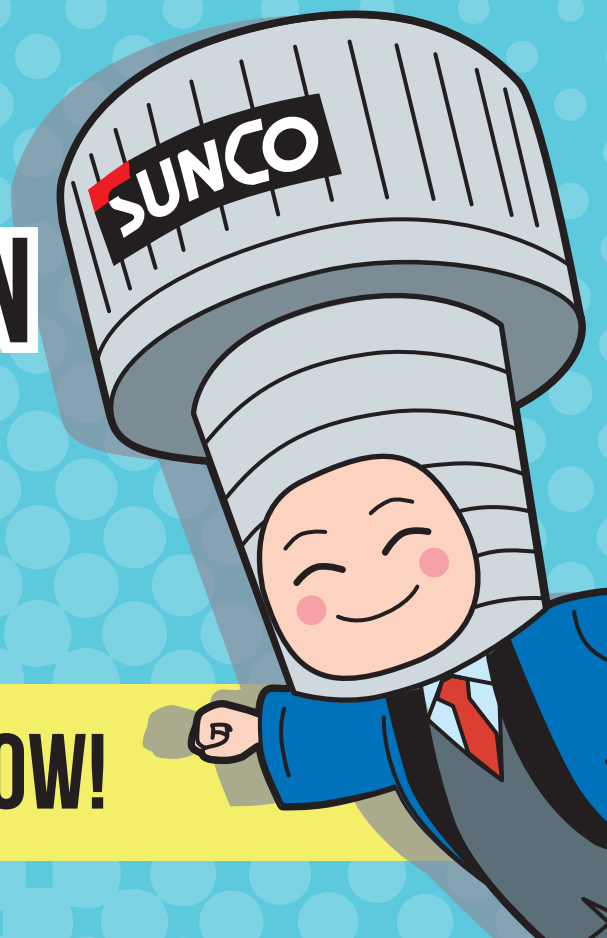


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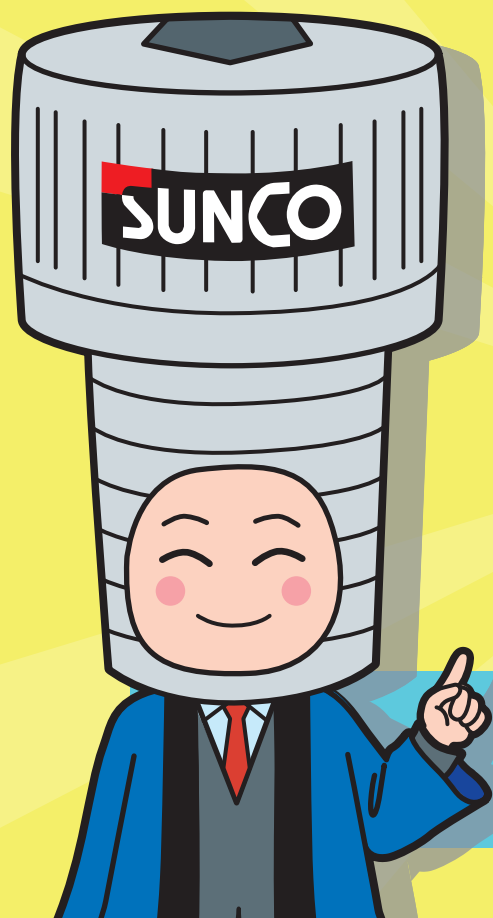


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**Issue
009**

1st June,

Neji Day



1st June is Neji Day. In this issue: Introducing topics featuring fasteners.

Neji Day – Enhancing the Social Status of Fasteners

Can Japanese Fasteners Compete on the Global Stage?

Expanding Business Abroad: Discussion with SUNCO x 5 Japanese Fastener Manufacturers

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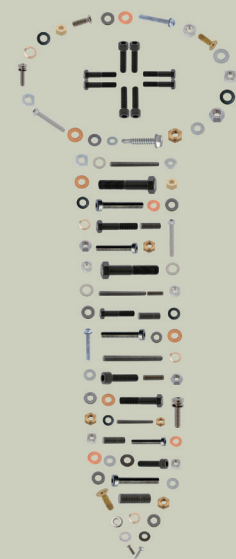
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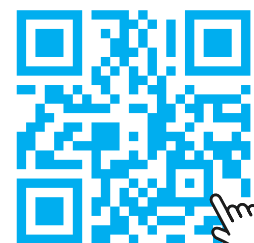
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Issue 006

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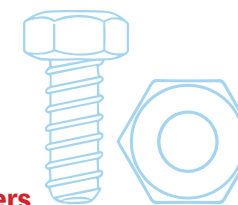
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In this issue: Introducing topics featuring fasteners!

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- Can Japanese Fasteners Compete on the Global Stage?
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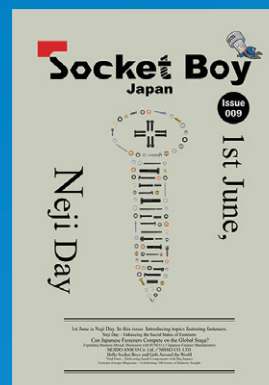
Shaping Clients' Vision

Akira Yoshida of EUREKA and the Art of Soft Toy Making



Socket Boy Japan

9th issue



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Neji Day

Enhancing Social Status of Fasteners



Neji Day banner displayed every year by Sunco Industries

Neji Day

Neji is the Japanese word for fasteners and in Japan, 1st June has now been designated as "Neji Day". The aim is to raise awareness about the importance of fasteners – components essential to manufacturing and indispensable to modern life. Fasteners ensure the safety and durability of countless products, from home appliances and buildings to precision machinery. Neji Day gives us an opportunity to appreciate the vital role fasteners play in our daily lives.

