

# Japan's *monozukuri* ready to shine once again

Global events such as the covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the U.S.-China decoupling have forced companies to rethink and diversify their supply chains as they seek more reliability. Japanese firms are known for their reliability and advanced technology, and thus are in an interesting position due to the weakened yen, with observers believing this is a very unique opportunity for Japanese *monozukuri* to shine once again.

"The covid-19 pandemic and U.S.-China decoupling have created chaos for overseas companies. However, Japanese companies have previously experienced similar disruptions caused by events like the Lehman Shock and the burst of the economic bubble," says Yoshinori Abe, President of EIWA Corporation, a trading firm specializing in inspection, measurement and analysis equipment. "These experiences have led Japanese companies to develop countermeasures to navigate such challenges, while the depreciation of the yen has prompted many companies to relocate their production bases back to Japan."

*Monozukuri* – the manufacturing philosophy focusing on craftsmanship and constant innovation – is another factor that sets Japanese companies apart from regional competitors. "At the heart of Japanese *monozukuri* lies a commitment to achieving the highest levels of quality and reliability," states Naoki Matsumoto, President of Matsumoto Kosan, a manufacturer of

high-precision parts for the automotives, medical and telecommunications industries. "Japan's unwavering dedication to producing one-of-a-kind, top-notch products has garnered significant global recognition, exemplified by the success of products like the iPhone [which is made up of many Japanese parts]. When global companies meticulously compare and evaluate products from Japan, China, and India, they consistently choose Japanese offerings for their exceptional quality and reliability."

Also important to the Japanese manufacturing philosophy are the concepts of *gemba* and *kaizen*, as highlighted by Nobuo Okita, President of Okita Iron Works. "Gemba, which is a Japanese word that translates to 'the place where action happens', combines quality control, customer satisfaction, and corporate culture into a melting pot symbolizing Japanese workplaces. Regarding the capabilities of *gemba*, I think that the Japanese people are very good at pursuing improvements, under the *kaizen* philosophy of continual improvement. In terms of quality control, Japanese people tend to raise the bar for quality further than any other country on the planet, beyond any standard criteria required."

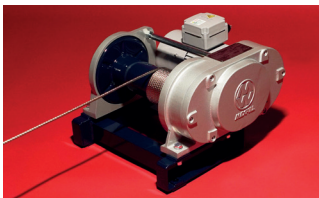
One focus of Maintech's *monozukuri* is its Dryer Section Passivation (DSP) Technology for paper manufacturing, which the company aims to make the global standard in line with its ambition to expand internationally. "We have some competi-

tors in the U.S. and Europe who just copied our technology. However, their chemical performance is not so good. Right now, we have over 800 applications across the world. We plan to increase the figure in Asia, Europe and North America and expect to reach the 1,000 mark in a few years," says company president Hiroshi Sekiya. "With the expansion of the e-commerce business, the demand for corrugated packaging has been increasing worldwide and is expected to increase by 24.5% in the next 10 years. In the U.S. quite a few paper machines have converted from printing and writing grades to paperboard. I believe that this global trend will definitely give us many opportunities to expand our DSP business worldwide."

One of the world's leading high-tension washer manufacturers, Ono Manufacturing is also expanding its international presence and plans to better serve the North American market with the establishment of a new manufacturing facility. "Producing washers in the U.S. is one of my personal dreams and it is finally coming true," says chairman Mamoru Ono. "We are aiming for mass production that meets American standards. The first step is to bring new AIDA press machinery, and currently, we are planning on bringing just a single washer. This is because there is no equivalent machine in the American market. We will use this AIDA press machine to produce products that meet U.S. specifications."

## Harnessing 3D tech to the Max

A specialist winch manufacturer, Maxpull is using CAD technology to provide an enhanced customer experience.



New BMW-Air series with many advantages

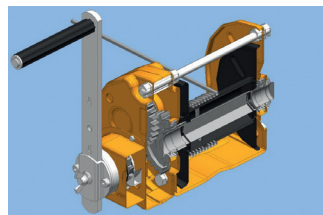
The Japanese manufacturer Maxpull has made it easier than ever for customers to get the full lowdown on its world-class industrial winches.

Visitors to the company's website can now peruse 3D, interactive CAD representations of its winches, with both exterior and interior views of products. Created using Fujitsu's iCAD platform, the cutting-edge feature also allows graphics to be downloaded on files compatible with a range of design software.

"This epoch-making system enables you to easily and intuitively view and operate 3D data on a smartphone, tablet or PC,"

says Maxpull's president, Koichi Ono. "Our sales staff can easily explain the winch's internal structure without bringing the actual machine to the customer and disassembling it on the spot."

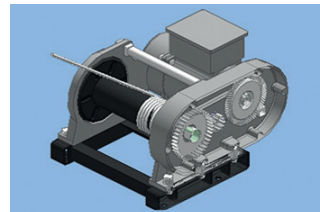
Accessing the new tool requires no prior registration, Mr. Ono adds: "We felt that for true user-friendliness, we needed to cut out the time spent logging in or signing up before obtaining product data."



Industry-first feature with 3D views of the winch

Among Maxpull's wide variety of winches, a stand-out item is the updated BMW Single-Phase 100V. Boasting enhanced compactness, it

can be installed in narrow spaces; in addition, the winch now has a longer continuous operating time. "Since



CAD files compatible with a wide range of design software

its launch last year, sales have been steadily increasing," Mr. Ono reveals.

Such expertly-crafted products have made Maxpull a domestic leader – and the company has a growing global reach, too, aided by its presence on the French online B2B marketplace Virtual Expo and its participation in international trade fairs in several countries. Furthermore, it is preparing to hold its own exhibition, in an online-offline format.



"We aim to make this service easily accessible for customers."

Koichi Ono, President, Maxpull Machinery & Engineering Co., Ltd.

"With the pandemic, the culture has changed from offline to online," Mr. Ono says. "However, if the information you need requires all five senses, an online exhibition isn't ideal. What's more, on-the-spot negotiations can be slower. That's why we're planning a hybrid exhibition in which we select and invite visitors interested in an online event to attend in person as our main target."



**MAXPULL WINCH**

[www.maxpull.co.jp/english](http://www.maxpull.co.jp/english)