

EURO BIZ JAPAN

OCTOBER 2019

➤ The next level

European video game makers aim to crack the Japanese market

➤ Diplomacy on the pitch

Neale Richmond, Senate of Ireland spokesperson on European affairs

➤ Irish ambition

Ambassador of Ireland to Japan Paul Kavanagh

DANIEL SMART,
CEO

HIROSHI YAMAGUCHI,
JAPAN COUNTRY MANAGER

GLOBAL GROWTH PARTNERS

Proclinical links life-sciences firms with
specialist talent globally





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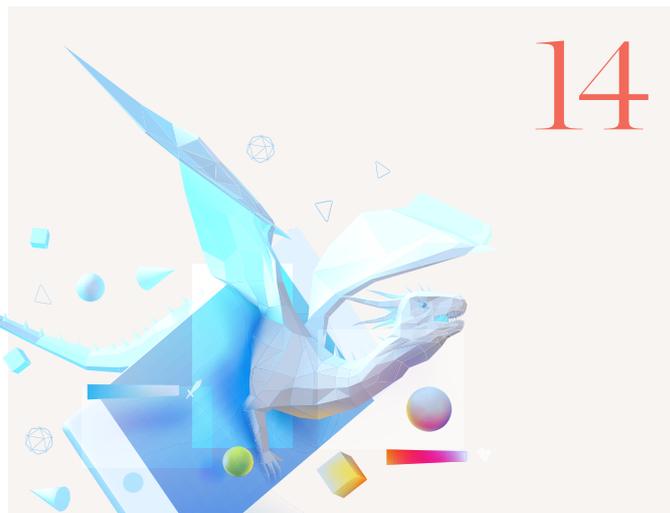
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The Mission of the European Business Council
To promote an impediment-free environment for European business in Japan.



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Global growth partners

By Toby Waters





First Focus

Sir David Brewster patented the kaleidoscope in 1815, stating on the application that it was for “exhibiting and creating beautiful Forms and Patterns of great use in all the ornamental Arts”.

Nearly two centuries later, in 2012, Tokyu Plaza Omotesando Harajuku — nicknamed Omohara — opened at the centre of Tokyo’s colourful and ever-changing fashion district. Its kaleidoscopic entrance, designed by renowned architect Hiroshi Nakamura, reflects and dissects all the latest trends.

Throughout each day and every season, the kaleidoscope of Omohara rewards every trip down the escalator by continually exhibiting and creating beautiful forms and patterns.

Photo by Josip Ivankovic
unsplash.com



Tokyo journalist **Tim Hornyak** has covered technology in Japan for IDG News, CNET, Scientific American and other media. He is the author of *Loving the Machine: The Art and Science of Japanese Robots*.

➔ *“I quit playing video games about 20 years ago (though I have fond memories of 1984’s Karateka), but I’m amazed to see how quickly they’ve evolved since. Japan is a gaming pioneer and it’s intriguing to see European companies carving a niche for themselves here through their commitment to gamers.”*



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.

➔ *“As ever more effective and expensive medicines continue coming to market, tensions between costs and patient wellbeing are rising in tandem. Partly in response to this, Japan recently reformed its complex pricing system — but in a way that may be detrimental to medical innovation and healthcare.”*



Tilen Milicevic is a deputy general manager at L4T Group and has been leading the expansion of the firm and its operations across the world. Prior to joining L4T Group, he worked as a consultant and project manager for a boutique private equity firm.

➔ *“Waste tires are an unexploited ‘urban mine’ of secondary raw materials with high added value. L4T offers a fresh focus and a new circular approach to recycling waste tires — and it has recently arrived in the Japanese market as part of its global expansion.”*



Kanako Otsuji is a member of the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and has a seat in the House of Representatives. She came out in 2005 and is the only openly gay member of the House of Representatives.

➔ *“Since I started out in politics in 2003, I have seen Japan become increasingly accepting of the LGBT community. Although the same-sex marriage bill I put forward in the Diet in June has been suspended, I believe Japan will one day recognise same-sex marriage — as long as the younger generation starts taking more responsibility for their society.”*

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We are experts at assisting foreign clients with entering and operating their businesses in the Japanese market. Each of our bilingual consultants have worked with many foreign companies, providing solutions necessary for their success in Japan.

We offer expertise in Japan in market entry; company formation; visa and license application; accounting; bookkeeping, financial reporting; HR; payroll and employee benefit processing and administration; tax advisory and compliance; process mapping, documentation and improvement; M&A; and IT infrastructure and support needs — all in one place.

We understand the challenges of being in a foreign country and apply that understanding, and a personalised approach, when bringing clients and their businesses into Japan. We act as our client's team of experts and "goalkeepers" for each of the service areas that we provide. Our strength is in helping companies that are looking to enter the Japanese market, or improve and expand their operations and business in Japan.

Marek Lehocky, Managing Director

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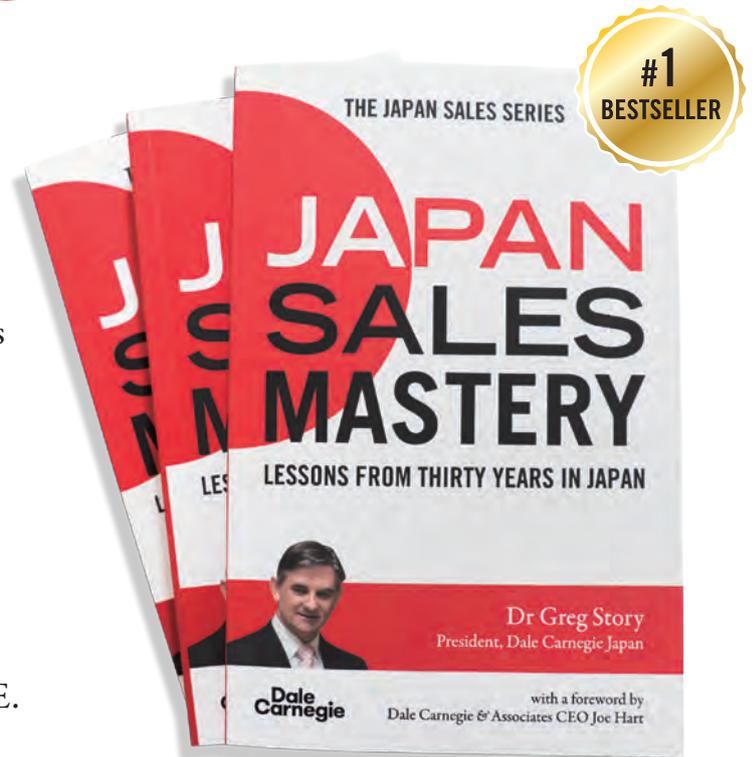
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Great expectations

In a surprise upset, Ireland’s rugby team – ranked first in the world coming into the Rugby World Cup (RWC) – lost 19–12 in their match against Japan on 28 September. But the gracious Irish response reflected the excellent relationship between the two nations. Irish Rugby tweeted that the hosts were “worthy winners ... [who put on] an incredible performance”. In one viral video, which was picked up by some Japanese news outlets, a group of Irish fans commended their opponents by singing “We all dream of a team of Japanese” (to the tune of “Yellow Submarine”) near the stadium after the match.

Irish Senator Neale Richmond was in Japan last month to play in the Parliamentary Rugby World Cup, ahead of

the RWC. In “Diplomacy on the pitch” (page 20), he speaks about the games he took part in with politicians from around the world, as well as the power of sport to bring people together. He also notes that, with the EU–Japan EPA in force and Brexit looming, there are great expectations for Japan–Ireland ties to get even stronger.

In the same vein, Ambassador of Ireland to Japan Paul Kavanagh noted that Ireland is increasing its investment in Japan. It will soon begin building a new Ireland House – complete with embassy, residence,

economic agencies, an exhibition area and a conference facility. Read “Irish ambition” (page 22) to find out more about the embassy’s future home, the growing trade between the two nations and the burgeoning market for Irish food and beverages here.

And take a look at the Country Spotlight on Ireland (page 26) to learn about the fastest growing spirits category in the world and how Ireland hopes to benefit from the RWC.

The craic is mighty in this month’s issue. ●

Editor-in-Chief
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Lakeland University, Japan Campus is a branch campus of an American university conveniently located in Shinjuku.

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As part of its community outreach, Lakeland University, Japan Campus also offers non-degree bearing courses in evening and Saturday Open College classes. Among the courses being offered are: Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Russian, Translation, Film Appreciation, Ageing, and PowerPoint.



GLOBAL GROWTH PARTNERS

Proclinical links life-sciences firms with specialist talent globally

As scientists' understanding of human biology, pharmacology and life sciences continues to grow, there is an increasing need around the world for specialists to research and to develop applications for the advances being made. However, efficiently deploying professionals – with the necessary level of specialised expertise – to where they are needed is a monumental task for ordinary recruitment agencies, even those with a global reach. And it's that space Proclinical fills.

Founded in London in 2005 by CEO Daniel Smart, Proclinical is a recruitment and consultancy agency that specialises in the life sciences sector. It has grown rapidly over the past 14 years, having opened 14 offices in 10 countries, and has had an annual average growth rate of roughly 45% for the past five years. Earlier this year, the firm opened its newest office in Japan.

"Every part of our business is expanding, and we're moving into new areas," says Smart.

"But at our core is science, and life sciences specifically."

Most of Proclinical's consultants have a degree in life sciences or have worked in some capacity in the sector, so they bring in-depth knowledge of the field to their work and invaluable support when working with

both clients and candidates. Consultants work in one of 10 niche areas, referred to as functional lines, best suited to their area of expertise, including regulatory affairs; clinical research; biometrics; commercial; medical affairs and physicians; as well as quality assurance and validation.

"Some of the jobs within the drug development process, for example, are complex and very hard to understand, such as pharmacovigilance," explains Smart. "The Proclinical philosophy has always been to hire scientists and teach them recruitment – it's easier to teach recruitment than it is to teach science."

"we can deliver talent faster by having global connectivity and cooperation internally within the business"

Japan Country Manager Hiroshi Yamaguchi adds: "One of our latest star recruiters studied molecular biology and worked as a medical representative at AstraZeneca before joining us. Because we are industry experts, we speak and understand the language of life sciences companies."

Consultants at the firm take the time to carefully research a client's business before their first face-to-face meeting, examining everything from current market share to upcoming clinical trials to the products they are looking to launch. So, when they do sit down with a client, they can focus solely on understanding the type of candidate they need in order to achieve their plans and goals.

"When we talk to clients, we try to understand the challenges: what are the milestones to achieve and in what span of time?," says Yamaguchi. "We are trying to add clear value, rather than work passively. Our consultants propose creative solutions, while telling clients what is and isn't realistic."

