

*Needle News provides information on markets, technical aspects, quality issues and much more. We hope you look forward to receiving this bi-annual publication.*

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## THE QUALITY POINT

### Customer Satisfaction 101

In today's competitive marketplace it's hard to differentiate your product and service offerings from your competition. The technology available to both you and your competitors has made it easier to duplicate each other's products and services. Because of this, it is difficult to rely on features alone to differentiate your company. Foster Needle has experienced this difficulty, also.

Excellent customer service is one of the few ways to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. Consider this, only 4% of all customers with concerns will complain. You must have customer feedback to get a pulse on how satisfied or dissatisfied your customers are. If you don't receive complaints, you can still be certain some customers are silently fuming. In fact, about 96% of dissatisfied customers never tell the suppliers how they feel—yet they voice their complaints to an average of nine (9) other people. Nevertheless, if the supplier handles customers' concerns professionally and timely, about 90% will stay loyal to the supplier. Thus, it is key to satisfy customers who take the time to complain, and also to actively invite and gather that feedback. Customer satisfaction is ever-changing in both nuance and our ability to detect if, as a company, we are in fact creating a positive impact. Advancements

in technology and the Internet have eroded geographical market barriers, opening the door to global reach and new markets to penetrate. While these are appealing, the rules that govern customer satisfaction are also being rewritten.

Our customer satisfaction program has benefitted us in many ways. It helps us improve our products and services by taking action on the customer surveys that reveal concerns. It could be something as simple as shipping concerns, and as complex as providing a felting needle that will give a customer the opportunity to produce the best product available in the market. Our customer satisfaction is continually monitored, so we can take immediate action on any concern, provide a solution and help keep your business running smoothly.

Foster Needle has a very active customer satisfaction system developed by our sales team and managed by this same team. Customer surveys are an integral part of our program. The surveys are distributed in a few ways. When a Foster Needle sales agent visits his customers, he will ask them to fill out a survey for him. This can be given to the agent, or it can stay with you to be filled out and mailed back. Additionally, Foster

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## THE CUSTOMER POINT

### SKAPS INDUSTRIES



SKAPS INDUSTRIES is a leader in the fabrication of geosynthetic and nonwoven drainage products for environmental and civil use in the U.S. and abroad.

Through its exclusive state-of-the-art manufacturing processes, SKAPS is able

to meet the supply demands of even the largest orders and most rigorous schedules. When it comes to geonets, geocomposites, and non-woven materials, SKAPS is the answer for environmental drainage control. Skaps Industries' needle punch division also produces a wide range of furniture, bedding, and automotive products using a spectrum of weights and colors, including flame-retardant fibers.

SKAPS Nonwoven division produces civil and environmental nonwoven geotextile, needle punched and made of 100% polypropylene staple fibers, that are formed into a random network for dimensional stability. All SKAPS geotextile products

resist ultraviolet deterioration, rotting, biological degradation, naturally encountered basics, and acids.

SKAPS Industries takes pride in supporting their customers with only first quality products. This can only be accomplished by using the finest materials and support of their suppliers. Foster Needle Company is one of those outstanding companies that provides excellent service and technical support.



*Continued from cover story*

Needle has this same survey available on our website at [www.fosterneedleusa.com](http://www.fosterneedleusa.com). Click on the red icon on the top right of the screen to open up the survey, tell us what you think of our produces and services, and how an improvement in our processes will, in turn, help you, the customer.

Don't be in that 96 percentile that doesn't tell their vendors how they feel.

Wouldn't it be easier to make your concerns known to your vendors, then work together to keep the continuous improvement cycle going, verses having to shop for another vendor and start all over? Here at Foster Needle, we are dedicated to our customers and their satisfaction to create the highest quality products on the market. THIS is how you can differentiate YOUR product offerings from your competition!

## THE AGENT POINT

### Eugene Dai Co., Ltd



Eugene began his career in textile and nonwoven machinery in 1978 as an agent of the Taiwan Branch of Siber Hegner Co. Eugene Dai Co., LTD was founded in 1989.

In 1990, Eugene became the agent for Foster Needle Co.

With the addition of the felting needle business and his knowledge of traditional textiles and machinery, Eugene was soon considered one of the most knowledgeable agents in Taiwan for textiles. This also grew with his representation of Fehrer Machinery as well as F.O.R. equipment.

Eugene's knowledge of textiles, knowledge of the Taiwan textile market, his customer relationships, and friends in the market have all contributed to the Foster Needle success in Taiwan.

Eugene enjoys the challenges of addressing customers' concerns and interests. He likes to contribute his experience and knowledge to all needlepunch companies in Taiwan and those which have relocated to China.

