

Spirit of Mutual Support Meets the Global Challenge

The spread of COVID-19 has exhausted supplies of medical-isolation gowns and sanitary ethanol, triggering many Japanese companies to feel a deep-seated desire to help, leading them to take actions to address the shortage. In various forms, their contributions are offering society respite from the suffering caused by the pandemic.

While treating increasing numbers of patients this spring as the novel coronavirus proliferated, Japanese healthcare workers were faced with a serious shortage of medical-isolation gowns. As they sought a way to promptly ensure a steady supply within Japan, some companies from other industries volunteered to aid in the production.

Upon learning about a labor shortage for the manufacture of

the gowns, ANA Group, owner of the major Japanese airline All Nippon Airways Co., Ltd., decided that it was time, with the continuing slump in air travel caused by COVID-19, to make what contributions it could, even in an area completely unrelated to the company's central business.

In addition to sewing, the process of manufacturing gowns includes many other tasks that require human labor. Supporting Valley LLC., a manufacturer in Nara Prefecture that

is making medical-isolation gowns to order, without asking for anything in return, ANA Group undertook some of the basic work processes, such as cutting fabric for sleeves, sewing ribbon ties, and inspecting of the products. Senior Director of Corporate Planning MURATA Kanako says, "The production of medical-isolation gowns must be perfectly sanitary. As employees of an airline, we always train ourselves to not only strive for perfection in terms



ANA Group's sewing operations, which took place at the company's training facility, continued while the workers maintained social distance.



No contaminant—not even a single strand of hair—is acceptable when it comes to medical-isolation gowns. ANA personnel highly experienced in exhaustive safety management are perfectly suited to performing meticulous checks.

of safety and of service quality, but also to work as a team to achieve such perfection. I felt that we were able to fully leverage our ability throughout this challenge of gown manufacturing."

According to ANA, over 1,600 employees volunteered for this project. People from a variety of positions including pilots, cabin attendants, and mechanics, formed teams helping in the production of approximately 50,000 gowns in around six weeks. The volunteers succeeded on account of their desire to make a personal contribution to society under the challenging conditions posed by the pandemic.



Kikusui Shuzo's president Haruta says that his company developed Alcohol 77—the ethanol-based sanitizer—out of a desire to benefit society.

Kikusui Shuzo is a long-established brewery in Kochi Prefecture that produces a wide range of alcohol, from sake to *shochu*—Japanese traditional distilled spirits.

spirit containing 77% alcohol, which soon went viral on social media and garnered widespread appreciation for the company's goodwill and social contribution.

Kikusui Shuzo was flooded with inquiries about the sake, and shipped a total of 100,000 bottles in a period of four and a half months.

Kikusui Shuzo was spurred into taking this initiative because it wanted to repay the enormous support that it had received when torrential rains struck western Japan two years earlier. The brewer's office at the time was flooded with a meter of water, causing the road outside to collapse. Half a year elapsed before the office could resume normal operations, but during that time, the company received a great amount of help from many sources. Kikusui Shuzo's president, HARUTA Kazuki, says that this is why he now wants to play a supportive role as a sake maker in society.

"With people worrying about supply shortages, we were able to provide reassurance that supplies are available. Sake is a non-essential item that most people would not hesitate cutting out of their budget, but I'm glad we were able to achieve new value."

By identifying what each can do and supporting society, businesses are demonstrating resilience in the face of COVID-19. ✿