Smart emphasises the fact that, today, the firm's unique selling point is its ability to "connect and mobilise people all around the world." With offices in Europe, the US and Asia, Proclinical can quickly match clients with the ideal candidate, no matter where they might be. In order to achieve this, the firm has evolved to become a very collaborative business, where consultants do not compete aggressively with one another – as they do at many recruitment



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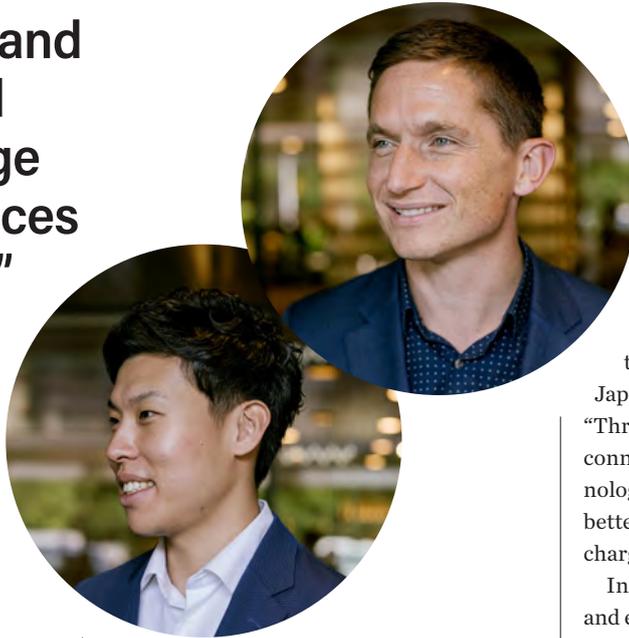
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“We speak and understand the language of life sciences companies”



firms — but cooperate within and across offices.

“Clients have an account manager that looks after their interests across all of their service lines, across all functional lines of expertise and, crucially, across all of the countries where they want to grow or want to be present,” says Smart. “Then those account managers work with our recruiters around the world, who specialise in those areas, to fill the roles in question. We feel that we can deliver talent faster by having global connectivity and cooperation internally within the business, which in turn helps our clients to grow faster.”

Of paramount importance is finding the right talent.



Proclinical currently has a global database of more than

250,000

screened and qualified life sciences professionals

“Often what decides whether or not a company succeeds and gets their product to market is down to the level of talent that they have within their core team,” Smart says. “We’re all about making sure that those companies have those right people. What we’re finding in the life sciences sector in Japan is major talent shortages, so we’re using our international network and collaborative strategy to attract Japanese-speaking professionals back to Tokyo on behalf of our clients.”

According to Smart, Proclinical currently has a global database of more than 250,000 screened and qualified life sciences professionals. Going one by one through that immense amount of data is slow and impractical, and narrowing techniques can run the risk of accidentally filtering out the perfect applicant.

To overcome this, Proclinical continually invests in technology that advances its ability to find the right person. It develops its own tools and software to speed up the search process, and it uses AI to keep in touch with candidates and make sure their CVs are up to date.

“We’re able to monitor the data that comes through Proclinical automatically,” Smart explains. “We can prioritise our searches and get to the active, highly relevant candidates faster than has been possible traditionally. We’re really focusing on improving the quality of service that clients get.”

The time and labour saved by this technology also makes finding candidates less costly, he notes, and these savings can be passed on to the client — savings which can then be invested in research.

“We’re expecting to grow very quickly in Japan,” Yamaguchi adds. “Through our international connectivity and use of technology, we’re able to supply a better quality of service without charging the client more.”

In addition to its staffing and executive search services, Proclinical has created a consulting division to give firms end-to-end strategic, operational and commercial guidance.

“We’re not just providing people,” Smart states. “We’re actually providing the services that help these biotech companies to get their product to market by providing regulatory affairs and market access consultation.”

As Proclinical expands in Japan, it also plans to assist international companies in opening new offices here, a service that has proven popular with its US-based clients.

“We could find good commercial people in Japan and employ those people on behalf of the companies that are trying to enter the Japanese market,” Smart says. “We also offer end-to-end relocation support and help with visa requirements.”

Linking life-sciences businesses in Japan to the best talent from across the world quickly, efficiently and affordably will be good for Proclinical, its clients and its candidates. But the resulting scientific advances could ultimately benefit us all. ●



FEATURE

TEXT BY TIM HORNYAK



THE NEXT LEVEL

European video game makers aim to crack the Japanese market

Once the Tokyo Game Show 2019 opened its doors at Makuhari Messe last month, it drew more than 260,000 people. And, last year, Japan's mobile games market — the world's oldest — ballooned to \$13.3 billion, up from \$9.3 billion in 2015. Clearly, the domestic video game industry is booming.

“Japan is one of the world’s great video game markets ... The standard for interactive entertainment is very high”

So, it’s no wonder that European game makers are trying to carve out a slice of Japan’s pie for themselves.

At Makuhari Messe, gamers flocked to check out French gaming giant Ubisoft’s newest offerings: the latest in its *Tom Clancy’s Ghost Recon* series of military shooters, and *Watch Dogs: Legion*, the third installment in the action-adventure *Watch Dogs* series. Ubisoft has been in Japan since 1994, eight years after it was established, and has over 30 employees here. While it doesn’t do game development in Tokyo, and only a limited amount in Osaka, one of the company’s most important roles is game localisation. It also actively works to build relationships with gamers.

“Japan is one of the world’s great video game markets, so we have to be present in this market, and we have to do well,” says Steve Miller, managing director at Ubisoft Japan. “The standard for interactive entertainment is very high, so coming up with consistently high levels of games, online services and customer support is a huge challenge.”

The firm’s approach is to reduce the distance between itself and the Japanese gaming community by being present at events like the Tokyo Game Show, holding its annual

Ubiday festival in Akihabara and, of course, selling games with Japanese voices and text. That’s a big investment because Japanese localisation is more time-consuming, more expensive and requires more significant rewriting than localising into another Romance language, for instance.

Esports is another important part of community-building. Competitive gaming in Japan grew to \$43.2 million in 2018, 13 times its size the previous year. Sponsored by Austria-based energy drink giant Red Bull, the Red Bull Gaming Sphere Tokyo in Nakano hosted 304 gaming events in its first year and it’s drawing more and more industry players. Bandai Namco, known for titles like *Tekken*, *Soulcalibur* and *Dragon Ball FighterZ*, now supports an event called Fighting Tuesday that brings together over 150 gamers every week.

“We found that the most important thing for the scene in Japan was community around each game title and [players’] favourite game genres,” says Yu Matsui, founder of Tokyo-based gaming marketing agency Groovesync, which looks after the day-to-day operation of the Gaming Sphere. “They needed both tournaments and community. We couldn’t just do one or the other.”

Finding ways to build community isn’t everything, of course. European companies face other challenges in Japan. Since the country has long been a successful originator of games, Japanese gamers tend to have very high expectations, as well as their own particular tastes.

“It’s very, very difficult to get in right now, as the industry is so mature,” says Serkan Toto, CEO of Tokyo gaming consultancy Kantan Games. “I think on mobile, the local, the Chinese and the Korean game companies will share the market between themselves. Korea and China have multiple multi-billion-dollar mobile gaming studios; they win just via their scale.”

Alexander O. Smith, a Japan-based writer for Austrian video game developer Moon Studios, known for its award-winning adventure title *Ori and the Blind Forest*, says games made in Europe tend to be fundamentally different from those made in Japan.



Japan’s mobile games market ballooned to

\$13.3
billion

in 2018

“Japanese games favour linear, closed worlds while European games often feature open, sandbox-style worlds,” says Smith. “Global competition and mobile games have brought a lot of developers much closer together, however, irrespective of region.”

Toto notes that the local market proved too competitive, too expensive or too different for companies such as Malta-based King.com (known for the colossal hit *Candy Crush*), Germany’s Goodgame Studios and Wooga, and Finland’s Rovio Entertainment, which produced the cultural phenomenon *Angry Birds*. They have all exited Japan, but that hasn’t stopped others from making a go of it here.

“The challenge is balancing what players in Japan want in contrast to players overseas”

Wargaming.net was founded in 1998 in Minsk, Belarus, and is now based in Cyprus. It’s known for *World of Tanks*, a massively multiplayer online game (MMO) featuring highly realistic armoured vehicles from the mid-20th century. It was one of the first free-to-play MMOs of its kind and its success allowed Wargaming to grow



More than

260,000

people attended the Tokyo Game Show 2019 in September

beyond the Commonwealth of Independent States to operate globally. It recently announced *Caliber*, a third-person military tactical shooter developed with Russia’s 1C Company. Like *World of Tanks*, it’s free to play with optional in-game weapons and gear for sale.

The firm has been in Japan for seven years. It recently expanded its publishing office and moved from Shibuya to the Yotsuya district. Some of its roughly 50 staff members here — part of 4,600 around the world — work on game localisation, sales and marketing.

“Our unique selling proposition is military accuracy,” says spokesperson Eileen Lorenzo. “We are known as being committed to World War I and World War II history to the point where we employ historians who work with museums around the world to find the blueprints to create the tanks and ships in our games.”

It takes about three months to build the detailed armoured vehicles in the games, and if

Wargaming doesn’t get a detail right, players — who include former tank drivers — will notice. These high expectations have helped make the company the dominant force in competitive military games.

Kaz Izumi, Wargaming Japan country manager, says there’s a great advantage to being in Japan with its legacy of companies that founded the concept of gaming as entertainment. Being here also allows Wargaming to really understand its players’ lifestyles.

“We want to renew our focus on what players want,” says Izumi. “The challenge is balancing what players in Japan want in contrast to players overseas, and they all have to play together on an MMO. We want to do more local product fit and keep global access and efficiency, in terms of technology, as clean and fast as possible.” ●



MAKING AN ENTRANCE

A helping hand into the Japanese market

TEXT BY TOBY WATERS

With Japan's economy growing slowly, but steadily, the country is an attractive location for businesses looking to get a foothold in Asia. But in a nation famed for its bureaucracy, where do you start? Fortunately, there are many businesses here waiting to help those who are looking to set up operations or launch a new product in the world's third-largest economy.

WHY JAPAN?

While other Asian economies are on the rise, firms such as **ProWorks Consulting** recognise the benefits of becoming a part of this well-established market.

"Japan remains an important and strategic market despite China, India and other countries in Asia having moved into leading positions in the Asian and global economy," says managing director Marek Lehocky. "While Japan is an important market and one of the most developed countries in the world, it is known for its communication and cultural barriers, its detailed processes, and its lack of compatibility in many areas — all of which are barriers to market entry and smooth business operations. Japan is a market that is based on long-term relationships, which often makes it difficult to implement dynamic and rapid business strategies."

Beare Consulting also understands not only the merits of starting a business in Japan, but also the challenges, and how to overcome them.

"Japanese people are generally process oriented while Europeans tend to be concept oriented. This can make it challenging to work together," says CEO Taka Hirano. "You may also need to compete with businesses you aren't familiar with because they aren't global players. But once you learn the rules of business in Japan through working with us, it's much easier to enter the Japanese market."

