

EURObiz JAPAN



*Cameron Brett
Randstad
Professionals*

*Lanis Yarzab
Spring Professional*



*Sriekesh Chidambaram
Exentive*



The World of Recruitment

Lifestyle retailing

Northern Europe
leading the way

Ready for disaster

Tokyo Governor on
Disaster Preparedness
Tokyo handbook

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Samuel Alexander

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The European (EU) Chamber of Commerce in Japan

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EURObiZ is now available onboard Turkish Airlines business class, leaving Tokyo twice daily from Narita and once daily from Osaka.



Contributors

Lucy Birmingham sits down with a multi-talented Japanese artist popular in Europe, page 34.



arts and culture. Her books include *Strong in the Rain: Surviving Japan's Earthquake, Tsunami and Nuclear Disaster*.

"Europe has a long tradition of generous support for the arts that extends well beyond its borders. Some Japanese artists have been the lucky recipients through grants and other sources. In fact, it can be easier to gain support from Europe than from Japan, where backing of the arts is often commercially driven. In a country that prides itself on its artistic and cultural heritage, Japan should be supporting more of its artists."

Lucy Birmingham – journalist, scriptwriter, author and former photojournalist – has written or photographed for Time.com, Bloomberg News, *Architectural Digest* and other publications, often about Japanese

Elliot Silverberg has lived in Japan off and on all his life. He currently works at an international law firm and also manages to explore business, politics and society as a freelance journalist.

"I found that the Scandinavian lifestyle retailers are well positioned in the market because of the cultural and aesthetic values they share with Japanese consumers. The enduring popularity of their quality brands speaks volumes of the potential



Elliot Silverberg covers the retailing of North European lifestyles, page 12.

to breathe new life into Japan's revered tradition of *monozukuri*."

Gavin Blair discovers products helping Japan stay fit with style, page 18.



Writing in and about Japan since 2000, Gavin Blair contributes articles to

magazines, websites and newspapers in Asia, Europe and the US on a wide range of topics, many of them business related. "The beginning of the year is always a good time to be thinking about all the different ways to be getting fit and healthy. So, with any luck, hearing about all these sports- and wellness-related products and services will inspire me to get in better shape in 2016."



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Pierre Gagnaire returns to Tokyo

The ANA InterContinental Tokyo is home to three-Michelin-starred chef Pierre Gagnaire's most renowned restaurant in the world. Chef Pierre will return to his restaurant in Tokyo from February 24th to the 27th to create fresh menus inspired by the coming spring season and to mingle with guests.

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**“THE CLUB IS AN
ESSENTIAL HUB
FOR MANY FAMILIES
IN TOKYO.”**

**JOHN DURKIN
TAC PRESIDENT**



A Bright Future

When I was elected president of Tokyo American Club (TAC) for the first time, in 2012, the situation at the Club was not good. A sizeable ¥28 billion had been invested in the Club, but the global financial crisis had decimated the Club's membership count and 2011's earthquake had aggravated the situation. The Club's financial condition was precarious.

Since then, things have completely changed. The Club has recorded three consecutive years of strong membership growth and our finances are stable. We expect to soon exceed 4,000 members, the most since the Club's founding in 1928.

TAC has become more relevant than ever to the lives of the Tokyo international community. This has been one of my main objectives.

We have improved our dining options for both adults and families, and last year we opened an American-style steakhouse, CHOP, modeled on the best venues in New York and Las Vegas. The restaurant promptly won awards of excellence.

Sports and fitness at the Club represent the best in Japan, and our fitness hours have been expanded from early morning to late at night. Lessons and classes with professional instructors are in English. Racket sports, swimming, golf, basketball, volleyball, running, indoor cycling, bowling and many other sports are all available.

We have also introduced frequent, inexpensive social events to bring together the community.

Family is key at TAC, and the Club is an essential hub for many families in Tokyo. It's a great place to grow up.

With membership approaching capacity, it's likely to become more difficult to join the Club in the future, both in terms of availability and price.

The purpose of this letter is to reach out to my friends in the many European chambers of commerce in Japan. The Club still has preferential, excellent-value entrance fees for the international community. Dues are comparable to high-end fitness clubs, but include a broad array of community, dining, social and cultural benefits.

The Club is a nonprofit organization, so any profits go back to the members. Last year, we were able to host free holiday shows and an event for more than 2,000 members and their families.

I would be delighted to personally sponsor any member of a European chamber of commerce who applies to join the Club.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Durkin', written in a cursive style.

JOHN DURKIN President/Representative Director, Tokyo American Club

東京

TOKYO AMERICAN CLUB

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03-4588-0687 (Membership Office)

Don't give up!

February is usually when New Year's resolutions to get back in shape begin to flag. According to surveys done in the US and the UK, roughly 65% of those who make resolutions give up on them by the end of the first month.

Joseph H. Pilates, inventor of the Pilates fitness method, said "Physical fitness is the first requisite of happiness." So before you decide to throw in the towel on your exercise regimen and risk losing out on some of the happiness and wellbeing you should be enjoying this year, take a look at Gavin Blair's article, "A healthy fit" (page 18). He presents a few of the latest imported goods that may help give you the encouragement you need to keep to your resolution.

Remembering that laughter is the best medicine, Lucy Birmingham introduces us to Atsushi Ogata (page 34), an actor and director whose humorous *Yukata Cowboy* web series is growing in popularity around the world and



winning awards at international festivals in Europe.

Along with health, physical safety is of paramount concern to all of us. In Tokyo, where the prospect of a major earthquake always looms, being prepared for an emergency is of particular importance. We have a special feature this month with Tokyo Metropolitan Governor Yoichi Masuzoe, who spoke

with *EURObiZ Japan* about the need for and the response to the Disaster Preparedness Tokyo book that was sent out to all residents of Tokyo's 23 wards (page 23).

Although not quite as crucial as health and safety, the jobs we do can define who we are. Our cover story for this month (page 8) features a roundtable discussion with three recruiters in Tokyo who are working earnestly to ensure the satisfaction of their clients, candidates, and staff.

Whether you're trying to get in shape or find the best candidate for your business, don't give up! [e](#)



Andrew Howitt
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Roundtable:

The World of Recruitment

Moderator **ANDREW HOWITT** Photo **BENJAMIN PARKS**

In an industry with as many players as recruitment, it would be natural to assume there is a lot of competitiveness, and even antagonism, among recruiters from rival companies. However, that was not the case when *EURObiZ Japan* sat down with Lanis Yarzab, managing director at Spring Professional; Cameron Brett, director at Randstad Professionals; and Sriresh Chidambaram, representative director at Exentive. With intelligent insights and a clear perspective on the industry in Japan, they discussed recruitment and what's important to satisfy clients, staff and job candidates.



want people in planning departments or in IT here locally that speak English. We also provide tailored recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) and HR recruitment optimisation services.

So, in some areas you're in direct competition with one another.

Lanis: It's true that there are a lot of recruiters out there, but it's such a big market. And we've got different networks.

Sri: There's basically space for everyone. There's just no issue in finding clients. If anything, it's surprising that there are clients that some of the big firms haven't latched onto yet.

Well then, how do you distinguish yourselves in an industry with so many players?

Cameron: For us it comes down to the candidate experience and the client experience. We try to create an enjoyable and rewarding experience on both sides, so that the client will continue to use us and the candidate will introduce us to other people in their network. We spend time on finding ways to improve our customer service, and provide an excellent level of service. One of the ways we do that is specialisation. Even though we may seem like a general HR solutions provider, what we are is actually a company full of specialists.

Lanis: When I started the Spring brand for the Adecco Group, I looked at the type of people I wanted to hire: mature consultants with some industry experience that could handle both Japanese and multinational clients. People who could offer good advice to candidates, help them make career decisions, and show them that they have different options. If there was a difficult position that needed to be filled, they would be able to understand the technical requirements and find candidates. So the quality of our staff is one way Spring differentiates itself.

Sri: We're not a big brand; we're a small brand. We don't work with many clients, but we're aggressive headhunters. So we can't compete with some of the big firms in terms of how they can mine databases, how many people they put on a job. We're primarily working with companies where we have access right at the top level, where we've had long-term relations or where a



EURObiz: What areas do your companies specialise in?

Lanis Yarzab: The Spring brand, which we started rolling out across Asia in 2013, is primarily known for being a technical recruitment firm, mainly IT, manufacturing, supply chain, and property and construction. We look for technical professionals within different industries.

Cameron Brett: Randstad Japan's DNA is really in manufacturing, and Randstad Professionals has played to

that strength. We have three teams that focus on technical and commercial roles. Automotive, electronics, and machinery is our manufacturing team. We have a life sciences team that focuses on pharmaceuticals and medical devices, and a B2C consumer team.

