

JAPAN'S INNOVATION THROUGH TRADITION

FROM STATIONERY TO SKINCARE, JAPAN'S OLDEST COMPANIES ARE INNOVATING WITH TIME-TESTED METHODS, GAINING NEW RELEVANCE IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY. *By Daniel de Bomford and Bernard Thompson*

Japan is home to a lion's share of the world's oldest companies. Many of these companies have been in operation for centuries, accumulating expertise and pioneering innovative products. Techniques handed down from master to apprentice, enriched by the philosophy of monozukuri, have continually contributed to Japan's well-earned prestige.

Hideo Tatebayashi, president of the respected Japanese watchband maker Bambi, which recently celebrated 95 years of business, says that the expert hand of the craftsman can be felt in the quality of the product. "Only skilled artisans can deliver the human touch that resonates deeply with users," he explains.

Likewise, ITO-YA, one of Japan's oldest stationery manufacturers, introduced Western-style stationery to Japan over 100 years ago and remains a leading voice in the industry. President Akira Ito says the company strives to create products that last and can be handed down to children and grandchildren. "The kinds of products we aim to create are those that support creativity, spark inspiration or bring a sense of comfort to people," he says.

Leveraging Japan's history of innovative manufacturing is Shirohato. "We are the oldest mask manufacturing company in Japan, so our quality control is built on decades of accumulated experience," says President Takanao Yokoi. Shirohato has leveraged that accumulated experience into manufacturing groundbreaking compression belts that some of baseball's biggest names have adopted.

Cogit is taking advantage of centuries of Japan's less-is-more philosophy to pioneer everything from UV-protective cloth to botanically based cosmetics that incorporate aesthetics and skincare in equal parts. "Our aim has always been to create products that not only serve a function but also surprise and delight," says President Shinichiro Kubo.

Continuing that same spirit of innovation is Kamo Textiles, which has developed its revolutionary BS Fine fabric, a functional material backed by research. President Yohei Kadono says the company manages the entire process in-house from development to after-sales. "Our business was founded with the goal of creating innovative, comfortable innerwear for everyone," he states.

Cred Holdings is bringing Japan's *omotenashi*, hospitality grounded in tradition, to the global lifestyle and wellness market. Its offerings span luxury hotel spas, postpartum care services like "AMATERASU," restaurants, language schools and publications, all delivering a consistent Japanese experience worldwide. "We want to share the essence of Japanese wellness with as many individuals as possible," says President and CEO Koichi Shirai.

Metabolic Inc. has led Japan's science-driven wellness sector since 1991, creating clinically validated supplements trusted by consumers for decades. From Chitosan After Diet to enzyme-yeast blends, its products focus on proven results. Now expanding to China, Hong Kong and beyond, President Kazuhiro Nishida says, "What has always set us apart is our emphasis on delivering noticeable, positive results."

From artisans to innovators, Japan harmonizes tradition and progress, exporting not just products but a cultural heritage of precision, quality and service and shares a vision of excellence that inspires worldwide.

UNMATCHED JAPANESE HOSPITALITY BY CRED HOLDINGS

CRED HOLDINGS IS PROVIDING AUTHENTIC JAPANESE HOSPITALITY IN ITS SPA AND WELLNESS TREATMENTS AROUND THE WORLD. *By Arthur Menkes*

Japanese hospitality is renowned worldwide for its attention to detail and willingness to go the extra mile. Cred International President and CEO Koichi Shirai says that people are coming to Japan for wellness treatments rooted in Japanese tradition for an authentic experience. "Hospitality is a major draw, and Japanese hospitality is renowned globally for its exceptional quality," he says.

Shirai says visitors can expect excellent service and high-quality treatments at all Cred International locations worldwide. The company's unified Japanese products ensure that the service is identical. Shirai points to a recent trip to Taiwan, where the service was precisely the same as in Japan. "That's why I emphasize unified products—those that are inherently Japanese yet can be offered internationally." Cred International has franchised and opened locations in Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, New York and Vancouver, while maintaining the quality and authenticity of the experience.