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

While there will be some shared experiences for any company starting operations in Japan, every business is different, and needs different approaches to get them off to a running start. Beare Consulting makes sure to stay in close contact with their clients at every stage of the process to make sure their launch goes smoothly.

"First, we listen to your ideas and expectations very carefully. Then, we put together a phase-based proposal of how to move forward," Hirano says. "Once we reach an agreement, we develop an action item list with responsibilities and deadlines.

We hold weekly calls to update clients on our status. Of course, we can help you set up your company in Japan, too."

ProWorks Consulting prides itself on making things as convenient as possible for its clients.

"We are a one-stop service firm, so clients don't have to talk to multiple professionals and then have to make the critical links themselves," Lehocky explains. "Our bilingual team keeps an eye on our clients' businesses, which allows our clients to focus on whatever they are busy with, wherever they are in the world."

SETTING UP, STANDING OUT

Just as every business is different, consultancy firms go to great lengths to distinguish themselves from one another. At ProWorks Consulting, their priority is to become not just an advisor, but a partner to their clients.

"Our clients come to us as experts who can provide them with knowledge and experience of the Japanese market," Lehocky says. "Our goal is to partner with our clients and become an integral part of their operations in order to help them achieve their goals in Japan — both strategically and financially. We understand that we cannot succeed unless our clients do."

At Beare Consulting, the team is most proud of its speed in getting businesses on their feet in Japan — and its track record getting this done.

"We have been in business development for 23 years and have a proven track record of more than 20 successful projects," Hirano says. "Our team has an in-depth understanding of the Japanese market and provides you with high-quality service in the quickest possible timeframe. Our particular strength is our principle of 'Action Fast'. We are always working hard for you and for your Japanese customers and partners."

Entering a new market is a complicated prospect for any company. But with just a little help, you and your business can rise to new heights here in Japan.





A bitter pill

The negative effect of Japan's new drug pricing system on European pharma firms

In May, US regulators approved the most expensive drug in history. Zolgensma from Switzerland's Novartis costs more than \$2.1 million for a single life-saving infusion that treats spinal muscular atrophy in babies. Such products are an increasingly important consideration in the trade-off that plays out in every country between the use of innovative but expensive medicines and healthcare budgets. In Japan, where an ageing demographic adds to the financial strain, a recent reform of drug pricing has much of the pharma industry crying foul.

For decades, Japan had been infamous for its drug lag — long delays before the latest medicines on the global market reached patients. This was due to both an insistence on additional local clinical trials and tightly controlled price structures. The prices of medicines are lowered at regular intervals after their release by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), which dictates the costs of most medical procedures, devices and drugs in Japan.

This issue was partly addressed in 2010 with the introduction of the Price Maintenance Premium (PMP) system, designed to protect the amount paid for innovative new medicines for up to 15 years. Prices were still reduced, but

only after the pharmaceutical company had recovered the cost of product development and launch in Japan. Along with other regulatory reforms, it hastened the shortening of the drug lag. While, like the medicines themselves, it was not a panacea, the industry overwhelmingly welcomed the changes.

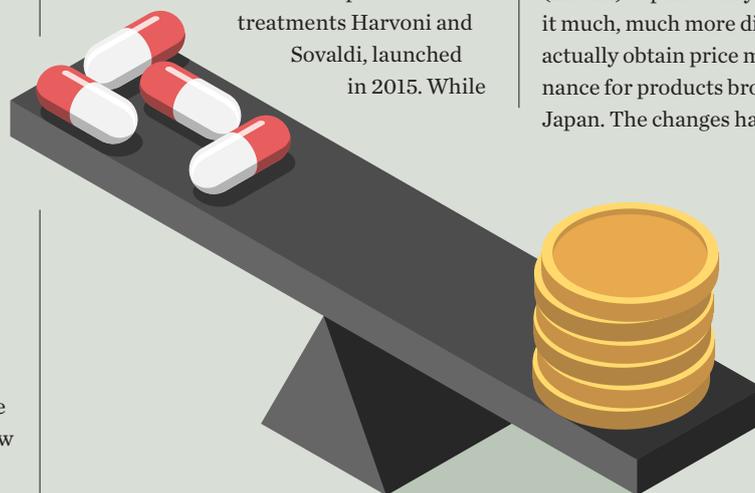
However, against a background of rising healthcare costs, the demand for expensive new medicines appears to have prompted Japanese authorities to re-evaluate PMP.

These include hepatitis C treatments Harvoni and Sovaldi, launched in 2015. While

not as expensive as Zolgensma, courses of treatment with the new drugs run to tens of thousands of dollars and their efficacy created significant demand among patients who were suffering with the liver-damaging condition.

Healthcare spending in the fiscal year to March 2018 grew 2.3% to ¥42.2 trillion (€359 billion), according to the MHLW, with the growth in medication bills outstripping that slightly at 2.9%. In April 2018, a major overhaul of PMP was implemented.

“They announced that a lot of products were taken off price maintenance, which had been developed in good faith on the understanding they would be protected for the duration of exclusivity,” says Ole Mølskov Bech, chairman of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) Japan. “They also made it much, much more difficult to actually obtain price maintenance for products brought to Japan. The changes have really



minimised the incentives for pharma companies to develop certain drugs for Japan.”

The PMP system and the reforms are extremely complex, with multiple criteria used to determine which drugs qualify for protection, at what level and how long it is maintained.

One clear indicator of the impact of this new regime is that the number of medicines that qualified for PMP fell from 823 in 2016 to 560 in 2018. Companies are also now categorised into three tiers – based on size and the how much R&D they conduct in Japan – with only products from top-rated firms granted complete PMP protection.

“Only the top 25 companies will be able to keep the full PMP on their products. This, of course, favours larger domestic companies over smaller foreign companies,” notes Bech. “Companies don’t know if they

will qualify for the top 25 in the future or not, and we work on very long cycles of product development.”

A mainstay argument from the industry for price protection is the large sums they invest in development. Pharma firms typically reinvest between 15% and 25% of their sales into R&D, a proportion as a sector second only to semiconductors.

“One of our concerns about the current pricing policy is if you launch a product in an existing drug class with an existing mode of action more than three years after the launch of the first drug in the class, by default you won’t qualify for PMP,” explains Bech.

Often in drug development, later versions of medicines improve efficacy and have fewer potential side effects than the initial treatment in the class.

“Under the revised rules you will have to take a 20% price cut compared to the lowest-priced drug in the class and automatically not qualify for PMP,” adds Bech.

The MHLW conducted a survey on the impact on R&D of pharma companies and 87% of respondents stated it had affected their development strategy in Japan.

“At EFPIA, we have also surveyed and found 50% of companies affected by the PMP changes have already implemented changes to their R&D policy in Japan, and 79% indicated they would revise their future

R&D strategy in Japan,” explains Bech.

The ministry has effectively ignored the results of the two surveys, including their own, “because it shows the reforms are having a negative impact on the pharmaceutical industry,” according to Yoshitada Kimura, vice-president of quality management at Novo Nordisk in Japan.

“The MHLW does want to protect innovative drugs, but how to do it is a



Pharma firms typically reinvest between

15%

and

20%

very important topic now,” suggests Kimura, who is responsible for price negotiations with the ministry at the Danish pharma firm.

A spokesperson for German pharma giant Bayer says, “We fully recognise the need of the country to strike the right balance between ensuring the sustainability of the universal healthcare system and the promotion of innovation ... We also recognise that the pricing system reform in 2018 was unbalanced as it heavily impacted the promotion of innovation in a negative way.”

Kimura points out that pricey new medicines often target narrow patient groups.

“This is not a waste of money,” he says. “Innovative drugs can save patients who could not be cured before.” ●

“The changes have really minimised the incentives for pharma companies to develop certain drugs for Japan”



Healthcare spending in the fiscal year to March 2018 grew to

¥42.2 trillion

“the pricing system reform in 2018 was unbalanced”



THE INTERVIEW

TEXT BY ANDREW HOWITT

PHOTO BY KAGEAKI SMITH



Diplomacy on the pitch

Senator Neale Richmond

In 2016, Neale Richmond was elected to the Seanad, Ireland's Senate, and currently acts as its spokesperson on European affairs. Europe has been an important area of focus for him since serving, early in his career, on the EU's Committee of the Regions in Brussels. Richmond is passionate about sport, having played rugby since the age of six, and has worked to promote education on concussion recognition and to improve gender equality in sport. *Eurobiz Japan* sat down with him during his visit to Japan last month.

What's the reason for your trip to Japan?

I've come here to play in the Parliamentary Rugby World Cup. In 1995, Nelson Mandela decided to establish a world cup for parliamentarians. He knew the power of sport, and he knew that within sport, rugby is quite unique in that most teams play each other every year. So, he brought parliamentarians from five countries to South Africa, and they played with golden oldies rules.

I've spent a week in Yamanashi Prefecture, in the foothills of Mt. Fuji, with a travelling party of 32 Irish people: six other politicians, a dozen or so parliamentary staff, former politicians, former staff, and guests. We played two matches there — against the New Zealand and British teams — and we played our last match against Japan in Tokyo. Former Japanese Prime Minister [Yoshiro] Mori presented us with a trophy.

This year, there were nine countries playing with over a hundred parliamentarians from around the world who just love

rugby: men and women of all ages, all creeds, all colours. The Japanese team included about half a dozen current members of the Diet.

Where else in the world can you go toe-to-toe on the sports field with the president of a country, have a beer and a handshake afterwards, and the next time you meet them, already have a warm relationship? Sport provides us with that special bond.

What is the value of the Rugby World Cup to Ireland–Japan relations?

It's as valuable as the 2002 FIFA World Cup was — a real watershed moment in Irish–Japanese relations. And this is going to bring them to another level.

I spent a week in this brilliant country, and I'm already in love with it. There're going to be 25,000 Irish people coming to Japan to watch the games, and I'm excited to see so many Irish people experiencing Japan for the first time.

Could you tell me about your current role as the Senate's spokesperson on European affairs?

When I came into the Senate in 2016, I thought it would be a great opportunity to discuss topics such as Erasmus Plus and the new European budget. But ever since the fateful day of the referendum, my political career has been almost wholly focused on Brexit. I engage a lot with the British media, in particular, but the global media, as well.

I took the Brexit Omnibus Bill through the Senate during an eight-hour debate in February. The Brexit Omnibus Bill, now the Brexit Omnibus Act, was developed by the Irish government in response to the increasing possibility of a no-deal Brexit. It details a range of contingency measures regarding areas such as social welfare payments, transport and protecting health care access.

It's very important to point out there is no such thing as a good Brexit — for Ireland, for the UK, or for Europe. But I very much hope that, when the UK leaves the EU, we will be the UK's best friend in Europe, and that we'll continue what has been a really warm relationship.

What else have you done on your visit?