Origin of Neji Day

Neji Day was established in 1975 by the Fasteners Institute of Japan, the country's only national-level organization composed of fastener manufacturers and distributors. 1st June was chosen because the Industrial Standardization Law was enacted on 1st June 1949, leading to the registration of fastener-related products as part of the Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS). JIS, Japan's national system of industrial standards, defines measurements and specifications that promote uniformity and high quality. By establishing national-level standards, Japan ensured the consistent reliability of its industrial products – supporting the growth and international competitiveness of its industries, including the fastener sector.

Activities on Neji Day

Every year around Neji Day, various promotional activities take place. Fastener manufacturers and distributors participate in panel discussions, exhibitions and community events. Some organizations invite the public to submit slogans promoting fasteners, while others create and sell commemorative merchandise. The Neji Day Logo is provided free of charge, allowing both companies and individuals from any industry to use it – for example, on business cards or envelopes. The design can also be customized. These ongoing efforts have helped raise awareness of Neji Day both inside and outside the fastener industry, contributing to its further development.

Fasteners in the Future

Neji Day is an excellent opportunity to share the value of manufacturing and the essential role of fasteners in everyday life. Thanks to the JIS standard, Japanese fasteners maintain an exceptionally high level of quality, enjoying strong trust from industries around the world. The fastener industry will continue to highlight the importance and appeal of fasteners through Neji Day activities – and its presence is expected to become even more prominent in the years ahead.

Article by Nono Kobayashi

JIS B 1111

JIS B 0201

JIS B 1111

JIS B 1188

JIS B 1188



JIS fasteners Sunco Industries deals with



Neji Day logo distributed by Neji Japan for free

In February 2026, Sunco Industries held a roundtable discussion with five key suppliers. Building on the first session held in July 2025, this second discussion explored the theme “From importing to exporting: overseas markets opened by Japanese fasteners.” Participants shared practical insights into overseas business development, lessons learned from their international operation and perspective on future growth opportunities

To begin, could each of you briefly introduce your company?

Hashimoto: Our U.S. subsidiary was established in 1986, and we began local manufacturing and sales in 1990. In 2005, we opened a factory in China, which initially produced molds and tools but now manufactures bolts and nuts as well. However, because a large share of its output serves the automotive sector, our Chinese operations are currently facing some challenges.

Kariya: Our international business, dates back to around 1987, when we began supplying our flagship product, PIAS, to a German customer – a relationship that has continued for more than 40 years. In addition, our bi-metal drill screw PIASTA* is sold worldwide, particularly in Europe. At present, approximately 60% of our total sales come from overseas markets.

*PIASTA: a bi-metal drill screw developed by QP Fastening Works, using different materials for the head and drilling tip.

Taniguchi: Founded in 1961, our company enters its 66th fiscal year this year. Our Vietnam factory, established in 2017, is also about to celebrate its 10th anniversary. When Europe imposed anti-dumping duties on China-made threaded rods, our core product category, this created a significant opportunity for us. As a result, our business expanded rapidly across Europe, where we now serve approximately 20 companies.

Shiba: Currently, we do not export directly overseas; instead, we export through trading companies. About 30 years ago, we did export directly to the United States, but exchange rate fluctuations eventually made the business unprofitable. Today, however, both our cost structure and the global environment have changed. This year, we hope to actively visit overseas markets and lay the groundwork for re-entering international business.

Murakami: Our business has three pillars: steel wires for cold heading and cold forging, hexagon socket head cap screws

and JFE high-strength bolts. While we do not export directly, our hexagon socket head cap screws are exported to countries such as China and India, where they are used in robotics and machine tool industries.

Takada: Founded in 1948, Sunco is a trading company specializing in fasteners. Although our primary business remains domestic, we established the International Trade Section about eight years ago to expand overseas operations. Initially, our focus was mainly on imports. In addition, as a trading company, we place strong emphasis on public relations. Through initiatives such as publishing our proprietary magazine Socket Boy and advertising in fastener-related publications, we aim to communicate information about the Japanese fastener industry and market to a global audience.

Hiraoka: The core objective of our export business is to steadily increase the number of customers. By looking beyond the domestic market and expanding overseas, we believe that even gaining one additional customer at a time will ultimately contribute to sustainable sales growth.

From an overseas business perspective, what do you consider your company’s key strengths, and where are you focusing your efforts most?

Hashimoto: Our strength lies in our people. We have employees with overseas business experience in the U.S. and China, and we often assign younger staff to international roles. This results in relatively low resistance to overseas business within our organization.

Kariya: Our key strength is the strong brand image associated with PIAS and PIASTA, which are widely recognized as high-quality products. In particular, European customers often associate PIAS with premium construction drilling screws, giving us a clear competitive advantage.

Taniguchi: My view may differ slightly, but I believe our greatest strength lies in our corporate culture. Threaded bolts, our main product, are difficult to differentiate by quality alone, and we cannot compete with overseas manufacturers in terms of scale. Nevertheless, our willingness to take on new challenges with a positive attitude - “That sounds interesting, let’s try

Roundtable Discussion #2 Can Japanese Fasteners Compete on the Global Stage?

it” - is our strongest asset.

Shiba: Although we have yet to expand overseas, we aim to use the same strengths we have cultivated domestically.

These include our integrated production system - from wire drawing and heading to plating and packaging - as well as our emphasis on service quality.

Murakami: Our strength lies in quality assurance that extends all the way back to the raw materials. Having originally started as a wire manufacturer, we maintain close, long-standing relationships with steel producers, enabling rigorous quality control from the material stage onward.

