

## SOMAY-Q SPECIAL

# Somay-Q offers touch-of-a-finger paint solutions

Sadao Hishiki, 69, is a self-taught chemical engineer who has no interest in a happy retirement. Rather, he seems determined to strengthen his decadeslong quest for innovative painting applications that enable consumers to use paint with the touch of a finger, as if they were using a digital camera.

“Photographers were once required to set the focal length and shutter speed each time they took a picture. Now all you have to do is to press the shutter,” the chairman of Somay-Q Technology Corp. said in an interview.

“When you put a coat of paint on wood or metal, you have to choose a wood-specific or metal-specific type of paint—plus have some practical knowledge for making a good paint mix in a do-it-yourself situation,” Hishiki said. “For about three decades, I have looked for solutions to allow consumers to use paint as conveniently as they can use a digital camera.”

In the early 2000s, his dream came true. His company launched an innovative product named the Somay-Q Aerosol, canned spray paint with up to 40 colors available for painting a wide range of goods made of leather, polyvinyl chloride (PVC) leather cloth, synthetic leather, plastics and wood, among others, to make them look like new.

The breakthrough product, which contains a proprietary compound composed of synthetic resins, pigments and organic solvents, is unique in that it applies nanotechnology to micronize particles in the compound and improve their adhesiveness.



Sadao Hishiki is a self-educated chemist whose company offers nanotech paint solutions.

Do-it-yourselfers may feel satisfied with their own work in an ordinary DIY paint job when the surface of the painted part looks good. But a check by an electron microscope would clearly show the invisible side of the

paint layer does not sufficiently adhere to the surface of the material because it remains microscopically highly uneven. As a result, the paint tends to peel when the material is extended or bent.

“With our product,” Hishiki said, “even when the painted material is stretched or bent strongly, the paint stays extremely adhesive. And it excels in durability and abrasion resistance thanks to the application of nanotechnology.” Somay-Q compound makes the paint-to-material surface adhesion ratio far greater than that for typical paint solutions.

The chairman said, “With the Somay-Q Aerosol, you can rejuvenate the surface of walls, floors, bathrooms, kitchens, furniture, sofas, bags and shoes or just change the color to suit your taste at low cost.” The 70-milliliter and 264-milliliter spray cans are priced at ¥800 and ¥2,100, respectively.

Hishiki’s company, located in Gokamachi, Ibaraki Prefecture, about 50 kilometers north of Tokyo, currently markets scores of consumer items, which are basically derivatives of the Somay-Q Aerosol, including colorless sprays, based on innovative technologies.

Their functions include: enhancing the warming or cooling properties of clothing; making floors of food processing plants impervious to grease, which acts as a medium for contaminants; instantaneously eliminating the odor of cigarettes from clothes; protecting food processing plants and restaurants from viruses and mold; cutting air-conditioning electricity consumption by about 15 percent; eliminating animal odors; preventing sun-bleaching of furniture and curtains; eliminating the odor inside boots; dyeing jeans; coating vehicle tires with colors of one’s choice; making tatami mats look

like new; reducing the effects of ultraviolet rays; and realizing pen-sized aerosol paint use.

Companies with cutting-edge technologies usually are keen to seek patents. Hishiki’s company is not. “Under the patent system, other companies can copy your proprietary expertise. I want to keep what I have developed exclusive to my company,” he said.

Has the Tokyo native had smooth sailing all his life? Not at all. As U.S. inventor and businessman Charles Kettering (1876-1958) is often quoted as saying “Ninety-nine percent of success is built on former failure,” Hishiki current success was built on bitter experience.

After graduating from Keio University, where he majored in Western history, he started working at his father’s paint wholesale company as a salesman. In 1972—three years later—he set up his own company, doing business-to-business paint distribution. In 1980, he shifted the focus of his business to consumers—only to encounter many problems.

Later in the 1980s, he became the successful owner of a cluster of companies engaging in restaurant, real estate, car dealership and construction businesses as well as overseas opera-

tions, besides the paint firm. However, his good fortune did not last long—his group collapsed in 1992 due to a combination of a questionable financial deal involving one of his business partners and the bursting of the real estate bubble.

Hishiki had to spend several years to repay his debts—which amounted to as much as about ¥7 billion. Nevertheless, he managed to keep his paint business afloat.

Though financially strapped, he never gave up. He anchored his hope in his core competence—his self-developed expertise in paint blending. To concentrate on his self-styled research and development effort by getting away from debt collectors, he left Japan in 1999 for Pahrump, Nevada. He lived in a trailer house and kept working on his solitary product development plan—all the while resisting the lure of the gambling mecca of Las Vegas, about 100 kilometers to the east.

In 2000, Hishiki returned to business, going from strength to strength as a business owner, specializing in leading-edge technologies he has pursued for years for consumers—and for the revival of his own fortune.

The chairman of Somay-Q Technology says his company is looking forward to expanding business-to-business deals with major automakers and other leading manufacturers as well as luxury hotels, among many other potential corporate customers. Somay-Q Technology products are marketed in the United States, South Korea and Switzerland.



Somay-Q Aerosol