



WHEN YUNI SHIRAMIZU LEFT KOREA IN 1977, SHE HOPED FOR A BETTER LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES. Along with her mother and five siblings, Yuni made a new home in Honolulu. She began working as a coffee waitress, but struggled with the culture and new language. Little did she know at the time that in 14 years, she would become owner of a local scale business with perhaps the largest service territory on Earth.

It all started in 1987 when Jack Young needed an office assistant for his business, Young Scale. Ten years had passed since Yuni moved to Hawaii. She was making good money as a waitress, but recognized the opportunity for a career in which she could better utilize her mind. Yuni's English had improved in the decade living in Hawaii and she learned excellent customer service skills as a waitress. She interviewed for the job and Jack offered her the position, which she accepted despite a decrease in pay.



*Yuni took a pay cut for her first job in the weighing industry. Today, she owns Young Scale. Her determination and focus on customer service help grow the business each year.*

At first, Yuni didn't know why anyone would need a scale. She wasn't sure if Young Scale would have enough business to survive. Yuni wondered how the company remained successful since its origin in 1959 selling such a niche product. Soon, however, she realized scales are essential to virtually every industry on Earth. Her mind raced with possibilities as she discovered this new, secret industry. It didn't take long for Yuni to decide her future was in scales. Although she was a new hire, Yuni told Jack she wanted to buy the business from him when he retired. Surprised with his new employee, Jack responded "Ask me again in one year and we'll see if you are still interested." The year passed, and Yuni and Jack revisited their discussion about the future. He asked Yuni if she was still interested in buying the business from him. Yuni responded, "Ask me again in one year."

In 1991, Yuni achieved her goal and bought Young Scale. Excited for the vast potential the scale industry offers, she was

also uncertain if she would be successful. The industry was male-dominated and she wasn't sure if a female immigrant would be accepted. To compound matters, her English skills were still limited and the scale industry had a language of its own. Indeed, there were many obstacles already in her path, but Yuni envisioned a new approach for the company to ensure success: focus on customer service.

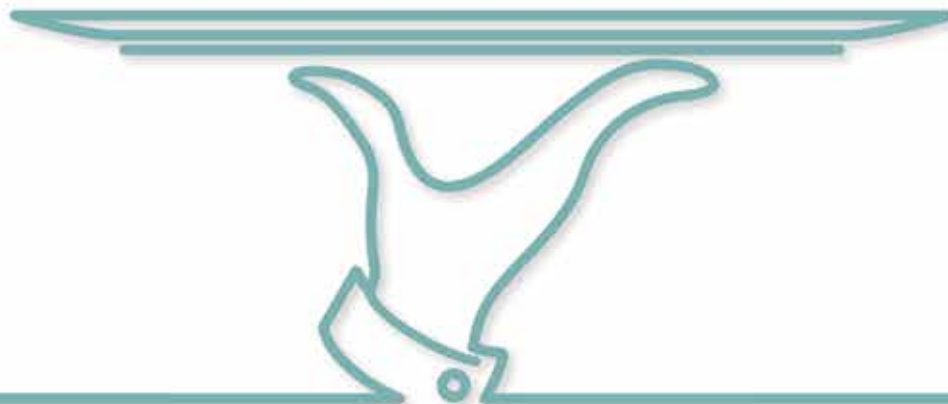
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Yuni instilled the fundamental imperative she learned as a waitress—taking care of the customer is the first priority. She began with her own employees. Yuni knew what it was like to struggle. She had witnessed it firsthand through her single mother, who would have been forced to give up her six children to an orphanage in order to remarry in Korea. Yuni decided to offer excellent wages and benefits to ensure Young Scale's employees could take care of their families and would, in turn, value their careers.

The business immediately began to grow, but Yuni remained cautious about new opportunities. Islands throughout the Pacific started calling Young Scale, but she didn't want to extend the business beyond its grip of excellent service. Yuni accepted scale installations only where she knew they could be properly supported.

When one of her scale technicians quit because he did not want to work for a woman, Yuni filled the position with

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# Paradise FOUND

**Yuni Shiramizu overcomes obstacles to own a successful scale business in Hawaii, climbing the ladder of success and traveling the world for Rice Lake scales.**

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her nephew, Scott Miyashiro, who was working as Young Scale's janitor. Youthful and eager to travel, Scott soon became Young Scale's field service technician, stretching the arm of service to remote locations such as Guam, Saipan, Philippines, Samoa, Tinian and Korea. Companies around the Pacific heard about Young Scale's excellent customer service, and unique opportunities (as well as a plethora of frequent flyer miles) presented themselves. A banking machine vendor (money counters, sorters, scanners and ATMs) called Yuni, requesting Young Scale take over their equipment on the island. "I had to decline their request because I did not want to stretch ourselves from scales to the banking business,"

Yuni explains. The vendor was persistent and reiterated their request a few years later. They traveled from Chicago to visit Young Scale, and Yuni accepted their offer because she was now more experienced and comfortable with branching out from traditional products and services. "I have to admit, it was one of the better business decisions I made," Yuni says. Young Scale began providing scales, shredders, perforators, check encoders and money processing machines for several of Hawaii's banks as well as casinos throughout the Pacific. "We now have the majority of bank accounts in Hawaii," Yuni explains, "including two of the largest!"

Whether servicing scales and banking machines in Hawaii or in a remote

Pacific location, Young Scale provides the same quality products and services to their customers. Traveling throughout paradise has its challenges, however. It turns out, customers aren't the only ones who like Rice Lake equipment. Scott battles with geckos and other tropical nesting creatures to keep them out of equipment boxes. If they infiltrate the box, they

*Scott Miyashiro (left) and Chris Shiramizu (right) fortify Young Scale's foundation of strong customer service.*

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often claw at electronics, resulting in malfunctions due to extremely unique circumstances. Usually, Scott is able to fight off the geckos to install his indicator of choice: Rice Lake's 920i®. Due to its custom programming options and proven performance, Scott has been able apply the indicator to a wide range of applications, including multiple heavy capacity installations on Guam. The island has provided so much business for Young Scale (242 pieces of equipment) that Scott leaves a full set of tools there



at all times, easing the demands of long-distance travel.

920i indicators and SURVIVOR® truck scales pepper the Pacific Rim, and the CB-2 concrete batching system is another popular equipment choice in the tropics. Andersen Air Force Base on Guam uses the CB-2 in a portable concrete batch plant to create airfields on demand. The CB-2's speed and reliability are essential for the base's needs. The island of Tinian also uses a CB-2 for their concrete plant. This 39-square-mile island depends on tourism for its economy, but the infrastructure is minimally developed—resulting in an unquenchable need for concrete (and drinks with little umbrellas in them).

In addition to industrial scales and banking equipment, Young Scale has solidified a retail stronghold. They have installed 50 food wrappers in Hawaii's grocery and exporting companies, and have their sights set on 50 more.

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Word is out, their reputation is growing and Young Scale's principles of quality, hard work, honesty and excellent service are synonymous with those of Rice Lake. Some acquire these merits from their family. Yuni refined them as a waitress, and her employees absorb them from her. Yuni invests more than just admirable character in her employees. She sends each new technician to Rice Lake Service School (4,000 miles away) so they can learn directly from the equipment manufacturer and, in the end, better serve the customer.

Yuni's ambition was key to overcoming challenges throughout her life and career. To find paradise, to reach the top of the mountain, one must have the end in sight—even if it is only in the mind's eye. Yuni Shiramizu reached this summit, not because it was given to her but because she pursued it without compromise. ■

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