You don't come all this distance and not take every opportunity available to engage with the Irish business community and to

promote Ireland and Irish–Japanese relations. We've met around 20 Japanese partners, we visited the Diet for an official engagement, and I've met with about 20 Japanese parliamentarians.

I spoke at the Keidanren and addressed the potential of the Irish–Japanese relationship, but I also went into detail about the impact Brexit could have and what the Irish government has been doing to prepare for it. Then we had a fruitful question and answer session; there are a lot of really concerned business people here. I reassured them that Ireland is in a good place, and that we're working with the UK and our European partners. I think it's very important to stress that, post-Brexit, Ireland will be an absolutely consistent partner for Japanese companies.

What opportunities do you see for Ireland here?

There're a number of key areas. We already have about 80 Japanese companies in Ireland. I think there's room through the EU–Japan European Partnership Agreement [EPA] for that to possibly double over the next few years — the obvious area being financial services, but also medical devices and pharma.

We're going to export a lot more goods to Japan now. Our beef has just come to the Japanese market in the past couple of months, and we're producing some of the best whiskey in the world. We're also looking to embrace even more Japanese products — Japanese food is hugely popular in Ireland.

Post-Brexit, there's no reason Ireland shouldn't be the gateway into the EU for Japanese companies. I very much hope that we can maximise the EPA, and I'm really excited about how big it could get. The sky's the limit. ●



Irish ambition

Ambassador of Ireland to Japan Paul Kavanagh

Ambassador Paul Kavanagh of Ireland has been in the diplomatic service for more than four decades. He has been ambassador to the United Nations in New York and Geneva, as well as to France, China and the United Arab Emirates. He arrived in Japan a year ago.

What are some of the embassy's current goals?

Our overall Irish government strategy, called Global Ireland 2025, has an ambition to double Ireland's footprint and impact in the world over the seven years from 2018 to 2025. We're going to be opening 26 new embassies and consulates general across all continents. We're also going to expand the reach of our agencies and support our industries and cultural sector. From within the European Union, Ireland has become a global island.

The Irish government has declared an increased level of ambition for its bilateral relationship with Japan and is investing heavily in this relationship. The great emblem of that is the new Ireland House, which will be built in Yotsuya. It's going to include the embassy, the official residence and the growing family of Irish economic agencies. But above all, it will be a gleaming showcase for

Irish technology, Irish design, Irish sustainable building, Irish art and so forth. It will include a performance space, an exhibition area and a conference facility. We hope to break ground by the end of next year and to commission the new building in 2022.

Ireland House in Tokyo will be the largest capital investment ever made by the Irish state overseas. And it is the first specifically designed Ireland House to be constructed anywhere in the world in the new century. It will be the perfect platform for us to bring the relationship between Ireland and Japan to a higher level.

The EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) will also serve to reinforce

Ireland's ties with Japan for many years to come.

What is the current level of trade between Ireland and Japan?

Ireland and Japan have strong levels of trade — about €10.5 billion, according to goods and services statistics from 2017. This is sizeable trade. Within that, Ireland has a strong trade surplus of about €6 billion. Ireland's exports to Japan include pharmaceuticals, medical technology, food,





is the fifth-largest financial centre and the fourth-largest exporter of financial services in the EU. This includes services in payments, treasury, insurance, re-insurance, fintech and so on. Not only is there tremendous expertise in Ireland in the industry itself, but the government has 30 years of experience regulating and cooperating with it. Ireland has become a major player in the financial services sector.

Ireland's financial services area was highlighted in Japan last month with the visit of Minister for Financial Services and Insurance Michael D'Arcy. He launched the Irish government's new financial services strategy, Ireland for Finance, which has a worldwide dimension as part of Global Ireland 2025.



Ireland's financial services sector employs

44,000

people

We've had a number of other successful ministerial visits in the last year. In March, Ireland's Minister for Culture Josepha Madigan had a very productive visit at the time of the celebration in Japan of St. Patrick's Day – the biggest annual Irish event in Asia. In June, we had the visit of Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Michael Creed.

Could you tell me about Minister Creed's visit?

He achieved two things. One, he was able to announce that Irish beef access to this market is now unrestricted. The 30-month limit on the age of beasts at slaughter that could be exported to Japan was removed. We're the first country in the European

“The Irish government has declared an increased level of ambition for its relationship with Japan”

Union to have full access for beef restored, and we're very happy about this.

Ireland is the largest net exporter of beef in the Northern Hemisphere. We saw Japan's tariffs on European beef, by virtue of the EPA, come down from 38.5% to 27.5% in one go earlier this year – with the prospect of a progressive reduction down to the level of 9% over the next 15 years. Japan has also opened its market to Irish sheepmeat. These developments have attracted great interest in Ireland.

Our government has decided that agriculture will be the first sector here to be ramped up as we look to expand Ireland's official presence in Japan. Minister Creed also opened the new office of the Irish food board, Bord Bia, in Tokyo. This will help us to do more to promote our food exports to Japan. Beyond beef and lamb, these include dairy, pork, seafood and alcoholic beverages. The minister also confirmed that Ireland would appoint an agriculture attaché from his ministry to our embassy in Tokyo.

Remember, we are building the new Ireland House. In order to match this capital investment, we are going to grow the size of Team Ireland in Tokyo. Our commitment to our ties with democratic Japan, our ambition for this market, and our deployment of skilled people here will all grow substantially over the coming years. ●

financial services, ICT, and ICT services.

If we turn to the financial services area specifically, one of the most promising elements where Irish firms are exporting to Japan is fintech. This includes regtech, payments, point-of-sale technology and digital transformation. The Irish companies in these fields are growing strongly worldwide. The quality of the services that they bring to a sophisticated and mature market like Japan are well received here.

Could you tell me more about Ireland's financial services sector?

It didn't exist 30 years ago. Today it employs 44,000 highly trained professionals. Ireland



Noriko Negretti Saito

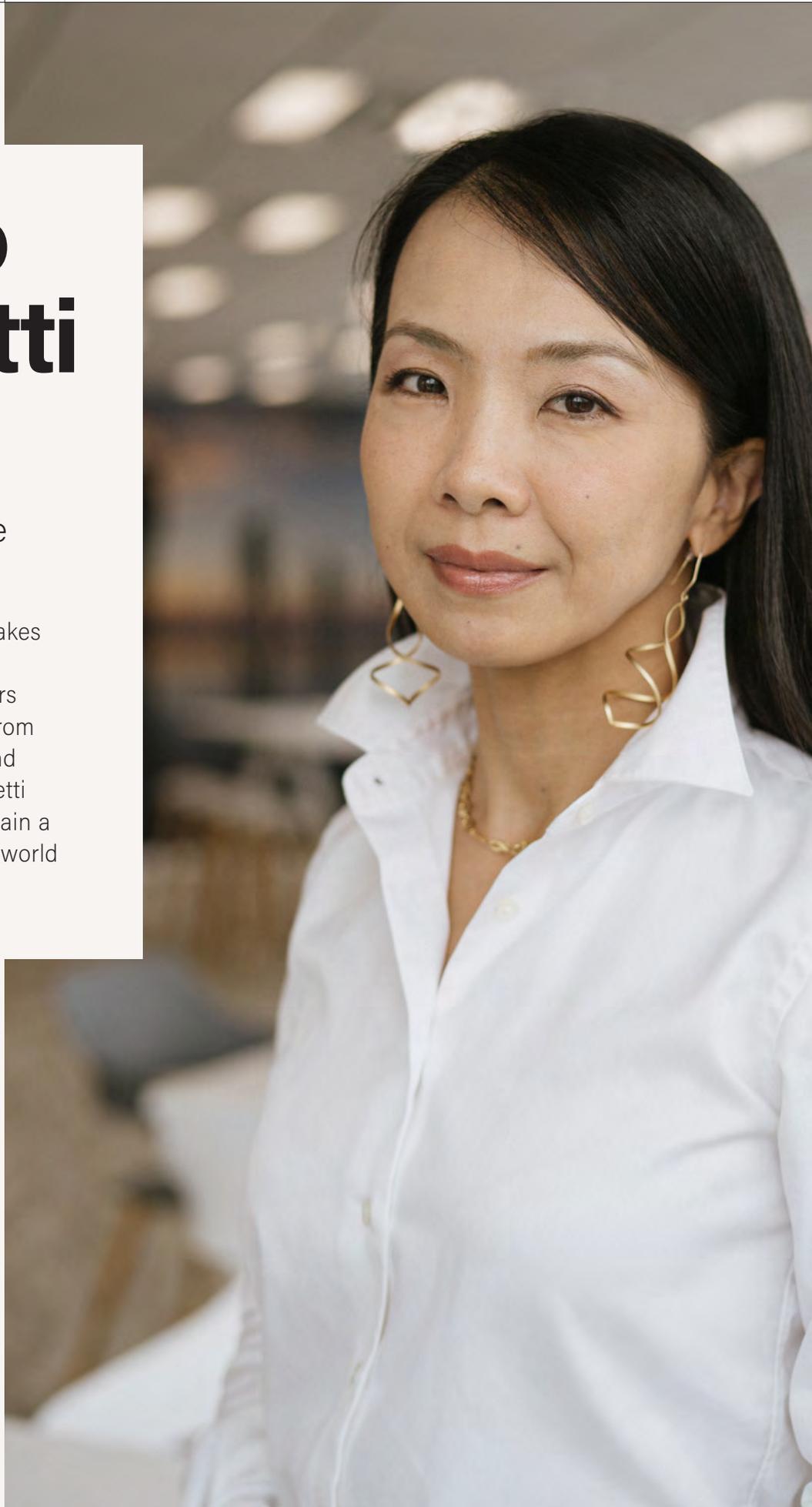
In touch with nature

Living in a city like Tokyo makes it easy to forget about the natural world. Forests, flowers and fauna seem so distant from the skyscrapers, subways and storefronts. So, Noriko Negretti Saito is determined to maintain a connection with the natural world every way she can.

Since seeing a TED Talk by the then-17-year-old Dutch entrepreneur Boyan Slat, Saito has been convinced of the need to combat climate change. She was deeply impressed by his presentation on the threat posed by plastic pollution in the ocean, and how it can be reduced.

“He was just a teenager, but the audience was carried along by his passion,” Saito says. “That speech really inspired me — just one teenager can make a difference in this area I’m passionate about.”

As carbon fibre global category manager and regional purchasing manager at Royal DSM,





a Netherlands-based health, materials and nutrition giant, Saito is proud to work for a company that takes sustainability and the environment seriously. DSM's sustainability efforts include its work to reduce CO₂ in the automotive industry and methane gas emissions in the agriculture sector. It has also partnered with Slat's NPO, The Ocean Cleanup.

"At our annual global purchasing meetings, with other buyers from the region, we discuss our strategy for sustainability activities for the years to come," Saito states.