Additionally, Cred International has recently introduced "AMATERASU," a service that focuses on postpartum care. AMATERASU aims to create an environment where mothers can thrive, offering luxury care for both mothers and their babies. Nurses, midwives and nursery teachers provide mothers with advice on childcare. From the day mothers are discharged from the hospital until the babies are 6 months old, they can take advantage of AMATERASU's service.

Along with hotel spa and postpartum care services, it also manages hotel operations, restaurants, Japanese language schools and high-end publications and hosts the student entrepreneurial support WSP (World Student Pitch). This fall, Cred International will launch "Billboard Live Taipei" in Taiwan, which will host live performances by artists at locations in Tokyo, Osaka, Yokohama and Nanjing, China.

It is focused on global growth by opening new locations and building an efficient ecosystem that localizes the Japanese hospitality experience to be appreciated worldwide. Shirai proudly states the company's goal, "We want to share the essence of Japanese wellness with as many individuals as possible."

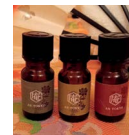
Cred Holdings leads the hotel spa and the Japanese language school industries and is developing wellness hotels.



"That's the beauty of Japanese hospitality—the meticulous attention to detail—and it's something we're committed to scaling on a global level."

Koichi Shirai

president & CEO,
CRED HOLDINGS Co., Ltd.
www.cred-in.com/en





"You can feel the difference the moment you put it on—that's the touch of true craftsmanship in a watchband."

Hideo Tatebayashi
president and CEO, BAMBI Co., Ltd.

BAMBI 
<https://bambi.jp> 
✉ Contact Us: global@bambi.co.jp



BAMBI CO: TIMELESS CRAFT

FOR 95 YEARS, JAPANESE WATCHBAND MANUFACTURER BAMBI HAS PURSUED HIGH-PRECISION CRAFTSMANSHIP BUILT ON SKILLED ARTISANSHIP AND "MADE IN JAPAN" QUALITY. AS IT APPROACHES ITS CENTENNIAL, THE COMPANY IS PASSING DOWN ITS TRADITIONS WHILE PUSHING INTO GLOBAL MARKETS. *By Cian O'Neill and Kyann Edouard*

Japan is home to many long-established companies that have weathered economic upheavals. Remarkably, nearly half of the world's companies with over 200 years of history are in Japan. Among them is BAMBI, a watchband and jewelry manufacturer now in its 95th year and on track to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2030.

President Hideo Tatebayashi emphasizes that customer satisfaction is paramount and that world-class quality demands true craftsmanship.

"Only with years of experience can we create products with such attention to detail. We make no compromises, even in parts that aren't visible—that's the spirit of our manufacturing," he explains.

BAMBI's products are carefully crafted by highly skilled artisans, and their superior quality is a defining characteristic.

"We don't pursue mass production; instead, we value durability so our products can be used for years. The designs are simple yet refined, and we choose high-quality materials that age beautifully over time," says Tatebayashi.

In advancing sustainable manufacturing, BAMBI combines eco-conscious materials with advanced technologies to create distinctive products.

"We see reducing CO₂ emissions and waste as critical challenges, and we strive to balance environmental responsibility with technological innovation," says Tatebayashi.

The company works closely with suppliers, retailers and customers, paying meticulous attention to material selection and continuously improving product qualities, such as water resistance and color fastness.

In Japan, BAMBI enjoys solid recognition and is supported by many who value quality. However, its presence overseas remains relatively limited. To change this, the company is now expanding into markets in the United States, Europe and Asia. With an understanding that design preferences and usage vary by region, BAMBI aims to become a brand selected by international customers as well.

To bring Japan's proud craftsmanship to the world, BAMBI is promoting its original brands: CRAFTTECA and GREDEER.

Each brand embodies a commitment to uncompromising craftsmanship, from ma-

terial selection to design and finishing. The company hopes more people will come to appreciate this value.

"Our goal is to bring small joys and a sense of richness to everyday life through high-quality products made with care," says Tatebayashi.

Originating from Japan, BAMBI is now stepping onto the global stage.



INSIDE COGIT'S MANUFACTURING EDGE

JAPAN'S COGIT BLENDS TRADITION AND SCIENCE TO LEAD THE FUTURE OF CONSUMER MANUFACTURING. *By Daniel de Bomford and Arthur Menkes*

Japan's skincare tradition dates back centuries, and coupled with the country's unmatched standards of manufacturing, it has developed a new generation of products and techniques that combine botanical wisdom with modern science and technology. Manufacturer Cogit Corporation is leading the country's skincare and beauty product development with its CICA Method and UV-resistant materials.

