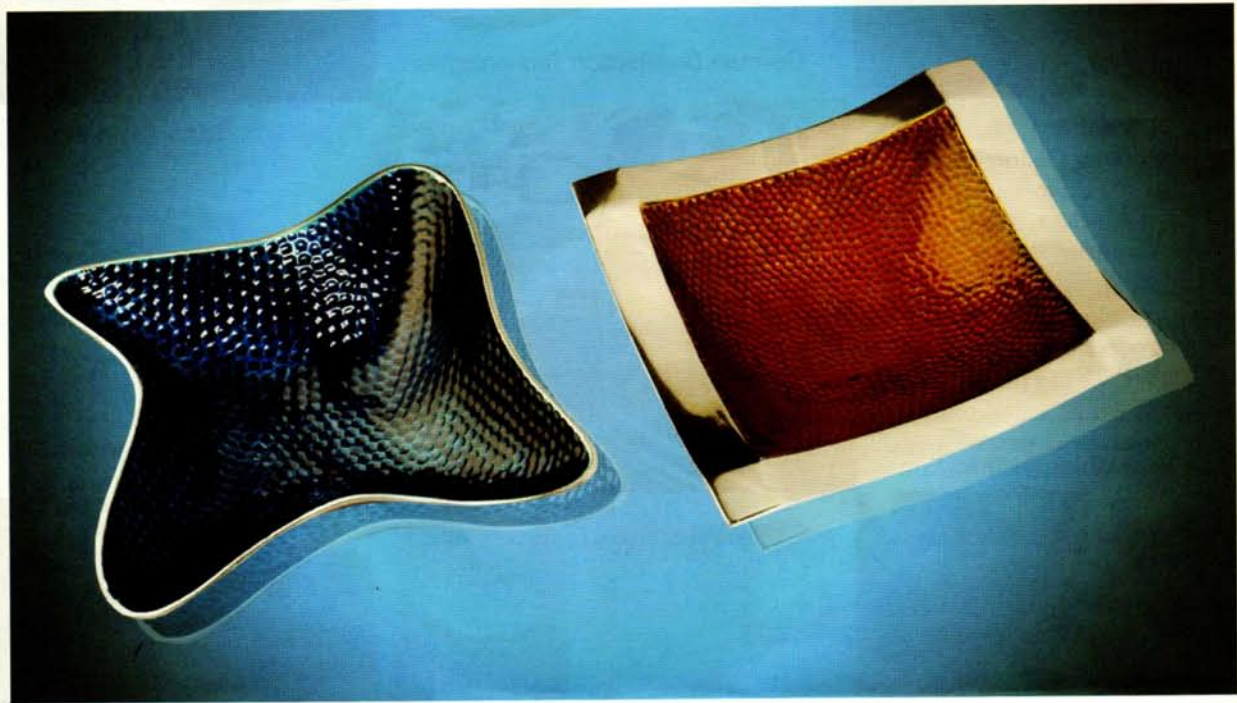


Staying the distance

Rikan General Trading is celebrating a decade in Dubai, so director **Riaz Khimani** talks to *Hotelier Middle East* about how his portfolio of more than 300 products, and the flexibility of his services, has helped the company to survive for so long in such a competitive industry



Rikan General Trading has been producing bespoke products for the hospitality industry for more than a quarter of a century, and 2007 marks the company's tenth year of operations in Dubai.

The secret of the company's success lies in its ability to produce custom-made products to suit any hotel brand standards, and any budget, according to Riaz Khimani, director, Rikan General Trading.

"Rikan's product range includes all types of luxury amenities made from leather or synthetic materials; metal goods made from brass, stainless steel, copper, wrought iron or aluminium; wood and resin products," he says.

The company's catalogue also includes custom-made guest directory folders, stationery boxes and folders, remote control holders, magazine racks, waste bins, minibar trays, fruit trays, bathroom amenity trays

and soap dishes, vases and ashtrays, as well as menu binders and bill folders for restaurants.