However, her care for nature isn't confined to the work place. At home, she spends a lot of time in her garden where she tends

"I feel exactly the same [when I'm gardening] as when I do yoga"

to her plants, watches the seasons change and occasionally enjoys breakfast. It has amazed her to see that her flowers — including roses, tulips, bougainvillea, hibiscus — and fruit trees have drawn an array of wildlife to her garden.

"They have attracted butterflies

of many different colours," she says. "And I didn't know that in Yokohama there were so many kinds of birds and so many other animals. Just watching their lifecycles is an education."

While Saito's gardening started as a purely practical matter — her house has a garden that needs to be tended — she soon discovered that it was an incredibly calming experience.

"I feel exactly the same as when I do yoga," she says. "You can enjoy the silence and let go of all of your stress and concerns and have a fresh start to the day."

The garden not only nourishes her soul, but her body as well. Saito is an avid cook, and often uses herbs she has grown to season her food, and fruit from

the garden for desserts. From fruit she picks from her own tree, she even takes the time to make her own *yuzu* marmalade, which, she notes with pride, her family and friends abroad love.

"You have to peel the skin in very thin slices, then squeeze out the juice — it takes a lot of time. *Yuzu* are so tiny that you need 40 or 50 just to make five or six jars," she says. "It's a lot of work, but the flavour and the smell are brilliant."

Saito's love of cooking comes from her family. Her mother and grandmother are both accomplished cooks, and her sister is a professional pâtissier. Saito makes dishes from around the world, and her frequent trips abroad give her the chance to build her repertoire.

"I cook lasagna for my Italian family and friends on special occasions," she says. "It's a big challenge to present it to native Italians, but they really enjoy it, which makes me happy. Last year, for Christmas, I made lasagna for 22 people. There were some kids among the guests, and they told me it was delicious — kids are honest, so I believe them."

Whether she is tackling climate change at work, enjoying the serenity of the garden or cooking a meal with ingredients she's grown, Saito is mindful of nature — and its benefits — in such an all-encompassing way that it should give us all food for thought. ●

Noriko Negretti Saito is carbon fibre global category manager and regional purchasing manager at DSM and represents the Netherlands on the EBC's Executive Operating Board.

Do you like natto?

Time spent working abroad:

I've never lived abroad, but I've had the chance to visit many countries.

Career regret:

Not working abroad. Since I speak English, Spanish and a little German, I'm open to it if I have the chance.

Favourite saying:

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.

Favourite book:

Shibazakura by Sawako Ariyoshi. It's the story of a geisha, and Ariyoshi's Japanese way of expressing things is just beautiful.

Cannot live without:

Latin music.

Lesson learned at a multinational company:

Learn by doing, not reading a manual. And you should place value on performance, not on the time you've put in.

Secret of success in business:

Confidence, and the fact that you get good insights through open discussion.

Favourite place to dine:

Oggi Dal Matto in Nishi-azabu.

Do you like natto?

Yes. That's an easy question for a Tokyoite.



Ireland

A toast to great growth

Irish whiskey is the fastest growing spirits category in the world. According to Bord Bia, the Irish Food Board, exports of the premium tippie hit €652 million in 2018. It is projected that the industry will ship 12 million cases worldwide in 2020, twice the number for 2010. More whiskey will certainly please devotees in Japan – the Japanese market is currently the largest for Irish whiskey in Asia.

Ireland’s tourism sector, which accounts for more than 4% of GDP, is also growing fast. The island saw 11.2 million overseas visitors in 2018, up 5% from the previous year. Thanks to the Rugby World Cup, Japanese awareness of Ireland is on the rise, and Tourism Ireland is investing heavily in Japan to encourage even more people to visit.

Raise a glass to great growth.



Trade with Japan

Exports to Japan: €8.11 billion

Imports from Japan: €2.38 billion

SOURCE: IRELAND'S CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE; GOODS AND SERVICES, 2017



Population

5,068,050 (July 2018 estimate)

Urban population: 63.4%

42.86% are 25–54 years of age (2018)



Main exports to Japan

Pharmaceutical products; optical, photo, technical and medical apparatus; organic chemicals; electronic equipment; meat and edible offal.



Did you know...?

- Guinness is undeniably an emblem of Ireland, but the country is only the world's third biggest Guinness consumer, after the UK and Nigeria.
- With seven victories under its belt, Ireland has won the Eurovision Song Contest more times than any other nation.

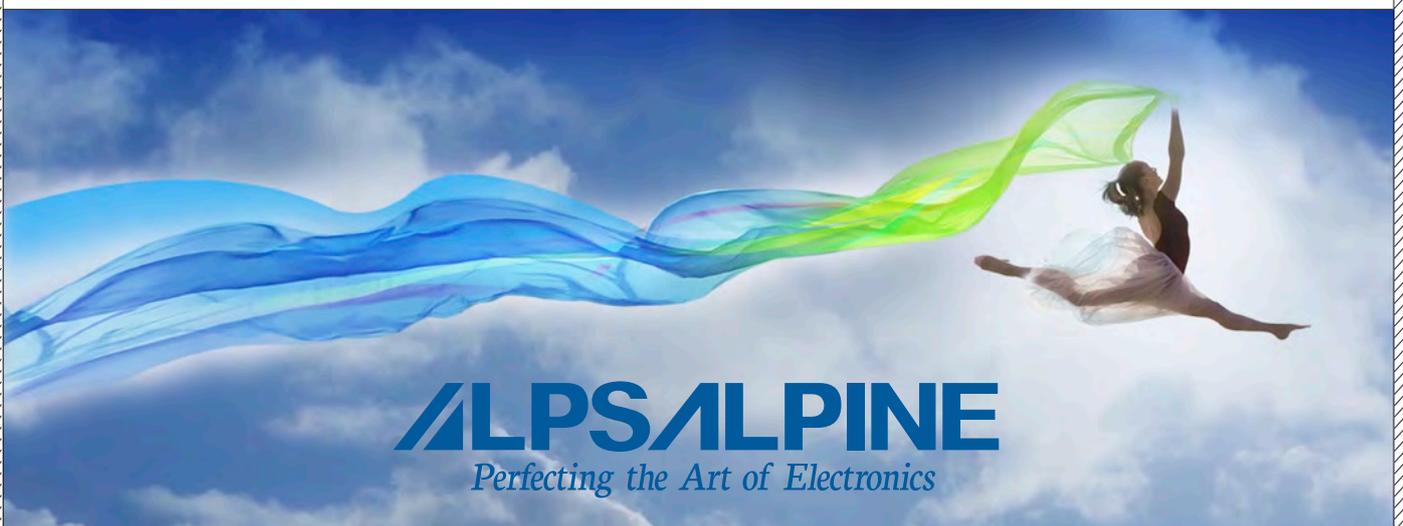




BUSINESSES FROM ...

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A look at some companies from the region



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BUSINESSES FROM ...

IRELAND

A LOOK AT SOME COMPANIES FROM THE REGION



Enterprise Ireland is the Trade and Innovation agency of the Government of Ireland

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Enterprise Ireland has had a presence for over 40 years in Japan supporting innovative and globally ambitious Irish client companies. Tokyo office services include market research and validation, strategy and business plan development, market sales and partnering itineraries, and business development events in collaboration with our Team Ireland partners.

The Japanese market is proving to be very compelling for our clients with compound annual growth in exports of 14.5% over the period 2015-2018.

There are now over 50 world class Irish companies with representation in Japan from Ireland's Plc's including ICON, Kerry Group, and Keywords International to significant privately held companies such as Daon, CAE Parc Aviation, Fexco, the Taxback Group, Openet and Redmills.

For companies in Japan, our Tokyo office provides a conduit to over 5,000 Irish companies with innovative supply capability. Our offer includes careful business matching based on market need and customised inward buyer visits to Ireland.

To see how world class Irish innovation can help you grow your business please contact us to arrange a confidential appointment.



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Automotive Components and Aftermarket

An important part to play

The auto-parts industry is experiencing profound changes that are presenting it with some harsh challenges.

Shifting consumer tastes and rapidly advancing technologies are putting the brakes on car manufacturing worldwide, directly affecting the firms that supply the industry with its parts and systems.

Several member companies in the EBC Automotive Components and Aftermarket Committee have been reporting “very significant” declines in volumes, according to chairman Joaquin Martori.

In Japan, demographics and changing lifestyles play a big role.

“The era for a consumer to own their own car is over,” says a committee member who requested anonymity. “The younger generation has no interest.”

This has been the trend for several years, but it has grown more acute lately as demand has slowed elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region. In China, new car sales have fallen every month over the past year on the back of an economic slowdown.

“You don’t see it yet with daily necessities, but when you’re buying a car, you have to have a

certain confidence that things are not going to get worse,” says Martori, who is also general manager at Mahle Trading Japan Co.

As the developed world turns towards carsharing and expanded public transport — along with the extensive integration of IT in vehicles — it is shifting away from private vehicle ownership. This has resulted in less business for many in the auto-parts industry.

One estimate shows that, on average, private vehicles spend more than 95% of their lives parked. Mobility solutions pushed by governments and tech companies aim to lower the rate — in other words, move more people using fewer vehicles.

“Solving the mobility problem will necessarily drive volumes down,” the committee chair says.

For the traditional car-parts makers, the changes will mean lower capacity utilisation, greater consolidation and adapting to new technologies. One increasingly common practice is to supply modules and even complete systems of transmission units, for example, rather than individual parts.

“The more solutions you can offer, the more attractive you are going to look to the Original Equipment Manufacturer [OEM],” Martori says.

One of the committee’s main advocacy issues concerns Japan’s lack of a robust independent aftermarket for auto parts. Martori notes that he and other members have worked hard on the issue, yet have seen no progress.

The group complains that parts

manufacturers are severely restricted in their ability to sell their products independently in Japan. The reason: when a local OEM agrees to order a part from a supplier, the OEM routinely includes a provision in the contract

banning sales of that part outside the agreement.

This used to be the situation in the EU and the US, until reforms allowed independent aftermarket sales to promote healthy competition that benefits consumers. The committee is calling for the same such liberalisation in Japan.

But there is a catch. For the suppliers, asserting their rights — which are protected under Japan’s competition law — is a delicate matter; they risk upsetting the OEMs and, hence, damaging their business relationships.

“There is not going to be one single whistleblower or maverick who will go to the Japanese OEMs and say, ‘I want the same treatment as what I’m getting in the EU,’” Martori explains.

Therefore, the committee’s strategy is to work with government officials, rather than appealing to the OEMs.

“We hope we can make this part of the ongoing trade agreement,” says Martori, referring to the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement, which came into force in February. “Every time someone from the EU delegation comes over here, and there’s a meeting of committee chairs, that’s when we bring this issue up.”

A lot is at stake. The parts makers view the restrictive practice as a significant lost business opportunity. And in these changing times, opportunities for the industry are getting harder to come by. ●

Advocacy issues

➤ Globalisation

The Japanese auto industry should be encouraged to focus on technical, commercial and logistical aspects of automobile production when procuring parts, rather than rely excessively on their affiliated companies.

