



Waikato Business News January, 2010

Page: 9
Section: General News
Region: National, NZ
Circulation: 11000
Type: Magazines Business
Size: 111.38 sq.cms.



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100 years of mowing grass

From manufacturing World War II grenades to creating New Zealand's first fridge and lawnmower – iconic Kiwi company Masport enters its hundredth year buoyed by a 40 percent increase in international sales in the past 12 months.

Masport was responsible for the first commercial production of both the push mower and the motor mower in New Zealand during the 1930s. Now the company manufactures more than 200 models of lawnmower and sells more than 100,000 mowers in 30 countries including New Zealand.

General manager for Masport, Steve Hughes says 100 years in business is a milestone few Kiwi companies reach and it's the Masport team's ability to innovate and think ahead of the times that has been instrumental in its success.

This forward thinking was demonstrated as far back as the late 1930s when Masport became one of the first companies to implement an equal opportunity policy and employ women on the factory floor before the start of World War II.

"The Masport story in New Zealand is a remarkable one, given the dramatic changes that have occurred in the past 100 years – we are fortunate to be here at all, let alone leading the market," says Hughes.

The company was initially founded by Kiwi engineer and entrepreneur Reuben Porter – his first product a patented valve mechanism for milking machines which revolutionised the industry.

He created Masport alongside fellow engineers Harold Mason and Edwin Jones and quickly established a reputation for quality engineering work – a foundation which is still adhered to today.