

Japan's manufacturers ready to seize moment

Japan's dwindling domestic market – the result of its rapidly aging and declining population – has compelled Japanese manufacturers to look overseas for new business opportunities. Fortunately, Asia's most advanced economy is surrounded by some of the fastest growing regions in the world, particularly Southeast Asia; while in Europe and the U.S., Japanese manufactured goods are still reputed for their high quality. The situation bodes well for Japanese manufacturers in the fashion, clothing and textiles industry, as does the recent depreciation of the yen and the fact that many companies are now looking to diversify their supply chains due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the U.S.-China decoupling.

"Companies are now looking for a stable supply chain, with Japan now being a viable option since it already has high-quality products and can ensure a stable supply," says Noboru Kajiura, President of Kaji Tech, a company which supplies materials for a range of clothing, from sports apparel to baby clothes. "Before, when products from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Korea were compared to Japanese products, Japan was considered as more expensive. However, the depreciation of the yen and the overall rise in the cost of materials has reduced this price difference. Now, Japanese products are price competitive in the global market."

Also speaking on the topic, Shinichi Kihara, president of textiles and materials trader MN Inter-Fashion, says: "The supply chain model has collapsed, and we are now in the process of building it back up again. We are in a new era where we must combine different players and we believe that our company is in a very unique position because we oversee material production for fashion brands." As a comprehensive engineering supply chain innovator, the company has a unique position within the industry, highlights Mr. Kihara. "I think we could be very useful to more niche companies that have huge future potential but maybe don't understand the supply chain very well or don't have enough funds to grow their business."

Kiichiro Nosawa, president of trading company NOSAWA – which is engaged in the import and export of goods across several industries, including textiles – is also optimistic about the recent changes on the global landscape. "Our products are renowned for their durability, making established brands eager to collaborate with us," says Mr. Nosawa, who discusses company plans to boost international growth. "Three years ago, I laid the foundation for our 50-year vision. By the time we reach that milestone, we aim to have one-third of our total sales generated from overseas markets. To do so, we have taken several steps, including hiring

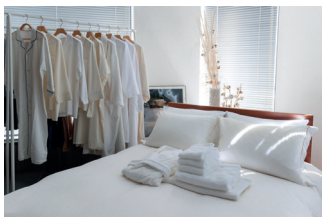
more personnel in our international offices and engaging in business activities abroad."

As Japanese textile firms look to meet the demands of the international market, sustainability has become a key priority in recent years. "When it comes to environmental efforts and producing more sustainable products, there are many challenges when you are working in the apparel industry. This is something that is very important to focus on today," says Shinji Nikko, president of undergarments manufacturer Atsugi. "Our products do ultimately end up in the garbage. However, we are actively focusing our efforts on creating some viable recycling projects. We are also working to reduce the environmental impact of our product packaging. For stockings, we are developing a new style of paper-based packaging."

For its part, YAGI TSUSHO, which is engaged in the high-end fashion industry, helps smaller companies to meet sustainability criteria. "Many small-scale Japanese companies involved in fabric production and dying struggle to meet all international standards required for sustainability," explains president Yuzo Yagi. "To bridge this gap, our company has obtained globally recognized standards, such as the GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) and GRS (Global Recycled Standard), enabling us to offer our services to these smaller companies and assist them in meeting international sustainability criteria."

Quality handkerchiefs for new markets

With a storied history, Blooming Nakanishi has been providing Japan's finest handkerchiefs, with the firm now looking to bring its quality overseas.



Guest room linen items

Since 1879, Blooming Nakanishi & Company – founded in Nihonbashi, Tokyo – has been a premium dealer and manufacturer of textiles, including handkerchiefs, hotel supplies and tablecloths. Its 140 years of history have helped the company cultivate a deep philosophy and expertise in fine craftsmanship.

"Inside and outside of Japan over the many decades that we have been in operation as a business, various



"Our approach pivots on comprehending customer preferences and identifying the threshold of satisfaction, thereby enabling us to tailor suitable solutions."

Hajime Nakanishi, President, Blooming Nakanishi Co., Ltd.

techniques including weaving, dyeing, printing and sewing have been developed and mastered," says Hajime Nakanishi, President of Blooming Nakanishi & Company. "We have built up collaborative relationships with high-quality factories specialising in these areas. With our know-

how built up during these years, today we are able to partner with the best factories to meet our clients' needs, and offer total quality control."

The company's main product line today is handkerchiefs, with its signature product, "CLAS-SICS The Small Luxury", the line



Handkerchief made of hemp material

that Blooming Nakanishi is most widely known for.

"The appeal of this series and its products lies in its extensive distribution network, which encompasses department stores and specialty stores all over Japan, as well as being directly managed stores," says Mr. Nakanishi. "Going forward, our success in foreign markets depends on several factors, including brand integrity. The stories we spin abroad need to be finely segmented, and to do that we need a robust infrastructure. Basically, the stars must align on all fronts for our efforts to bear fruit in victory."

BLOOMING

www.blooming.co.jp

Love music: Roland setting the foundation for the next generation of music enthusiasts

Beloved for more than 50 years, Roland Corporation continues to provide the world with only the best electronic musical instruments.



BRIDGE CAST Audio Mixer

Roland Corporation has been a driver of innovation for over 50 years as a maker of electronic musical instruments—a journey woven into the very fabric of contemporary music. The brand's products are beloved by renowned musicians, creators, and amateur users alike. And today, Roland's musical instruments and audiovisual equipment can be seen and heard in live venues, event stages, recording studios, and homes all over the world.

"Roland was founded on the belief that technology should enhance the creative process, not hinder it. I believe that we've continued our growth to date because of our passion for innovation, and the way that we develop technological capabilities that allow us to overcome new challenges," says Gordon Raison, CEO of Roland Corporation, which was founded by Ikutaro Kakehashi in Osaka, Japan, in 1972.



V-Drums Acoustic Design

Part of Roland's magic is that it specializes in both hardware and software, whilst also developing its own proprietary technology, says the CEO.

"Developing electronic musical instruments requires a deep understanding of technology, and while we don't manufacture the chips, the designs are very much ours. When you sit down with our instruments, you should feel comfortable and inspired—there should be a creative symmetry between the person playing and the instrument. Our goal is to deliver an experience that's every bit as enjoyable as playing an acoustic instrument, for example, drums or piano, and then go even further."



Roland Cloud

Indeed, digital technologies have advanced in nearly every industry and music is no exception. Today, producers can compose and distribute high-quality music from a computer-based digital workstation. While for amateur musicians this process can be somewhat daunting, Roland Cloud—a subscription-based service including software recreations of the brand's iconic legacy instruments—aims to make music production more accessible than ever before.