Srikesh Chidambaram: At Exentive, we primarily focus recruitment on three different areas – professional services, finance and IT companies, especially start-ups. Quite a lot of Japanese companies are going overseas, and they



Robert Walters Japan


Robert Walters was established in London in 1985 and is now one of the world's leading specialist recruitment consultancies with a global network across 24 countries. With offices in Tokyo and Osaka, established in 2000 and 2007 respectively, Robert Walters Japan specialises in permanent and contract recruitment solutions across all industry sectors with strong regional and global business client partnerships. Our award-winning business is supported by highly trained consultants with in-depth knowledge about each industry as well as by the world's largest database of Japanese-English bilingual professionals at all levels of seniority in order to best serve clients' highly specialized needs.

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long-term relation introduces us to a new client.

From what I gather, the recruiting industry is quite intense. What do you do to retain your staff?

Lanis: That's a huge issue because the industry has very high turnover. We take staff retention very seriously. In our company every year, we do the Great Place to Work survey, and all of the management is held accountable for how we do and how we are perceived by our staff. Our global vision is "Better work, better life"; and every time we do planning, the question that you get asked is, "How does this affect our staff?" I think, as well, to retain staff you need to trust your employees. If you hire good people, they get the job done. It's very outdated to say: "You must work nine to five". We're a flexible com-

“A GOOD ENVIRONMENT TO BE RECRUITING IN”

pany, and what's important for each of your staff depends on what they need on a given day.

Cameron: As a leader, I think my most important job is hiring and retaining 'A' players. It's also one of the most difficult things to do in our industry. To retain 'A' players, I think you really need to know your people. You need to understand what motivates them and what engages them. In my experience, recruiters are economic animals, and an attractive and transparent compensation plan is important. As well, the guys on our team told us that training was important to them, so we've started to provide opportunities for overseas training programmes. We're also looking at how we can improve work-life balance. I think it starts with listening to people that you're managing and trying to find ways to keep them on board.

Sri: It's not very applicable for myself because we're a small boutique. But in my experience, there are a lot of senior

recruiters out there who become very upset when their employees quit and go to a competitor; and it's sad, because we are headhunters. When one of your staff leaves and you get upset, it just sends the wrong signal to your entire staff, saying that there's something inherently wrong with this mission. The places that say, "Thank you for all your effort, good job," they tend to hold on to a lot more people.

What is an important issue for you right now as you recruit in Japan?

Lanis: I always talk about diversity issues in the permanent recruitment market. Part of my stance and what we do at Spring is to only talk to our clients about candidates' skills. No personal information is given to clients about candidates. We try to get the best skilled candidate into the best job – no

matter what gender, race or age they are. It's one of our core values.

Sri: Sexism and ageism are rampant in Japan. There are lots of legal workarounds for it. You can be completely ageist in your

hiring policies, for what's called succession planning here. And they base that on age. There are fantastic candidates out there who, once they hit a certain magical age, have a much harder time finding a job. Also, I've been told by employers a number of times that they would prefer a man in the job because they'll have to manage a team of people in their forties. I've been helping some companies resolve discriminatory practices: seeing if they have discrimination policies in effect; looking through their actual interview processes, how they are interviewing people, adding analytics to it; and educating.

Lanis: For all of our clients, we know that's not the message coming down from the top. But you have certain practices which have been in a company for a long time, and they're hard to change. Upper management wants a diverse workforce; however, there is an unconscious bias at different layers of organisations.

What are some of the qualities and skills that employers are looking for in the Japanese job market today?

Cameron: It's responding or adapting to change. Or, if it's a management role, then it'd be driving change. Also, for a skill set in just about any industry, digital is key: people who are digital savvy, and who understand how to create and drive a digital strategy.


Sri: For us, the key word that keeps popping up is 'transformation'. We need flexible people. That's the core. The other thing that I would say is a strategic planning mindset. Even for lower-level positions, employers want someone who can be flexible and strategic. Of course, digital is always in demand. I think every single company has a headcount somewhere for something related to digital.

Lanis: I agree. I think technical skills always come first. Can the person do the job and, on top of that, can they communicate and interact with different parts of the business?

What is it like to do business in Japan's current economic climate – with the global recession and Abenomics?

Sri: Economics hasn't really affected our area. The only thing that has been affected is the kind of recruitment that is being done. Where in the past there were a lot of direct vendor relations, now we see more recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) happening, and a lot of the bigger companies are moving more and more into pitching clients' RPOs.

Lanis: Everyone talks about the economy and Abenomics. In Japan, the temporary recruitment market in fiscal 2014 grew 105%. The permanent market grew 118%. Companies are so short on good staff. It doesn't affect us on a day-to-day basis.

Cameron: Absolutely. The unemployment rate in Japan hovers around 3.3%, which is one of the lowest of any country in the world, and so it's a really candidate-driven market. There're lots of jobs, and not enough candidates, which is a good environment to be recruiting in. I'd say this is the best market we've seen since 2007. And it keeps getting better. 



innish author Tove Jansson's Moomins of Moominvalley are an unusual childlike bunch, but they hold a

fascinating charm.

Management at FinTech Global Incorporated, a boutique investment bank in Tokyo, has recognised Moomin's unique appeal, and is busy laying the groundwork for Metsä, an ambitious development on a 46-acre woodland site north of Tokyo at Lake Miyazawa. Metsä, meaning "forest" in Finnish, will have both Finnish-style boutiques and restaurants. It will also be the site of

Moomin Valley Park, only the second Moomin theme park in the world, after Moomin World in Naantali, Finland.

One might ask, why build a Moomin theme park in Japan, of all places? And why now? In fact, the proposition is not at all far-fetched. The Moomins have tremendous name recognition and appeal in Japan, especially among older Japanese who recall with great fondness the Moomin books and telecasts of the 1960s and 1970s.

"Scandinavian children's tales – like those of Tove Jansson, Astrid Lindgren and others who have their origin in calm, democratic and gender-equal

societies – have done extremely well in Asia," says Roleff Kråkström, managing director of Moomin Characters. Kråkström estimates that Japanese consumers are currently responsible for 35% to 40% of global sales of Moomin products. And this over a 10-year period when Moomin Characters, the Moomin copyright holder, experienced percentage growth in the triple digits.

But Moomin's nostalgic appeal to Japan's ageing baby boomers is secondary to the greater trend at work here: Scandinavian culture and lifestyle's huge and growing marketability in Japan.

Lifestyle retailing

Northern Europe leading the way

Text **ELLIOT SILVERBERG**





- (1) Carl Hansen & Søn
- (2) Dream Chair by Tadao Ando
- (3) Sweden House
- (4-6) Fiskars Royal Copenhagen
- (Left) Bang & Olufsen's BeoPlay A9 music system

Sweden's IKEA Japan has truly been a force to be reckoned with since the Japan subsidiary was re-established in 2006. This in spite of the furniture giant being humbled by its failure in the 1980s to enter the country's demanding marketplace. To date, eight massive depots have been built. An IKEA Touchpoint store in Kyushu opened last October, and another mega-sized depot in Nagakute City near Nagoya is on the way, with an online store expected to follow.

IKEA's huge appeal in Japan stems from its determination to offer products that combine good design and quality with affordable pricing, according

to Peter List, president and CEO of IKEA Japan.

"We continue to visit people's homes all over the world and to learn about their different lifestyle needs," says List. "Our vision goes beyond home furnishings. We want to create a better living experience for all people our business touches."

Henning v.G. Rosted, the regional president for Japan and the Asia-Pacific at Carl Hansen & Søn, a Danish furniture manufacturer, explains: "Scandinavian interior style is very much centred on providing warmth and cosiness through the liberal use of blankets, rugs,

cushions, candles and dim lighting. What we express at Carl Hansen is a similar type of intimacy, conveyed through the simple and authentic furniture of Hans J. Wegner and others of the 1950s and '60s era of Danish Modern.

"We have traditionally been a stellar brand in the residential or private consumer sector," adds Rosted, "but in recent years we have been tapping very strongly into Japan's professional segment – hotels, restaurants and other environments where dining and living room sets are needed."

Another Scandinavian – actually, hybrid Swedish-Japanese – retailer with >

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WING CHAIR
HANS J. WEGNER · 1960

The Wing Chair - one of Wegner's most famous works - is a lounge chair that isn't just beautiful to look at. With its light and elegant design, the chair also promotes fantastic seating comfort thanks to a solid beech wood frame with wings that provides excellent support for the back - regardless of one's sitting position. A true masterpiece!



