



TIME 100 NEXT

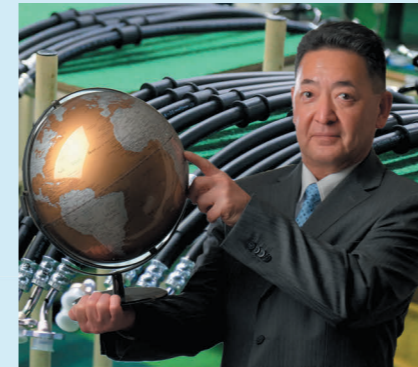
# Kelsea Ballerini

By Shania Twain

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99 MORE OF THE  
WORLD'S RISING STARS

## Evolving into an International Success Story

Japanese manufacturing business Nichirin is about to celebrate its latest milestone anniversary by showcasing the agility and innovation that has been the secret of its longevity.



—Hiroyuki Soga  
President & Representative Director,  
Nichirin Co., Ltd.

As a keen traveler who has lived all over the world, Hiroyuki Soga brings a true international flavor to a proudly Japanese business. The president of hose manufacturer Nichirin Co., Ltd., is currently preparing for his firm's 110th anniversary next year, so he is particularly aware of how important change and evolution are for long-term business success. It's his mission to build on this landmark and lay the foundations for a bright future with increased international sales and partnerships, more sustainable production and even greater levels of customer service and satisfaction. "Our company has a philosophy, 'Contribute to the 21st century with a joyful and trustful manufacturing spirit that touches our heart'," said Soga.

The firm has managed to stay at the cutting edge of new technology by evolving from rubber product manufacturing, such as bicycle tyres and aircraft tubes, to producing hoses for automobiles, motorcycles, and even home furnishings. So, it's no surprise the president likes to quote Charles Darwin about adapting to survive. "Nichirin has been able to adapt to the change over the years, and our agility

and ability to change with the times is something we're very proud of," said Soga.

A key part of this evolutionary success is the company's international reach. Even before the current, globally-mobile president took charge, the business was making bold moves overseas. Forty years on from its first worldwide forays in the 1980s, Nichirin enjoys strong connections across Asia, North America and particularly in Europe – including a subsidiary in Spain, where now more than half of the cars sold by Volvo, Peugeot and Land Rover carry its products. At present, Japan accounts for about 30% of the firm's sales, with Japanese automotive clients in the ASEAN region more broadly contributing another 30%. Motorcycle sales increases in Thailand, Indonesia and Viet Nam are also expected, while Africa is seen as a strong growth area in the near future. Nichirin operates a global QMS (Quality Management System) to maintain its high Japanese standards in different nations, and the president is proud of his firm's border-crossing bravery. "Back in the 1980s it was decided to expand our reach overseas for the first time and now my generation has really committed to improving ourselves. We have strived to make our bases stronger," said Soga. "I think a key facet of our success was the ability to develop our overseas market over the last 40 years. I believe that forming trust through dialogue is the simplest way to approach business internationally," he said. It's not just sales and products that are internation-

al – but staff too. Soga hopes to employ more foreign workers and encourages Japanese staff to broaden their own horizons. "I would also like to diversify our company more because if we have only Japanese employees, the ideas we come up with will be very homogenous," said Soga. The firm is committed to improving sustainability, and there are exciting plans in place to showcase its advances in automation across its manufacturing facilities. "Next year, when we celebrate our 110th anniversary, in order to achieve more efficient automation, we are aiming to establish a hub for experts throughout our 11 global factories to smoothly integrate a planned 500 robotic units with our production lines," said Soga. "In

this building, each country's personnel can compete to see which country can implement the tech the most seamlessly," he said. Production techniques, such as changing materials

and miniaturizing components, are also at the heart of the business's move towards the Sustainable Development Goals. "We address SDGs by thinking about product specifications with smaller carbon footprints, and we are actively engaged with an initiative to make our products lighter, smaller and more compact. We are also aggressively working towards recycling goals and employing renewables in the form of solar panels," said Soga.

**"Our constant agility and ability to change with the times is something we're very proud of."**

Hiroyuki Soga

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**NICHIRIN**