"The next stage for Roland Cloud is to expand beyond the core audience. Currently, around 80% of subscribers are experienced 'top tier' hobbyists and professionals. We're looking to bring the potential of Roland Cloud to a much wider community—the goal being to remove the barrier of entry so that more people can learn instruments and make music. For example,



our free Zenbeats music-making software runs on computers, tablets, and smartphones and lets people produce great music as easily as possible—wherever you are in the world.

"We're also several years into exploring how AI can support the creative process, as seen in the i-Arpeggio technology on our JUPITER-X synthesizer, which uses built-in AI to analyze your keyboard performance. It can sense how hard or soft you are playing, as well as your skill level. It then adapts the composition to match the way you play, with very inspiring results."

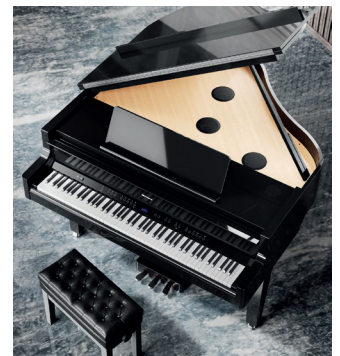
In terms of where next for this enduring brand, Mr Raison is upbeat, with a recent push into gaming audio via its BRIDGE CAST series, plus a flourishing adjacent category dedicated to pro-video products.



"I would say that we are a brand that is truly loved, so people who connect with our brand have a passion and an affection for what we make."

Gordon Raison, CEO, Roland Corporation

"We make the tools for the artists and creators. Consequently,



GP-9M Digital Grand Piano

I would say that we're a brand that is truly loved, because the people who connect with us have a passion and an affection for what we make. It all comes from the love, care, and attention to detail of the people who work for the company. It may sound cliché, but it is true."



www.roland.com/global

MN Inter-Fashion: Sustainable apparel for global markets

MN Inter-Fashion is not only a trader of functional textiles, it also has its own manufacturing capabilities as an OEM and ODM company, with a focus on sustainable materials.



"The cultural significance and emotional satisfaction derived from attire cannot be understated. These core tenets consistently guide us as we address environmental concerns."

Shinichi Kihara, President,
MN Inter-Fashion

Established through a merger of Nippon Steel Trading Corporation's textile business and Mitsui Bussan I-Fashion Ltd., MN Inter-Fashion is a company that has taken strengths from both of its founding businesses to develop a wide range of solutions and products across manufacturing and retail, including high-performance garments, home linens and textiles.



HANA E MORI

"Prior to the merger, Mitsui Bussan I-Fashion occupied a median position within the textile industry. Following the merger, MN Inter-Fashion has ascended to the premier position within Japan, particularly in the domains of OEM and ODM," says Shinichi Kihara, the company president. "Our significant scale underscores our unparalleled reliability, engendering confidence among prospective business partners. This expanded magnitude also affords us the latitude to assume greater risks, enabling enhanced investment capabilities and exploration of novel business models."

With the fashion retail and textiles industries known for having some of the longest supply chains in the world – for which the industry has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years – the company is one that truly places value on sustainability, explains Mr. Kihara.

"It is crucial to understand the foundational priorities underpinning our garment manufacturing processes," he says. "Foremost among these is the principle of protection. Unlike certain fauna, humans possess limited inherent protective capabilities, necessitating the protective role of clothing. Furthermore, the cultural significance and emotional satisfaction derived from attire cannot be understated. These core tenets consistently guide us as we address environmental concerns. When we develop materials, we try to develop sustainable ones such as recyclable materials that are derived from ocean waste. We also place a lot of importance on traceability, so we feel it is important to be able to track



Vietnam factory

what comes from where, and where it goes. Ultimately, we value *monozukuri*, therefore we only produce what is necessary and fits the market."



Tokyo head office

MN Inter-Fashion sits in a strong position within the sector in this respect, as it not only acts as a trader for functional textiles and materials, but also has its own manufacturing capabilities as an OEM and ODM company. Considering the three big industry trends of

traceability, sustainability, and diversification, how does Mr. Kihara think the business model will evolve over the next few years?

relationship that consumers have with a brand. Again, MN Inter-Fashion is positioned well thanks to its own branding business.



PERTEX®, a high-performance material brand

"I believe that our company is in a very unique position because we oversee material production for fashion brands," he says. "Essentially, we have a bird's eye view of the industry, and it means we can see what should be combined and what

"Our core business is B2B but with the consumer power shift, we have now been challenged to understand the consumers more and get a better reading of what exactly they want. We have recently initiated our B2C operations. In alignment with this strategy, we have cultivated our proprietary brand and commenced its online sales," says Mr. Kihara.

With 11 overseas subsidiaries, the majority of which are located around Asia, including factories in Vietnam and Myanmar, international strategy also remains high on the agenda with the company focusing on global markets.

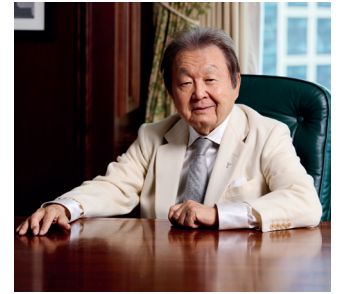
"Right now our overseas operations are focused on supplying to Japan so that is how we lay out our branches, however, we are also now looking at how we can sell overseas. With many asserting that the 21st century belongs to Asia, it is imperative for us to further our expansion efforts in this region. In the industry of apparel and clothing, having new ideas is very important, so in terms of having more exposure to those ideas we are looking at Europe, which we consider an extremely important market to strengthen our business. Of course, the U.S. is a huge market as well. There, we are looking to find a reliable partner to build a strong alliance with."

new innovation is needed. We can analyze what combinations and collaborations might work out well and where new value can be created. In this sense, we identify with our role as a comprehensive engineering supply chain innovator. Currently, we demonstrate adeptness in addressing diverse requirements across various sectors. However, I posit that we can elevate our role, orchestrating industry-wide transformations and transitioning towards a more consultative capacity."

One of the other major trends in the fashion retail market today is digitalization, with brands increasingly adopting e-commerce channels or digital stores. One of the impacts this is having is the



MACKINTOSH GINZA SIX STORE (TOKYO)



"I view the fashion business as the business of lifestyle change."