CARL HANSEN & SØN
PASSIONATE CRAFTSMANSHIP



Moomin theme park
(Image courtesy of fintech)

deep roots in Japan is Sweden House, a housing company that has built custom homes for Japanese families since 1984. The company is perhaps more notable for the construction of Sweden Hills, a Swedish-style village in Hokkaido. Sweden House often incorporates Swedish exterior and interior design elements with Japanese homeowners' preferences for tatami-mat flooring, temperature-controlled bathtubs and larger kitchens. Now, the company is repositioning itself for the future market with its new Hus Eco Zero.



"In December, we introduced photovoltaic solar cells and other sustainable energy technologies into our product line-up, with the intention to construct 200 fully energy-efficient homes annually," says Masanori Suzuki, sales division director at Sweden House.

Scandinavian lifestyle's surging popularity is hardly restricted to furniture and housing. Bang & Olufsen, the Danish luxury sound systems-maker, continues to make strides in Japan.

While home entertainment systems appear to have taken a backseat to affordable mobile technologies such as smartphones and tablets, Bang & Olufsen's designer stereos and televisions have not lost their edge. In Japan, the high-tech retailer aims to open 20 stores in the next three years, with a turnover target of ¥2 billion.

"We strive to create enduring magical experiences for our customers," says

Yumiko Kanai, marketing manager at Bang & Olufsen Japan.

"The Danes and Japanese share an appreciation for high-quality minimalism and functionality," adds Matteo Gaeta (left), president of Fiskars Business Region Asia-Pacific. It owns Royal Copenhagen and other Scandinavian brands, such as Iittala and Rörstrand.

Sweden's Hennes & Mauritz, better known as H&M, is yet another retailer to enjoy huge growth in Japan. The clothing giant recently opened its 55th outlet

here, and attributes its continuing success to its belief in the

importance of catering to a diversity of fashion preferences, from modern basics to current and cutting-edge.

Although Denmark and Sweden are famous for sophisticated lifestyle designs, two other Scandinavian countries – Norway and Finland – are less recognised in Japan for their contributions to lifestyle.

However, Michal Berg, executive director of the Norwegian Chamber of Commerce in Japan, is optimistic about the future. Among his chamber duties, Berg is editor-in-chief of *StyleNORWAY*, a quarterly lifestyle magazine. He is very upbeat, in large part because of the meteoric rise of Fuglen, the specialty coffee brewer, cocktail maker and furniture distributor with branch cafés in Oslo and Tokyo. Fuglen cafés, which are decorated with traditional Norwegian furnishings,


double as live showrooms where customers may test the furniture and purchase any pieces they take a liking to.

The café, which made headlines in 2011 as one of design magazine *Monocle's* top five selections for "best small retail concept in the world", has also organised an international furniture exhibition called Norwegian Icons. When the exhibition came to Tokyo in 2013, it attracted roughly 7,000 visitors and was acclaimed by critics.

"Fuglen means so much to all Norwegians in Japan, and it completes the circle here for all that is Norway-related," says Berg. "I personally am hopeful that in the future it will provide a gateway for other Norwegian products."

Fuglen embodies the strength of Scandinavian lifestyle business in Japan and around the world, according to Trond Varlid, a Norwegian business executive and programme director of the annual Japan Market Expansion Competition.

"Here you have a small café in Oslo that, within a few short years, set up a very successful branch in Tokyo which sells its vintage design furniture in several of the country's leading department stores. And now, it also serves its specialty coffee roasts in the showrooms of Lexus and other premium brands here," Varlid says. "As a marketing concept, to be able to go from almost zero to where they are now, is very impressive."

And with the many other examples of Scandinavian lifestyle's burgeoning growth, the Fuglen story may yet be only the beginning. 

The island of Funen in Denmark is, perhaps, best known internationally for being where author Hans Christian Andersen was born and raised. Another native of Funen who made his mark on the world was Carl Hansen, who in 1908 founded the furniture company that still bears his name.

The company's products have a solid reputation for matching quality craftsmanship with the tasteful practicality that Scandinavian consumer goods are famous for.

"Mr. Hansen was a carpenter," explains Henning v.G. Rosted, president of Carl Hansen & Søn Japan. "He started his own shop, making furniture for local people – nothing fancy, very utilitarian."

Rosted says the years just after the Second World War were crucial for the firm.

"After the war, there was renewed optimism in society – a renewed desire to explore life," he says. At that time, the company began working with architect Hans J. Wegner, who was then young and unknown, but later became one of the world's most well-known chair designers. Holger Hansen, who had taken over the business from his father, saw great potential in working with Wegner, says Rosted, also noting that Wegner designed the now iconic Wishbone chair for Carl Hansen & Søn.

"It's still one of the most revered chairs in the furniture business," says Rosted, adding that the Wishbone chair has been in continuous production since 1950.

Rosted says that what makes Carl Hansen & Søn distinct among furniture makers is that its products are not only designed in Denmark, but they are made there as well. "That's quite rare nowadays," Rosted points out.

Carl Hansen & Søn sells some 100 unique products. "We tailor the finishing of our products to meet customers'

needs," Rosted remarks, "but we stay with the original core design."

The company is now active in 40 countries. Carl Hansen & Søn entered the Japanese market 25 years ago with a wholly owned subsidiary. Japan is the firm's biggest export market.


Like many foreign business people in Japan, Rosted says it can be hard to make inroads into this very conservative market. "It takes time to develop trust with consumers," he observes, adding that the firm now has a very strong presence in Japan, with annual double-digit sales growth. Most of those sales come from the residential market via 160 furniture dealers, although Rosted says Carl Hansen & Søn has been putting more effort into promoting its products to the "professional" market in the last couple of years. Last year the company began an e-commerce operation, and it has a flagship retail outlet of its own in Tokyo's upscale Aoyama district.

While the furniture that Carl Hansen & Søn makes is a bit pricey, Rosted says the company doesn't see itself catering to the high-end of the market exclusively. "There are a lot of people who save up to buy our furniture," he notes. "That makes sense if your aim is to have something that will last for decades."

Carl Hansen & Søn's profile in Japan got a major boost when the firm asked famed architect Tadao Ando to design a chair (see page 12). "We launched the chair three years ago," Rosted says, "and the response was phenomenal. It's now being sold worldwide as a niche product."

In a similar vein, Rosted says that this year Carl Hansen & Søn is introducing a chair designed back in 1950 by Wegner that has never been produced before, and the firm is also launching a rug collection designed by Naja Utzon, the granddaughter of Sydney Opera House designer Jørn Utzon.

On a personal note, Rosted has lived in Japan for a total of 13 years, with his second stint in this country beginning three years ago. He says he appreciates the Japanese people's sense of correctness and punctuality.

To stay in shape, Rosted says he and his wife make a habit of getting up early and going for a run. Although he says he's quite comfortable living in Japan, Rosted admits that he misses Danish bread and cheese. 

Carl Hansen & Søn

Simple beauty that's built to last

Text **STEVE MCCLURE** Photo **KAGEAKI SMITH**

“THERE ARE
A LOT OF
PEOPLE WHO
SAVE UP TO
BUY OUR
FURNITURE”



A healthy fit

*Imported products
and expertise*

Text **GAVIN BLAIR**



Picture yourself carving down the expansive ski slopes of Hokkaido, sprinting along the sidewalks of Tokyo, working up a sweat at the local fitness centre, or recharging mind and body at a spa. When it comes to health and fitness in Japan, European companies are helping enhance your routine with a range of imported products and services.

Sportswear giant adidas of Germany has been expanding and upgrading its offerings of customised shoes and uniforms. Its mi adidas service makes it easier for sporty types to stand out from the crowd. Since it began in 2002 with just football and tennis shoes, mi adidas has been steadily growing in popularity. The range of available wear that can be customised to suit each customer's preferences has widened. Since 2012, adidas also has gradually been shifting mi adidas from its retail brick-and-mortar shops to its online sites, with a more recent focus on mobile devices, says Takashi Yamashita, senior manager of the

Concept to Consumer division at adidas Japan.

Customers can design their running shoes, football boots or casual trainers with their own combination of available colours, components, designs, laces and Velcro. They can even put their own text across the soles. Since January 2015, a smartphone app known as mi ZX Flux has allowed people to take a picture with their smartphone and have that image become part of the design on their shoes.

"We've had customers take a picture at a wedding, and then get that printed onto shoes to give to the couple as a present. Our staff also like to customise their shoes so they don't look like everyone else's," says Yamashita.

Customised uniforms are also proving popular, especially among sports teams, such as varsity athletes looking for a different spin on their university colours.

Last year's Rugby World Cup helped stir interest in related apparel, thanks in particular to the Japan team's performance that exceeded expectations, as well as to the adidas-sponsored champions, the All Blacks. Although the Japan national team uniform isn't from adidas, the company does provide the boots for ace kicker Ayumu Goromaru.

