on average. Furthermore, MEAN WELL targets the high-end applications, some of which are outside the traditional lighting market. Its concept products for the standard power supply segment are also frequently updated to become more advanced and attain a premium level.

With respect to overseas expansions, MEAN WELL has set up branch offices around the globe and is working hard to enter the emerging markets such as the Southeast Asian countries, India, and Russia. The branch offices and overseas subsidiaries are committed to forge deep ties with local clients to achieve mutually beneficial results. Currently, MEAN WELL has established a broad network of sales channels worldwide.

MEAN WELL presented a star-studded lineup of products at this year's Guangzhou International Lighting Exhibition. In addition to the well-recognized driver and power supply series (e.g. the HLG, HBG, and ELG), the company also showed off its latest power supplies for various LED lighting applications. These new cutting-edge solutions target indoor lighting (the LDC series), high-efficiency applications with waterproof requirement (the ELGC-300 series), high bay lights for mining or industrial pursuits (the HBGC-300 series), signage (the ERPF-400 series), and ultra-thin displays (the UHP series).

Taking account of the rising demand in the applications related to smart homes/buildings, MEAN WELL also presented the smallest KNX standard power supply on the market – the KNX-20E-640. At the same time, the company's exhibition booth also displayed the advanced KNX-DALI gateway KDA-64.



MEAN WELL's exhibition booth offers an impressive lineup of its latest power supplies.

MEAN WELL has executed its product launches and overseas expansions after meticulous planning. The company emphasizes that it is proceeding with an attitude of thoughtful deliberation rather than without clear directions. Last year, the company set its 2018 revenue target at USD 1 billion. To achieve this goal, various levels within the whole organization have developed a unified strategy to coordinate the allocation of resources and carry out various tasks. Working together, the different departments within the MEAN WELL Group are expected to deliver outstanding performance results at the end of this year.

MEAN WELL pursues high-power solutions and aims to make LED power supplies smarter in the future

By specifications, the market for LED drivers and power supplies is divided into the high-power and the standard categories. Tsai stated that MEAN WELL is going to focus on the high-power segment when developing solutions for the LED lighting market. Major factors that affect demand in the high-power segment are product quality, functionality, and technology. Furthermore, high-power solutions are generally for sophisticated applications related to fields such as horticulture and biotechnology. In these end markets, brand recognition and international certification are sought after by clients. Developing products that meet these types of requirements and standards is an integral part of MEAN WELL's roadmap. Also, the company will strive to differentiate their solutions for applications that need a high degree of functionality, such as street lighting.

The advent of the Internet of Things has brought forth new opportunities in many areas for LED lighting companies, and major brand vendors are now shifting their attention to the smart lighting market. This consensus on the smart lighting market as the next crucial battleground is also having an impact on the future development of the power supply market.

Tsai pointed out that power supplies will become "smarter" in a sense that they will have to satisfy a growing list of needs from their users. The next-generation solutions will have to be tailored for energy saving, monitoring applications, lighting adjustments, and specific module designs. Furthermore, they will have to feature some kind of communication technology. Looking at the wide-ranging functions that power supplies have to incorporate, Tsai believes that the designs of these solutions will vary greatly in the future, even as all these products want to be recognized as being smart.



Visitors flock to MEAN WELL's exhibition booth at the Guangzhou International Lighting Exhibition.

MEAN WELL invites fellow members of the industry to strengthen the LED lighting market and realize its potentials

Tsai is optimistic about the future of the LED lighting market. He said that a long time period is still needed for this market to expand and take shape. While the growth momentum is gradually slowing down, new applications have emerged, such as those related to Mini LED and Micro LED. At the same time, more and more LEDs are being integrated into biotechnological devices, medical equipment, and other ergonomic products. On the whole, LED and LED lighting markets are certain to keep growing and moving forward in connection with technological progress and application development.

During the interview, Tsai expressed hopes that the fellow members of the industry will work hard to increase the total scale and value of the LED lighting market. Patent infringements, counterfeiting, and purposely creating products of inferior quality are some of the short-sighted practices that not only put companies at risk of lawsuits and product returns but also harm the health of the entire industry. Tsai said that it is sad to see companies being forced out of the market, which in turn can cause headaches for consumers (i.e. difficulties in getting after-sales and repair services). Furthermore, governments worldwide are now establishing stricter regulatory standards for LED lighting products, thus limiting vendors and suppliers' ability to take rash actions for short-term gains.

Because MEAN WELL is committed to sustainable business practices, the company has weathered through several major shakeouts in the industry. Market manager Yvonne Chen, who was at the press meeting to unveil her company's exhibition at the trade fair, stated that MEAN WELL is currently the world's second-largest provider of power supplies in revenue terms, and more than 40% of its revenue streams come from LED lighting solutions. In sum, MEAN WELL will continue on its path of steady growth as before.

'Powered by MEAN WELL' is this year's cross-promotion campaign to help clients achieve success

In the today's fiercely competitive market, capturing market shares and building a respected brand are the central tasks of the marketing department. For MEAN WELL, promoting its brand name, like other aspects of its operation, revolves around the clients. They are the heart of everything that the company does.

Chen said that MEAN WELL is very appreciative of its clients and the feeling is mutual. This year, the company has launched a new cross-promotion campaign under the slogan “Powered by MEAN WELL.” There is even a specially designed logo for clients that want to show their endorsement of MEAN WELL’s brand and solutions. Going forward, participating clients are licensed to use the “Powered by MEAN WELL” slogan and its logo on their websites and product catalogs. In addition, MEAN WELL is also collaborating with clients in marketing efforts. MEAN WELL’s website, for instance, provides information on its clients, their products, and their cooperation with the company.

Under this overarching theme, representatives from three of MEAN WELL’s partner companies in China – Luxtronik Technology (Shenzhen), SNC Opto Electronic (Shenzhen), and Sheenly Lighting (Shanghai) – were invited to speak at the press meeting held at the Guangzhou International Lighting Exhibition. These three companies shared with LEDinside and other media outlets their experiences working with MEAN WELL.



“Powered by MEAN WELL” was the highlight of the press meeting at the Guangzhou International Lighting Exhibition.

Chen stated that there are now 18 high-level clients that have applied to participate in the cross-promotional campaign. Additionally, MEAN WELL will be introducing this slogan to potential clients engaging in other fields, including industrial automation, industrial controls, medicine, and electric vehicles. The company hopes that this campaign will attract up to 100 or more clients in the future and produce great profits for all those involved. Also, the “Powered by MEAN WELL” logo provides the additional credibility for end products, thus reinforcing consumers’ confidence during their purchasing.

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