President Shinichiro Kubo says Cogit differentiates itself through the principles that guide the company's product development. "To nurture that spirit, we deliberately maintain a layperson's perspective, evaluating our products through the eyes of consumers rather than professionals," he explains. Instead of letting conventional industry wisdom guide development, the company actively develops from the consumer's viewpoint, even if it is less cost-effective. This has led to the pioneering of truly innovative products, such as sun protection. Instead of simply developing sunscreen, it developed UV-resistant fabrics that don't heat up in the sunlight and remain cool to the touch, encouraging customers to protect their skin with comfortable fabric alongside sunscreen. "Everything begins with awareness—staying attuned to emerging trends, ideas and needs from around the world," Kubo states.

Cogit's CICA Method line echoes this ethos and centers on gentle plant-based ingredients, especially *centella asiatica* and licorice derivatives, to repair the skin barrier, reduce inflammation and support hydration. Most products blend *centella* with Japanese herbal extracts for extra soothing, anti-oxidative and brightening effects. These products are considered "quasi drugs," with active ingredients, and must maintain higher standards to meet regulatory approval, unlike other cosmetics. "Japan still maintains a strong global reputation for safety, and I believe this is where we are most highly regarded internationally," Kubo explains. The higher standard of Japanese consumers has naturally prompted Cogit to develop products that match this standard, giving the company a competitive edge over foreign competitors. "While originally developed for Japanese consumers, our CICA brand is now gaining momentum in Southeast Asia and is even being sold alongside major brands like Shiseido," he says.

Cogit is carrying the Japanese manufacturing standard with its consumer-first approach and innovative spark.



Hiroichi Kubo, founder (left)



"Our product development has always been driven by new encounters and fresh ideas rather than rigid planning."

Shinichiro Kubo
president, Cogit Corporation



体感-10℃以上の冷却効果



Sun Block LAB Ambassador Matt Rose



THE ART OF WRITING WITH ITOYA

THROUGH JAPANESE STATIONERY, ITO-YA REKINDLES THE JOY OF COMMUNICATION. *By Daniel de Bomford and Bernard Thompson*

The digital era has transformed communication, creating an impersonal barrier between people. The simple act of writing a letter with a pen conveys so much personal meaning, where every flourish expresses dedication to the reader, and even blemishes and mistakes carry the character of the author. What appears to have been lost in an era of digital messaging, Japanese stationery company ITO-YA keeps alive, seeking to rekindle that connection with thoughtful, high-quality pieces.

Someone once said, "If ITO-YA says something is stationery, then it is stationery," according to Akira Ito, the president of ITO-YA. It is almost inconceivable for a company to gain such a level of trust from its customers. For the Japanese stationery manufacturer, this is the reality it has built, and even in the digital era, the company still strives to create meaningful stationery that goes beyond mere function.

"One of our guiding principles is to create long-lasting items: things you could one day pass down to your grandchildren," the president explains. ITO-YA is creating products that inspire creativity, spark inspiration and bring a sense of comfort into people's daily lives.

The company was founded in 1904 by Katsutaro Ito to import Western-style stationery, as there were no manufacturers of such items in Japan at the time. The president recalls how, as manufacturers in Japan began producing Western-style stationery, they would approach the founder for his feedback and approval. Over the years, it has established itself as a leader in premium Japanese-made stationery, expanding into dedicated retail spaces where discerning customers can experience its unmatched quality firsthand.

Its Ginza store has experienced a surge in interest as tourism numbers have increased, reflecting the global appetite for care and craftsmanship. Ito explains that as technology has replaced the need for stationery, a counterculture has emerged, turning it into a luxury item. "This shift allows us to create higher-end products with greater value and higher margins. That's the reality we're operating in today," he explains.

As this segment continues to grow, ITO-YA is looking to replicate its success in the international market and capitalize on the demand for quality Japanese stationery. Ito describes the company's strategy, "Our goal is to introduce the ITO-YA name internationally, especially in Asian and European markets, where there's a more intuitive appreciation for the quality and appeal of Japanese-made products."

