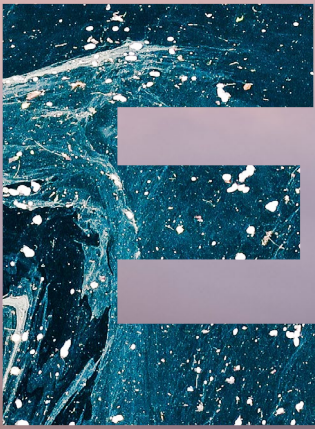


EDITION 2



EKAMANT  
MAGAZINE

when  
perfection  
matters.

Working with  
the world's largest  
cork processor

Page 10

A family affair in  
Thailand since 2001

Page 18

# HEADWAY IN ASIA

*Mark Lee and co-workers still see  
untapped potential in a dynamic market*

Page 6

EKAMANT



EKAMANT  
MAGAZINE

## Welcome to the international edition of Ekamant Magazine

Communication in all aspects is important, whether it's face to face, in print, digital or any other means. With this magazine we would like to share stories about the company, products, partners, customers and employees.

Happy reading!

Joakim Jonsson,  
Marketing & Communications Manager



## This issue

### ABOUT EKAMANT MAGAZINE

This publication is a part of Ekamant's marketing communication effort. The content reflects the company's operation, both in Sweden and around the globe.



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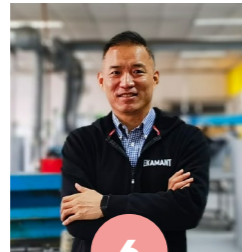
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## EKAMANT

### THIS IS EKAMANT

Ekamant is located in Markaryd, deep in the heart of a Swedish forest, where our company was founded in 1928. The coated abrasive knowledge we have accumulated over the years has been passed down from generation to generation. We are constantly discussing new ideas for improving our technology. At work, we are trying, testing, failing - and eventually succeeding. But the goal is always the same: how to find ways to make our products even better and more effective in supporting our customers' development.

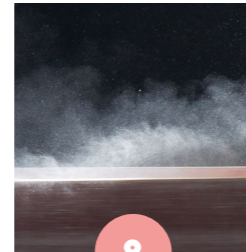
Our combination of tradition and high-technology is unique and it has inspired us to think outside the box and use abrasives in an innovative way - for the benefit of both present and future generations.



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### From rural backwater to high-tech hub

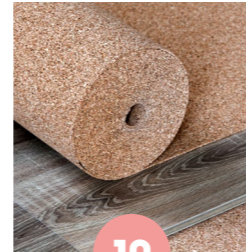
Ekamant China's operation has seen some major advances in the past years. Managing Director Mark Lee has the insights.



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### The story behind the antistatic original

With Antistatex™, we pioneered antistatic sanding technology shortly after dust extraction systems were introduced in the 1970s.



10

### On the Portuguese market for decades

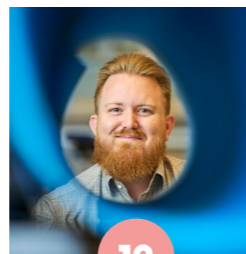
Ekamant's partner in Portugal supports the world's largest cork processor - and more!



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### Hands-off warehouse

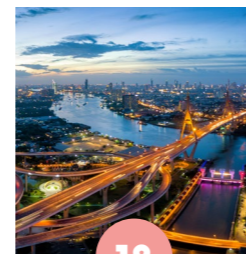
Warehouse in Markaryd, making the picking, packing and shipping process more efficient.



12

### Ridge-free surfaces - longer running time

The EKA BLACK is in a league of its own when it comes to ridge-free surfaces on MDF, chipboard, and hardwood.



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### From Småland to Bangkok

The family-like atmosphere with our partner in Thailand all started with an email.

## Navigating change & investing in the future



We trace our company history back to 1928 when Mr. Ernst O. Andersson founded Fabriks AB Ekå in Markaryd, a small town in the Swedish province Småland. Back then, the world outside one's town or municipality was a distant concept. Goods not sourced locally would arrive slowly, often passing through many middlemen who added both cost and delay to the delivery process.

Times have changed. At Ekamant, our world is both bigger and more connected than ever before. Since we started our expansion outside Sweden in the 1980s, our strategy has always been to establish Ekamant close to where our products are being used. This philosophy has taken us to every corner of the globe.