Takada: Sunco’s greatest strength is our extensive product lineup centered on JIS fasteners. We currently handle approximately two million SKUs and offer overseas customers the same advantages as in Japan: small-lot orders, a wide variety, and rapid delivery. Demand is particularly strong for fasteners that are difficult to procure locally but are needed urgently.

We think the reason why our customers choose us is because of these factors. The need for fasteners that cannot be obtained locally but that are needed for immediate use is high and we receive a lot of orders on that basis.

Hiraoka: Our logistics center is another major strength. Located in Higashiosaka, a city renowned for its manufacturing heritage, our mission is to deliver JIS fasteners to customers worldwide through a highly efficient logistics system. By fully leveraging this system, we are able to ensure fast and reliable product delivery.

“Quality” has come up as a key word. How do you feel Japanese quality is viewed by companies outside Japan?

Hashimoto: I believe Japanese products are widely recognized for their high quality, and products manufactured by Japanese companies are trusted overseas. We often hear positive feedback from European companies regarding the quality of PIASTA, produced by QP Fastening Works.

Kariya: Yes, we feel our quality is well appreciated by many customers. We focus not only on delivering high-quality products but also on responding quickly and attentively to custom-

er inquiries, both domestically and internationally. This kind of Japanese “quality,” including our approach to customer service, is a clear competitive advantage over overseas companies.

What do you think your company needs to strengthen to support further development?

Hashimoto: In addition to reviewing how we communicate our added value, I believe it is essential to further strengthen our corporate culture and organizational capabilities. Ultimately, trust in “people” is often the deciding factor for customers, and in some cases, it can be even more important than the product itself. It is crucial to build a system in which overseas business is not handled exclusively by a single department. Instead, the entire organization should be involved, ensuring that any employee can respond with the same level of speed and quality.

Kariya: I believe it is crucial for us to actively turn our attention to overseas markets. In the past, although we often heard about other companies’ overseas businesses, we had limited opportunities to directly gather information on market trends and customer needs. As a result, we did not yet have sufficient insight or the know-how that is essential for developing overseas business. When visiting overseas markets, I also feel it is important to go beyond formal business meetings and build trust through more personal interactions, such as having lunch or dinner with clients.

Taniguchi: At our company, I believe we need to further strengthen internal education and information sharing. As shipment volumes and business scale continue to grow, work has increasingly become dependent on specific individuals, with knowledge and know-how concentrated among a limited number of employees. Going forward, it has become essential for the entire organization to work together. Our most pressing challenge is to establish systems that enable information and expertise to be shared widely across the company, along with a well-structured internal training framework.

Shiba: With the ongoing difficulty of securing personnel in Japan, we believe it is increasingly important to further promote labor-saving initiatives and automation within our factories. Drawing on our experience of withdrawing from export business due to cost issues some 30 years ago, we are now planning to build a new automated factory, with construction scheduled to begin in October next year. By strengthening our cost competitiveness through automation,



we aim to establish a manufacturing system that customers will actively choose.

Murakami: I believe we need to further strengthen our ability to communicate externally, as well as working on our branding efforts. In the Japanese market, there has traditionally been an environment where high-quality products would sell naturally. However, when expanding overseas, even excellent products cannot be properly evaluated if our company and products are not widely known. In today's environment, where information searches driven by AI have become mainstream, enhancing our communication capabilities and strengthening brand visibility - such as improving search rankings and overall exposure - are extremely important. These efforts must go hand in hand with the continued development of high-quality products.

Takada: I believe it is essential to establish clear internal standards for import and export operations. In the past, these tasks were handled solely by the International Trade Section. However, sales and purchasing departments are now gradually becoming involved in overseas business, and we are building a company-wide structure that enables us to manage international operations more effectively.

Hiraoka: We would like to continue expanding our product lineup for both domestic and international markets, with a particular focus on delivering JIS fasteners to customers worldwide.

What kind of opportunities do you think Japanese manufacturers and trading companies will have when selling fasteners overseas in the future?

Taniguchi: I believe there are significant opportunities, particularly for manufacturers whose high-quality products ensure that they stand out from rest. As we search for high-quality partners to support our overseas business, customers abroad are likewise seeking manufacturers that can deliver superior quality.

Have you had any memorable experiences where your product quality was especially well received by customers in Europe?

Taniguchi: This is a situation commonly faced by threaded rod manufacturers. Even when we lower our prices, competitors often reduce theirs even further, leading to intense price competition. In response, we chose to shift the conversation away from price and instead emphasized the quality of our products. As a result, our customer told us, "These products can't

be substituted by anything else" and ultimately decided to continue purchasing from us. This experience stands out as a clear example of how quality, rather than price, was truly valued - and it eventually led to large-volume orders.

Do any of the other participants see future opportunities based on your own experiences?

Murakami: I believe that choosing where to compete is crucial. Our hexagon socket head cap screws are often used by manufacturers of high-end machine tools. On one occasion, we asked a China-based company - which sources almost all of its products locally except ours - why they continue to purchase from us. Their response was very telling: "Even if we reduce the cost of the bolts we use, the impact on total cost is minimal. In that case, it makes more sense to choose high-quality Japanese products, even if they are slightly more expensive." Based on this experience, I believe that companies competing in high-specification industries tend to prioritize quality over price.

As a trading company, what kinds of opportunities do you see for yourselves going forward?

Takada: I believe it is important for Japanese companies to take a more active role in the overseas markets. According to overseas market reports and business publications, the global fastener industry is expected to continue growing. If we carefully consider how to present and promote ourselves within this expanding market, there are meaningful opportunities to demonstrate our strengths - both in product quality and service.