When not working, Eugene spends time with his wife and daughter. They enjoy tennis and the beach. One of Eugene's longtime hobbies is scuba diving, which he does whenever possible.

## THE MAIN/TECHNICAL POINT

### The success of the Star Blade design has proven the test of time, continuously finding advantages in new market areas.

For many years, Foster Needle's original Star Blade has been very successful in the production of all types of geotextiles. The Star Blade is much different in appearance and performance compared to traditional triangular blade felting needles.

The most obvious difference is in the shape of the cross section. The Star Blade has an additional apex compared to the traditional triangular needle. With the addition of the fourth apex comes improved interlocking of fiber, resulting in higher tensile strengths. Normally a needle designed for higher fiber locking will result in a deterioration of the fabric surface, but not the Star Blade. The star shape has been proven to result in remarkable surface appearance.

Another advantage for the Star Blade is reduced needle load on the equipment. In recent tests compared with other geotextile needles, the load with the Star Blade was lower, meaning less equipment stress and repair.

Other advantages of our traditional Star Blade design include: less needle breakage due to the star-shaped design, higher physical properties with fewer penetrations per square centimeter, barb spaced close

together for good fiber entanglement at low penetration depth (resulting in reduced needle dwell time in the fabric), and the 60-degree apex to increase barb life.

Foster Needle Company has introduced modifications to the original design over the last few years. We now offer a conical version of the Star Blade needle. This design would be excellent for replacing regular conical needles when an increase in physical properties is desired. In the U.S. we have sold this needle successfully to companies manufacturing cotton cosmetic pads. The conical shape helps reduce the possibility of broken needles, a very sensitive area for this market. The star shape increases fiber interlocking at lower punches per square inch. This needle could also be used for the padding industry when an increase in tensile strength is required.

Foster Needle is also offering the Star Blade with different options on barb spacing. The standard barb-to-barb spacing for a Star Blade needle is 0.031 of an inch. We now offer a Star Blade with barb spacing of 0.063 of an inch. This needle could be used for tacker looms and other applications where loft may be important. The combination of regular barb and medium barb spacing

on this needle allows for a good uniform distribution of fibers. We currently have this needle in a complete technical lab line. We believe this needle has applications in several market areas.

The Star Blade needle is successfully being used in the following markets:

- Geotextile
- Furniture fabrics
- Needling woven fabrics for upholstery
- Blankets
- Cosmetic cotton pads
- Flat felts for carpet manufacturers
- Needling composites together (several layers of different types of products)
- Needling mop yarns
- Automotive products
- Protective clothing market (Kevlar® and/or Nomex® products)
- Needling Stitchbond products for vertical blinds
- Brake pads
- Abrasive disks for sanding operations
- Other technical felts

This list is just from U.S. customers, proving that Star Blade needles are not just for geotextiles, but can offer needling solutions in many market areas.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>IDEA 2010</b>	<b>Techtextil North America</b>	<b>World of Wipes</b>	<b>ITMA ASIA 2010</b>	<b>"CINTE" Techtextil</b>	<b>Filtration 2010</b>	<b>INDEX 2011</b>
April 27-29	May 18-20	June 21-23	June 22-26	October 19-21	November 30 - December 2	April 12-15, 2011
Miami Beach, FL	Atlanta, GA	Chicago, IL	Shanghai, China	Shanghai, China	Philadelphia, PA	Geneva, Switzerland

### Foster Needle Company Mission Statement

Foster Needle is and will continue to be the world leader in the production and sale of world quality felting needles by providing customers the best value and service, generating profits that protect and enrich Foster Needle's future, caring for the development and well being of all our employees.

## Meet Keith Gilbert



Keith started working for Foster Needle in 1989 as a production machine operator. After three years he was promoted to shift lead person in the production area. In 1994 Keith was promoted to second shift pointing and barbing production area supervisor. He remained in that position until May of 1995, when he was promoted to area manager in the pointing and barbing area.

As area manager, Keith plays an important role in production and quality at Foster Needle. Over the years he has been involved in advances in both machine and needle developments. Keith has also attended numerous supervisory and management classes offered through the University of Wisconsin, and he obtained a Mid-Management Development certificate.

Keith is an excellent example of the employees at Foster Needle. He has worked for the company for 21 years, and during this time has elevated himself to an important part of Foster Needle's management team.

Keith is originally from Manitowoc and has lived here all of his life. He has been married to his wife Sherry, who also works at Foster Needle, for 31 years. Keith is an avid outdoorsman who enjoys hunting and fishing.

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