Nevertheless, we've maintained a close-knit, competent network of partners and subsidiaries dedicated to serving our customers with high-quality products and unparalleled expertise.

Today, our distributing partners serve customers in nearly 60 countries. From remote rural locations to bustling urban industrial zones, we're there. Alongside our subsidiaries in 8 key markets, we remain close to our customers, wherever they might be. I must say that since our first venture into Germany in 1987, expansion has become integral to our company's DNA, and Ekamant has grown stronger ever since into the company I lead today. Some things are timeless, however, and our commitment to quality, expertise, and customer service will never go out of style.

### INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Before I conclude, I am pleased to share some exciting updates. Given the current world market conditions and the relatively low speed and demand for our products and services, we, like any business, need to keep a steady line and make the best of the situation. We are actively working with our suppliers and controlling costs to continue serving you. While our suppliers are showing signs of price reductions,

it takes time to fully implement, especially considering the challenges of inflation. In response to these market conditions we will, as always, make sure our customers benefit from our supply chain improvements.

During a recent Ekamant Board meeting, we addressed general business discussions along with important investment approvals for our R&D and manufacturing. For those familiar with our operations in Markaryd, the Maker is the heart of our supply chain. As a part of our forward-thinking strategy, we're investing heavily in key components to enhance efficiency. Additionally, we are investing in R&D test facilities and machinery, allowing for a more intensified R&D efforts and fostering innovative product development.

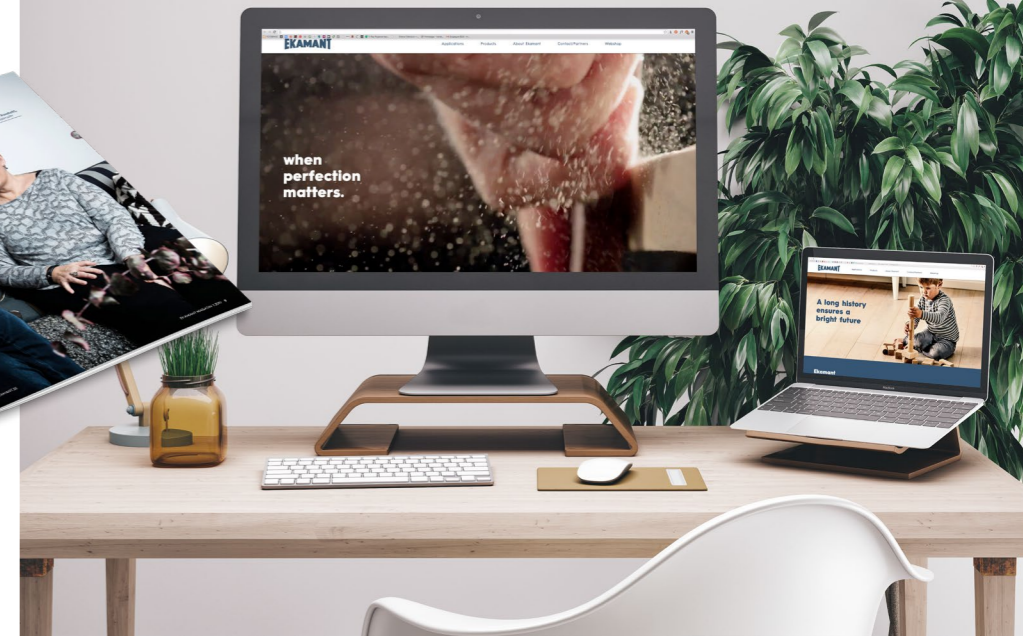
In conclusion, no matter the business climate, we are determined to move forward and improve. Our investments in R&D, manufacturing, and sales operations will intensify, ensuring we are fully equipped to support our customers long into the future.

MIKAEL RIETZ  
CEO





# when perfection matters.



**B**randing is a paradox. While a company owns the rights to its brand, it doesn't own the rights to how it's perceived. We do. We, the market. It doesn't matter how often a brand communicates its excellence/service-mindedness/inventiveness/you name it. If the market has a different opinion, the market wins. That's why a strong brand is always built on a promise that the market is prepared to believe in and the brand can deliver on.

#### WHAT'S OUR PROMISE?

Our customers, regardless of application and industry, demand perfection from themselves and us. Why? Because their customers expect it too. So our pledge to them is simple – a perfect finish. And that commitment is captured in a single conceptual line: When perfection matters.