What steps do you think are important for spreading Japanese fasteners worldwide?

Hashimoto: I believe that engagement with industry associations and public organizations is essential. I recently read that the Taiwan Industrial Fasteners Institute (TIFI) established a dedicated team to improve quality and actively participate in exhibitions in countries such as Germany and Poland. While Taiwan is promoting itself overseas in a coordinated manner through its industry association, I feel that Japan had room for improvement in this regard. Since individual companies face limits in terms of funding and resources, effectively leveraging external systems and institutional support is extremely important.

Roundtable Discussion #2 Can Japanese Fasteners Compete on the Global Stage?

Kariya: I believe that simply selling drilling screws is no longer sufficient; providing clear added value is increasingly important. In overseas market, we have successfully built strong partnerships - for example, with a German company - and have received very positive feedback

regarding our product quality. However, it is difficult to establish a market presence through drilling screws alone. The drilling screw market has already matured and is beginning to enter a phase of gradual decline. Under these conditions, for example, Japanese Building Standard Act specifies the use of designated construction materials for certain structural applications. By positioning our products within such regulatory or system-based frameworks, and by having their importance properly recognized, we believe we can create new opportunities for future growth.

Shiba: Expanding business overseas is extremely challenging, as it requires a great deal of motivation and sustained energy. For that reason, it is reassuring to know that there is support available from the government and that appropriate opportunities may arise through such frameworks. One example is our nut and conical spring washer assembly, a product that combines nuts and washers. While this product is fairly common in Japan - even though the number of manufacturers capable of producing it is limited - we were surprised to learn that it is considered relatively rare in the United States. This experience made us realize for the first time that products regarded as standard in Japan can, in fact, represent valuable opportunities in overseas markets. At present, we are also considering expanding our product lineup to include items such as contamination preventive rolled nuts. By introducing new products, we believe there is potential to access markets that were previously out of reach with our existing offerings and to further broaden our customer base.

Takada: As a trading company, we aim to continue our PR efforts so that overseas companies recognize us as a reliable partner they can work with. To stand out in overseas markets, it is essential to expand our sales channels and steadily acquire new customers. With this in mind, we believe it is important to keep introducing our suppliers' products to new customers while broadening our distribution networks.

Hiraoka: While remaining true to our role as a trading company, we want to continue refining our ability to deliver products precisely when customers need them, in the quantities they require - whether large or small - and to take this capability to an even higher level. When it comes to acquiring new overseas customers, we have been seeing a steady increase in inquiries from the United States, and we are therefore considering placing greater emphasis on this market.

At the same time, what is most important for us now is flexibility. Rather than focusing solely on specific countries, we believe it is essential to pay close attention to all markets from which we receive orders. This approach allows us to begin market research organically, such as identifying potential seeds for new business opportunities.

With regard to PR initiatives, we are in the process of making our website multilingual, and we intend to continue taking on new challenges while learning and adapting along the way.

For those companies thinking about expanding abroad, are there any successful experiences or initiatives from your own overseas expansion that you would like to share?

Hashimoto: I believe that having your products adopted as industry standards can be a significant advantage. When we established our factory in the United States, there were no existing standards for tension control bolts. As a result, during the 1990s, we became actively involved in the standardization process and helped develop the foundational requirements that later became ASTM standards F1852 and F2280.

Taniguchi: We are planning to open a new plating factory in Vietnam in April 2027. When we first established our company in Vietnam ten years ago, we received a great deal of advice encouraging us to "start small and gradually expand," and we followed that approach. However, our products are ones where competitiveness depends on volume. Based on this experience, I have come to believe that the most important factor is committing fully from the outset and approaching the project on a reasonably large scale. Looking back, I feel that projects often succeed when you challenge yourself by aiming slightly beyond your current capacity - eventually, you grow into that larger framework and make it work.

Finally, based on today's discussion, could you share the initiatives your company plans to pursue going forward?

Hashimoto: I believe the key issue is how we develop people through overseas business. Our strength lies in our human resources, not only our Japanese employees, but also our local staff abroad. For example, a member of our sales department who was involved in establishing our Chinese office later succeeded in securing monthly orders of 70,000 units for sewing machine applications. This is a scale that would be difficult to imagine in the Japanese market. However, through years of careful development and experience, that individual's efforts have finally borne fruit. By nurturing talent in this way, we are able to uncover new market opportunities and possibilities overseas.



Roundtable Discussion #2 Can Japanese Fasteners Compete on the Global Stage?



Kariya: We take pride in being a pioneer in bi metal products, and going forward, we aim to expand our product lineup beyond standard items to include more distinctive offerings. In Europe, demand for long length fasteners is growing, yet quality consistency in this segment remains an issue. I believe this is an area where we can take the initiative and set higher standards ourselves. From this perspective, reviewing and restructuring our quality framework will be one of the most important themes for us moving forward.

Taniguchi: Personally, I feel that we want to continue pursuing initiatives that are genuinely interesting and challenging. About five years ago, we created a ten year business plan and wrote down every idea we could think of at the time. One of those ideas was the establishment of a base in Europe. Today, we are actively working toward the launch of Nakaumi EU in 2027. While we cannot yet say exactly how things will unfold, I feel that a combination of luck, timing, and fate has brought us to this point.

Shiba: I feel that we are currently facing a major turning point, shaped by geopolitical developments and other external factors. Issues such as steel tariffs, along with the exceptionally prolonged weakness of the yen, have created a rapidly changing environment. I believe that meaningful opportunities often emerge precisely during times of such change. Hearing the experiences and perspectives shared today has been highly motivating for me. Moving forward, I want to continue taking an active approach, whether that means traveling to the United States or visiting other countries this year.