➤ Aftermarket

Japan should have a legal framework that supports an independent aftermarket, giving parts manufacturers the freedom to sell their products.



Never tired of reducing waste

L4T rolls the circular economy forward with recycled tires

As the world's population continues to grow rapidly, it is putting ever-greater pressure on the planet's resources and generating more waste each year. There are also a growing number of vehicles on the road and, as a result, hundreds of millions of tires are disposed of annually, a major global waste problem — and an ongoing challenge — for the recycling sector.

A decade ago, very few people were talking about the circular economy or secondary raw materials, but two groups of environmentally conscious scientists, engineers and businesspeople — one based in Italy and the other in Slovenia — were already investigating the potential of end-of-life tires and developing a circular approach. They each developed their own complete ecosystem, a pioneering step for the circular economy in the tire industry.

In 2017, these organisations — the Italian high-tech machinery producer Curti Costruzioni Meccaniche and the Slovenian project development firm EP1 — founded a strategic joint venture, the Life for Tyres Group (L4T), which is backed by an investment fund. The L4T Group developed technology, which has been patented worldwide, with the objective of manufacturing high-quality secondary raw materials, such as recovered carbon black, green oil and steel, which are then used in industrial processes. Its novel technology is self-sufficient and reduces up to 90% of greenhouse gas emissions, compared with conventional tire-recycling processes.

L4T has been awarded a full environmental permit in the European Union to process more than 27,000 tonnes of waste tires



yearly. It is the only firm in the world in the materials recovery sector that has been recognised in this way.

After signing agreements with a range of multinational corporations to deliver secondary raw materials, L4T is moving forward with an ambitious expansion plan. It will build at least eight industrial plants, with a total capacity exceeding 240,000 tonnes of waste tires per year, by 2025. Two of these are already in the investment phase.

The Japanese market is an important focus for the firm. Japan generates more than one million tonnes of waste tires every year, which makes the country an important location for new industrial plants.

In October 2018, L4T attended the EU's Circular Economy Mission to Japan as part of a business delegation with the aim of evaluating the market and establishing contacts.

Since then, it has been working intensively on developing the project in Japan and is cooperating closely with the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation. The centre has helped L4T gain a better understanding of the Japanese market and given it a big boost in attracting investment in Japan. The nation's geo-strategic position could also serve as a hub for the firm as it further expands in Asia.

Currently, L4T is looking at joint innovation opportunities here and is already in discussions with four Japanese firms in the recycling, service and manufacturing sectors.

These companies share the same values for solving the problem of waste tires and, therefore, can create added value for both the Japanese economy and society. A joint venture would also benefit the environment by preserving precious raw materials, as the loop of the circular economy is closed. L4T hopes to establish a strategic joint venture with one or more local Japanese companies in the first months of 2020 and build a fully operating plant by 2022.

The circular economy is our future — simply because we need to become better stewards of the environment and create more sustainable societies in order to survive. As the L4T Group transforms from a European SME to a global player in the circular economy sector, it is making an important contribution to achieving this goal. ●

Tilen Milicevic is deputy general manager at L4T.





A balancing act

Japan and the EU discuss effective competition regulation for the digital economy

The rise of the digital economy has changed the world forever, but with this have come issues that need to be resolved — not just in Japan, but around the globe. On 19 September, the Delegation of the European Union to Japan hosted a conference titled “Competition Law Enforcement in the Digital Economy — Perspectives from the EU and Japan” to discuss how best to address these challenges.

Opening the event, Akinori Yamada, secretary general of the Japan Fair Trade Commission (JFTC) and Marjut Hannonen, the head of the EU delegation’s trade section, made clear the complicated nature of the issues that face regulators and lawmakers when it comes to regulating digital platforms.

“Any technology developing at a rapid pace raises questions

“We realise that some walled gardens are necessary to incentivise new work”

like, ‘How are regulators keeping pace?’, or ‘How are we making sure that these new technologies are not abused?’” Hannonen stated. “In the age of the digital economy, it is very important that we have global rules that apply to all. This is an area where the EU and Japan can actually take the lead.”

One key aspect of the discussions was the fundamental issue of when — or whether — competition authorities should regulate market behaviour.

Emeritus professor at Hitotsubashi University Dr Hiroyuki Odagiri noted that for platforms to attract enough users to keep their business viable, they may engage in strategies such as penetration pricing, where initial prices to participate on the platform are lowered to entice new users. But when do such practices become anti-competitive and necessitate action from competition agencies?

Odagiri argued that authorities becoming overly involved in the market had been detrimental in the past. In a case predating the digital economy, he cited the *Chubu Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper selling monthly subscriptions in Gifu, Aichi and Mie prefectures in 1975 at prices of ¥500 per month. At the time, the JFTC successfully argued that this was predatory pricing, and that subscriptions could not be sold at that price.

“I believe this was a case of penetration pricing, and was necessary for successful entry,” Odagiri said. “Therefore, the JFTC’s intervention may have actually hurt competition.”

Dr Philip Marsden, deputy chair of the

Bank of England’s Enforcement Decision Making Committee, agreed that it was difficult to find a happy medium between deciding when authorities should judge what is and is not anti-competitive behaviour, but said he believed that regulation can have benefits, and could even improve the development of a platform.

“We realise that some walled gardens are necessary to incentivise new work,” he said. “But we generally favour, where possible, openness.”

Marsden proposed that tech companies work closely with competition authorities to create the codes they will be bound by, rather than having restrictions imposed on them by governments — because, he noted, sooner or later these codes will need to be drawn up.

“I think [they] might like this model, compared with what could come,” he said.

It is a difficult balancing act to moderate the tensions between promoting innovation and preventing practices that inhibit competition. Japan and the EU — contemplating global standards together — may not immediately be able to resolve all the questions that emerge, but, hand in hand, they will certainly be able to walk further along the digital economy tightrope. ●

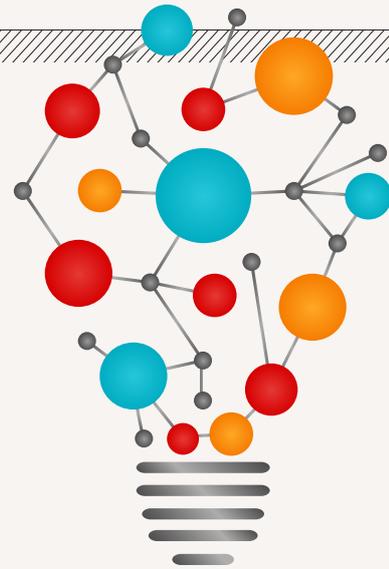


Dr Philip Marsden
Deputy chair of the Bank of England’s Enforcement Decision Making Committee



A better way to innovate

IFA Berlin promoted co-innovation on the global stage



I've been to many tech trade shows over the years, from CEATEC in Tokyo to CES in Las Vegas, but there was something different about Germany's IFA Berlin, which I attended for the first time last month. IFA stands for Internationale Funkausstellung Berlin (International Radio Exhibition Berlin), and it was first held in 1924. With more than 200,000 visitors and nearly 2,000 manufacturers and brands at its latest edition, it is Europe's biggest tech event and mostly showcases products for the European market. Many at this year's IFA talked about 5G, AI and voice control, but one unexpected buzzword was "co-innovation".

"Innovation is now a challenge for many companies in this connected world, as no company is really able to innovate all on their own," IFA Executive Director Jens Heithecker said in the official IFA magazine. "We think 'co-innovation' is the best expression to underline how we bring innovation to IFA, and also help our exhibitors and innovators find each other and exchange ideas."

The need for innovators to work together comes as 2019 sales in the global consumer electronics market are expected to shrink about 1.8% to €740 billion. One reason is smartphone ennui: Apple, Samsung and Huawei have seen sales fall, while new, high-priced models such as the iPhone 11

and Galaxy Fold have received mixed reviews.

Japan, a onetime consumer electronics giant, is trying to offer something different. A Japan Pavilion at IFA sponsored by Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry brought together about 20 startups under the concept "interfaces with consideration and sensibility". The idea was to come up with new ways of interacting with machines, especially to ensure access to technology for ageing populations.

A good example is mui Lab, a Kyoto startup that was showing off something you don't usually see at a tech trade show: a wooden plank. Mui, as the plank is called, looks like an ordinary two-by-four until you touch it, at which point the wood glows with alphanumeric and it turns into a smart speaker, smart home hub and interactive display. Covered with a thin layer of real wood, it's intended to be a calming, natural-looking

household object that only functions when needed. It's also intuitive and easy to use.

"Private spaces should be a relief from constant connectivity," the company notes on its website.

The focus of mui Lab isn't on mass-producing gadgets with a short-lifecycle but on making products that can be used for decades. It may be on to something: it has raised nearly \$250,000 through crowdfunding and earned a CES Innovation Award earlier this year.

Recently spun off from industrial moulds maker Nissha, mui Lab already has many industry collaborations under its belt, and new CTO Munehiko Sato has been a researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab and worked with global IoT firms. So, what will he and his colleagues come up with next? At IFA, it invited visitors to try out products currently in development: interactive wooden boxes, and a column — developed with digital pen tablet maker Wacom — that can measure and remember, a child's height as they grow.

Here's hoping that many other startups like mui Lab will harness co-innovation and bring some amazing new Japanese designs and technology to the world. ●

"no company is really able to innovate all on their own"



The Agenda

OCT
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CLIC CHAMBERS

8th Joint Chamber CLIC Event with Robert Hirst, Chairman of Moomin Monogatari Ltd.