It's a promise we know we can keep, and it's one our market can rely on. After all, we've been doing it since 1928.

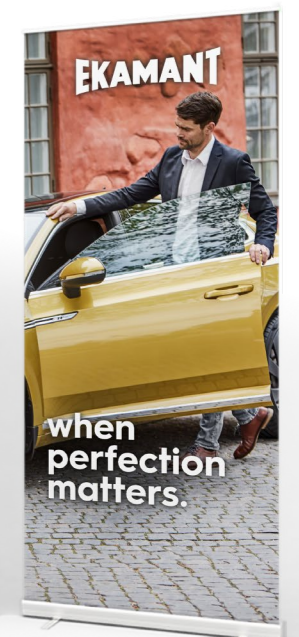
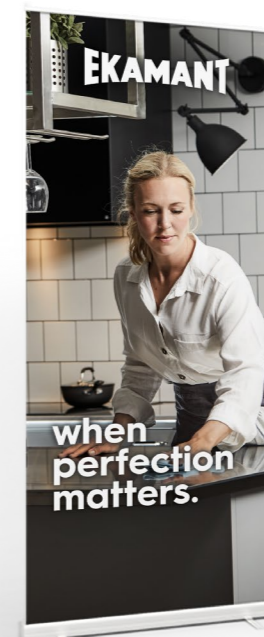
## Ekamant is perfection

There are several words we would like the market to associate with us. Service-minded is one. Innovative another. Honest, open and friendly would be nice too. But to continue building our brand on a global market, there is one word our customers must associate with us. Perfection. We're there when perfection matters. Which, in their world, is every day and in every delivery.

#### WE SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE

A strong brand is easily recognizable – wherever you come into contact with

it. Apple is true to itself all over the world. You don't have to know the local language to understand what they're communicating. The same is true of Mercedes, BMW, Nike, Gucci and every other successful global brand. We will never be as well-known as any of those, but we do operate on an international market. That means we speak with one voice and communicate one message. And if you've read the whole article, you know what that message is.



# IN THE EYE OF THE STORM



*Mark Lee is a very busy man.* After joining Ekamant in late summer 2019, he's had to work on company structure and contend with the far-reaching effects of a global pandemic. In the midst of it all, he's been bringing the rest of his team up to speed on the best way to run the Ekamant China operation.

*From rural backwater to hi-tech hub*



**Mark Lee, Managing director Ekamant China**

Ekamant China first opened for business in 2005. At the time, the company was based in Shenzhen – the once modest farming community that became a sprawling metropolis – in southern Guangdong Province. It was a fitting location – right at the heart of the country's technology and innovation belt. Today, operations are headquartered in Tianjin, a boom town for smart tech with a strong sense of history and easy access to Beijing.

#### COLLECTIVE DUTY

"After I joined the company in August 2019, the top priority was to analyze the situation and assign greater responsibility to my team."

Employees, according to Mark, were somewhat "one-pointed" in their responsibilities. In the plant, workers would

concentrate on the task at hand, but lacked appreciation for the bigger picture – and this applied equally to his sales staff. The key, Mark explains, is to instill a collective "sense of duty" that isn't limited to a "single work station". In this, according to Mark, individual accountability is critical. "In order to build competence and culture throughout the plant."

#### MANAGEMENT OVERHAUL

Mark Lee is committed to sharpening all facets of plant management – from creating a monitoring system that provides vital feedback to boosting inventory performance and AR all the way to gross profit, cost, quality and delivery.

At present we're working with more than 50 prospects – 20 of which are clients. All this has happened after September, 2019."



However, when Corona hit Wuhan in late January 2020, the impact was felt throughout China. Authorities clamped down on all supply and distribution channels. Ekamant's plant ground to a halt for more than a month. The severity of the situation cannot be overstated:

*"We had bills to pay but no income – and countless customers were in the same situation. But by mid-March, most companies in south western China were once again open for business and on the way to recovery."*



Mark considers the new Ekamant branding concept key: "Not only for the sake of business or budget objectives, but because a single missing link can bring down the entire production system." "It's changed the way we perceive ourselves. What's more, we need to formulate a communications strategy that enables us to share our insights with customers – and the true significance of When perfection matters. It's all-encompassing – not only in terms of products, but total costs, productivity and employees. A macro perspective that doesn't lose sight of the finer points."