Murakami: As we celebrate our 100th anniversary and look ahead to the next five or ten years, I feel that we are entering a new era in which the traditional principles of

QCD - quality, cost, and delivery - that we have long practiced almost instinctively will become increasingly difficult to sustain. In this new environment, I believe that carefully carrying through what is considered “normal” or taken for granted in Japan, and executing it thoroughly, can become a powerful differentiator. These very practices have the potential to create our unique sales points and attract attention from overseas markets as well. To achieve this, we must first strengthen our foundation through initiatives such as human resource development, capital investment, IT implementation, and improvements in factory efficiency.

Takada: Looking ahead, we intend to continue sharing information in the same proactive manner we have pursued to date. To encourage overseas customers to choose our services, it is essential to further raise our profile and position ourselves as a company they can confidently select as a partner. In addition, as a company engaged in media activities, we would like to help build a foundation in which Japan is clearly recognized as a key player in the global fastener industry.

Hiraoka: We would like to proactively expand our base of new customers, while at the same time increasing opportunities to introduce our suppliers' products. In parallel, we aim to establish systems that enhance visibility online, in search engine results and through effective information sharing I believe that if, over the coming decades, we can build a structure in which your products and information consistently contribute to our sales growth, this will be one meaningful way for us to give back to our suppliers for their continued support. Thank you very much for today's valuable discussion.

Article by Chizuru Kishibe & Nono Kobayashi



What is the TV program 'It's a screw world' ?

It explains how fasteners are made - something most people don't know - and interesting ways of using them. It's a small TV show that focuses on how interesting and great fasteners are!

Broadcaster: Kansai Television Co. Ltd.
Broadcasting time: 11:09-11:25 PM on every Sunday



Episode 1

Gigantic fasteners



A gigantic fastener, so large that two hands are needed to hold it. Hundreds of these massive fasteners are used to connect wind turbines props.

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Huge fasteners are often produced by heating carbon steel. Heating makes the material easier to shape, and they are then strengthened by hot forging.

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Episode 2

Fasteners that prevent theft

At Sunco Industries Co., Ltd.

They have many tamperproof fasteners that surprise and have people say, “we never thought of that!”. “Toranaide” is a fastener that is useful to prevent car registration plates from being stolen because it can only be unfastened by a special tool. “Safety Lock Bolt” is a fastener with a head part that detaches when fastened firmly.



Anti-theft fastener that can't be turned anticlockwise!



Fasteners are normally fastened by turning them clockwise. After fastening the “one-direction neji”, it can't be turned anticlockwise and so can't be unfastened. Tamper-proof fasteners reveal a lot of unique ideas!

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Hello Socket Boys and Girls Around the World!

There are still many fastener companies around the world that we don't know about. Let's say hello...



Vital Parts LTD

Delivering Small Components with Big Impact

Based in Maidstone, UK, Vital Parts Ltd has built a strong reputation for reliability, technical expertise and customer-focused service since its establishment in 2013. With a technical office in Bournemouth and a team of around 50 employees, the company has grown rapidly by addressing gaps it identified early on in both product availability and industry customer service.

From its beginnings, Vital Parts set out to improve the customer experience through responsiveness, dependable lead times, and strong technical support. A major turning point came with the launch of a new website and the strategic expansion into metal fasteners, complementing its established ranges of plastic and rubber components. Continued investment in warehouse capacity has since allowed the company to significantly increase stockholding and further improve delivery performance.

The company offers a carefully developed range of components, including protective caps and plugs, tube inserts, mechanical hardware and metal fasteners. Alongside standard products, Vital Parts is well known for its custom manufacturing capabilities, supported by an in-house design and prototyping team that develops bespoke solutions for specific applications.

Vital Parts supplies a broad mix of industries, including renewable energy, furniture manufacturing, industrial equipment and data centers. Its products are used in applications ranging from large-scale industrial systems to everyday consumer products.

A standout achievement came last year, when the company successfully shipped over 50,000 customer orders - a milestone that highlights both its operational capability and customer trust. Guided by its core values - Listen, Appreciate, Manufacture and Deliver - Vital Parts continues to focus on growth, stronger partnerships, and delivering one of the most responsive component supply services in the UK.



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Fastener Europe Magazine

Celebrating 100 Issues of Industry Insight

Fastener Europe Magazine marks a significant milestone with the publication of its 100th issue, celebrating more than two decades of dedicated service to the global fastener industry. The company was founded as Ali Baysal in 1998 in Istanbul, Türkiye. It began its journey with a clear vision: to strengthen sectoral publishing and support industry connections through information and events. Over the years, this vision has expanded internationally, with offices established in Germany and representation in Taiwan.

In 2006, the company Fastener Europe Magazine was established as a subsidiary of Ali Baysal and a magazine of the same name was launched. *Fastener Europe Magazine* was created to address a notable gap in international fastener publications. Since then, it has grown into one of the industry's most widely distributed magazines, reaching readers in 56 countries.

With both print and digital editions, the magazine connects manufacturers, suppliers, distributors and end users through timely news, in-depth analysis, company features and coverage of global exhibitions.

One of the magazine's distinguishing strengths is its strong presence at international trade fairs. It is distributed at more than 30 fastener exhibitions and over 50 related sector events each year, making it the most visible publications in the global fastener community. Supported by a professional team of experienced editors, designers and marketing specialists, the

magazine delivers reliable, high-quality content tailored to industry needs.

