

## IZUNAMI and ARROJO: New technology, new team

When Mike Kim introduced his salon styling tool appliance line a couple of years ago, there were already more than 80 suppliers providing hair dryers and flat irons to salons. Not a problem for Mike and his IZUNAMI line. The parent company (Shake N Go, the largest supplier of hair goods to the multicultural market with \$200 million in sales), owned by Mike and his brother, provides the financial firepower. In addition, Mike's vision and goal of creating a line of styling tools that reduces or eliminates heat damage while making top quality flat irons is being achieved quickly.

**Beauty Industry Report (BIR)** recently caught up with Mike to check in on his progress.

**BIR: In a crowded salon styling tool marketplace, what is IZUNAMI's point of difference?**

**Mike Kim (MK):** It is a crowded market. Everyone says, "We are better." So how do we differentiate our company from others? By continuing to introduce new technology, most recently, our Independent Temperature Control. Today's stylists are knowledgeable and have high expectations. As technology advances, we implement the new technology as soon as it becomes available. Then, we present the product in our famous leather packaging. Presentation is very important. And last but not least, we follow up with unmatched customer service. Our distributors are extremely happy with our service.

**BIR: When you started IZUNAMI, what was your initial marketing plan and how did you begin to gain market share?**

**MK:** Initially, we tried to make sales immediately without laying the necessary groundwork. We thought sales would happen instantly simply because we had great products. But we learned that you have to create brand awareness first. We have done extensive advertising and publicity. Our focus continues to be strengthening our position as an elite professional tool manufacturer through advertising, public relations and education. We also learned that it's important to form alliances with the right people. We came to form partnerships with some great industry people, including you, **Joni Rae Russell** and **Bill Decker**. Now, we are represented by two great



*Mike Kim and celebrity stylist Nick Arrojo show off the new Arrojo by IZUNAMI iron.*

companies—**The Kirschner Group** in the Northeast and **Van Nest Coleman & Associates** in other territories. I must admit, whom you know is very important in this industry.

**BIR: Now, after being in the market for a couple of years, what is your vision for IZUNAMI?**

**MK:** IZUNAMI's vision continues to be manufacturing the top performing tools dedicated to the full-service, exclusively professional market. I see a much greater opportunity than I originally did. I think the biggest opportunity comes from the fact that stylists have high expectations of quality and performance. Stylists get it. They can immediately see and feel the difference when they use a top quality tool—another good reason to pay attention to details. Second, companies tend to establish a brand name and then quickly divert it to the general market, leaving us some more room for expansion.

**BIR: Tell me about your successful trade advertising initiative, "IZUNAMI: It's Love at First Glide." What is behind the message and what's the strategy in terms of marketing message and call to action?**

**MK:** Most appliance lines make the same claims. They are all fastest, hottest, smoothest, etc. So who is the best? The only way to find out is to try their tools. The reaction from our users is immediate—IZUNAMI's frictionless gliding ability and fast heat recovery are instantly noticeable. Try it, and you will fall in love with our iron at first glide. It's also called our "We Know You Will Love It" guarantee. You can return our product to the point of purchase within 30 days for any reason

whatsoever. The distributor can either refund or give store credit, depending on its policy. At the end of each month, we pick up any returned merchandise by call tag. As for our warranty services, I will let a quote from a satisfied customer speak: "I would like to take the time to thank you so much for the quick response with my IZUNAMI replacement. I just love the Iron and the reliability of the customer service. I will be an IZUNAMI customer for life. Your products are awesome! Thanks again, Traci B. Davidson."

**BIR: Tell me about the exciting news that IZUNAMI is teaming up with Nick Arrojo, one of the salon industry's most recognized and successful stylists.**

**MK:** It's a collaboration between a most recognized educator and stylist, **Nick Arrojo**, and IZUNAMI, a manufacturer with the reputation of utilizing the most advanced technology and craftsmanship. After our irons were introduced to his salon, our mutual friend, **Bill Decker**, arranged a meeting. We will be formally launching **The ARROJO by IZUNAMI flat iron** and **The ARROJO by IZUNAMI dryer** in July. The development process for these state-of-the-art styling tools was exciting, as well as challenging. Nick has high requirements for performance and quality. They will be the best styling tools available.

**BIR: Share with BIR readers how IZUNAMI and Arrojo are working together.**

**MK:** We have a licensing agreement. IZUNAMI develops tools according to his specifications, and Nick is the centerpiece of PR, ads and education. We like his emphasis on



education. Education is the key to success, and he is the top educator in the country. He was involved with the whole process of developing design and functions. His requirements are stringent, specific and often demanding, and we expect him to continue to raise the bar.

His high expectations not only improve the product, but also improve our company.