#### COLLEAGUES ... AND FRIENDS

Mark has been at Ekamant since 2019 and has nothing but praise for his new colleagues, who have since become good friends.

*"I really appreciate my visits to Ekamant in Markaryd. My Swedish colleagues are not only dedicated and deeply knowledgeable professionals, but also gracious hosts. And I'd be very happy to welcome them to my home country!"*

**Ekamant China's production plant is located in Tianjin, a coastal metropolis with 15 million inhabitants.**



# ANTISTATEX™ – THE STORY BEHIND THE ANTISTATIC ORIGINAL

Ekamant pioneered antistatic sanding technology shortly after dust extraction systems were introduced in the 1970s.



The incentives were as clear to see as the dust that filled the air in all types of sanding situations. Besides creating a very unhealthy environment to work in, the dust was clogging up the machinery and playing havoc with finishing treatments. Of course, extracting out the dust was a major step forward. But the static charge between the abrasive, the sander and the material, made dust cling to everything. Antistatex, the original antistatic abrasive, has turned this problem on its head.

#### OUR PATENTED TECHNOLOGY WORKS LIKE THIS...

“Due to its graphite treatment, Antistatex™ cancels the static charge that otherwise builds up the moment the sander comes into contact with the work material. This means that instead of sticking to all of the surfaces, the dust particles are released – and easily removed away by the extractor,” explains our Research & Development Manager, Martin Blom. Getting the dust under control in this way has multiple benefits. Application & Solution Development Manager, Mikael Stein, walks us through them:

#### ON THE SURFACE

“First and foremost, quality goes up because less dust is adhering to the workpiece – even inside the pores of the surface where it otherwise gets trapped. This improves the result of surface treatments such as lacquers and other finishes. And while quality is increased, the number of work pieces that have to be rejected or reworked decreases, which of course translates into lower cost.”



#### DOWNTIME AND DURABILITY

Mikael continues: “In an ideal world nothing interrupts production during a shift. But when the sanding dust adheres to the belt it becomes ineffective – and has to be replaced. So by releasing the dust, Antistatex stays clean longer, which means less downtime for changing the belts. On top of this, because the abrasive is designed to work freely and efficiently, its lifespan is much longer – further reducing the total cost for the customer.” To which Martin adds: “Even for the machinery, less maintenance and cleaning cut costs. Without the antistatic treatment everything is continually getting blocked-up as the same dust just keeps circulating.”

#### HEALTH AND SAFETY

Speaking of less dust and increased lifespans, it's easy to imagine the benefits for the people who are operating the machinery. In bigger installations, where extractors are in place, very few workers wear face masks. In these situations the use of Antistatex™ helps to reduce the amount of dust entering their lungs. Then there is the matter of static shocks often experienced by operators while handling the machinery or workpiece. This, Mikael emphasises, “can be very unpleasant.” As an aside, Martin points out that the static electricity is a well-known cause of machinery and factory fires.

# SERVING THE PORTUGUESE MARKET FOR MORE THAN 50 YEARS

Augusto Rodrigues is a central figure in modern Portuguese sanding. Having been our local partner for more than 50 years, he knows a thing or two about the business and how our applications have not only survived but thrived through the decades. Not surprisingly, it's all about quality, reliability and speed of service.



Augusto Rodrigues  
Managing Director

Mr Rodrigues first experienced the quality of Ekamant's products in the early 1970s. His company specialised in portable power tools, and he and his staff began noticing the quality of sandpaper on their stocked sanders. When they discovered it was Ekamant's, a call was soon placed to Sweden. Aureobar have been our partner in Portugal ever since, gradually expanding their operation to cover all aspects of sanding, specialising in the furniture, door and cork industries.



#### QUALITY AND TRUST ARE KEY

Being a partner to Ekamant means serving the market with high quality abrasives. Not only that, all our partners have access to our vast wealth of experience to help them meet the challenges in their local markets. Mr Rodrigues has experienced this first-hand on many occasions.

"I can say that over the years we've developed our cooperation based on trust, which is of course very important when building a business. Ekamant has always helped us solve problems and continues to provide us with everything we need to run our business with a customer-centric approach."