Looking ahead, Fastener Europe Magazine aims to strengthen its digital platforms, expand global reach and become a key reference in the fastener industry, while advancing its long-term vision of establishing a World Fastener Association to connect and support national fastener associations worldwide.

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Who's the next Socket Boy or Girl?
SEE YOU NEXT TIME...



To Become the Most Trusted Manufacturer in Asia

President and CEO Hidefumi Ando

Founded in 1939, Ansko Co. Ltd. is a Japanese fastener manufacturer with an 87-year history.

The current President and CEO, Hidefumi Ando, is the company's third generation leader. After graduating from university, he joined a trading company and based himself in Shanghai for four years from 1996 to 2000. During this time, he traveled extensively to countries, witnessing first-hand how cities transformed at a time of rapid economic growth. Drawing on his international experience, he now leads the company while also actively promoting its overseas expansion.

The Thailand base connecting Asia

Located in Chon Buri in Thailand, Ansko (Thailand) Co. Ltd. is positioned as a hub connecting Japan, ASEAN and Indian markets. Established in 2012 under Ando's leadership, the Thai base is not only strategically located but also serves as a practical model for applying Japanese style manufacturing overseas. As Ando explains, "The development and management of our Thai factory will become the foundation for future expansion into India." With Thailand as its main overseas base, Ansko aims to further strengthen and expand its global business.

Challenges in establishing an Indian base

Ansko has been researching the Indian market for the past two years with the goal of establishing a local base. In January, Ansko exhibited for the third time at IMTEX, India's largest machine tool and manufacturing technology exhibition. Reflecting on the market, Ando notes: "India has significant growth potential but there are challenges related to legislation, infrastructure and cultural differences – especially



President and CEO Hidefumi Ando



when compared to Thailand, where many Japanese companies already operate."

Ansko remains committed to steadily moving toward expansion in India.

Becoming a trusted manufacturer through sustainable management

Looking ahead, President and CEO Ando stated that "Ansko aims to become the most trusted socket screw manufacturer in Asia". To achieve this, he emphasizes the importance of first strengthening the company's foundation in Japan through reviewing its manufacturing and sales systems. According to Ando, the true strength of Japanese manufacturing lies not only in product quality but also in all the various aspects of quality, including cost, lead time, corporate social responsibility and a people-centered approach to employee well-being. "Rather than competing solely on price, it is essential to build long-term trust with customers who share these values," he says.

Product highlights

One recommended product is Ansko's grub screw. Many visitors are surprised by its exceptional quality, demonstrating that even the smallest fasteners can be finished to an extremely high standard – a clear testament to the company's technical expertise.

Another key strength is Ansko's anti-loosening process, developed through a technical partnership with ND Industries in the United States. This process applies a nylon powder coating rather than adhesive, maintaining strong anti-loosening effectiveness even after repeated use. It is highly valued for machine tools and industrial machinery applications.



Recommended product, PLB v2

PLB v2 received Fastener Innovation Award in 2025

Nissei Co. Ltd. is a manufacturer specializing in the production and sale of thread rolling machines. One of the company's key strengths lies in developing its own programs for these machines, enabling it to create highly customized products tailored to specific customer requirements. In addition to machinery, Nissei also manufactures anti-loosening bolts, PLB v2 (Perfect Lock Bolt), by leveraging its roll-forming technology and develops specialized oils optimized for roll-forming processes.

Shuichi Amano, Executive Vice Chairman

Executive Vice Chairman, Shuichi Amano, joined the company after graduating from university and has since been engaged in product development. He began his career in the technical department, where he designed an automated loading machine that feeds materials into fastener thread rolling machines. He later became head of the technical department and has spent the past 17 years developing CNC thread rolling machines alongside the PLB v2.

Passed ISO16130 vibration tests PLB v2: Achieving the highest level of anti-loosening performance

Using its proprietary roll-forming technology, Nissei developed its original product, PLB v2. This product has demonstrated the highest level of locking performance in tests conducted under the stringent ISO 16130 standard for anti-loosening products. PLB v2 features a unique design: a single bolt with two different thread leads, paired with a corresponding double-nut system. The outer nut supports the inner nut, effectively preventing loosening caused by vibration.

Developing Own Products with Threading Skills



Shuichi Amano, Executive Vice Chairman

Developed through 17 years of trial and error

The development of PLB v2 began when a major trading company asked whether products typically made through machining could instead be manufactured using roll forming. Amano explains that creating the thread posed the greatest challenge. The product's defining feature – two different thread leads on a single bolt – required minimizing the volume difference between the threads to ensure stability during the rolling process. Forming threads was the hardest challenge they faced while developing the product. Although extensive research ultimately solved this challenge, another issue emerged during mass production: short tool life. In the early stage, the die used for rolling would fail after only a few hundred operations. However, by refining the thread profile, the team successfully improved durability to an acceptable level.

After overcoming all these challenges over 17 years, PLB v2 was finally brought to market. Nissei now sells the product along with licensing rights. Amano stated, "It would take too long for us to introduce PLB v2 to the world on our own. Through licensing, we aim to expand its adoption worldwide while building mutually beneficial partnerships."

Bringing products that benefit society to the world

Nissei has set a target of achieving sales of 2 billion yen while promoting PLB v2 both domestically and internationally. This reflects the company's commitment to enhancing safety across society through its innovative products. PLB v2 is expected to play a key role in improving safety around the world in the future.



ANSCO (THAILAND) CO., LTD.