Yuzo Yagi, President,
Yagi Tsusho Limited

Yagi Tsusho: High-end fashion merchandising and marketing for the global marketplace

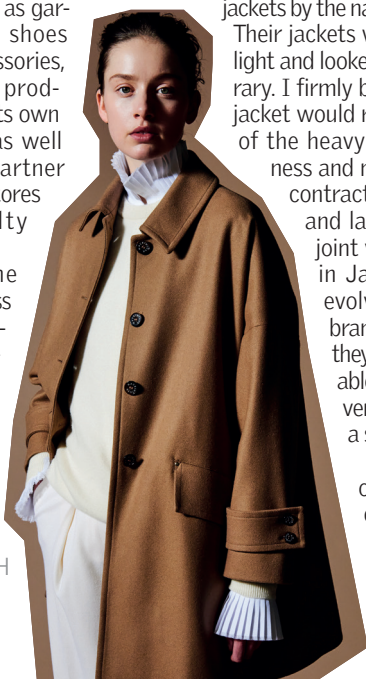
Having operated since 1946 as a specialized trading company in fashion goods, Yagi Tsusho has transformed itself into a high-end marketing company using its extensive experience in various international markets.

The companies best able to meet the challenges of the new global marketplace will be those who are ready to seize new opportunities. With Osaka and Tokyo as dual hubs, and strategically located overseas offices in the U.S.A., Europe and Asia, which act as a network of information, marketing, product development, finance, and logistics, Yagi Tsusho Limited is one company which has the trading acumen and financial capabilities to seize these opportunities today.

Founded in 1946 as an exporter of textiles, Yagi Tsusho today exists as a global fashion marketing and merchandising company specializing in high-end fashion products such as garments, bags, shoes and hair accessories, selling these products through its own retail shops as well as through partner department stores and specialty chain stores.

"I view the fashion business to be the business of lifestyle change and a typical example of the business of lifestyle change is

MACKINTOSH



the down jacket," says company president, Yuzo Yagi. "Back in 1972 I found the down jacket to be the most interesting and promising business for the near future and thought it would be a success if some company transformed the



ALEXANDRE DE PARIS

then bad looking jacket into something more fashionable. In 1995, we found an Italian company which makes fashionable down jackets by the name of MONCLER. Their jackets were so warm, so light and looked very contemporary. I firmly believed the down jacket would replace a big part of the heavy wool coat business and made a long-term contract with MONCLER and later we started a joint venture company in Japan. MONCLER evolved into a luxury brand business and as they achieved remarkable success, our joint venture also became a success."

"While we still operate as a specialized trading company in fashion goods, we

have also transformed ourselves into a new type of global marketing company," adds Mr. Yagi. "We have acquired several fashion companies in Europe and U.S.A., including well-known brands like MACKINTOSH and ALEXANDRE DE PARIS, and accordingly we have been doing marketing of these fashion goods in the global market."

"With our marketing know-how, we have managed to transform MACKINTOSH's traditional coat into a contemporary and comfortable offering, all while preserving the core concept that defines MACKINTOSH."



White pyramid of Gaius Cestius (Rome)

MACKINTOSH is also representative of the Group's wider business model, which has a distinct focus on serving the upper-middle-class and high-end market segments, tailoring products to meet the preferences and needs of this sophisticated clientele. Furthermore, the company also recently invested in ECOPEL, a renowned French company known for their faux-fur products. Due to growing concerns about animal cru-

elty, prestigious Italian and French brands have expressed growing interest in faux-fur creations.



J&M DAVIDSON

"Additionally, we actively engage with sustainable materials, including organic cotton, recyclable polyester, and biodegradable materials, and have obtained globally recognized standards, such as the GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) and GRS (Global Recycled Standard)," adds Mr. Yagi.

Meanwhile, the company has also been involved in the restoration of the ancient White Pyramid in Rome. Mr Yagi states: "This project strengthens our commitment not only to conducting business on a global scale, but also to making a meaningful contribution to the well-being of other countries where we do business for a long time."

 YAGI TSUSHO LIMITED
www.yagitsu.co.jp/en

Atsugi: Japan's leading undergarments brand

From pantyhose and lingerie to pressurized socks and fem-care products.



"When it comes to our R&D and which business divisions we are strengthening, we are looking to expand our work in the healthcare sector."

Shinji Nikko,
President, Atsugi Co., Ltd.

Atsugi, headquartered in Kanagawa, is Japan's leading stocking brand specializing in the manufacture of pantyhose, socks and lingerie products.

"We are very grateful that we have reached our 77th year in business here in Japan. We have been able to maintain a high level of recognition and trust from the Japanese population, and are proud to be widely known for providing a strong sense of safety, security and ease," says Shinji Nikko, President of Atsugi.

The company's products not only serve the undergarment needs of Japanese women, but the country's growing elderly population too – an area where the business is today deploying significant research and development investment.

"When it comes to our R&D and which business divisions we are strengthening, we are looking to expand our work in the healthcare sector," says Mr. Nikko. "We are now working on advancing this technology to improve our

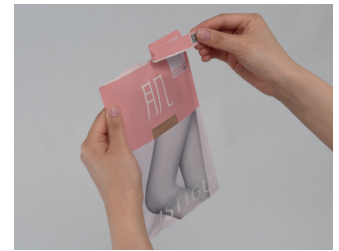
socks' effect on the circulatory system and the nervous system. This also helps in coping with various illnesses and challenges that older people may face."

Another area that Atsugi is focusing on is developing female-care products. "We want to adapt the various technologies that we have developed to create stockings and socks that are soft for the skin," Mr. Nikko. "This will allow us to create even better products for women. Our thread processing technology can be applied to create the most comfortable products for women at various stages of life."

Hug your skin and heart

Atsugi

www.atsugi.co.jp/english/



Eco-friendly package from ASTIGU



ASTIGU, the leading stockings brand in Japan



Water absorbing shorts as female-care products

Quadrille Nishida: Success based on the best quality and comfort

Japan's Quadrille Nishida offers brassieres that use innovative technology, design, and craftsmanship to provide comfort and support to women across the world.



"Side Support Design" Bra

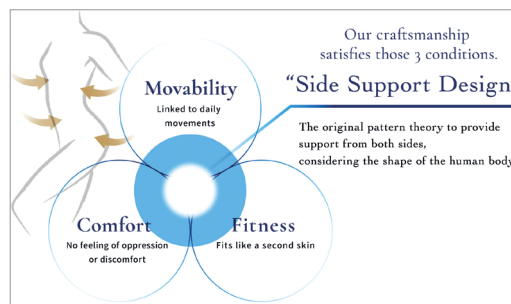
The importance of personal comfort can never be overstated, and one of the companies ensuring women of all ages can feel relaxed and free is Japanese underwear manufacturer Quadrille Nishida.

Founded in 1969, the OEM specialist uses innovative design and technology to manufacture brassieres that allow women to move without the worry of discomfort. Quadrille Nishida's core technology is its Side Support concept, capitalizing on the human body's



"We aim to provide the best quality and comfort for our clients, varying in all ages and shapes."