To achieve these goals, the company is looking to open retail stores in its target markets, exporting its Japanese-made products to eager international buyers. "We see online stores as a complement to physical retail—not the other way around," Ito says. ITO-YA is looking to focus on its proprietary brands and expand its product lines. "We want to sell our own original items or products we've developed in collaboration with Japanese manufacturers," Ito states.

ITO-YA is therefore unique in the market: what sets ITO-YA apart is that it not only produces its own stationery but also operates its own stores, seamlessly uniting products and services into one experience. Ito posits, "We don't really have direct competitors doing exactly what we do." More than the items themselves, the retail space creates value through the overall experience, reflecting that it is the experience and the intention behind writing that ITO-YA seeks to capture and share with its customers.



"Our focus is on creating value through the overall experience."

Akira Ito

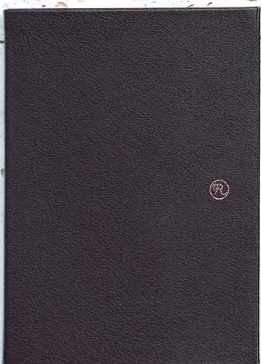
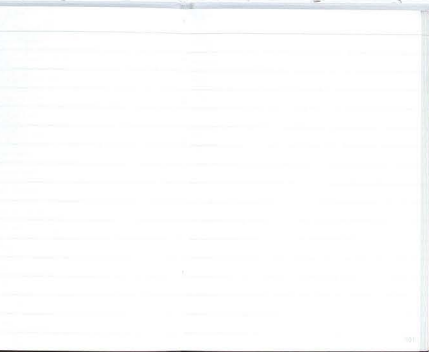
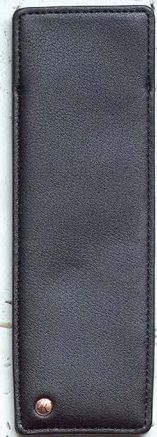
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HEALING FABRIC FROM JAPAN

KAMO TEXTILE'S BS FINE MATERIAL COMBINES NATURAL BLACK SILICA WITH ADVANCED FIBER DESIGNED TO OFFER COMFORT, REGULATION AND RELIEF, WHILE DELIVERING UNMATCHED QUALITY. *By Daniel de Bomford, Bernard Thompson and Cian O'Neill*



From humble beginnings on the outskirts of Okayama, Kamo Textile is creating apparel with innovative materials, while managing the entire process in-house, from raw material to sales and aftercare. Its president, Yohei Kadono, believes the company's BS Fine material, made from natural black silica, will contribute to healthier, more prosperous and fulfilling lives.

"BS Fine is a fabric designed to help bring the body back to its natural temperature state," Kadono says. Whether you're too warm or too cold, the fabric responds to support the body's ideal state.

Originally developed to create perfect underwear, the textile now supports a broader mission: to address issues such as poor sleep, fatigue and cold sensitivity across all age groups. The company offers a range of products, from innerwear and leg warmers to bedding and seat cushions, all leveraging BS Fine.

Kamo Textile manages every step of production

in-house, from mining black silica in Hokkaido to product design and direct sales. This vertical integration allows the company to maintain strict quality control and respond quickly to consumer feedback.

While the firm began as a subcontractor for leading brands, it has since grown into a developer of proprietary functional materials. Over the past decade, it achieved 2,000 percent revenue growth by combining science with targeted marketing.

The company has launched pop-up stores in Thailand and is eyeing markets in Finland and Taiwan. At the same time, its research team, which includes advisors from leading universities and major manufacturers, is testing new applications in sectors ranging from health care to electronics.

Still, Kadono sees broader potential. "We've recently entered the B2B space," he said. We're also working with global partners to create new applications."

"Our goal is to be seen not just as a clothing brand," Kadono said, "but as a global materials company grounded in science and driven by purpose."



"Our business was founded with the goal of creating innovative, comfortable innerwear for everyone."

Yohei Kadono
president, Kamo Textile Co., Ltd.

KAMOSENI 

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Japan's manufacturing sector has rightly earned its reputation for quality and attention to detail. For Japan's oldest mask manufacturer, Shirohato, this quality has been refined through decades of experience, which is foundational to maintaining the standards for which it is known.