Article by Nono Kobayashi

Article by Ikumi Shinomiya

Sightseeing

Relaxing and Entertaining: Super Sento! Naniwa Utopia



Address: 3-4-21, Nagadou, Higashi-Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture 577-0056, Japan

Just a five-minute walk toward Kawachi-Eiwa Station from Fuse Station in Higashiosaka, you will find Naniwa Utopia, a seven-story building constantly wrapped in clouds of warm steam. Loved by men and women of all ages, it is a popular local landmark. In the past, every neighborhood in Higashiosaka had a public bath facility, identifiable by its tall chimney, and people enjoyed them as their “neighborhood living room”. Naniwa Utopia continues that nostalgic tradition while at the same time evolving into a modern 24/7 facility. Japan’s public baths, called *Sento*, are a unique system developed during the Edo period - about 300 years ago. Nowadays, many large capital companies combine the *Sento* concept with entertainment, creating what are known as “*Super Sento*”. Opened in 1986, Naniwa Utopia is recognized as one of the pioneering *Super Sentos*. Many regulars – including people enjoying a night out in Fuse, as well as rugby fans visiting the revered Hanazono Rugby Stadium – make a stop Naniwa Utopia as part of their schedule.

One of the greatest attractions of Naniwa Utopia is that the entire seven-story building is dedicated to bathing. The men’s baths occupy the 5th to 7th floor, while the women’s baths are on the 2nd to 4th floor. As you go up each floor, the water temperature rises and the atmosphere becomes livelier. Japan is currently experiencing a huge sauna boom and Naniwa Utopia offers plenty of sauna options too. Guests can enjoy a Finnish sauna, a steam sauna infused with white birch aroma and even a salt sauna known for its skin-beautifying effect. The post bath, rest area, essential for any *Super Sento*, is also taken very seriously here. The facility includes a restaurant, game corner, wall-to-wall comic books and massage services, providing everything from meals to total relaxation. The reclining chairs come with free Wi-Fi and power sockets and it’s not unusual to see elderly guests dozing off over a

newspaper beside young businesspeople dozing off while working on their laptops. The atmosphere feels almost like a second home.

Naniwa Utopia continues to preserve and pass down the culture of hot baths, saunas, good food and the concept of a “neighborhood living room” to future generations. Why not stop by Fuse’s public living room tonight with a towel in hand?



Gourmet

Gojodo Bloom like fireworks, “Konoike-Hanabi”



Gojodo's signature product Konoike-Hanabi

Founded in 1975 by Toshinobu Shibata, *Gojodo* is a much-loved, traditional Japanese sweets shop, cherished by the local community for more than half a century. Today, Toshinobu’s daughter, Aya Shibata, carries the legacy - blending classic techniques with fresh, modern ideas. Inside the shop, long-term favorites like *Matsurimochi*, a signature item since the shop first opened, sit alongside traditional Japanese sweets such as *Warabimochi* and *Kuzumochi*. You will also find creative East-meets-West treats, including fruit-filled *Daifuku* and macarons. Gorgeously wrapped in attractive paper and decorated with ribbons, these packages are especially eye-catching, making these products popular with all generations, including visitors from overseas. Seasonal limited-edition items also appear throughout the year, giving customers something new to look forward to each time they visit.

Gojodo continues to evolve while honoring tradition, always challenging itself to create new forms of Japanese confectionery. Among

their many innovations, the most iconic is *Konoike-Hanabi*. This colorful Daifuku is inspired by the image of fireworks blooming in the night sky – *Hanabi* in Japanese – and is named after the “Konoike” area in Higashiosaka. *Konoike-Hanabi* is made by wrapping five types of fruits - raspberry, blueberry, pineapple, orange and banana – together with whipped cream and smooth red bean paste, all enclosed in *Habutae-mochi*, a soft type of Japanese rice cake. In just one bite, you can taste a burst of vibrant fruitiness and subtle sweetness, revealing how it earns its nickname - “edible fireworks”.

This sweets is now available at major gateways of Kansai region, including JR Shin-Osaka Station and Osaka Itami Airport and is a very popular souvenir. They are sold not only in shops but also frozen, through vending machines. Simply thaw a frozen *Konoike-Hanabi* at room temperature for about one hour and you can enjoy authentic Japanese traditional sweets at anytime!

In 2022, *Gojodo* renewed its main

shop, making a fresh start for this long-respected brand. Combining the founder’s philosophy and the second generation’s creative spirit, their sweets from Higashiosaka continues to bring delight and a smile to people in Japan and around the world.



The traditional sweet, *Matsurimochi*, eaten during Autumn Festival in Kawachi area

Main shop address: 1-5-7, Higashikonoike cho, Higashiosaka City, Osaka
Opening hours: 9:30am to 6:00pm

College Rugby- A Player Incubator for Japanese Rugby Kansai College League: Hanazono Develops Match-Readiness



In the 2020 season, Tenri University won the National University Championship – the first team from the Kansai region to do so in 36 years.

©KRPU M.Noguchi

Since 2007, the Japan National Rugby Team had been led by non-Japanese head coaches. They all have pointed out a long-standing issue: players often value success in College Rugby more than playing for the national team. While this may seem contradictory, the reality is that College Rugby has long supported the growth and development of Japanese rugby. Japan does not have a fully developed nationwide youth academy system for rugby. Instead, talented players gradually gather at high schools and universities known for their rugby teams, where they refine their skills through rigorous training and competitive matches. This combination of education and after-school club culture serves as the country's practical player-development pathway. Within this tradition, loyalty to one's school team is highly valued, and universities collectively contribute to the sport's advancement. Because of this system, conflicts occasionally arise between national team schedules and university commitments. However, the intense competitive experience gained at the university level teaches players to fight for every last point – an

