



# The People Behind the Titles

By **Elizabeth H. Yang, China Chief Representative, LEADERS Magazine**

## CHINA and YOU Survey

As part of our continuous effort to build an interactive communication channel between you and Chinese leaders, we would like you to take a moment to participate in this important survey, which will help us to better address topics of your interest in our coming issues, and help the world and China to better understand each other. We can also pass your comments along to related government officials and business leaders in China, in order to facilitate your communication with them.

### Feedback on the current issue:

1. Are there any issues we missed that you would like to have seen addressed by the leaders interviewed in this edition?
2. Do you have any questions or comments for any leader featured in this section?
3. What kind of topics or leaders would you like us to feature in future issues?

### Doing Business in China

4. What specific questions or concerns do you have regarding your industry's activities in and relationships with China?
5. What do you feel China needs to do to improve the business climate for foreign companies and investors?
6. What do you perceive as the biggest risk in doing business in China?

### Best Local Partner in China

7. What are the key characteristics that you look for in a local partner in China?
8. In our upcoming issues, we plan to launch a "China Roundtable" series to focus on the vast business opportunities in China. We will invite industry leaders from China to participate. What fields would you suggest we present in the roundtables, and what issues would you like to see covered?

Thank you so much for giving your input to our survey. Please send your comments to [china@leadersmag.com](mailto:china@leadersmag.com).



Elizabeth H. Yang

THROUGHOUT MY YEARS AS A PROFESSIONAL journalist, producer, writer, and business executive, I have always tried to be an effective communicator, able to elicit relevant aspects of human nature from my interviewees, whatever title they may hold. I am eternally curious about the personal drive and sources of wisdom that have charted their paths across that special map of their lives as a person and a leader. With Branding China, I have the unique opportunity to interview people who are shaping the history of China, and feel an imperative to understand and present the human side of these leaders.

This was certainly the case when I interviewed Mr. Li Rongrong, chairman of SASAC. For a person who is responsible for 169 major state-owned enterprises with total assets of more than \$1.3 trillion and 10 million employees, I can certainly understand him as a busy person with no time to waste. It amazed me, however, as I read the mountainous background information about SASAC, how a person could shoulder such a heavy responsibility, where his actions have a profound impact on China's economy and his challenges are ceaselessly enormous. There's no doubt that he is a person with an iron will, not to mention a serious face, which may have led to his opening statement to me, "I can't quite say that I am here for an interview. I don't quite know what you are trying to achieve and do not want to waste your readers' time."

However, after explaining the mission behind the LEADERS Branding China effort and getting him to drop his shield, I found myself in front of a great human being who is intelligent, quick-witted, respectful, caring, extremely responsible, and sincere. During the next two hours he led me into his world to see his vision, his mission, as well as his personal path: how he started 40 years ago as a worker earning a monthly salary of \$5, and grew to become the leader in charge of \$1.3 trillion in state assets. The interview truly became a heart-warming dialogue. We touched upon all major aspects of SASAC's tasks and Mr. Li, the person, emerged from behind the daunting title he holds. According to the members of his team, Mr. Li opened up to us in a way he had never done before. Hearing him share his personal story left us with a much deeper understanding of the source of his strength as a highly responsible leader.

My mind raced through all the great leaders I have interviewed so far: the pragmatic idealist, Minister Zhao Qizheng of the State Information Office; the idealistic realist, Chairman Guo Shuqing of China Construction Bank; the courageous optimistic captain, Chairman Wei Jiafu of COSCO; the architect of excellence, Chairman Fang Chao of Huamao Center; the fair and balanced executive, Mr. Peter Bowie, CEO of Deloitte China; the effective communicator, Mr. Long Yongtu, Secretary General of Boao Forum For Asia; and of course, Chairman Li, the sincere and responsible leader of SASAC. However different from each other they seem to be, they all strike me as having great similarities: faithful idealists who are committed to a higher cause, to which they are prepared to devote their whole lives. From knowing them, I see my mission more clearly and gain my strength.