#### WINNING AND RETAINING CUSTOMERS WITH OUTSTANDING SERVICE

Having seen the market evolve, Aureobar knows how to retain customers. It goes beyond cutting-edge machinery, modern processes and experienced staff. As Mr Rodrigues sees it, the key to success is innovating in line with customer needs and providing fast deliveries

as well as, not just good but, excellent customer service; all of the time, every time.

Working with a quality supplier like Ekamant, customers are usually already familiar with Aureobar's range. And the use of various digital platforms has been helping the company to do more new business effectively and intuitively. That said, Mr Rodrigues acknowledges the value of having a reputation for quality and customer service.

"Our customer satisfaction levels prove time and time again to be the golden ticket when it comes to gaining new business," he says.

#### WORKING WITH THE WORLD'S LARGEST CORK PROCESSOR

Responsible for more than 50 percent of the global production, Portugal is the largest cork producer in the world.

And while the material might seem obsolete to some, it is used in a wide variety of modern applications, from coatings and stoppers to spacecraft and missiles. As one of the most experienced companies in the market, Aureobar has enjoyed a rewarding relationship with the Amorim Group, the world's largest cork processor, for years. Aureobar supplies Amorim with a broad range of products including wide belts, segmented belts and accessories. As an industry leader, Amorim is constantly evolving and developing, which requires agility and adaptability on our part, when supporting their sanding capabilities.

"Thanks to our experience and expertise, combined with abrasives from Ekamant, we have managed to nurture our relationship with Amorim over a period of many years. Which is something we are very proud of," Mr Rodrigues concludes.

# Our R&D department never stops

While the innovative culture of the Swedish brand goes a long way back, Ekamant continues to put product development at the centre of its business model.

Every three months a network of representatives from around the world meet to share their insights. Mikael Stein, who is a member of the Council, explains that there are huge differences in how we sand and what we sand in different parts of the world. By understanding the changing needs of customers and welcoming their input, the R&D department know where they should be looking for the next innovation. And to collect ideas from the company and

various other sources, there is an internal product board, too.

From initial idea to market launch, the development of a new product can take anywhere between 6 and 24 months. "Sometimes our clients approach us directly with a specific request," says Research & Development Manager Martin Blom. "So when there's sufficient volume to make it viable, we're able to create a fully customised solution."



Martin Blom,  
Research & Development Manager

## EKA BLACK – FOR PERFECT RESULTS ON MDF, CHIPBOARD, AND HARDWOOD

The furniture industry is always looking for improvements, whether it's about more efficient production or new and enhanced materials. This was the starting point for a new type of Antistatex™ product that has since become very successful.

**THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING EKA BLACK** began when a few major customers were planning to improve their top surfaces, making them more scratch-resistant while retaining the same fine finish.

– Paint manufacturers began incorporating aluminum oxide, which drastically heightened the requirements for the abrasive material. Many of the belts that customers had previously used was faced with a reduced lifespan. That's when we decided to introduce a special type of silicon carbide, whose properties were not only successful for the new type of paint but also produced fantastic results on hardwood, says Application & Solution Development Manager Mikael Stein.

### RIDGE-FREE SURFACES

**IN THE FINAL STAGES OF PRODUCTION,** whether it's painting or foliating, it's extremely important that the material has no ridges. This is where EKA BLACK performs in a league of its own. Not only does the material leave no ridges, but it also manages

### EKA BLACK TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

**PAPER BACKING:** E-weight & F-weight

**COATING OPTION:** Semi-open

**GRAIN TYPE:** Silicon carbide

**STEARATE:** Available as EKA BLACK N

**GRIT RANGE:** from 40 to 400. Available for wide belt and narrow belt applications

to do it with twice the running time compared to the nearest competitor. This means you can run an entire work shift with a single set of belts, which also has a positive impact on the total cost.

– The longer lifespan is largely due to the special silicon carbide grains, which, with their special distribution in conjunction with our ANTISTATEX binder, result in a fantastic product that provides a consistent and controlled sanding result, says Research & Development Manager Martin Blom.

Neither Mikael nor Martin wants to reveal what's next in the pipeline, but they guarantee that it's at the cutting edge.



# HANDS-OFF WAREHOUSE

“We are proud of our new automated warehouse”

After years of planning, building and installing, Ekamant has launched its automated warehouse in Markaryd. It's now been in operation for a while and Ekamant has already discovered that the picking, packing and shipping process is more efficient.

1600 m<sup>2</sup> put to good use.