Every single Japanese player in the MLB has used the belt, and Yokoi says that some players can't play without it. "I still remember how surprised I was when we received our first official order from the Los Angeles Dodgers. They're such a major team, and it was a turning point for us," he recalls. Two years later, a player on every MLB team is using the belt, including stars Mookie Betts, Yoshinobu Yamamoto, Masataka Yoshida and Cal Raleigh.

Building on what it has learned, Shirohato is looking to introduce the belt to other sports. Last year, the company began supporting snowboarders for the upcoming Winter Olympic Games, which presents an ideal opportunity. “Our future vision is to become a brand that supports athletes across all sports, globally,” Yokoi says. Already, the company is receiving orders from Major League Baseball teams and prestigious universities in the United States. Shirohato is looking toward Europe next, to find new markets.

At the core of its product quality is the experience that comes with its decades of operation. Its core mesh technology was developed through extensive research and development, benefiting from its expertise in designing and manufacturing masks. “We understand textile innovations, and we look to develop new materials,” Yokoi explains. Now, as it continues its explosive growth, Yokoi hopes the company can take its place alongside Nike and Adidas as a top-tier sports apparel brand.



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METABOLIC: SCIENCE-DRIVEN WELLNESS

JAPANESE WELLNESS LEADER METABOLIC DELIVERS SCIENTIFICALLY VALIDATED SUPPLEMENTS TAILORED TO GLOBAL HEALTH-CONSCIOUS CONSUMERS.

By Daniel de Bomford and Cian O'Neill

What is wellness? A buzzword? A vibe? A smoothie with a side of self-doubt? While others were chasing crystals and kale, Metabolic has been in the lab since 1991. Born and raised in Japan, it doesn't do trends. It does tests. Metabolic is backed by science, fueled by trust and leading the wellness world without breaking a sweat.

President Kazuhiro Nishida states the company's strength lies in the evidence supporting its ingredients, and its approach centers on scientific validation. "We're constantly researching and analyzing the optimal level of each ingredient," Nishida says.

A focus on quality and consistent, transparent practice has garnered trust and long-term loyalty from its customers. Consumers have trusted Metabolic's Chitosan After Diet for decades. It's straightforward to understand, with its purpose and active ingredient stated in the name. "We've prioritized providing accurate and transparent information about our products, especially the active ingredients they contain," Nishida explains.

Metabolic's product strategy is shaped by closely monitoring the needs of each demographic, driven by the increasing demand for health care and wellness products. Especially as Japan rapidly moves toward an aging society, Nishida states, "We aim to develop proteoglycan and brain care products through ODM partnerships with brands specifically targeting older consumers."

Part of this support stems from its open communication with customers. Metabolic has included a survey with each product for the last 30 years to connect with customers. And now, Metabolic takes feedback online, which can provide insight into product performance and customer satisfaction. "Their feedback plays a vital role in guiding future product development," Nishida says. He prioritizes real, measurable results and authentic customer experience more than most competitors. As he puts it, "What matters most is that customers feel the benefits they expect from our products."

The company develops its products through scientific research, and its Yeast x Enzyme Diet is a prime example. Responding to an enzyme-based product trend, the company believed enzymes alone were insufficient to deliver real results; instead, it developed a product that combined them with yeast. The product uses yeast with a molecular weight of approximately 10,000 daltons that a professor at a Korean university has clinically tested. "Our findings showed this combination was highly effective in suppressing appetite," Nishida explains.

As the number of inbound tourists increased in Japan, the number of products being taken home likewise increased. The company's sales increased to the point where production could not keep up. In response to the increased demand, Metabolic began collaborating with overseas companies in China and Hong Kong to establish itself in those markets to great success. It has the United States and Southeast Asia in its sights next, where it still has a small presence and is in the process of building a local sales network.

As Metabolic approaches its 40th anniversary in 2031, President Kazuhiro Nishida aims to evolve the firm into a global well-being brand where scientific integrity, cultural adaptability and customer trust remain central.



"What has always set us apart is our emphasis on delivering noticeable, positive results."

Kazuhiro Nishida
president, Metabolic Inc.

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