Another type of boot that can be customised is the Vacuum Fit range from Austrian ski-maker Fischer. The technology has been hailed as a game-changer that takes the pain out of what, for many people, can be the worst shortcoming of skiing: uncomfortable boots.

"In the past, the inner boots could be heated up and moulded to the shape of your feet, but now it can be done for the outer shell boots, too," explains Fischer

Japan merchandise manager Ken Odashima.

The boots are heated in a special box to 80°C. The



skier then steps into them, and they are cooled down to fit perfectly around the feet. Another winning factor is that the polyurethane plastic makes the boots approximately 30% lighter than the current standard.

"A lot of people in Japan still don't know about Vacuum Fit boots, but people who try them on really like them and become repeat customers," says Odashima.

At ¥80,000 to ¥115,000, including up to five re-mouldings, they don't come cheap. But still, most skiers who try on the Vacuum Fit boot never go back to a standard boot, according to Odashima.

Those who like to exercise all year round may well end up relying on the equipment of Italian company Technogym, the world's leading manufacturer of technology-driven fitness equipment. In Japan, Technogym can be found at gym chains such as Tipness, Renaissance and Konami, as well as hotels including The Peninsula Tokyo, Andaz Tokyo and the Prince Park Tower Tokyo. Technogym's fitness and strength machines are cutting-edge, combining the latest in sports science, ergonomic design and technology. Technogym aims to offer an optimal exercise experience for users to enhance their performance.

"Innovation, on both the hardware and software side, is the principle on which our equipment is developed," says Norihisa Miyake, marketing manager for Technogym's Japan operations.

"Attention is paid to precise details that are often overlooked by other manufacturers, such as the exact angle of a treadmill monitor that best reduces strain on the neck when looking at it while running," Miyake adds.

ARTIS is Technogym's flagship range of machines that it designed in cooperation with Loughborough University Sport Technology Institute, a leading UK centre for sports science. The institute, for example, created equipment that takes into account biomechanical factors such as the exact differences in the positioning of a user's fingers when being pushed or pulled during an exercise, explains Miyake.

ARTIS equipment also aims to be environmentally friendly. The energy generated by physical activity on its machines can power the monitor displays.

“[THE] MACHINES ARE CUTTING-EDGE, COMBINING THE LATEST IN SPORTS SCIENCE, ERGONOMIC DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY”

Technogym's users can access their own personal database through mywellness, a cloud-based, open and free platform. Their training history, performance and other statistics, as well as data from third-party apps, can be accessed when users log in from any computer or handheld device.

Founded in 1983 by Nerio Alessandri, who remains president of the company, Technogym promotes an overall wellness lifestyle. The systems can monitor users' movements throughout their daily life, a cloud-connected app can personalise music for running, and its exercise ball-type office chairs can aid wellbeing in the work place.

In keeping with the Italian emphasis on design, Technogym's range of home-use equipment – including a treadmill, recumbent bicycle and cross trainer – were created in partnership with Italian industrial designer Antonio Citterio.

"The real appeal of our equipment is difficult to express in words; they really need to be experienced first-hand," says Miyake.

Technogym equipment is also available at the Palace Hotel in Marunouchi, where guests can recharge and relax at the hotel's evian Spa Tokyo. Modelled after evian's luxury resort on the French

shores of Lake Geneva, it was the first evian-branded spa in Asia.

"The spa is designed around the concept of the mineral water on its journey through the Alps," explains Palace Hotel spokesperson Saori Shiobara.

A range of treatment courses is available, with each room named after a peak in the Swiss Alps. They use a



number of luxury brand French cosmetics and skincare products. The latest addition is Carita, introduced in January, according to Shiobara.

"The treatments we offer are based on those at the evian resort, but we have also added Japanese elements to make it our own original spa," she adds.

In whatever way you choose to exercise or unwind in Japan, there's an increasingly greater chance that European companies are helping you do it in style. [e](#)

Martijn van Keulen

Passionate about work

Text **DAVID UMEDA** Photo **KAGEAKI SMITH**

The western part of the Netherlands, in a place close to the sea, is where Martijn van Keulen grew up.

"People there are down-to-earth, open-minded, direct," he recalls. "And they are not afraid to make decisions."

At a very early stage in his career, van Keulen discovered that these traits, part of his cultural heritage, were incredible assets in business. He also learned

challenges so far in their exploration of other markets.

"They are facing difficulties due to a lack of expertise," van Keulen states.

For Heineken Kirin K.K., where van Keulen is General Manager, optimising business in Japan requires fully leveraging the know-how of both companies. Heineken Japan K.K. was initially established in 1983 by Heineken, with a licensee agreement to Kirin Brewery Company Ltd. for local brewing of Heineken® beer in Japan. The joint venture was established in 1989, and renamed Heineken Kirin K.K. (Heineken Japan) in 2010.

"The expertise of Heineken as a global company has been

proven by the success the company has enjoyed in international markets," he notes. "Kirin, as a local partner, offers an established, strong infrastructure in Japan."

While there is no import duty on beer products, van Keulen believes the free trade agreements now in negotiation between Japan and the EU may accelerate revisions favourable to Heineken.

"The existing, unique beer taxation system by the Japanese government places an excise tax on beer that is higher than the tax imposed on beverages such as *happo-shu*, the new genre of local beverages with lower, or no,

malt content," he explains. "The proposed revision is to unify these taxes eventually by reducing the excise tax, benefitting Heineken's 100% malt beers, and resulting in a better offer to Japanese consumers."

He cites another advantage in how the joint venture handles the changing demographics of Japan.


"We are in a better position to capitalise on best practices that have been proven in the global market and now apply them to the Japanese market," he explains. "Japanese consumers are more exposed to global trends through the digital media; and, as a result, commonality with other countries' lifestyles is increasing."

While the company's market strategy for Japan remains focused on sales of Heineken in bottles and their quality draught, there are new, innovative and higher value-added products and packaging formats available elsewhere that are yet to be introduced here.

However, he hints that this may change in the future: "We are willing to introduce some new-to-market products in order to further grow the business in Japan."

His emphasis on passion extends to golf and squash, sports that van Keulen continues to enjoy here.

When asked about living in Japan, he says he most values "the quality of life, the great people, and its culture."

It's apparent that van Keulen has found a city that fuels his passion. 

“IF YOU'RE NOT PASSIONATE ABOUT YOUR WORK, YOU WILL NOT PERFORM WELL”

something that has made the difference in how he approaches his responsibilities today.

"If you're not passionate about your work," he emphasises, "you will not perform well."

The daunting challenges he sees Japan facing — such as the stagnant, or slow, economic growth, and the ageing and declining population — certainly puts this theory to the test.

"Under such circumstances, the development of overseas markets, or globalisation, is a critical task for many Japanese companies," he says.

Yet, many domestic companies and brands, he feels, are facing



 **Do you like natto?**

Time spent working in Japan:

Four months.

Favourite saying: “The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do.” – M. Porter.

Favourite book: *The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafón.

Cannot live without: My family.

Lesson learned in Japan / Secret of success in business:

Be patient, respectful and eager to learn.

Favourite place to dine: Still looking.

Do you like natto?: Not yet my favourite Japanese dish.

Pink Ball 2016



New Horizons

SATURDAY, MARCH 12, THE WESTIN TOKYO

¥35,000/SEAT, ¥350,000/TABLE

Guest Chef



Yoshi Yamada

Multi-lingual Economics graduate Yoshi Yamada worked at Restaurant Gordon Ramsay in Chelsea for 18 months before becoming head chef at Tempo, an Italian restaurant in the Mayfair section of London. He later spent five years cooking in top restaurants in Naples (2 Michelin star Don Alfonso), Sardinia and Florence.



www.runforthe cure.org

Ready for disaster

An interview with the governor



EURObiZ Japan sat down with Tokyo Metropolitan Governor Yoichi Masuzoe regarding the *Tokyo Bosai* [Disaster Preparedness Tokyo] books that have been sent out to the residents of Tokyo.



How many of the Tokyo Bosai books did you send out?

Approximately 7.5 million copies of the Japanese version of the book were produced and distributed to all households in metropolitan Tokyo starting on 1 September, 2015.

About 30,000 copies of the English version were also produced for foreigners residing in Tokyo. These have been distributed to those who wanted them, and also sent out to all embassies in metropolitan Tokyo.

In addition, the English, Korean and Chinese versions have also been published on the website of the Tokyo metropolitan government [www.metro.tokyo.jp/ENGLISH/GUIDE/BOSAI].

What is the purpose of the Tokyo Bosai book?

The greatest mission of the governor is to ensure the safety and security of the residents of Tokyo. With the aim of fulfilling this responsibility, and to ensure that each and every resident of Tokyo is fully prepared for disasters on a daily basis, *Tokyo Bosai* was produced as a disaster-preparedness map for each household that can also be utilised in their everyday lives. Tokyo is confronted by the potential risks of various disasters, including a Tokyo inland earthquake.