Toshio Nishida, President (left); Kiyomi Nishida, Chairman (right),
Quadrille Nishida Co., Ltd.



comparative resilience to pressure from the sides, with company chairman Kiyomi Nishida proudly stating: "Considering the skeletal structure and thickness of the human body, our bra provides greater comfort with reduced constriction by supporting the body from the sides. Moreover, our sewing technology complements our design philosophy, resulting in products that offer mobility, comfort, and an exceptional fit."

Quadrille Nishida's innovation has allowed it to develop factories in China and Vietnam, and its products are environmentally conscious, actively incorporating materials that utilize recycled yarn and natural resources like organic cotton. Furthermore, Quadrille Nishida's dedication to high-quality Japanese craftsmanship results in exceptional product durability.



In-house brand "Twin Cross"

As a manufacturer committed to crafting healthy and comfortable products, both domestically in Japan and on the global stage, Quadrille Nishida remains dedicated to collaborating with customers to deliver products that contribute to the well-being of women and society as a whole.

QUADRILLE NISHIDA

www.quadrille.co.jp/en

Kamakura Shirts: Made in Japan, made for the world

A Japanese fashion brand that's celebrating its 30th anniversary, Kamakura Shirts is out to continue its steady growth at home and abroad.

A Japanese company committed to quality materials and high manufacturing standards, Kamakura Shirts specializes in precisely crafted, stylish shirts that stand the test of time. Founded in the seaside city of Kamakura in 1993, the firm has enjoyed steady growth over the past 30 years – and as it looks ahead to its fourth decade, Kamakura Shirts is out to continue building its brand, both in Japan and abroad.

"You probably know the story of the tortoise and the hare," says Kamakura Shirts' president, Nanako Sadasue. "In that regard, our company is more like the tortoise than the hare. We have taken firm, deliberate steps, moving forward in a gradual, focused manner. These are the principles that we have adhered to throughout the history of our company, and we want to carry on in that vein for the years to come."

Thanks in part to this prudent, purposeful approach, Kamakura Shirts has established itself as a manufacturer that respects and protects the environment. "The essence of our business model is to produce approximately the same number of products as we sell," Ms. Sadasue explains. "We do not overproduce or exceed the number of products that we need. This prevents us from increasing our environmental burden, as we do not throw away the amount of things that the fast fashion companies do according to reports circulating around the world.

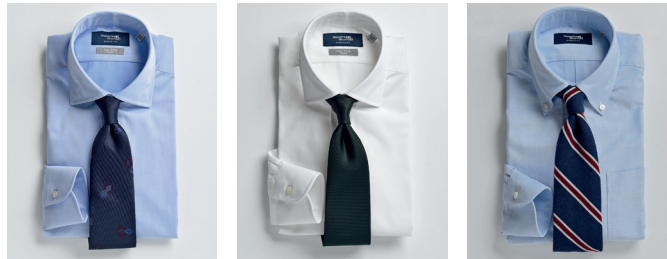
"Another aspect of our business model is its simplicity, as we do not create many different variations of products. We create high-quality products that become very popular, with people preferring to only buy one particular type of shirt, for example. Offering a limited range of products allows us to track our stock better."

Kamakura Shirts green commitment is further exemplified



"We want to continue introducing our high-quality products to both the domestic and overseas markets. We want to spread the word about our products to the wider global audience."

Nanako Sadasue, President, Maker's Shirt Kamakura Co., Ltd.



Shanghai store

by its development of a state-of-the-art, anti-wrinkle fabric that is designed to sidestep the reliance on chemicals seen in the production of other easy-care materials. Created with the help of the spinning specialists at the Unitika Tokiwa Fac-

tory – and a grant from Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry – Palpa Premium features a unique, two-layer structure, with cotton wound around polyester to generate its wrinkle resistance. "Cotton easy-care fabrics usually need a

special chemical resin to be applied to the surface to become wrinkle resistant," Ms. Sadasue says. "However, Palpa Premium is inherently anti-wrinkle."

A company that places an emphasis on all-Japanese manufacturing, Kamakura Shirts boasts stores across the country. It has also opened a Chinese branch in Shanghai, and ran a successful New York store until COVID-19 forced its closure. In addition, the firm's shirts for men and women are sold at partner retail outlets in locations such as Hong Kong, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, France, Sweden and the U.K.

As Kamakura Shirts bids to double its current turnover by the time its 40th anniversary comes around, the company is working to grow its network of in-house stores – an expansion plan that stands to benefit both in-person and internet sales. "We still have not fully covered the Japanese market," Ms. Sadasue says. "In September this year, we opened our first store in Sapporo, and we intend to launch more domestic shops next year. Our products have to be fitted, which requires our customers to visit our shops. Later, they can visit our online store and buy the same products again.

"Internationally, the American market – which accounts for 80% of all purchases from our global online store – will be important for us going forward. For the time being, reopening our store in New York and potentially opening a second store in Washington, D.C., are my goals. While they may be ambitious objectives, we will steadily take the steps that are required and we will not rush to achieve them."

**Kamakura
Shirts**

<https://kamakurashirts.com>

Chikuma: The uniform specialists committed to society and sustainability

A Japanese company that sells uniforms on the domestic and international markets, Chikuma looks to take care of the planet and give something back to society.



"We aim to showcase our recycling capabilities to position ourselves as a sustainable and environmentally responsible company."

Wataru Horimatsu,
President, Chikuma & Co., Ltd.

A specialist B2B supplier of uniforms, Chikuma is a socially and environmentally conscious Japanese firm whose products are in demand.

"Japan has witnessed an influx of tourists following the pandemic,

leading to more orders for company uniforms from clients such as airlines, hotels and restaurants," says Chikuma's president, Wataru Horimatsu.



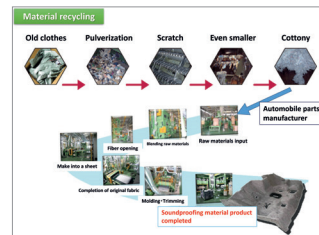
Electric fan wear

Chikuma's school uniforms are selling well, too. "Despite a 2% decrease in Japan's student population, we achieved a 4% increase in revenue last year," Mr. Horimatsu reveals. "We're now targeting elementary school students: only 10% of them wear uniforms, so there's huge untapped potential."

As well as being popular in Japan, Chikuma's top-quality

uniforms – which can even be equipped with in-built fans – could be exported worldwide.

A company that also sells fabrics to domestic and international clothing manufacturers, Chikuma is dedicated to minimizing waste, having established an environmental-protection office in 1995.



Material recycle flow chart

"We've set up a recycling loop to collect and recycle the items we produce, transforming them into new products," Mr. Horimatsu says. "At our recycling facilities in Shizuoka,



Exhibit at Premiere Vision

we convert clothing into automobile interior materials."