The job of the automated warehouse is to increase the safety and efficiency of material handling. Instead of people labelling, tagging, tracking, palletizing and packing manually, the job is handled by robots, gantries, conveyors - all supported by a sophisticated management and control system.

Production Supervisor Jonas Paulsén explains: “The process is much more efficient now, including administration. Previously, each order would typically be handled in several operations over time, but now it's done at once and around the clock. This has led to an increase of our capacity, while also utilizing the surface space - some 1600 m<sup>2</sup> - more efficiently. To help us realize our vision, we partnered with specialists in this field - AFRY, Fisker and Pivab to name three.”

### CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Profitability and efficiency comes down to doing more in less time, using less resources. Machines are unbeatable at routine tasks - and human expertise and resources can be used for more advanced work. Jonas Paulsén elaborates: “Safety was a key consideration when we planned the transition to full automation. It's also worth saying that we've made the shift without any redundancies. In fact, nobody has ever been forced to leave Ekamant due to a technology upgrade.”

Profitability and efficiency comes down to doing more in less time, using less resources.



Feeding the automatic rewinder

1





2

Jumbo Roll heading towards the robot station.

**LOUD AND CLEAR**

Whenever a company makes a major investment, it sends a strong message to its stakeholders.

**FROM MARKARYD TO THE WORLD**

Each shipment from the new automated warehouse contains raw material awaiting conversion to the finished

“We are proud of our new automated warehouse, says Andreas.”

It tells our employees that they’re working for a future-oriented company and it says to our partners, suppliers and customers that we mean business. We’re already known for our excellent delivery precision and high-quality products, but this investment gives an additional boost to our availability.”

product - some 75 percent of the material is distributed to our global subsidiaries and partners. “Around a quarter of all shipments from Markaryd are bound for the conversion facility in Strömsnäsbruk, just a few kilometres away,” says Jonas, “and from there it’s shipped to customers all over Europe.”



3

Robot in operation...



Next stop - shipping!



4

Packing, palletizing, labelling - with our friendly robot multitasking behind the scenes.



# Ekamant Thailand – a family affair

A set of fortunate circumstances resulted in Janya and her husband joining Ekamant. Today, after nearly two decades in the “family,” JS Mechanic remains a key supplier to the Thai market.

In addition to subsidiaries in Europe, Africa, South America and Asia, Ekamant’s impressive global presence is supported by a large number of strategically located suppliers and partners.

#### FROM SMÅLAND TO THE HEART OF THAILAND

One of the companies selling coated abrasives from the heartlands of Småland is JS Mechanic, which is based in Samut Sakhorn, just south of Bangkok. The business is co-owned and run jointly by Janya and her husband Suwat.

In her capacity as operations and marketing manager, Janya interfaces daily with the metal and wood industries. Her husband focuses on sales, specifically pneumatic sanding tools.

“Our role as Ekamant supplier suits us very well,” Janya explains. “We enjoy close ties with Sweden, and it often feels like doing business with family.”

In 2001, when it all began, JS Mechanic possessed little more than four empty hands. Suwat, at the time a sales rep for a competing manufacturer, wanted to start his own business. He decided to send an email to the sales department at Ekamant – who just happened to be on the lookout for a supplier in Thailand.

In the early days, headquarters were in Suwat’s father’s paint shop. A few years later, the couple were in a position to purchase some land and build a factory of their own. “We’re still the brand’s sole



Janya Rawanich,  
Owner, JS Mechanic

representative in Thailand. Which is something we’re very proud of,” says Janya. JS Mechanic imports jumbo rolls from Markaryd. These are converted to abrasive sheets, discs and belts in the Bangkok-based plant, which currently employs some 60 workers.

#### DRIVING BUSINESS ABROAD

Thailand is the company’s principal market. But JS Mechanic also services the automotive and steel industries – plus

numerous furniture manufacturers – in neighbouring Laos.

“It’s tough to compete with the price of cloth in Asia, which is why we’ve opted for paper instead. Ekamant constitutes more than 80 percent of our total sales. Our biggest commercial hit? EKA 1000,” Janya sums up.

*“It’s tough to compete with the price of cloth in Asia, which is why we’ve opted for paper instead. Ekamant constitutes more than 80 percent of our total sales. Our biggest commercial hit? EKA 1000,” Janya Rawanich sums up.*



# when perfection matters.



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