

EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

Christopher Che leads Hooven-Dayton to rapid growth



BY JOE COGLIANO
DBJ STAFF REPORTER

WINNER

Christopher Che's philosophy on how to lead is simple: hire the right people and set the right vision.

"What excites me is not being a manager, but being a visionary and putting a game plan in place," said Che, the president and chief executive officer of Huber Heights-based Hooven-Dayton Corp.

Che bought the company in 2007 and has nearly doubled sales and employment since then.

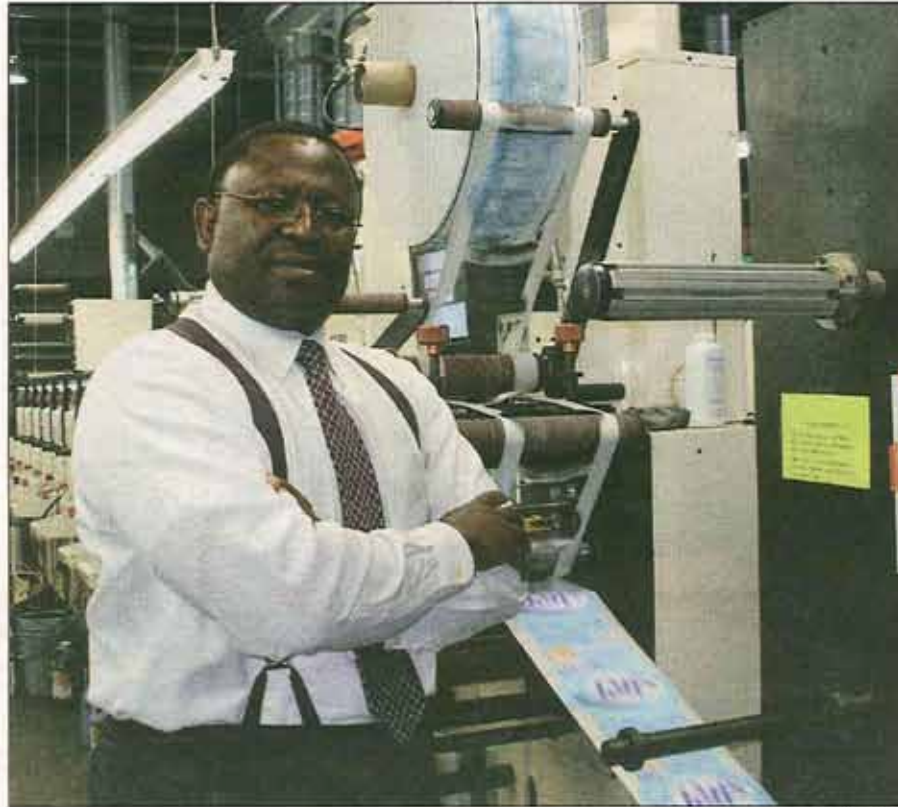
Because of his success — and strong leadership skills — Che was chosen as the Dayton Business Journal's Executive of the Year.

Hooven-Dayton sells flexible labels and packaging to Fortune 1000 companies — such as Cincinnati-based Procter & Gamble Co. — which are then used to hold goods such as food, cosmetics and over-the-counter pharmaceuticals. The company is also among the biggest producers of coinless casino tickets in the country.

An accountant by training, Che had been working as a chief financial officer for about 17 years, mostly in the manufacturing field where he worked on acquisitions and putting together joint ventures.

"Which was the best training ground for me as a businessperson," he said.

Che broke out on his own in 2005 and formed a holding company. His goal was to acquire companies in diverse indus-



FILE PHOTO BY DBJ

Christopher Che is president and CEO of Hooven-Dayton Corp. After buying the firm in 2007, it has doubled sales and employment since.

tries with a proven performance record selling to Fortune 1000 companies and a good technology base that he could grow. Hooven-Dayton was his first purchase and he has been looking to make other buys as well.

Channon Lemon, executive director of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce's Minority Business Partnership, said Che is a textbook example of an effective business leader. "His financial background and under-

standing of the elements that are key to business success have enabled him to significantly grow Hooven-Dayton," Lemon said. "He's really done it by identifying a very strong niche, pursuing customers within that niche very aggressively and then delivering superior value."

Che said his role models include his father, Nelson Mandela and Robert Johnson — the founder of BET and founder and chairman of RLJ Cos.

Johnson showed Che that by working hard and having a good vision, you can sell the vision and grow a business. Che said his father taught him to be kind, to share and to contribute to the growth of any community in which he lives, while Mandela taught him humility and perseverance.

"Always present yourself as humble and respect everyone, even those that don't like you," he said. "And no matter how difficult things are, you can achieve it with vision."

Bill Clinton is also a role model for Che.

"He tells me that you have to be yourself, even when you make mistakes," Che said. "You have to acknowledge who you are, but treat people well and be very community-oriented."

Lemon said Che's personality has also played a big part in his success.

"He is very thoughtful in terms of what's important to support the region and how Hooven-Dayton can play a role," Lemon said.

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