Hence, as a countermeasure against these disasters, the *Tokyo Bosai* book was drawn up entirely with the specifications of Tokyo in mind, taking into consideration its diverse regional characteristics, its city infrastructure, and the lifestyles of its residents.

The success of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, as well as the development of the capital city of Tokyo, cannot be achieved if we are unable to secure the lives and assets of Tokyo residents and the citizens of Japan. Disaster prevention measures serve as the foundation for supporting a world-class Tokyo.

What has the public's response been to the book?

The *Tokyo Bosai* book has been very well received. Immediately after distribution commenced, we received many inquiries, including questions about the possibility of distribution to all family members, requests for sale of the book to those living outside metropolitan Tokyo, and distribution to all company employees. While distributing the book to all families in the metropolitan Tokyo area, we launched the sale of the book to the general public.


However, over the first three days after the book went on sale, we

received a massive number of orders, exceeding 10,000 copies, making it impossible for us to immediately meet the demand. This response reflects the strong desire for disaster preparedness awareness among residents of metropolitan Tokyo.

Our aim remains to enable residents using the *Tokyo Bosai* book to improve their knowledge of disaster prevention together with their families, friends and neighbours – ensuring preparedness in the event of a disaster.

How important was it to print the books in English?

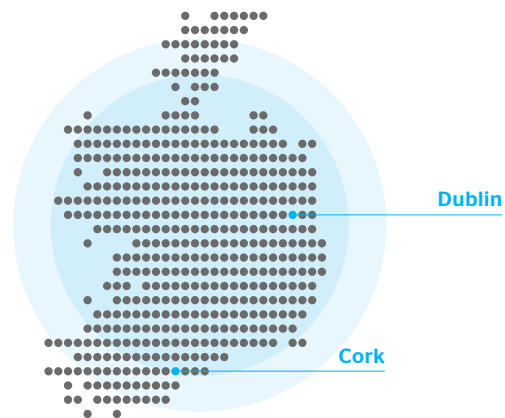
As the governor of Tokyo, it is also my mission to ensure the safety and security of foreigners residing in Tokyo. The production of the English version of these books is a matter of course for Tokyo as an international city, and a matter of great importance to us.

I am putting in place various initiatives in order to develop Tokyo as a hub for global business. It is of vital importance that corporations and business people who are considering developing their businesses in Japan recognise Tokyo as a safe city. And I hope that this *Tokyo Bosai* book can play a part in enhancing this awareness. 

Ireland

Ireland and Japan have long maintained friendly relations, with diplomatic ties having been established between the two countries in 1957. The Japanese legation in Ireland was upgraded to an embassy in 1964, while Ireland established its embassy in Tokyo in 1973.

According to Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, exports from Ireland to Japan were valued at ¥355.3 billion in 2013, while Japan's exports to Ireland totalled ¥102.0 billion in the same year.



Main cities: Dublin (capital), Cork, Limerick, Galway.

Total area: 70,273 sq. km

Coastline: 1,448km

Population: 4,892,305 (July 2015 est.). 63.2% urban population. 43.82% are 25-54 years old.

Climate: Temperate maritime; modified by North Atlantic Current; mild winters, cool summers; consistently humid.

Natural resources: natural gas, peat, copper, lead, zinc, silver, barite, gypsum, limestone, dolomite



Yuji Okada

General Manager,
Dominique Ansel Bakery Tokyo

reads

euRobiZ JAPAN

Moe Kato

Ireland Japan Chamber of Commerce

www.ijcc.jp

Text **DAVID UMEDA**



Established in 2008 to succeed the Japan Ireland Economic Association, the Ireland Japan Chamber of Commerce continues to strengthen Irish-Japanese business relations.

"My purpose is to give back to members as much as possible, while growing the chamber through increasing membership" says Moe Kato, operations manager.

"We are still a new and small chamber, so we've been focusing on providing network opportunities to strengthen the Irish community in Japan, to extend and to tighten our relationships," she observes. "Networking is done in a casual and open atmosphere. As a member once remarked, 'It's about a night of Irish fun!'" Kato views events as "creating a good image of Ireland in Japan and making the country better known." Chamber members also "are given opportunities to learn more about business, kept updated about the current status of the economy back home, and receive information about how to conduct business in Japan."

For the many people coming and going in Japan, she believes it's important to continue these networking events. But Kato also started questioning what else the chamber could do for those who have been in Japan for a long time and have solid connections already.

"We are keen to provide more benefits to the membership, such as by working closely with Guinness distributor Diageo and the Toyoko Inn chain in various collaborations. In 2015, we started a new partnership with British

Airways. We believe these benefits add value to the chamber and for our membership," Kato points out.

"We are also focusing more on business-oriented events, such as with speakers," she observes. Since last year, the chamber has been invited to a monthly strategic meeting with the Irish Embassy and other government entities. Directors of chambers also attend regular meetings organised by the embassy, where participants can

the market and how to respond to them in a short timeframe.

"As operations manager, my day to day role is to keep everything under control, to make sure everything works fine and runs smoothly," she explains. "As I am the only staff member working in the chamber, I manage various tasks, such as maintaining current membership, recruitment, managing current accounts and preparing financial reports – on top of event organising."


So what brings Kato the most satisfaction on the job?

"I've only been with the chamber for a year and a half, so I am still learning by trial and error, day by day. But I feel that we are going in the right direction when members who have been involved

with the chamber for a long time, say, 'This was the best event I've attended', or, 'You raised the bar to a higher level!'"

Kato sees more people coming back to the events, or coming up to her to say they want to get involved and be a part of the chamber.

"It makes me feel that we are providing things that the market looks for, and that meet people's needs," she explains.

The chamber's "I Love Ireland Festival" in Yoyogi Park, first held in 2014, attracted 35,000 people last March. It's simply about everyone getting to know each other better. 

**TO KEEP IMPROVING
OUR ACTIVITIES AND
GROW THE CHAMBER**

interact with key senior representatives from Japan's leading companies. Kato believes these efforts contribute to improved activities for members.

"It is not easy to make changes and to start something new, but I am here to keep improving our activities and grow the chamber so that our members can feel it is worth being part of the IJCC. We keep learning and keep developing."

Recently, the chamber organised a formal dinner in Osaka with the ambassador for the first time. "We are keen to expand our activities beyond Tokyo in the coming years," she adds.

Yet, Kato realises the challenge she faces in learning the current needs of

Japanese government bonds

Japan doesn't owe as much as it says it does



The belief that Japanese government bonds (JGBs) are in a bubble has been a recurrent theme in the global bond market for more than a decade. The reason for this is based on a misconception about how to account for government bonds that are owned by the departments of an issuing government, such as in funded state pension schemes and bonds held by the central bank's quantitative easing (QE) programme.

If both the JGB holdings owned by the government and those held by the Bank of Japan (BoJ) were to be written off, the Japanese state's outstanding liabilities would shrink dramatically. From an approximate gross debt of 245% of the GDP, the figure would be reduced, quite legitimately, to a net debt to GDP of around 41%, based on data from late 2014.

The misconception of a higher ratio comes from the use of the gross debt (not net debt) to GDP figure. Net debt to GDP, on the other hand, strips out the value of JGBs held by sections of the government, such as in the aforementioned state pension schemes and also in welfare programmes. This is surely the better figure to use when assessing a government's ability to sustain its current borrowing level, since such government bonds are no longer a liability. This is because a state-run welfare programme funded with government bonds is as reliant on the tax-raising and borrowing power of the state as an unfunded scheme is. The state, in effect, is holding an IOU written by itself.

We can, therefore, write off these JGBs as assets. To be consistent, we must surely also write them off as government liabilities. Doing so takes Japan's debt to GDP, on a net basis, to around 132%, as of June 2014. This is a

better comparison against other countries' debt levels, since few countries have similar funding schemes for state organisations. Of course, a net debt to GDP ratio of 132% would still be of concern if it weren't for QE, which brings the figure down still further.

The scale of the purchases of JGBs by the Bank of Japan is staggering; ¥80 trillion worth of JGBs are currently being purchased annually by the central bank, more than twice the current ¥37 trillion of new issuance by the government. As with all the other major central

“
THE BOJ AIMS
TO KEEP BOND
YIELDS LOW AND
SO **STIMULATE**
THE ECONOMY
”

banks that are presently operating a QE programme, the stated intention of the Bank of Japan is to one day sell them back to the market.

But QE introduces a novel dilemma to central bankers. By purchasing JGBs, the Bank of Japan aims to keep bond yields low and so stimulate the economy. It is not doing so in order to help the Ministry of Finance keep its interest rate bill low; or to effectively tear up the JGBs and thus reduce the government's outstanding liabilities.

