

# Star Charge: Developing China's Electric Vehicle Charging Landscape

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*This case study examines Star Charge, a pivotal player in China's electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure market. Founded amid ambitious government initiatives to bolster EV adoption, Star Charge rapidly emerged under the visionary leadership of Danwei Shao. The case explores how Star Charge has developed strategically, from its unique crowdfunding approach to its current success, overcoming challenges and taking advantage of opportunities in a competitive industry where State Grid and Special Call are the dominant players. It explores Star Charge's business model, technological advancements in charging stations, and the pivotal role in supporting China's dual carbon goals. The study analyzes future projections, including international expansion strategies and technological innovations such as vehicle-to-grid (V2G) technology. Through this comprehensive analysis, the case illustrates how Star Charge continues to shape the future of sustainable mobility in China and beyond.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Brief History of Star Charge**

Star Charge, established in 2014, is a Wan Gang New Energy Investment Group subsidiary. In 2016, the company started sharing its progress via its website (<https://www.wbstar.com/>). Initially, Wan Gang's parent company, Wan Bang, was prominent in the taxi industry and the '4S' automobile sales service shops, a franchise model encompassing sales, spare parts, service, and surveys. Recognising the potential of the new energy car market, Wan Bang established DeHe Charging Station to address the growing need for charging stations as the number of electric vehicles increased. DeHe sold charging stations and provided home installation services. A crowdfunding model strategy was implemented during this period, contributing significantly to DeHe's success.

Star Charge, initially the name of the driver software within DeHe, gained national recognition in 2015 following the National Conference on Charging Facility Promotion organised by the State Council of China in Changzhou. By 2016, it had evolved into an investment and operational brand garnering nationwide attention. As of 2024, Star Charge holds over 400 patents, including those for hardware security protection and OTA software upgrades, and is listed as one of the top 50 companies in China's charging station industry. Star Charge adopted an aggressive strategy upon its establishment: it invested heavily in infrastructure and used crowdfunding to expand. This approach led to the rapid construction of over 1500 charging stations within three months, drawing the attention of the state council and earning Star Charge significant public recognition.

To address the issue of the increasing number of electric vehicles outpacing the speed of charging station construction, Star Charge implemented a private stake-sharing strategy. This strategy integrated private charging stations with the “Star Charge” platform and encouraged owners to offer private stations to the public. However, this model faced challenges due to the charging stations' high maintenance costs, necessitating future improvements.

### **Business Model**

Star Charge mainly makes a profit in these four areas: equipment sales, software services, investment operations, and hosting services. Star Charge has a deep collaboration with OEMs and the real estate industry. Initially, Star Charge always initiates collaborative business programs with shopping malls or hotels. In 2016, Star Charge started to expand, offering a platform for private and corporate charging stations to conduct agent sales to meet the trend. Private cars will become a significant force

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