**BIR: How do Arrojo tools differ from the core IZUNAMI line?**

**MK:** Arrojo tools have a lot of new features. We've incorporated our new Independent Temperature Control and used wider and longer plates for more efficient straightening—the plate size is 1 ¼ inch by 4 inches. It's designed to safely get closer to the roots. And we added more cushion to the plates to increase the ability of the iron to self-adjust to the uneven thickness of hair. We rounded the plate edges 5 mm to prevent any creases when straightening or curling and added the cool tip for convenient, two-hand maneuvering. The dryer is probably the fastest hair dryer ever. Ounce for ounce, it's very light but dries extremely fast. The dryer excites me as much as the iron does. They are an awesome pair!

**BIR: How does the independent temperature control protect the hair?**

**MK:** In most irons, the temperature is controlled by one plate. Heat kicks in when the controlling plate cools. The heat of the other plate depends completely on the controlling plate. When the condition of the hair is uneven, whether it is because the hair is only partially dry or because sprays have been applied unevenly, the dependent plate gets either too hot or too cold. Some irons reach beyond 500°F, which will undoubtedly damage the hair. Independent temperature control is a new technology that allows each plate to maintain the preset temperature independently to ensure more consistent styling while greatly reducing the possibility of heat-damage.

**BIR: What are your marketing and your distribution strategies for the Arrojo tool line?**

**MK:** We have tons of co-marketing plans, including trade shows, PR, ads, education programs and more. We'll be looking for representations from full-service distributors who meet a few criteria. They must maintain a certain number of full-time DSCs. The stores, if any, must be professional-only. Also, they must be able to host educational events and have quality customer service.

**BIR: Mike, in your sales literature it states that IZUNAMI tools embody REQD—Rapid Engagement, Quick Disengagement. Please explain what that means to a stylist.**

**MK:** REQD resets the temperature five times per second. When there is a drop in

**“Stylists get it. They can immediately see and feel the difference when they use a top quality tool—another reason to pay attention to details.”**

temperature, it immediately kicks in the heat, ensuring fast heat recovery. Fast heat recovery is very important for consistent styling, top to bottom. The iron cools as you slide it down the hair. In some irons, the temperature drops by as much as 150 degrees. (It starts at 400°; but it drops down to 250°.) Thanks to the high-performance heater and REQD technology, IZUNAMI boasts the fastest heat recovery. And fast heat recovery means fewer reps and consistent styling.

**BIR: IZUNAMI recently launched a 450°F flat iron to compete in the keratin treatment market. Please tell me more.**

**MK:** The IZUNAMI 450° flat iron has the same great features and benefits that our original had. Due to the popularity of keratin treatments, we added an option to click the dial over to 450°F. The new model has continuous settings from 200° to 400°, and between 400° and 450° a “click” has been

added to indicate that the temperature is being set at 450°. 450°F is recommended only when an application, such as a keratin treatment calls for it. Providing this option definitely had a big positive impact on our sales. Our sales popped up almost instantly after we added the feature.

**BIR: What's next?**

**MK:** Within this year, we will be launching the Arrojo by IZUNAMI Iron and the Arrojo by IZUNAMI Dryer, a new iron named KTX, a curling iron and a hybrid iron that straightens and curls perfectly.

**BIR: Tell me about your sales structure.**

**MK:** We work with The Kirschner Group in the Northeast and Van Ness Coleman in other regions. They make our job so easy. Led by Peter Lim, our sales team's main job is to provide them with educational support, sales materials, promotional products and great after-service. Peter and his team respond to any request with immediate follow-up.

**BIR: What type of education programs do you provide?**

**MK:** Education is very important to IZUNAMI. Whether it be a distributor show or sales meeting, our team likes to fly in and conduct educational sessions. We find that face-to-face sessions are much more effective. When such meetings are not possible, we send all the materials and samples in advance and have online meetings. We like distributors that ask for help. Shows and meetings are also an opportunity for us to learn what our customers' needs are, what new technologies are available and what our competitors are doing that we can learn from. We would like to have our full-time educators deployed all over the country to continually visit distributors and salons with new information and techniques.

**BIR: What are some of your goals and challenges for the balance of 2010?**

**MK:** My goal for 2010 is, has been since the beginning of our company and will continue to be to build a brand that lasts. If we build a brand, they will come. We have lots of challenges, because there are a lot of things we want to accomplish. Some of our challenges are introducing new skus on time, establishing a stronger company identity and building a stronger education team. I am confident we will be able to accomplish them all.

*To learn more, reach Mike Kim at 866-455-0777 or [mikekim@izunami.com](mailto:mikekim@izunami.com) and visit [www.izunami.com](http://www.izunami.com).*