Central bank financing of government spending, whether through lowering

interest rates or through bond purchases, is called deficit financing. This is considered a sin by many central bankers since it can too easily become the favoured method of raising funds for a government, which, in turn, leads to inflation.

Japanese economist Masazumi Wakatabe of Waseda University has taken the standard definition of the net debt figure and added the JGBs held by the Bank of Japan. The country's net debt to GDP ratio subsequently shrinks to 41%, for late 2014.

Adair Turner, a distinguished British economist and a former central bank regulator at the Bank of International Settlements, approves of this method of accounting for Japan's debt. In his 2015 book on debt, *Between Debt and the Devil*, he suggests that the Bank of Japan announce its intention to never resell its JGB holdings back to the market. It could then tear up the bonds that it owns. (Technically, it could go to the Ministry of Finance and swap its holdings of JGBs for a worthless IOU, such as an irredeemable zero coupon bond issued by the ministry.)

The bond market should be indifferent to any outbreak of concern over deficit financing. After all, the amount of interest and capital required to be repaid to non-government bodies has not changed. Meanwhile, taxpayers' confidence in the solvency of the Japanese government would improve, helping to reduce savings and boost consumption. ☺

TOM ELLIOTT is an international investment strategist with the deVere Group in London.



My Number and privacy

Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan, Luncheon – 9 December, 2015

Text and photo **ANDREW HOWITT**

Masako Banno emphasized throughout her talk at the last SCCIJ luncheon of 2015 that the My Number system is “not so complicated.” Yet, questions raised during the brief Q&A session were clear evidence that there is still anxiety – and a lack of awareness – over the introduction of this national ID system in 2016.

“Do the *zairyu* card [residence card for foreigners] and the My Number card work together?” and “Are there sanctions if you refuse to participate?” were two such questions. Both received a negative response – Banno saying “no” to the latter because participation in the system is compulsory.

In her talk, “My Number: Is my privacy still safeguarded?”, the attorney at Okuno & Partners began with a straightforward overview of what the My Number system is. “It is very simple. It is basically a national ID number system, using a 12-digit number, to be used for tax purposes and also social welfare benefit services like pension and unemployment insurance.”

It is for everyone living at a registered address in Japan, she added, and not only for Japanese citizens. She compared it to the US’s social security number system.

Banno explained that there have been nearly 50 years of debate in Japan on whether to adopt a national ID system. The concerns voiced by its many opponents have included the potential negligence leading to leakage of personal data and the invasion of privacy by the government.

However, several factors in recent history have made the My Number system unavoidable. There was the incident of the missing pension records exposed in 2007, where 50 million pension records were not integrated into the simplified pension numbering system created in 1997. Another reason cited was the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011

when many citizens lost their ID, and so could not easily receive their pension or welfare benefits.

The government has chosen to adopt the My Number system because authorities claim they can assure the

prevent data being stolen through hacker attacks.

As a particular word of caution, she referred to incidents where individuals had been given exclusive access to personal information and later abused such authority.

“The important thing is to not concentrate authority in just one person,” she stressed. “In order to protect your company and your own position, you need to establish this kind of security protection programme.”



population of fair taxation and reliable pension records, as well as the system being an effective aid in disaster risk management.

Nonetheless, the security of individual numbers is still a concern of the general public. The central warning in Banno’s presentation was that, “with the My Number system, there’s the risk of bigger data leaks because of rapid technology developments.”

Now that companies will need to start managing employees’ numbers, the attorney provided some practical advice on how to handle this information appropriately, once again reassuring everyone that this duty is actually not so complicated. “Your company is already obliged to have these kinds of security measures in place under the Act on Protection of Personal Information [APPI].”

Her suggestions included setting a clear in-house security policy; assigning specific staff members to be responsible for employees’ My Numbers in order to limit access to records; and ensuring strong cyber-security to

Failing to put appropriate policies in place could lead to the theft of employees’ My Numbers, and companies will be held liable if the loss of any data was preventable.

Banno concluded that the current view held by the international community, and Europe in particular, on Japan’s handling of personal information is not overly positive. The main objections are that Japan does not have a strong central supervising authority, and that regulations on the international transfer of personal information are still unclear. However, “the amendment of the APPI this year is aiming to cover those two concerns,” she stated.

Even then, there is still cause for some anxiety over the introduction of the My Number system with regard to the security of personal information. Japan still has work to do in order to meet international standards. But with the full implementation of the amended APPI scheduled for January 2017, it looks like the government is beginning to move in the right direction. [e](#)



Human Resources//

Incremental progress

Text **GEOFF BOTTING**

If you follow the domestic news in Japan, you're probably familiar with many of the advocacy points of the EBC Human Resources Committee.

Increased immigration, getting more women in career positions, and reforming the work place are regularly grabbing the headlines. Over the past couple of years, third arrow reforms in the economic policies of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have put these topics on the front burner, as Japan tries to come to terms with how its demographics are putting the squeeze on jobs.

Immigration policies topped the committee's list in the EBC 2015 white paper. Committee chairman Steve Burson says that things in this area are "generally going in the right direction."

Recent changes include the scrapping of the re-entry visa, and the extension of working visas to five years from three years.

"Together, these measures will benefit individual companies and the

Key advocacy points

- **Immigration** - On-line working visa applications should be introduced.
- **Taxes** - The spousal tax break, which effectively discourages women from full participation in the workforce, should be reformed.
- **Pensions** - The minimum number of years of premium payments required to receive a state pension, currently 25, should be lowered.

economy as a whole," the committee reports in the white paper.

Business leaders have been urging Japan to drastically increase its intake of immigrants, as Western countries have been doing, to counter the shrinking size of the workforce. But, Burson adds, such expectations aren't realistic, given

the often sensitive political and cultural issues Japan's policymakers face.

"I think one thing everyone needs to understand is that there's never going to be one point of time when any Japanese government is going to stand up and say, 'We're going to open the floodgates!'"

Better to look at the incremental progress, he says, taking place "in the background" in specific targeted areas – moves that are bringing in growing numbers of foreign workers.

For example, the authorities' slow-but-steady approach may well lead to improved internship programmes that encompass more industry fields. Japan's efforts, to date, have come under fire. Too often, according to the critics, the programmes are excuses for Japanese employers to exploit people who, coming to Japan to learn technical skills, end up being overworked and paid extremely low wages.

The committee members in the auto field want to see the Technical Intern Training Programme include vehicle



“EXPECTATIONS [TO DRASTICALLY INCREASE IMMIGRATION] **AREN'T REALISTIC**”

mechanics, who are currently in short supply here.

A similar issue concerns qualifications. Current immigration rules require skilled immigrants to have industry experience of at least 10 years if they lack university degrees. The committee is urging the time requirement to be lowered to five years in order to attract a younger age group.

“There are not many 25 year olds who have 10 years’ experience,” observes Burson, who is also president of H&R Group.

No discussion about Japan’s shrinking working age population would be complete without including women. Womenomics is an oft touted phrase associated with the prime minister’s reform ideas.

Abe has said repeatedly he wants women “to shine” in Japan’s workforce. Government officials and advocates, however, are finding out that such a promise is easier made than implemented.

The committee sees income tax credits as a major barrier to women entering the workforce as professionals. The “spouse special income tax credit” is available for households where spouses earn less than ¥1.4 million a year, which encourages married women to take low-paying or part-time work.

In addition, many employers provide health benefits for those workers who have dependent (not working) spouses.

“This should have been the first thing for Abe to change,” Burson says.

Advocates for working spouses have also been pointing to insufficient day care facilities. The committee chairman says improvements in this area are taking place, but this depends on where one happens to live.


“It’s happening in some cities but not in others. Yokohama has really taken this up by vastly increasing its facilities,” Burson continues

He adds that, at his company’s Nagoya office, working mothers have problems admitting their children to

such facilities midway through the academic and fiscal year.

“They have to wait until April of the next year, and they have to make their applications by a certain period,” he says. Despite the ongoing improvements, there is a fairly long road ahead before Japan becomes an attractive place in which people from around the world would wish to work.

“Things like income tax rates, social insurance and so on are not really encouraging people to come and work in Japan. When you go to places like Singapore, Hong Kong or Kuala Lumpur and see how they are encouraging people to set up businesses, Japan is still miles behind,” points out the committee chair.

Fortunately, Japan is now producing a growing army of advocates keen to see that the needed changes are carried out. That includes the Human Resources Committee, which won’t be running out of advocacy issues anytime soon. 