TIME: 19:00 to 21:00**VENUE:** Embassy of Sweden, Roppongi**FEE:** ¥5,000 (for members), ¥7,000 (for non-members)**CONTACT:** office@fcc.or.jpNOV
9

IRELAND JAPAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

IJCC Ireland Japan Golf Challenge Ambassador's Cup 2019

TIME: 7:00am**VENUE:** Haruna no Mori Country Club**FEE:** See website for fees**CONTACT:** secretariat@ijcc.jpNOV
12

SWISS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY IN JAPAN

Jens Mehlhorn, Swiss Re

TIME: 12:00 to 14:00**VENUE:** Shangri-La Hotel Tokyo**FEE:** ¥6,500 or 1 SCCIJ 2019 luncheon voucher (for members); ¥8,000 (for non-members)**CONTACT:** info@sccij.jpOCT
31

GERMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY IN JAPAN

German Music Industry Meets Japan

TIME: 11:00 to 16:00**VENUE:** EDGEof, 2F, in Shibuya**FEE:** Free**CONTACT:** de-events@dihkj.or.jpNOV
12

ACCJ, CCCJ AND ICCJ

ACCJ, CCCJ & ICCJ - Autumn Chambering 2019

TIME: 19:00 to 21:00**VENUE:** Fratelli Paradiso, Omotesando Hills 3F**FEE:** ¥7,500 + VAT (for ICCJ members); ¥9,000 + VAT (for non-members)**CONTACT:** projects@iccj.or.jpNOV
7

GERMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY IN JAPAN

How IP rights contribute to your business

TIME: 9:30 to 11:30**VENUE:** German Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan**FEE:** Free**CONTACT:** events@dihkj.or.jpNOV
21

BELGIAN-LUXEMBOURG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN JAPAN

Gala 2019 — Night of the Sports

TIME: 18:30 to 23:00**VENUE:** Conrad Tokyo Hotel, Kazanami Ballroom**FEE:** ¥23,000 (for members), ¥27,000 (for non-members)**CONTACT:** info@blccj.or.jpNOV
8

BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN JAPAN

2019 British Business Award

TIME: 18:00 to 22:00**VENUE:** Hotel Gajoen Tokyo, Maiogi Room**FEE:** ¥28,000 (for members & non-members)**CONTACT:** info@bccjapan.comNOV
26

SWISS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY IN JAPAN

SCCIJ & Swiss Club Tokyo Year End Party 2019

TIME: 18:00 to 23:00**VENUE:** The Hilton Tokyo, Shinjuku**FEE:** ¥15,000 (for members and their guests), ¥8,000 (for students)**CONTACT:** info@sccij.jp



A new bag of tricks

Japan gets serious about tackling plastic waste

Japan uses 40 billion plastic bags annually and ranks second globally in plastic packaging waste per consumer, but it is now pledging to cut manufacturing and sales, launch collection and clean-up efforts, and switch to greener alternatives.

Just last year, Japan and the US were the only Group of Seven members not to sign a G7 Plastics Charter. However, now, Japan is joining the more than 60 countries that have initiated bans and fines for single-use plastic waste, and may one day be among the 25 that have complete bans.

The EU, which produces some 27 million tonnes of plastic waste annually, unveiled plans last year to institute a single-use bag ban by 2021, and make all plastics recyclable by 2030. Currently, only about one-third are. In July, the UK announced a £60-million investment to promote bioplastics — which use plants, wood chippings and food waste instead of polymers — and is considering a tax on packaging made from less than 30% recycled content.

Japan intends to cut use 25% by 2030. The nation's Osaka Blue Ocean Vision, announced at the G20 Osaka summit in June, urged countries to develop alternative materials such as bioplastics and address growing marine waste, with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe noting that the Pacific Ocean “is crying out in despair”.

Japanese firms, meanwhile, are stepping up efforts to use alternatives to plastic, particularly product packaging. Panasonic

shifted to a plant cellulose-based resin that's stronger than plastic and biodegradable, while retailers such as Fast Retailing are switching to paper bags at its Uniqlo and GU outlets with the aim of cutting plastic use 85% from a current 400 million bags annually. Supermarkets Aeon and Life already charge for bags at over half of their outlets, while Japan plans a national bag charge by April 2020.

Convenience stores are perhaps the most egregious in their use of plastic food wrapping, microwave-strong bento boxes and polymer cartons, bags and drinks, but cutting packaging beyond polyethylene terephthalate is becoming a real pet project.



7-Eleven plans to end rice ball plastic wraps, and instead use sugar cane-based biomass. With an estimated 2.2 billion *onigiri* produced annually, plastic waste could be reduced by 260 tonnes, according to the company, which will use only paper or biodegradable materials at stores by 2030.

Changes are also taking place at restaurant chains. Watami is introducing bamboo straws to replace plastic ones, while Gyoza no Ohsho stopped supplying plastic straws and spoons at all of its 729 locations in July. Ohsho is beginning to introduce biodegradable versions for take-away orders.

“A lot of praise [is] around compostable and biodegradable

plastics, yet for Japan, where we clearly do not have infrastructure in place to dispose of these items in the most appropriate way, we need to be careful not to celebrate ... too quickly,” says Mona Neuhauss, founder of social venture No Plastic Japan, which promotes sustainability through advocacy and eco-products. “While technology can bring solutions, waste is waste.”

Japan aims to make all plastics recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025. Bio-based plastics, created with converted sugar from plants, cane, corn, wheat or potatoes, are part of the solution, but not all are biodegradable or compostable. And nearly all are more expensive.

Next-generation packaging will see technical breakthroughs and less expensive polymers. These could lead to straws from seaweed and flip-flops from algae, or even bioplastic film made from a shellfish biopolymer, potentially a perfect wrap for those billions of *onigiri*.

Adopting such alternatives should be as simple as Nestlé Japan's switch to paper packaging for its KitKats last month. Nestlé recommends using the paper to make origami cranes and send someone an eco-message. It also expects to cut at least 380 tonnes of plastic use annually, another sign that Japan is indeed joining the recycling fold. ●

Changing Japan

Advocating for LGBT rights from within the Japanese government

When I got into politics in 2003, most people weren't aware of the term LGBT. I came out in 2005, when I was a member of the Osaka Prefectural Assembly, and — as the first politician to have come out as gay — I feel I've succeeded in making the LGBT community more visible, especially to the government.

Awareness has grown through annual pride parades held around Japan. And the biggest step forward for the LGBT community came in 2015 when Shibuya and Setagaya wards started offering partnership certificates to same-sex couples.

Today, every political party knows they need to have a position on LGBT issues and be able to respond to them. Especially with the Olympics and Paralympics coming up next year, politicians are aware that there should be an anti-discrimination law protecting the LGBT community. When I was elected in 2003, I wouldn't have believed that Japan could have come this far and changed at this speed. But we still haven't achieved what we're aiming for.

In June, I put forward a same-sex marriage bill, and I feel extremely proud for having been the first to introduce such a bill in Japan. This is one of the reasons I wanted to become a Diet member. However, before a bill can be discussed in the Diet all parliamentary groups need to give their approval. That hasn't happened with this bill — the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) are opposed to it — so it has been suspended. It's very unlikely now that it will be discussed in parliament.

However, we are seeing a gradual change in the attitudes of those at the Ministry of Justice. There's an increase in the number

of people in the LGBT community being allowed to reside in Japan, such as same-sex partners of embassy workers and those in the American military.

Pressure is also being put on the government domestically. The number of regional governments offering partnership certificates is certainly on the rise, and it will be a big deal when these jurisdictions cover more than half of the Japanese population.

After receiving a partnership certificate, couples try to submit registration of marriage documents at the city office, but they aren't accepted. So, an increasing number of these couples are taking the city to court. The media is reporting on these stories, and the voices of people asking, "Why can't they get married?", are getting louder and louder and will continue to do so until even the LDP can't ignore them.

This is one issue that could bring the ruling party out of office. The next federal election will be a time to decide whether we want to be a country that accepts diversity in families or one that doesn't. What I want is to help Japan become a fair society, a place where anyone — just as they are — can live how they want.

For change to happen sooner, people in their twenties and thirties need to get out and vote so that they can have their voices heard more clearly by the government. Voter turnout for the last Upper House election was incredibly low. More than half of the population didn't vote, and only around 20% of those in their twenties voted.

I feel **extremely proud** for having been the first to introduce [a same-sex marriage] bill

This is a huge problem, and I really believe Japan is facing a crisis of democracy. I want the entire electorate to bear in mind that they are responsible for building the society they live in.

If people believe that it would be good to have a society where same-sex marriage is accepted, they need to vote. Everyone needs to make an effort, or else Japan won't change. ●

Kanako Otsuji is a member of the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan the only openly gay member of the House of Representatives.



HIGHER EDUCATION

LEARN, YOUR WAY



Higher education graduates from a one-size-fits-all approach

TEXT BY TOBY WATERS

With more people entering higher education than ever before, universities are striving to set themselves apart to attract students. One way to appeal to prospective students is to enable personalised education. From course selection to learning environments, institutions' increasing flexibility helps each student get an education that's a perfect fit.

education that will prepare students to become successful managers — and make a difference — in the business environment of the 21st century."

Warwick Business School offers MBA courses that aim to directly and rapidly advance your career.

"I work with executives from all over the world who are looking to move into senior leadership," says Karen Barker, director of recruitment and admissions. "At Warwick, we know exactly what is needed to make that transition, and that is why our focus on leadership, one-to-one coaching and career development is central to the Warwick MBA."

Lakeland University Japan is the perfect choice for those seeking a US education in Japan in a multicultural atmosphere.

"Lakeland University Japan offers American-style education, emphasising student interaction, critical thinking and diversity of opinions," says the dean, Alan Brender. "Students from over 30 countries comprise 40% of the student body, guaranteeing lively discussions in classes. Small class sizes and a family-like atmosphere encourage students to express themselves frankly and to formulate

WHY JAPAN?

The **National University of Singapore Business School** combines global knowledge with regional experience.

"NUS Business School offers a rigorous, relevant and rewarding business education to outstanding students from across the world," says MSc Programme Director Aaron Goh. "By providing the best of global knowledge with deep Asian business insights, we prepare students to lead their businesses to international success and help global companies succeed in Asia. We achieve this through the transformative, experiential and holistic approach we adopt in our curriculum and teaching."

A priority for **McGill University** is to make its MBA Japan programme accessible to those currently in work.

"We bring the world to you," says director David Hackett. "The McGill MBA Japan programme brings McGill

professors to Japan, providing students with a world class business education in Tokyo. It's a full time MBA designed with weekend classes so you can advance your career without leaving your job."

Kyoto-based **Doshisha University's Graduate School of Business** not only teaches its students executive skills, but also how to tackle today's global challenges.

"At Doshisha, we apply our university's traditional philosophy of 'education guided by conscience' to the challenges and opportunities of today's world," says Yong Yin, director of the Global MBA Programme and professor of operations management. "We provide a business

educated opinions that will lead them to becoming enlightened businesspeople and well-informed global citizens."

Those seeking to advance quickly should consider **IE Business School's** intensive, international programme.

"Our Global Executive MBA goes beyond the traditional EMBA," says Kaoru Iino, Japan office representative. "Our blended methodology — which combines interactive online periods with five face-to-face weeks in Madrid, London, Singapore and LA — allows well-established professionals to participate in this intensive 15-month programme.

"Institutions are becoming increasingly flexible to help each student get the education that's right for them."



It will provide you with the tools you need to excel in the C-Suite."

THEORY AND PRACTICE

McGill's learning structure merges a personalised study of theory with practical exercises to create well-rounded and confident graduates.

"In addition to independent studies and optional study tours, the primary way students focus their learning is the practicum," Hackett explains. "It's the final assignment in which students select a real-world business problem important to them, then work with a McGill

professor one-on-one over the course of several months to create a solution."

Doshisha University is also a firm believer in close collaboration between staff and students. "Immediately upon entering our Global MBA Programme in Kyoto, every student is partnered with a supervising faculty member,"

Yin says. "At the beginning of their second semester, all students are assigned two supervisors for their Master's research project. These faculty members provide academic support throughout the entirety of a student's studies at Doshisha."