A commitment to sustainable fashion was also among Chikuma's motivations for creating Fukuiku, a social-outreach program that encourages people about the significance of clothing in daily life.

"We emphasize that clothing is effective for communication and social participation that leads to health, safety, and environmental sustainability," Mr. Horimatsu explains.

CHIKUMA & CO.,LTD.
www.chikuma.co.jp/en

Diversifying manufacturing horizons and strategies for global expansion

From security equipment to sustainable innovations: Unveiling the multidimensional endeavours of Kinboshi Inc.



Security uniforms

Though Kinboshi's primary business in Japan revolves around security equipment and uniforms, the firm, which was established in the late 1940s, is involved in a wide range of businesses both at home and abroad.

"Our core mission," says company president Kazufumi Ishii, "is to make significant contributions to society through our business operations; we prioritize the social and natural environment, along with the living environment of individuals."

Known for an approach that emphasizes product quality and

durability over just sales, Kinboshi provides comprehensive after-sales services to support optimal purchase cycles and product life.

Where uniforms and security equipment are concerned, this encompasses anything from cleaning and maintenance to storage and inventory management assistance.

With the launch of ultra-fine bubble generator PURETE, however, the company has clear ambitions to move beyond Japan and establish itself in the global market.

Mr. Ishii adds: "We originally explored the potential of UFB technology to find a more efficient method of cleaning uniforms. Over time we realized this technology could



Ultra fine bubble generator "PURETE"

be applied to a variety of industries. This led to the development of UFB generator PURETE"

Today the firm is exploring new applications for the technology, particularly in the care sector, where PURETE has already improved the efficiency of the patient bathing process.

An increased focus on robotics and labor-saving alternatives will simultaneously



Powder feeder "LD-12L"



"In five years' time we will have consolidated our position in the domestic market and expanded overseas, improving quality of life for people all over the world."

Kazufumi Ishii,
President, Kinboshi Inc.

allow the company to address challenges presented by Japan's aging population. "At Kinboshi, we are keenly aware of the impact of these issues," Mr. Ishii states, "and are actively seeking to diversify our business ventures in accordance with our values."

Brilliant Together
KINBOSHI
www.kinboshi-inc.com

Kaji Tech providing safe plastic snaps for a variety of garments

From sports apparel and working uniforms to baby garments, Kaji Tech is providing the best materials to ensure high-quality apparel.



"It is our mission to provide safety to babies and children, both in Japan and worldwide. That is our goal for the future."

Noboru Kajiuira, President,
Kaji Tech Co., Ltd.

The 100-year history of Kaji Tech is a story of evolution and adaptation. The company, which celebrated its centenary in 2022, started out as a supplier of secondary material for shoes for the Japanese Army before becoming a manufacturer of children's shoes. Later, it decided to focus on babywear and today Kaji Tech is a leading supplier of plastic snaps for baby clothes, as well as general clothing, electronic components, bags, sports equipment and more.



Sustainable mushroom leather

"I believe that the essence that underlies our 100-year history is that the founder of the company, who was my grandfather, always insisted on three keywords for our business. The first is 'sincerity', the second is 'making efforts' and the third is 'gratitude'," says current third-generation president, Noboru Kajiuira. "On top of that, when my father became the



Kaji Tech's billion-unit seller: safe plastic snaps for babies and kids

president, he made the company credo to respect the past and respect tradition, but to always be innovative and cater to the current needs of society. When I became the president, I made the company credo to weave, connect and attach the smiles of people all around the world."

Kaji Tech's most important innovation to date has been the plastic snaps for babywear that have replaced metal snaps, which can be more dangerous, more easily swallowed or cause metal allergies due to babies' sensitive skin. By converting these snaps to plastic, Kaji Tech is providing safer babywear, not only in Japan but also throughout the world. Testament to the quality, reliability and safety of its products is the fact that the company's snaps are widely used in garments that are manufactured by the biggest SPA brand in Asia, which has thousands of retail stores and the No.1 baby brand in Japan.

As a company committed to the environment, Kaji Tech has managed to develop eco-friendly solutions, such as snaps made from recycled resin, Mycel, a sustainable leather material derived from mushrooms, as well as apple leather and wood leather, in which wood powder is used to make the leather. Kaji Tech has also been collaborating with a fellow Japa-

nese company, FUKUI TAIYO, to up-cycle used EVA foam for the manufacture of saddles.



Japanese-made snap DIY kit

"Within our corporate philosophy, we have four core values. One of those values is coexistence with the environment. Our mission is to supply products that are friendly to both humans and the environment. We have acquired ISO9001 and ISO14001 which are environmentally related ISO standards, as well as GRS, which is the global recycling standard," explains Mr. Kajiuira.

"Most of our plastic snaps have been certified with Oeko-Tex certificates. Having said that, the advantage of manufacturing snaps with plastic compared to metal is that it creates zero waste and does not require any water in the process of manufacturing. Therefore, it is more eco-friendly in terms of processing."

With Japan's dwindling domestic market due the aging population, diversification and global expansion are key to Kaji

Tech's strategic plans moving forward. In terms of diversification, the company is developing new applications for its products and materials, which includes the development of materials for batteries.

"Finding new applications and new markets is crucial for us," adds the company president. "For example, when it comes to the shackle, we were recently able to apply it to the logistics area, which is a new market development for us. Our main customers are in the apparel field and babywear in particular. However, we also have sports apparel, work uniforms and outdoor-related applications.

"During the pandemic, when people were staying at home and social distancing, handicrafts became a popular activity. So, we started to provide products for the handicrafts market not only in Japan but also in Taiwan and the U.S. too. We want to continue strengthening this field going forward."

When it comes to global expansion, India, South and Southeast Asia are prime target markets for Kaji Tech, which is always on the lookout for partners with local knowledge when entering new regions.

"Partnering with local companies is crucial. Learning and understanding the local culture is important when entering into a new market. Therefore, we have partnered with an Indian and Bangladeshi local company that does sales and provides machinery maintenance. We want to take this business model and enlarge it so that we can expand across Southeast Asia," says Mr. Kajiuira.

"We want to thrive together as a team working with all of our partners. Enhancing our status globally is the key to growth."



KAJI TECH CO., LTD.

www.kajitech.jp/en



OWNDAYS MBS Premium Concept Store

Pioneering digital transformation in the optical industry

OWNDAYS has digitized its customer journey, cutting down on the time customers spend in-store in order to make the overall experience more efficient.