The business of wellbeing

A healthy lifestyle

Text **DAVID UMEDA**

The demands of urban living, especially in the largest metropolis of the world, require a healthy balance between work and leisure. Numerous facilities in the business of fitness and wellness are conveniently located to serve Tokyo's 23 wards.

The Pilates Aoyama studio opened in 2005, and is fully equipped in the classical style. Founder Maki Okazaki was trained under renowned students of Joseph H. Pilates.

"I create programmes that are designed to meet each client's specific needs, taking age, health condition and fitness level into account," explains Okazaki.

Club 360, owned by Tokyo Fitness KK, believes that everyone should live to their full athletic, fitness and health potential – and to live a pain-free life.

"To help our clients achieve this, we offer integrated health and fitness solutions to meet everyone's needs," points out Sam Gilbert, Manager and Head Physiotherapist.

The foreign community

NUA's English-speaking staff provide waxing treatments with a unique hot waxing method that is great for sensitive skin.

"We also provide microcurrent facelifts to treat sagging skin, customised Dermalogica facials, and skin-rejuvenating Photocare anti-ageing facials," explains Nicola Aquino, Director. "NUA offers manicures and pedicures as well."

Most of the clients at Pilates Aoyama studio are non-Japanese, and include ambassadors, lawyers, executives, dancers and singers.

"Beginners and those with phys-

iotherapy needs are welcome," adds Okazaki.

The Premier Personal Training programme at Nihon Barbell Club offers complete body transformation and personal training services, utilising a proven and structured training system.

"Applying only effective training methods and driven by continued client successes, it is no wonder we are trusted by the elite of Tokyo's business and expat community," notes Sam Law, President.

Techniques from abroad

For over a decade, MagaGYM has offered classes in Krav Maga suited to your ability, from beginners with no martial arts experience, up to the advanced levels in the defence tactics system of the Israeli Defence Force. Since March 1st, weekday daytime classes are now being held.

"Staff in Roppongi and Akasaka include some of the highest-ranked instructors in Japan. Techniques are based on instinctive movements, so are easy to learn," says Atsuhiro Kumagai, CEO and President. "A training regimen offers a tremendous workout to get in shape."

The NUA salons also specialise in IPL, a method of permanent hair removal.

"We use high-end equipment from Denmark and Sweden for remarkably effective results in removing unwanted hair for both our European and Japanese customers," Aquino adds.

Lifestyle choices

Be Yoga Japan is conveniently located in Hiroo. The studio is spacious and clean with a beautiful view of Hiroo Garden Hills.

"We offer daily ISHTA yoga classes, as well as ISHTA teacher-training programmes and workshops throughout the year," says Kumiko Mack, Director. "Studio classes in English and Japanese are taught every day."


Their classes focus on safe alignment, and meditation instruction is taught in each class.

"No reservations are needed for studio classes," says Mack. "Treat yourself to a moment of serenity at Be Yoga."

Sam Law at Nihon Barbell Club encourages making good lifestyle choices. "Discover the expert approach to building your best self, inside and out," he says. "Reserve your personal training experience today."

Club 360's slogan is "Changing lives through health and fitness".

"Whether you are recovering from an injury or wanting to get in shape," says Gilbert, "let the Club 360 team help make your goals a reality."

When it comes to your wellbeing, Tokyo makes sure you are well taken care of. 

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Akasaka HM Bldg., B1

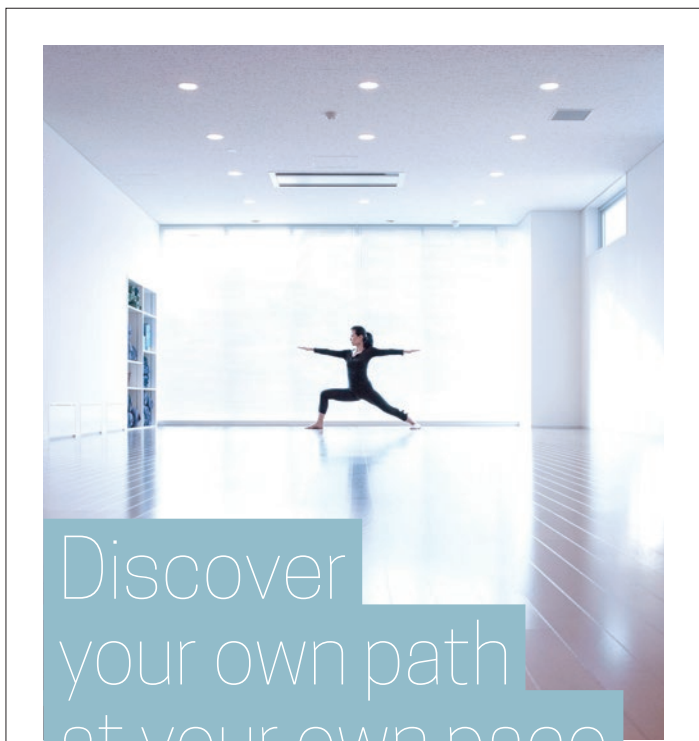
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Yukata cowboy >

Filmmaker with European appeal

Text **LUCY BIRMINGHAM**



Humour may be hard to translate. But in the hands of an award-winning director, writer and actor, it becomes a cross-cultural language delighting audiences worldwide. Europeans are some of his greatest fans and sources of support.

Humour came naturally to Atsushi Ogata, while growing up between Japan and the US.

"When I was in school, I was always the class clown," he admits. "Even my father, who was a businessman, was mistaken for a professional comedian."

His mother, Sadako Ogata, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, also has a good sense of humour, he says adding with a laugh, "I guess you could say it's been passed down to me."

While at Harvard University he pursued his interest in liberal arts, followed by an MIT graduate programme in art and technology. Yet, it was public grant programmes in Europe that became the key to his success today.

During his early years creating avant-garde art videos, Ogata was invited to the Academy of Media Arts Cologne in Germany as a guest artist.

"In Europe there's generous funding and appreciation for the arts," he says. "There's more than in Japan and the US, where the focus is on commercial work."

Ogata also collaborated with artists on video installations commissioned in the Netherlands, France and Germany. His art videos were screened at art galleries in places such as Madrid, New York and Venice, and won awards along the way.

In Japan, he received exceptional support for more than 10 years from Art Front Gallery director Fram Kitagawa, who is also general director of the

Echigo Tsumari Art Triennial and Setouchi Triennial. Ogata was commissioned for various video projects and held several exhibitions.

"I was able to get the work because Fram liked what I was doing. But in Europe there was much more, where there's more tradition and appreciation of avant-garde content," he explains.

Ultimately, his art video work led him to writing screenplays. It was in Europe where he first found funding. Germany's public TV broadcaster ZDF and the Dutch National Film Fund offered him grants. During this time, Ogata landed his first regular stint as a comedian on a weekly show airing on VARA Dutch national TV.

He honed his comedic skills in combination with filmmaking, directing and

distributor and can upload yourself," says Ogata. "Young people are prolific creators of web series, especially in countries where the economies are bad, and the film and TV industries are shrinking."

He adds, "In Japan, with its uncompetitive environment where the TV content has hardly changed since I was a kid, video web series are virtually non-existent."

Ogata's *Yukata Cowboy* is going great guns. Since launching last year, he now has 30 episodes, equivalent to four seasons, which are raking in views in different countries. He's also winning awards at some of the many international web series festivals that have recently popped up, mainly in Europe.

He wears an old cowboy hat he

found at his parents' home, a pair of used cowboy boots, and a Japanese cotton *yukata* that he bought for an actress 10 years ago. He struts through cities in

“A VENTURE INTO THE **HOTTEST NEW** MOVEMENT IN VIDEO”


writing to create a series of short films. One of these, *Eternally Yours* (2006), which had audiences laughing from São Paolo to Bangkok, propelled him to the international film festival circuit.

Cast Me If You Can (2010), a romantic comedy about a man constantly mistaken for someone else, was his first feature film. It was also the spark of inspiration for his most recent work, *Yukata Cowboy* (<http://yukatacowboy.com/>), a venture into the hottest new movement in video: web series. Each short, story-based episode is shown on video-sharing websites such as YouTube, Vimeo and Daily Motion.

"The cost is low. You don't need a

different countries skillfully lassoing willing victims – all on camera. His wide smile and mile-a-minute delivery in Japanese and English – flecked with a New York accent – adds to his comedic allure.

Ogata admits he's not doing it for the money. As a one-man production outfit, his costs are low, and he does not post ads to generate money. He says it's a publicity tactic, but there's more.

"I'm comparing different cultures from different points of view as a trigger for people to think about their own culture," Ogata explains. Indeed, his virtual e-mirror on society is bringing laughter, as well as reflection. 