"We have been specialists in these products for the last 25 years and been in Dubai for the last 10 years. No doubt, when we started these items were quite unheard of and we only had the basic eight to 10 amenities in our portfolio, which every hotel used," Khimani says.

"We have also evolved along with the rapid changes in the industry, such as the increased demand for luxury amenities and the urge to be different and provide that little bit extra to the guest. This has resulted in us having more than 300 items to our current portfolio," he explains.

However, Rikan General Trading's point of differentiation lies in its ability to produce bespoke items, Khimani continues. If a hotel does not find a suitable product from the 300 in the catalogue, the company is

more than happy to create an item to match a hotel's exact specifications, he says.

"We are considered the best in all kinds of leather and metal products, which is our biggest hallmark. The reason being we have our own manufacturing unit in India and we employ a highly dedicated, quality and service oriented team of 300 people in four production units.

"We are designers and creators, unlike other companies, who only trade in various amenities that manufacturers develop for the general market," he explains.

"For example, since we have our own tannery, we can dye leathers into any pantone shade required, even for the smallest quantity, which others cannot do. We can develop any finish in metals like brass, stainless steel or aluminium, and at the same time make sure that it is user friendly."

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HIGH-END CUSTOM

Rikan's manufacturing team, and its attention to detail and quality production, have won the company contracts from a wide range of high-end hotels across the Middle East.

Within the UAE, Khimani and his team can count the Burj Al Arab, Emirates Towers, Madinat Jumeirah, The Jumeirah Beach Hotel, Bab Al Shams Desert Resort & Spa, Sheraton, The Ritz-Carlton, The Fairmont, Hyatt, JW Marriott, Renaissance, Ramada, Radisson SAS, InterContinental, Shangri-La, Grosvenor House, Kempinski, Rotana, Jebel Ali Group of Hotels, Millennium Hotels and Hilton among its regular customers.

New projects are now also being undertaken for Emaar Hotels and Resorts, and Sun International, which is currently working on the final development of Atlantis, The Palm — a 2300-room five-star deluxe property on The Palm, Jumeirah.

Across the region, and Rikan General Trading has also supplied hotels in Qatar, Oman and Bahrain, while international deals have been fulfilled for a number of high profile hotels, such as The Lanesborough and 51

Buckingham Gate in London, The Setai — Miami in the US, and the Taj Group of Hotels in India.

The list is impressive, but Khimani is quick to point out that often it is the hotel team's creativity that leads the way in product development.

"Hotels are getting extremely innovative and demanding, which helps us in developing new products and coming up with new ideas. Our specialty products are a result of the fast growing hotel industry," he says.

QUALITY CONTROL

While innovation is often the main selling point for hotel amenities and giveaways, Khimani stresses that quality is also a key element and urges hoteliers to consider this factor when selecting suppliers.

"Due to the ever expanding size of the market, we have too many hotel supply companies mushrooming, and everyone is looking to get a piece of the action," he explains.

"It is not a bad thing, but quite a natural phenomenon. The only caution hoteliers needs to exercise is to make sure that the company they are buying from is well established and

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able to deliver even the smaller quantity orders, which are required at later stages of operation.

"At the project stage, there may be a huge choice of suppliers for a hotel to choose from — and there may also be a price war — but many of the suppliers that say they can provide cheaper options at that time may not be able to provide that same service later on," he warns.

Price fluctuation is another negative impact of the market, often associated with the rising costs of raw materials.

"Since we are manufacturers, we do not face much of a challenge in sourcing good quality products. The only problem we face currently is the rising prices of raw materials, and the fluctuating currencies, which make it very difficult for us to convince the hotels of the price rise," Khimani says.

In order to counter these price spikes, Rikan General Trading rarely keeps additional stocks of any of its products.

"We only provide customised items as per the hotel's requirements, and specialise in delivering smaller quantities; therefore we do not actually stock anything," Khimani explains.