Frame: OWNDAYS SNAP



Frame: Graph Belle



Frame: OWNDAYS SNAP



Frame: OWNDAYS+

OWNDAYS is a leading eyewear brand from Japan with more than 550 shops in Japan, South East Asia, and Australia. Selling over 3.5 million pairs of glasses a year, it is one of the few companies in the world that has implemented the SPA (Specialty store retailer of Private label Apparel) system into the optical business where the entire process from design and manufacturing through to inventory management and retail is managed from within. This system has allowed the company to maintain the highest level of product quality in order to meet Japanese Industrial Standards while keeping prices affordable.

In the globalized world, e-commerce has become a signifi-

cant contributing factor for retail brands aiming to expand their presence, and for the optical industry – and OWNDAYS in particular – this is no different.

“Spectacles are a unique product,” says Shuji Tanaka, President of OWNDAYS. “And traditionally they have been approached through an omnichannel strategy, which maximizes their impact by linking physical stores with the internet. The process typically involves eyesight inspections, trying and testing the glasses, making necessary adjustments even after their initial use, and providing after-service support alongside the glasses.

“We have been able to strengthen customer loyalty

and engagement by enhancing our industry leading warranty system and promoting digital membership. Furthermore, since the pandemic, innovations such as the virtual try-on function, remote eye test, and the real-time service notification system have embodied our commitment to digitalization, which has helped us eliminate unnecessary steps, cutting down on the time customers spend in-store, and making the overall experience more efficient.”

He adds: “With these remote eye inspections, for instance, we currently handle an impressive volume of up to 1,000,000 cases per year. Each remote inspection is meticulously recorded and fed into our AI system. Our aim is to transition away from relying on human employees for this aspect of the job within the next two years, with avatars taking over customer communication.”



OWNDAYS SANEI PARCO CITY

Mr. Tanaka stresses that while certain aspects like eye check-ups, inspections, and fittings still



“As a result of the changes we’ve implemented, approximately 40% of our previous in-store processes can now be efficiently completed through online channels.”

Shuji Tanaka,
President, OWNDAYS

require in-store attention, OWNDAYS has made a deliberate effort to separate the physical and digital aspects of its operations. This has led to the company allocating more resources to tasks that need to be performed at the physical stores, enhancing overall customer satisfaction.



OWNDAYS SM Megamall

“During the past three years, we’ve focused on identifying which steps previously conducted in-store could be shifted online. As a result, approximately 40% of our previous in-store processes can now be efficiently completed through online channels. However, we have no intention of transitioning all our services online, as that could potentially inconvenience our customers. We believe in striking a balance, aiming for a 50/50 distribution between physical and online services.”

OWNDAYS

www.owndays.com

STYLEM makes commitment to sustainability and development of new services and products

With a rich history spanning 160 years, the Japanese domestic giant focuses on the textile business, placing greater emphasis on major markets like China, the EU and the United States.



"My primary objective is to ensure that everyone in the fashion industry not only knows who STYLEM is, but also understands our mission and contributions."

Ryuta Taki,
President & CEO, STYLEM
TAKISADA-OSAKA CO., LTD.

STYLEM TAKISADA-OSAKA CO., LTD., a textile trading company established in 1864, continues to support the fashion business across four business divisions: textiles, raw materials, apparel garments, and lifestyle. The company is expanding its business globally with a focus on the textile business, which has established the top share in the domestic market.

Given the weak Japanese yen and current international context, which has seen the U.S. and Western countries decoupling from China, many commentators believe this could be a pivotal time for Japanese industry.



Triporous: Space QOL Series

And while the weak yen undoubtedly benefits STYLEM's business, president Ryuta Taki is keen to emphasize that there are other reasons for consumers to choose Japanese products.

"Our clients predominantly seek made-in Japan textiles due to their exceptional quality," he



The ARCHIVE & GALLERY at the STYLEM Headquarters

says, "something that cannot be easily replicated elsewhere."

The country is also leading the way when it comes to providing an alternative to fast fashion. In recent years there has been a huge push in the West for handmade Japanese denim, a demand that is reflective of a more general shift towards sustainability in Europe and beyond.



ORGANIC FIELD™

"We believe," Mr. Taki says, "that our mission is to deliver high-quality clothing that stands the test of time, rather than promoting cheaper, disposable options."

It is worth noting that as well as producing high-quality garments, STYLEM is strongly committed to sustainability and has taken on the challenge of developing new products and services, such as ORGANIC FIELD™. Every process involved in producing ORGANIC FIELD cotton is controlled by STYLEM, from seed selection through to cotton cultivation and yarn production, to ensure its traceability.

Since converting farms to organic production takes time, the company has entered into a partnership agreement with Indian company NSL, working together with farmers from the first in-conversion year (IC1) onwards. STYLEM is also working to improve the working environment and the natural environment by safeguarding workers' health and protecting the soil from harmful chemical substances.

"By creating an environment that facilitates the conversion to organic cultivation," Mr. Taki confirms, "we are making a contribution towards job creation and local community development; building a sustainable supply chain to usher in a brighter future for everyone."

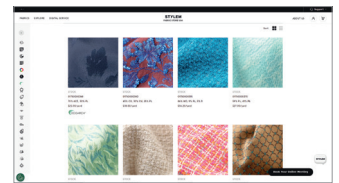
Nor has the company neglected its digital and online presence, recently establishing its web store, named the STYLEM FABRIC STORE.

Mr. Taki again: "Through this platform, we offer designers in the apparel industry a convenient way to browse and select materials that align with their creative vision. We maintain an extensive inventory of approximately 5,000 traceable fabrics, providing a one-stop shop for clients to check product information, including specification and stock availability, and place orders."

The company focuses on fashion capitals such as Paris, Milan or New York, with these serving

as the basis for its planning and marketing strategies.

"Maintaining an extensive global network is essential to our strategy," Mr. Taki states. "We want to concentrate on potential areas for our production sites that cater to high end apparel brands or clients. Which is why we are also prioritizing regions such as the ASEAN countries, China and India for our production sites, where we have already established operations."



STYLEM FABRIC STORE

A recent collaboration with Sony Group Corporation, meanwhile, has led to the creation of wear made with Triporous™, a porous carbon material made from rice husks.

Thanks to its unique patented microstructure, Triporous offers potential applications in a wide range of fields such as water and air purification. This wear has excellent deodorant and antibacterial effects, quickly eliminating unpleasant odors and enabling it to be worn repeatedly even in environments where laundering is not possible.

That even includes outer space: "Triporous: Space QOL Series" relaxing wear, in which Triporous is applied to textiles was adopted on astronaut Satoshi Furukawa's long-duration mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS) in August 2023.

For his part, Mr. Taki is more focused on earthly concerns. "The fast fashion industry generates a considerable amount of waste," he concludes. "My vision is for the next generation to carry forward the business in a more sustainable and environmentally responsible manner."

