

■ JAPAN BUSINESS REPORT ■

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IZUMI CATERS TO DISCERNING CLIENTELE FOR ROLLER CHAINS

A growing appreciation in Southeast Asia for quality-assured and longer-lasting goods is creating demand for brands that are made and honed in Japan. When it comes to roller chains for vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles and industrial machinery, Izumi Chain Mfg stands out with 102 years of experience, the longest among Japan's chain manufacturers. It is the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) of high-class bicycle chains for Shimano, one of the world's largest cycling component producers, and Tsubakimoto, the world's largest industrial chain manufacturer.

"We've had long business relationships with these industry leaders, almost 50 years now," says Kazuyuki Higashino, president of Izumi. "Their technology inspired us to hone our own brand mainly for vehicles, bicycles and speciality chains."

Izumi roller chains, both OEM and original brand products, are exported all over the world. The company's single-speed chain is a particular favourite among cyclists, especially in the United States and those engaged in track racing. Quality inspected every step of the way, Izumi's products are valued for their durability and excellent performance. The company is also renowned for custom-made roller chains such as conveyors.

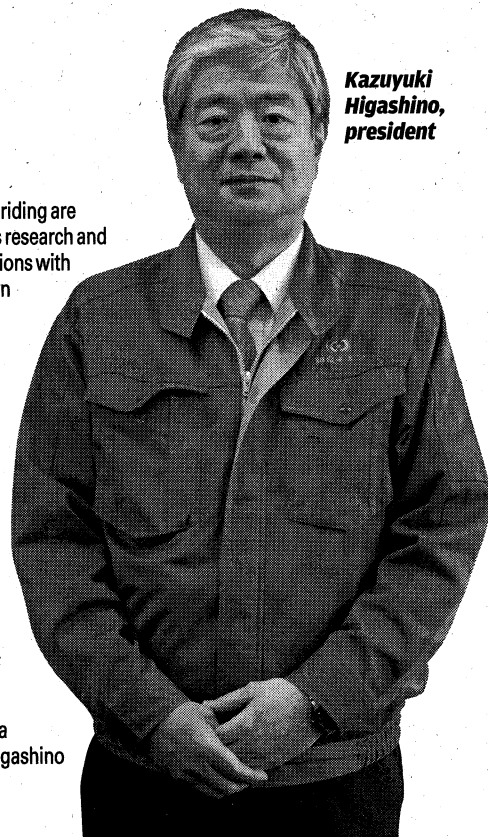
"Through technical collaborations with our customers, we are able to produce high-quality yet low-cost chains across markets. The key is to produce with stable quality and no disparity. It requires good craftsmanship alongside the technology to manufacture. Our long history gives us a competitive edge," Higashino says.

Keen on increasing its footprint in Southeast Asia, where the fitness

lifestyle and motorcycle riding are vibrant, Izumi welcomes research and development collaborations with the region's home-grown champions.

It is also seeking partnerships with established distributors of high-value and top-quality equipment especially in Southeast Asia. India and Africa are also expanding markets.

"We would like to be recognised as the trusted name when it comes to quality chains, and seek to gain No 1 footing across Asia by catering to the needs of a discerning clientele," Higashino says.



Kazuyuki Higashino, president

NOSUI BRINGS FRESHNESS FROM THE SEA TO THE TABLE

The seafood business is a battle against time. In 1956, when modern freezing technologies and business logistics were decades away from being foolproof, one company dared to defy the odds to bring freshness from the sea to the table – halfway around the world.

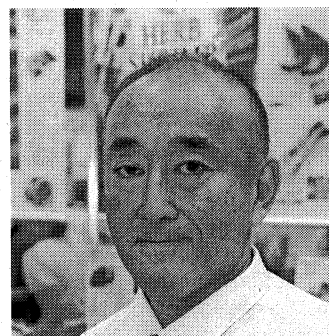
Nosui Corp began as a frozen shrimp exporter to the United States, later on adding oysters, fish and fish roe to its products. Today, the company's

and product quality at all times. "With seafood, quality is not just a competitive edge – it is a responsibility that we take seriously," says Hirohisa Kagiya, Nosui's managing director and chief operating officer of its marine products business sector.

"Our approach to business is based on our 'product-out, market-in' philosophy – where we combine our stringent standards to maintain the

most of its products still target the Japanese taste, Nosui is opening up to cater to a broader, more international palate.

Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland China, Singapore and Thailand are Nosui's biggest markets overseas, but the company envisions a much farther reach in the next decade. "From 10 per cent of overall revenues, overseas sales should account for at least 20 per cent"



FAIR CONSULTING GROUP OFFERS FAIR, ONE-STOP BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

Shepherding Japanese companies that embark on cross-border expansion while sharing gems of knowledge that take businesses to the next level, Fair Consulting Group (FCG) has been guiding its clients for almost 15 years in the areas of accounting and taxation, mergers and acquisitions (M&A) including human resources and system integration. Providing one-stop business management solutions, the highly specialised consulting firm aims to sustain its 20 per cent year-over-year growth in the next five years.

FCG is bound to continue its organic growth as it targets to manage 100 locations worldwide in the midterm. To date, it operates 22 offices in 14 countries serving a predominantly Japanese client base. The company seeks to increase its foreign clientele as it opens sites in Munich and New York this year while bolstering its presence in Asia.

"Our core belief or policy is to please clients," says Hitoshi Ban, founder and



Hitoshi Ban, founder and chairman

chairman of FCG. "We have an exceptional track record in helping demanding Japanese companies, and we want to extend this to the international market."

FCG solves clients' business

challenges by applying the *sampo yoshi* philosophy. Translating to three-way good or triple satisfaction, *sampo yoshi* is a traditional Japanese strategy that pursues what is good for the seller, buyer and society.

"We strive to be fair to sellers, buyers and the larger community at all times," Ban says. "This means reflecting *sampo yoshi* in our company culture – paying proper taxes, complying with regulations, providing high-quality services at reasonable prices, and driving people's growth wherever they are posted."

FCG is also keen on unlocking opportunities by applying artificial intelligence to its business to further improve efficiency, and expand its reference network globally.

"We build trust and we work with clients in accordance with the present technology," Ban says. "We ensure we do not fall behind developments to continue to win and serve customers."

STAR FLYER STEADILY EXPANDS WITH NICHE MARKET POSITIONING

Amid strong competition from Japan's full-service legacy airlines and low-cost carriers (LCCs), Star Flyer has succeeded in building a respected brand and reputation by reinforcing its strategic market positioning and route selection.

"We've found our niche by providing a higher level of service than budget airlines while offering boutique flights that are priced lower than mega carriers," says Sadami Matsuishi, president and CEO. Star Flyer flights also provide a viable alternative to high-speed rail service, or Shinkansen, in certain routes.

Labelling itself as a hybrid airline, Star Flyer is a distinct carrier based at offshore Kitakyushu Airport, one of Japan's few 24-hour airports. With business travellers

legroom compared to a typical LCC plane that seats 180 in a 28-inch pitch – or even a major carrier, which normally offers about 31-inch pitch for economy passengers.

"Passengers who keep flying with us see the extra leg room as a huge added benefit, especially for flights around two to three hours long," Matsuishi says.

Star Flyer passengers also enjoy wide, leather seats with footrests, power ports for laptops and mobile phones and personal entertainment screens – a novelty in the domestic market. Although free meals are not provided, Star Flyer serves coffee with chocolate, soup and soft drinks while LCCs only offer a light beverage service for a fee.



Sadami Matsuishi, president and CEO