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Big buyers

Wine auctions and their shady underbelly

In the first decade of the 21st century, the world of wine truly went global thanks, in part, to a series of events that rocked the realm of fine wine auctions. Auction houses such as Sotheby's and Christie's catered to a small number of fine-wine enthusiasts in New York and London who sought to stock their cellars with an assortment of collectible Bordeaux, Burgundy, Rhône and, maybe, the occasional Super Tuscan. Sellers and buyers happily shared their intimate bubble.


In 2008, however, that bubble burst — quickly and dramatically. It was the year of the financial crisis, and New York wine auctions were hit (only 35% of wines were sold at a New York City auction in December 2008). It was also the year that Hong Kong nixed its 85% wine import duty. A year later, Sotheby's established a wine department in China's gateway city, sparking a red wine frenzy among the Chinese elite. If you've seen the film *Red Obsession*, which documents China's recent love affair with Bordeaux, you'll understand how this shifting climate has created the perfect storm for scandal after scandal involving counterfeit wines.

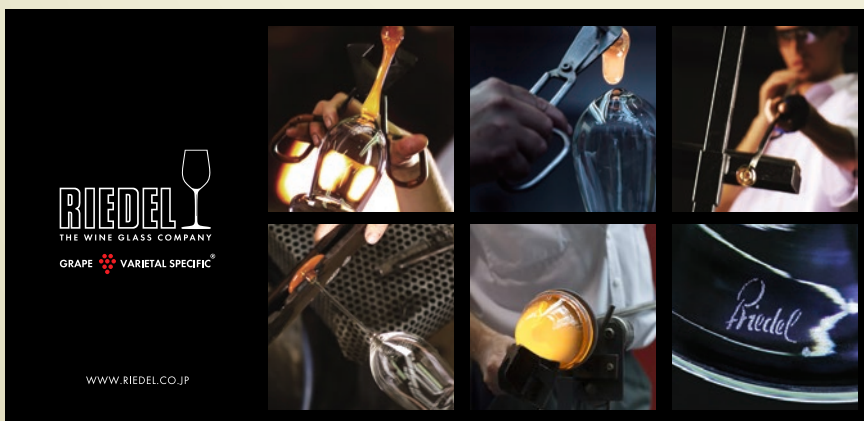
Wine auctions, for example, provide a tempting setting for counterfeits. Anyone who has a collection of wines worth at least \$20,000 can offer them to an auction house without too many questions being asked. Bordeaux chateaux keep records of their vintages and quantities produced; but after year upon year of sales, trades and so forth, who's to say that a certain bottle was drunk? And you can't exactly open a bottle of wine to authenticate it before an auction. As a result, auction houses are having to rely on catalogue records of bottle labels and corks to verify a wine. The problem is that many old wines have to be re-corked, since old corks tend to disintegrate, resulting in few clues left for the authenticator.

Counterfeit wines are nothing new, but the frauds of today are, of course, much more spectacular and costly. In 1985, prominent German wine trader Hardy Rodenstock came into possession of an underground cellar in Paris, filled with hundreds of bottles of old French wines engraved with the initials "Th.J.". Rodenstock was convinced that these bottles had belonged to none other than Thomas Jefferson, America's

ambassador to France. Collectors flocked to claim their share of history, including billionaire oil heir Bill Koch.

In 2005, Koch was preparing to exhibit his four Jefferson bottles when the Boston Museum of Fine Arts asked for their provenance to also be displayed. Koch was unable to find any records of authentication, and the Thomas Jefferson Foundation said nothing in their records indicated that Jefferson had ever gained possession of those bottles. In 2006, Koch filed a civil lawsuit against Rodenstock, claiming he had been the victim of fraud.

With alarm bells ringing, Koch ordered an intense examination of his 43,000-bottle wine cellar. Some 211 bottles were found suspicious, all of which had been sold to Koch through auction by Indonesian-born Rudy Kurniawan. These bottles, worth \$2 million, were tested by the University of Bordeaux's physics lab and determined to be counterfeits. In a 2012 FBI raid of Kurniawan's Los Angeles home, they found that the house was kept at 15° Celsius; bottles were being soaked to remove their labels; and there were heaps of corks, a re-corking device and tens of thousands of fake labels for the world's 27 top wines. Kurniawan was sentenced to 10 years, but only Koch knows if that justifies the \$25 million he says he spent on his crusade against counterfeit wines. 



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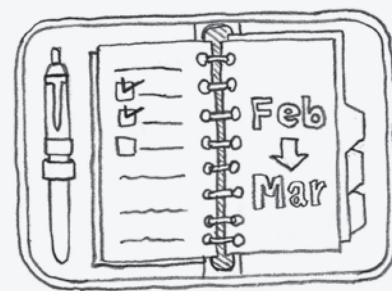
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Upcoming events



» **Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Japan**

www.blccj.or.jp

Monthly beer gathering

15 February, Monday; 22 March, Tuesday, 19:00-22:00

Venue: Belgian beer café in Tokyo

Fee: Pay for what you drink

Contact: info@blccj.or.jp

» **Finnish Chamber of Commerce in Japan**

www.fcc.or.jp

FCCJ Club Evening – “New Successful Finnish Businesses in Japan”

3 March, Thursday, 18:30-21:00

Venue: Scandinavian Center, Akasaka

Fee: ¥4,000 (members), ¥6,000 (non-members)

Contact: fccj@gol.com

» **French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan**

www.ccifj.or.jp

“Building Sustainable Retail Profitability”

26 February, Friday, 12:30-14:00

Speakers: Patrick McDermott, Lacoste Japan; and Kuniaki Watanabe, Winworks

Venue: CCIFJ, Yotsuya/Kojimachi stations

Fee: ¥3,000 (open to non-members)

Contact: c.queval@ccifj.or.jp

Conference – “Japan Macroeconomic Update”

3 March, Thursday, 18:30-21:00

Speaker: Philippe Avril, CEO, BNP Paribas Securities Japan

Venue: CCIFJ, Yotsuya/Kojimachi stations

Fee: ¥4,000 (open to non-members)

Contact: c.queval@ccifj.or.jp

CCIFJ Marketing Committee

28 March, Monday, 12:30-14:00

Speaker: Guillaume Desurmont, Arkema

Venue: CCIFJ, Yotsuya/Kojimachi stations

Fee: ¥3,000 (open to non-members)

Contact: c.queval@ccifj.or.jp

» **Ireland Japan Chamber of Commerce**

www.ijcc.jp

Emerald Ball 2016

18 March, Friday, 18:30-0:00

Venue: Tokyo American Club

Fee: ¥27,000

Contact: secretariat@ijcc.jp

I Love Ireland Festival 2016*

20 March, Sunday, 10:00-19:00

Venue: Yoyogi Park, Shibuya

Fee: Pay for what you purchase

Contact: secretariat@ijcc.jp

* Live Irish music and dancing, food, drink and culture

St. Patrick’s Day Parade

20 March, Sunday, times to be confirmed

Venue: Omotesando

» **Polish Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan**

www.pccij.jp

Polish Day in Tokyo 2016: Special Valentine’s Day Event

18 February, Thursday, 19:00-21:30 (doors open at 18:30)

Venue: Shibuya Shidax Village, 1F, Tokyo Main Dining Room

Fee: ¥7,000 (members), ¥8,000 (non-members)

Contact: secretariat@pccij.jp

» **Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan**

www.sccij.jp

Japan-Swiss Spring Ball 2016*

9 March, Wednesday, 18:00-22:00

Venue: Imperial Hotel Tokyo, Fuji Banquet Hall, 3F

Fee: ¥ 25,000

Contact: motohm@gol.com

* Dress code: Black-tie or dark lounge suit

FEBRUARY

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MARCH

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27	28	29	30	31		

Compiled by **DAVID UMEDA**

» **Multi-Chamber Event**

Joint Nordic Business Luncheon – “EU-Japan FTA”

19 February, Friday, 12:00-14:00

Speaker: Timo Hammarén, minister-counsellor and head of the Trade and Economic Section, Delegation of the European Union to Japan

Venue: Hotel Okura, South Wing, 12F, Mayfair

Fee: ¥6,000 (members), ¥8,000 (non-members)

Contact: respective chambers

Samuel Alexander

CEO and Head Designer, KiD

The fashion and accessories brand KiD (minne.com/kid-in-tokyo), which combines the whimsical elements of British design with high-quality Japanese craftsmanship, started in Tokyo last spring.

"I've found that quintessentially British products are a popular choice for consumers in the Japanese market," observes CEO and Head Designer Samuel Alexander, "so, with my love of English style, developing KiD just seemed the natural thing to do."

KiD's products are informed by the company's values of being playful, free, imaginative, energetic and honest.


"With KiD I hope to contribute something of value to the Japanese community, and especially the kids and young people here ... hence the name of the brand." 

Photo **KAGEAKI SMITH**





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