STYLEM

<https://en.stylem.co.jp>

NAXIS: Pioneering sustainable innovation in apparel

Founded in 1897, Naxis is a leading apparel auxiliary material manufacturer committed to innovating solutions that promote greater sustainability in the sector, including cutting-edge RFID technology.



"Sustainability is more than just eco-friendly products. It demands a holistic approach, and by reducing overproduction, we significantly impact the industry."

Taiho Nakamura, President,
NAXIS Co., Ltd.

© Photos by Takuya Furusue

As it is across the entire global economy, sustainability is today one of the major challenges facing the apparel sector. It is estimated that about 10,000 clothing items go into landfills every five minutes due to the modern fast fashion trend. Japanese manufacturers such as Naxis are at the forefront of industry innovation aimed at improving sustainability in this field, pioneering environmentally friendly materials such as the Econax-cello, a packaging material made from wood pulp-derived viscose as an alternative to petroleum-based films.



Woven labels

"We develop, manufacture, and sell eco-friendly products, but we recognize that we have only just scratched the surface of addressing sustainability," says Taiho Nakamura, CEO of Naxis, which has been an apparel auxiliary material manufacturer for over 125 years.

"The essence of sustainability involves more than simply offering environmentally friendly products. What we are focusing on as the essence of sustainability is how we can contribute to solving the problems of excessive production and excess inventory

in the apparel industry. Traditionally, lead times in this field have been quite long, with manufacturers producing numerous items and keeping them in stock without a clear understanding of actual demand or future trends."

The company's RAIN RFID (UHF RFID) solution, which was launched in 2005, is now one of Naxis' major products and provides an effective way to prevent such problems of excess endemic in the apparel sector, today producing more than one billion RAIN RFID tags a year.

"By introducing RAIN RFID solution and using it correctly, manufacturers are able to understand inventory status in real-time. Furthermore, by properly managing inventory, you can increase the accuracy of demand forecasts and more realistically grasp the amount of inventory needed in the future," explains Mr. Nakamura.



RAIN RFID Inlays

Besides its RAIN RFID solution, Naxis – which globally delivers labels and packages from seven production sites and employs 2,000 people across Asia – has also developed its proprietary Naxis Relational Database (NRD), a web order placement system for auxiliary materials. Its

Implant Naxis Platform (iNAP) additionally provides clients with an in-plant printing system.

"In the traditional business model, we would create tags and products after receiving orders and then deliver them to our customers. By using NRD and iNAP, we can install tag printing machinery within our clients' factories," says Mr. Nakamura. "Orders are still processed through NRD, but the actual production takes place on-site. To ensure top-quality results, we carefully select materials and configure the machinery to operate in multiple languages to suit different regions. This allows us to provide a comprehensive software solution service while maintaining consistent quality. Our initial focus for this project is centered around the ASEAN region, and this direction aligns with our commitment to contributing to the reduction of excess production by making lead times shorter within the industry."



Functional products

The RFID technology which Naxis specializes in is a form of wireless communication that incorporates the use of electromagnetic couplings and allows the unique identification of objects, people and even animals. The technology has seen rapid growth in recent times, however, some of the challenges it faces include reader collision where one tag from an RFID can interfere with another. Furthermore, materials like metal can impact the signal, and sometimes they are not as accurate as bar codes. Naxis is one of many industry innovators working to overcome these challenges.

"Recognizing our customers' thinking on the matter, we are actively working to enhance their understanding of the limitations and technical constraints asso-



Heat transfer printing

ciated with RAIN RFIDs," says Mr. Nakamura. "We believe it is crucial to consider the incorporation of barcodes and QR codes alongside RAIN RFID technology to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each combination and choose the most suitable option. RAIN RFID can either replace or complement barcodes. Essentially, any products with barcodes can use RAIN RFID. Our primary focus now is on the widespread integration of RAIN RFID tags into various items."

This technology's current phase is reminiscent of the early days of the Internet, particularly in Japan in 1995 when households first began adopting computers and connecting to the Internet. Back then, while people had internet access, they were not entirely sure how to make the most of it. It was only as internet usage spread globally that new services like Yahoo, Google, Facebook, and others emerged.

"We see our current endeavor as comparable to these early stages of internet adoption," says Mr. Nakamura. "By spreading RAIN RFID tags into a wide range of products, we are creating an interconnected environment. This network of RAIN RFID tags will serve as a foundation, and we are actively preparing the stage for new players who specialize in software to identify and leverage the potential of this established RAIN RFID tag network. Our role is to create this essential network and await the entrance of innovative industry players who will further develop systems based on it."

NAXIS®

<https://naxis.net/en/>



Sankosha: Japanese quality finishing equipment manufacturer for laundry and dry cleaning

From its humble beginnings in the City of Hachioji, Sankosha has now grown to be the go-to manufacturer for dry cleaners across the world.



LP-5000J



ST9300

The company behind the renowned Sankosha and Ajax brands of dry cleaning machines, Sankosha has been an global ambassador of 'Made-in-Japan' quality for 30 years. With its roots in the City of Hachioji, Sankosha has built an established presence in the U.S., Europe and Asia, and, although not a household name, the company is well-known among those in the dry cleaning industry. "We are a global niche company that is known by those in the know," states Yusuke Uchikoshi, president of Sankosha, who runs the company (founded by his father) along with his brother, Keisuke Uchikoshi, the executive vice president.

Unlike many of its competitors, Sankosha boasts a total in-house manufacturing system, from design to prototyping and production, and can produce 2,000 units per year. In fact the development of this in-house system comes down to the company's origins in Hachioji, as explained by Yusuke Uchikoshi. "The reason why we have such a high percentage of in-house production is that we are located in Hachioji, where it is difficult to find subcontractors. If we were located in areas where the automotive or shipbuilding industries are prevalent, then we would have been able to have a subcontracting model. Compared to other companies, we are unique in the way that we have been able to establish a group network, which

allows us to take care of everything by ourselves. This is something that other companies are not doing."

Sankosha's overseas sales now represent 80% of total sales, compared to 50% in 2007. And the company's international success can be traced back to its initial move to the U.S. back in 1993. While cracking the U.S. market was difficult at first, dry cleaning business owners soon came to recognize the benefits of Sankosha's machines over those made by American manufacturers, which were not as durable and thus required more maintenance after a short period of time. "Our machines can last from five to ten years. Sometimes no maintenance is required at all. This resulted in the customers choosing our equipment instead of the equipment from the U.S. companies that did not last long and required regular maintenance," says Keisuke Uchikoshi. "More and more customers began to choose our company. The 'Made in Japan' brand equipment had a great reputation, and many Japanese finishing equipment manufacturers started to go to the U.S. They saw how successful we were, so they wanted to follow suit."

