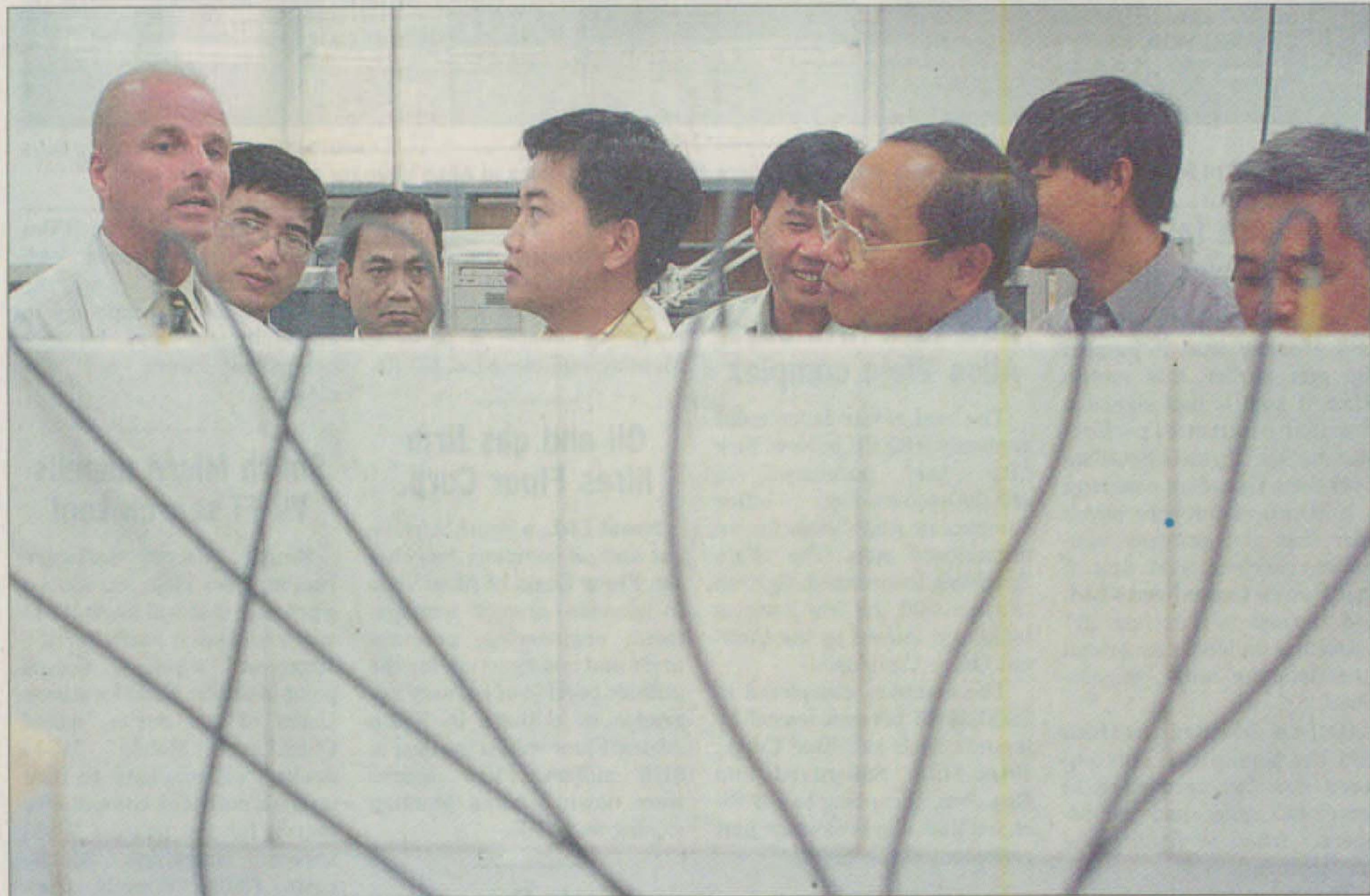


"The only thing we sell at this company is service."

TWEE PHAM, EXPRESS MANUFACTURING



PHOTOS: CINDY YAMANAKA, THE REGISTER

LEARNING: EMI official Linwood Goddard, left, gives visiting Vietnamese telecom executives a tour of the Santa Ana plant.

Long-distance relationship

Vietnamese telecom executives visit one of O.C.'s largest electronics manufacturers to study American-style customer service, management.

By JIM FINKLE

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

American telephone companies don't have a reputation for excellent customer service, but Vietnamese telecommunications executives journeyed here to learn whatever they could.

A group of 10 managers from the government-controlled Vietnam Post and Telecom Corp., or VNPT, has just finished a whirlwind two-week tour of California, Arizona and Hawaii to study American-style customer service, management and telecommunications products.

They stopped in Santa Ana on Aug. 17 for a tour of Express Manufacturing Inc., a family-run business that assembles elec-

tronics products for other companies. The Vietnamese officials grilled Express Manufacturing managers on how they've managed to keep growing, even as many U.S. competitors have closed because of lower-priced competition from Asia.

Twee Pham, an Express Manufacturing marketing executive, explained how her company's account managers work with customers to make sure each side understands what's expected.

"The only thing we sell at this company is service," she told the visitors.

The touring telecom executives said they believed some of Express Manufacturing's strategy could be applied to the delivery of telephone, wireless and In-

Vietnam's telecom system lags behind

Low-ranked: Accessibility to telephones and the Internet in Vietnam is far behind that of most developed countries. A survey by the International Telecommunication Union gives Vietnam's telecommunications system a grade of 0.31 on a scale of 0 to 1. The ITU Digital Access Index considers the quality of a country's telecommunications infrastructure, along with its usage, affordability and the literacy of its population.

Lower-ranked: Economies that were behind Vietnam included Syria, at 0.28; Pakistan, 0.24; and Cambodia and Myanmar, 0.17.

High-ranked: The high scorer in the survey of 178 countries was Sweden, with a score of 0.85. The United States and Canada came in at 0.78. France, New Zealand, Italy and Slovenia all got grades of 0.72. Mexico, Russia, and China were tied at 0.50.

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AT THEIR SERVICE: Twee Pham, EMI's director of marketing, discusses customer service with the Vietnamese executives.