essential quality for higher-level players. College Rugby consists mainly of three leagues - Kanto Taikousen Group College League, Kanto College League and Kansai College League. Although national attention tends to focus on the Kanto Taikousen Group College League, the Kansai College League is especially compelling due to its competitive balance. Each year brings unexpected result, sometimes with underdogs toppling former champions. Doshisha University once dominated the league, but the competitive landscape has been fluid for the past 20 years. Ritsumeikan University, Kanseigakuin University, Kyoto Sangyo University, Osaka University of Health and Sport Sciences and Tenri University are now the main title contenders, collectively raising the overall level of competition. Their performances at the National University Championship have been strong – highlighted by Tenri University's 2020 national victory. Kyoto Sangyo University has also shown consistent excellence, regularly finishing in the top four. The league's main stage is Hanazono Rugby Stadium in Higashio-

saka. Known as the most important location for high school rugby, Hanazono also hosts the opening and final rounds of the Kansai College League. The opening matches are typically held in mid-September, and the final round takes place in late November or early December – always at this historic stadium. Here, players sharpen their match-readiness through 80 minutes battles filled with tactical adjustments, high-pressured tackles and critical kicking decisions. These experiences prepare them for the professional league, League ONE, and for competing on the national team.

College Rugby provides the national team with both essential match-readiness and structural challenges. It remains the "seedbed" that supports the foundation of Japanese rugby. The fierce, high-level contests at Hanazono help nurture the players who will become Japan's future stars.



Shaping Clients' Vision

Akira Yoshida of EUREKA and the Art of Soft Toy Making



Akira Yoshida, based in Nara Prefecture, Japan, runs EUREKA, a creative studio known for its meticulous craftsmanship. His work spans a wide range of fields – from creating bespoke soft toys, puppets and mascot costumes to stage design and even developing headphones for people with hearing difficulties in collaboration with a laboratory at the University of Tokyo. Today, however, EUREKA's core focus is soft toy production. Yoshida began making soft toys while he was still a university student. His uniquely crafted creations quickly caught people's attention and led to commissioned work. He now receives a wide variety of orders including projects from major anime production companies, museums and the volunteer organization, Make-A-Wish, which supports children with critical illnesses.

The beginning of making soft toys

Yoshida's journey into soft toy making started with a moment of inspiration. While watching television, he saw a really cute sea creature, a dugong, and decided to make a soft toy that looked like it. Having belonged to drama clubs in high school and university, helping create stage props and costumes, he was already comfortable using a sewing machine, so making the leap to soft toy creation a natural one. Reflecting on how his passion turned into a profession, Yoshida says: "Making customers happy by creating soft toys of their dreams is incredibly rewarding." As he continued to gain experience and refine his skills, commissions followed organically, paving the way for his career.

A passion for productions

Yoshida typically works alongside an assistant, but every piece is crafted under his close supervision. He places particular importance on pattern design, which he considers the foundation of high-quality soft toys. Having loved crafting since childhood and having made countless paper models, Yoshida explains that when he sees a three-dimensional object, he intuitively imagines its pattern layout. This ability allows him to translate complex shapes into soft materials with remarkable precision.

One notable example of Yoshida's work is Socket Boy, the mascot character of Sunco Industries. Yoshida paid special attention to the design of the socket head, a form that is inherently angular and challenging to recreate using soft fabric. Through careful planning and experimentation, the shape was successfully expressed using plush fabrics. According to Yoshida, more than 10 types of fabric were used for the costume and variations in pile length and color resulted in a selection of over 850 different materials. Each element was chosen and applied with purpose – to faithfully capture the client's vision. Even the material used to stuff the character was carefully selected. The type of cotton used affects weight, elasticity, resilience and the overall tactile quality, all of which Yoshida considers essential for the final product. Every detail contributes to how the soft toy feels in a person's hands.

Unique commissions

Yoshida often receives unconventional and emotionally meaningful requests. At Edogawa Hospital in Tokyo, for example, a 2.5-meter-long elephant head soft toy made by Yoshida was installed on an MRI machine. The hospital specializes in end-of-life care, and its cheerful interior is designed to ease anxiety for children with serious illnesses. The elephant soft toy helps relieve nervousness and provides a sense of comfort and calm.

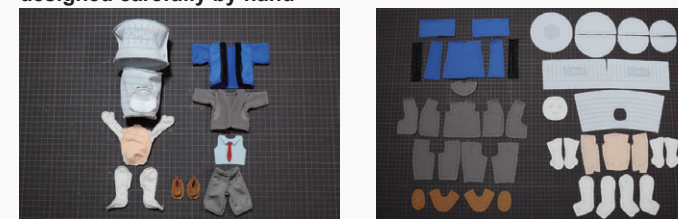
Another memorable project involved a request from Make-A-Wish. A boy who loved penguins asked Yoshida to create soft toys representing all 18 species of penguins in the world. Each toy was carefully crafted to reflect the subtle differences between species. The penguin soft toys showcased on the EUREKA website were born from this very project. Looking back, Yoshida recalls feeling a sense of destiny with the commission, as he himself had loved penguins since he was a child.

Looking ahead

Yoshida says his goal is simple yet profound: to continue making people's dreams come true. Seeing customers smile brings him both joy and fulfillment. He is committed to pouring his heart and soul into every piece – remaining involved at every stage of production and refining each work as long as time allows. By approaching every commission with sincerity and care, Yoshida hopes to continue captivating hearts by bringing his clients' visions to life.

Article by Nono Kobayashi

The soft toy of Socket Boy, Sunco Industries' mascot character, designed carefully by hand



Elephant head soft toy displayed on the MRI machine at Edogawa Hospital



EUREKA



Some of the soft penguin toys that requested to make through Make-A-Wish