Be it in the U.S., Japan or beyond, Sankosha has always been associated with three characteristics: quality, cost performance, and innovation – factors that have guided its success and are key to product development. "These three characteristics allow you to posi-

tion yourself at the forefront of any age," adds Yusuke Uchikoshi. "The concept of our brand is to provide trust and assurance, and when it comes to future products, we want to provide new surprises to our customers. We highly value our company culture, which allows us to provide all of these aspects to our customers."

One particular highlight solution developed to cater to customer needs is the ST-900 press-free machine, which allows dry cleaners to treat washable garments without using multiple processes, saving on energy and human labor. "If dry cleaners buy our press-free machine, they can reduce their labor costs immediately. If we set the price of our machine at less than the labor cost for two people, the companies will want to buy it," states the president.

Offering both its premium and standard brands, Sankosha and Ajax respectively, the company has solutions for all budgets and aims to expand its customer base in the U.S. and Europe. Meanwhile, it will continue to develop new products based on quality, cost performance and innovation, with automation and robotic labor-saving solutions top priority due to the aging society in Japan and many developed countries.

"Based on these three key elements, we are trying to develop and produce new machinery and



"Compared to other companies, we are unique in the way that we have been able to establish a group network, which allows us to take care of everything by ourselves."

Yusuke Uchikoshi,
President (left),
Keisuke Uchikoshi,
Executive Vice President (right),
SANKOSHA Co., Ltd.

new solutions so that we can cater to the changing society," adds Yusuke Uchikoshi. "We have already developed new machines such as our press-free machines (ST-9000) and our universal folders (AF-1000J). By enhancing and combining our technologies, we can develop new solutions."

However Keisuke Uchikoshi is quick to point out that the company is not only focused on the aging society and labor-saving technologies. "We are also focusing on how we can help existing dry cleaners to survive in this changing industry. I focus on the present, whereas my brother focuses on the future under the presumption that we cannot only stay in the drycleaning industry. We will need to expand for us to be sustainable in the future. While I have a short-term vision, my brother's vision is for the long-term. Of course, we need to focus on both, and there must be a balance. They complement each other."



sankosha
PRESS AND PROGRESS

<https://sankosha-mfg.com>

Takayama Reed offering next-generation technology to support the textile industry

President Toru Takayama received the Award of Decoration from the Emperor of Japan in November 2023 in recognition of his contribution to the company's remarkable progress.

Japan might be grappling with an aging population and a shrinking domestic market, but for Takayama Reed President, Toru Takayama, the answer does not necessarily lie in automation.

"Everything we have here at our company," he says, "is a result of our expertise and knowledge, and we cannot turn our back on that craftsmanship after more than 100 years in business."

Mr. Takayama is adamant that the best way for younger employees to learn is from experienced craftsmen, and this inter-generational technology transfer means the company currently enjoys the number one share in reed manufacturing around the globe.

Products such as ETp, a low-friction surface treatment, and Diamond-Like-Carbon (DLC), a coating to cover dents, have helped cement this status in the eyes of clients worldwide.

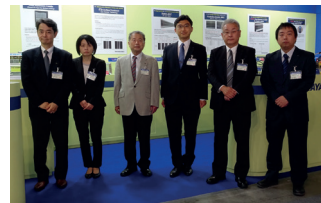


"We can select the best reed to meet customer needs and provide them with a tailor-made solution."

Toru Takayama,
President
Takayama Reed Co., Ltd.

And, having recently presented several new products at this year's International Textile Machinery Exhibition (ITMA Europe), the firm has started to diversify its business.

In addition to manufacturing reeds, Takayama now has the ability to sell and service various testing machines imported from overseas, includ-



Exhibition members at ITMA Milan

ing the TEXTEST from Switzerland, with whom it has had a relationship for 30 years.

As for partnerships in international markets, however, challenges remain. Mr. Takayama again: "We pride ourselves in maintaining very traditional ways, which would not go well with many foreign companies."



Exhibition booth at ITMA Milan

Even so, America remains big business, with a new distributor helping to ensure that more than 50 Takayama Reed shipments have made their way across to the U.S. in 2023 so far alone.

"Customers in America recognize the value of our products," Mr. Takayama explains, "because they know the quality is high, and they know the product is going to give them the best features."

Looking to the future, Mr. Takayama is keen to treasure the company's human capital. That, and to uphold its commitment to quality: "Quality comes first and it is the number one aspect that we would like to emphasize in everything we do here."



www.takayamareed.co.jp/en

NOSAWA: Bringing Japanese craftsmanship and culture to the world



"My objective is to ensure our company remains innovative and dynamic."

Kiichiro Nosawa, President,
NOSAWA & CO., LTD.

For over 150 years, NOSAWA & CO. has brought Japanese culture, technology and products to the world, whilst also bringing the very best the world has to offer to Japan. As a trading company on the global stage, it has continually had to adapt to the changing times to serve consumers with the products that they want – acting as a bridge between Japan and the world.

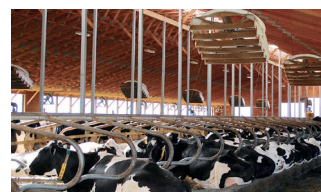
NOSAWA's 'Farm to Table' philosophy is about utilizing its organizational capabilities to connect customers' products with consumers, providing satisfaction to customers and consumers alike.

"We are not merely a trading company engaged in the buying and selling of products," explains Kiichiro Nosawa, President of NOSAWA & Co. "Under the stance of our total approach that supports customers from all directions for the long term, we pay attention to what our customers seek in products and services, even to the



Dutch Gouda Cheese

smallest needs. We add value to each customer's requirements and send them to the market."



Cow Comfort Barn

NOSAWA is composed of multiple divisions specializing in the import of Cheese, Livestock, Machinery, Textiles and the export of Japanese Food, Cutlery, Machinery and Textiles, with all departments collaborating to pool their expertise and deliver functional solutions that ensure customer satisfaction.

"Each of our business divisions holds significant potential," says Mr. Nosawa. "Our Machinery division has already ventured into exporting tofu and soybean machinery



Japanese Kitchen Knife

and factory lines, while also offering maintenance services for them. In our Livestock division, we're actively engaged in our 'Farm to Table' project, which promotes Japanese dairy farming. Additionally, we export Japanese denim to China in partnership with a Chinese company. Within the Business Development division, we are currently exporting sake, matcha, craft beers and cutlery to Asia and Europe. Our goal is to continue expanding all of our business divisions, with the aim to contribute to the development of each market and industry we serve."



NOSAWA & CO., LTD.
EST. 1869

www.nosawa.co.jp/en