At Warwick, the staff's expertise joined with contemporary experience makes for an all-encompassing learning environment, as students can attest.

"The Professors of Practice are world-class leaders in their respective fields and embrace the reciprocal nature of the learning environment," says current MBA candidate Darran Ling. "As rich as the academic theory they are

teaching is, they are incredibly receptive to real-life challenges. The way they encourage robust discussion and intellectual debate is what really sets Warwick apart."

CONTROLLING YOUR LEARNING

To maximise potential, NUS Business School keeps students abreast of their progress at all stages of their degree.

"Continuous assessments allow students to gauge their learning throughout their studies. Our faculty provides individual feedback to the students, who can use these evaluations to review their learning capabilities," explains Goh. "This will help them to take decisive steps towards achieving their learning objectives."

At IE Business School, cutting-edge classroom technology is used to ensure a compelling learning experience.

"WOW Room is a virtual classroom with emotional recognition capability. It allows the professor to simultaneously evaluate the students' level of engagement and respond to them individually," Iino explains. "When a student is not engaged, the system recognises this and alerts the professor. In this way, students and faculty experience deeper immersion that keeps everyone engaged and interested."

Lakeland University uses tried-and-tested methods to develop their students.

"Lakeland University Japan offers small class sizes, focusing on critical thinking, group and pair discussions, and interactive teaching techniques to personalise teaching," Brender said. "In a basic required course, we teach students such skills as bias assessment, fact finding and audience analysis. We also train high-performing students to tutor their peers one-on-one in learning centres on various sites on campus."

Thanks to innovations in teaching and technology, your studies can be as unique as you are.



Graduate Certificate In Applied Portfolio Management (g-CAPM)

18 - 24 November 2019

The CAMRI Applied Portfolio Management Programme is a 7-day state-of-the-art applied portfolio management training programme at NUS Business School, Singapore, developed by academic professionals for investment professionals, and conducted at the world's most advanced Investment Management & Trading Lab.

Who Should Attend

Portfolio managers, analysts, and risk managers with 3-5 years of experience who are looking to reinvigorate their quantitative, fundamental, portfolio and risk management skills in equities and fixed income. In addition, the participants will also be exposed to a real-time macroeconomic view on current global issues affecting investment management. The programme is also relevant for those planning to make the switch from operations and administration-type functions in financial institutions to the front office, and who already have basic knowledge of investments and financial analysis.

Learning Outcomes

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- Hands-on computational finance, risk & portfolio management, and trading & execution abilities
- An understanding of hedge fund and alternative investment strategies, manager due diligence

Find out more at exced.nus.edu/gcapm

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ie

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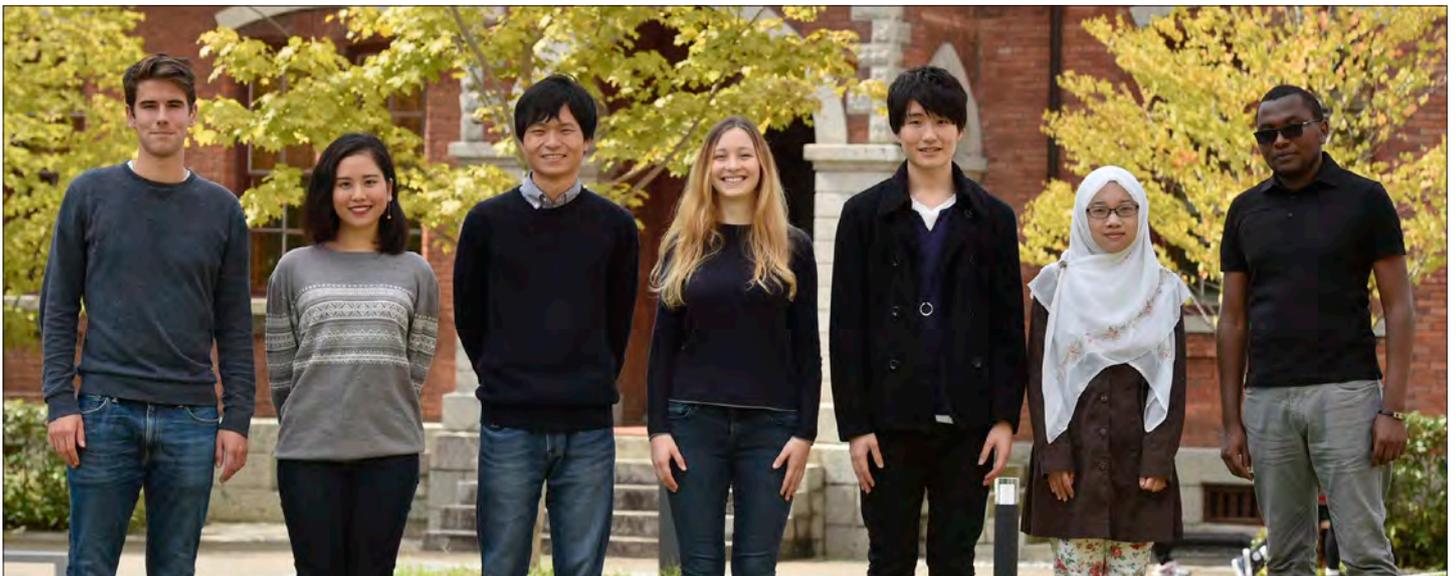
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 **Doshisha Business School**
People Hold The Key



Insuring your safety

Golf insurance can protect you from a host of hazards

Search YouTube for “golf” and “alligator” and you’ll get a variety of scary videos of players encountering the large and dangerous amphibians. I have had close encounters with monkeys, boars, bears and, once, a cobra that slinked across the fairway at Siam Country Club in Thailand. But golf hazards come in many shapes and forms, and even the greatest of golf’s achievements — a hole in one — can have costly consequences.

Fifteen years ago, HSBC bank produced a commercial in Japan where a foreigner playing with some Japanese colleagues joyfully got a hole in one. His joy was tempered by the gifts — electric trolleys, new drivers, etc. — he had to buy his fellow players. The next shot shows him at the same hole deliberately trying to miss the green only for his ball to hit a tree and go in again, which obviously resulted in more gift buying. The advert



intended to demonstrate the importance of local knowledge, but it also carried a warning for golfers in Japan.

So, how do you mitigate unexpected problems like this? You buy insurance.

Golf insurance is not limited to Japan. Insurance companies worldwide are inventive in coming up with potential catastrophes to keep you worried, and the golf course has a whole host of things to worry about. If you’re my caddie, it’s me; 20 years ago, I managed to hit my caddie even though she was standing a very safe distance away. Of course, this being Japan, she apologised. If I’d been in another country, a lawsuit may have ensued.

There are plenty of other things that can go wrong on a golf course. You could:

- Crash your buggy or be hit by a buggy
- Be struck by lightning
- Have your golfing holiday cancelled as a result of a natural disaster
- Injure someone with a ball
- Get injured by a ball or flying club head
- Hit your ball onto a highway or into someone’s home
- Get a hole in one or an albatross
- Have your clubs or other possessions stolen
- Be attacked by wildlife

These calamities differ in type. Although a woman who was blinded in one eye while watching the Ryder Cup in France last year sued the organisers for negligence, it is generally assumed by those in the legal profession that when you enter a golf course, as a player or spectator, you are aware of its dangers.



Insurance companies worldwide are inventive in coming up with potential catastrophes to keep you worried

However, there are exceptions to this “assumption of risk”. If something defective on a course causes injury or someone deliberately does something deserving redress, a valid lawsuit could follow. Even hitting another player with your club could leave you liable. But generally, if you get hit by a golf ball or a club or even if you break a window in someone’s house, there will be no liability. These occurrences are not uncommon, but someone has to pay; hence, golf insurance.

In the case of a house situated on a golf course, the house owner is assumed to be taking the risk. If you hit a car on an adjacent road, you will probably not be liable, but the golf course might be if it provided inadequate protection for the road.

So, everyone gets insurance. In Japan, this might run from ¥2,000 to ¥20,000 per year and should cover most eventualities — but I still ask my caddies to be careful ●



Eco-wines

Sustainability enters the wine market

With an environmental crisis looming, consumers are realising that the power to effect change lies in their wallets. Buying organic produce and grass-fed meat is just the beginning of a worldwide movement to support local, ethical and sustainable businesses. Yet these standards are rarely discussed when selecting a bottle of wine.

As with the cultivation of any crop, a host of resources, including water and energy, are used to grow wine grapes. Pest management, commonly in the form of pesticides, is the plague of every viticulturalist. Soil health, and its effect on the surrounding ecosystem, is a growing concern, as is the impact of transporting wine domestically and internationally. To combat these concerns, wineries worldwide are beginning to explore how they can grow grapes responsibly while still producing a great bottle of wine.

Water conservation in the vineyard and the winery is paramount. Dry farming — when vineyards use only rainwater for irrigation — is becoming more and more widespread. Wineries in places where droughts occur frequently, such as California, are turning to dry farming to reduce water consumption and to create intensely flavoured wines. When vines are irrigated, their root system remains shallow because they're getting most of their water and nutrients from the top layers of soil. But in dry farming, the vine's roots must go deep into the soil for water and nutrients, which in turn produces more concentrated berries,

resulting in a more complex wine.

Pest management is another hot topic in the wine world, as more wineries turn away from conventional sprays to more holistic options. Organic pesticides have proven effective, yet wineries with years of experience producing organic wines, including Fetzer Vineyards in California, emphasise that it's more complex than simply switching to organic. The system of integrated pest management recognises a vineyard's intricate ecosystem and modifies it so that pests are naturally deterred. Planting cover crops amongst vines to attract beneficial insects, which prey upon harmful pests, gives good bugs shelter and food to sustain them in the vineyard's habitat. Healthy canopy management, which keeps the vine's leaves healthy and trim, also prevents pest infestation due to decreased air flow.

Perhaps the most challenging of all vineyard management techniques is the practice of regenerative agriculture. Also known as carbon farming, regenerative agriculture focuses on enriching soil to improve



watersheds and enhance ecosystems by capturing carbon dioxide. It's a recent trend that's increasingly being discussed due to the approaching carbon crisis.

Fetzer Vineyards is a pioneer in the area of carbon farming for the wine industry. As a certified B Corporation, Fetzer practices holistic vineyard management, such as composting, cover cropping, and zero tilling (to prevent the release of carbon). It's carbon neutral, meaning it absorbs as much carbon as it releases, and its dedication to sustainability has won it a great deal of press in recent years. The winery's key labels include Bonterra and Bourbon barrel-aged 1000 Stories, which have seen growth of 70% and 45% respectively over the past five years.

Across the Atlantic, the *appellation d'origine contrôlée* of St. Émilion, famous for its Merlot-dominant red blends in Bordeaux, is now requiring environmental certifications from all its wineries. Starting with the 2019 vintage, all wineries in the appellation must be certified sustainable (organically or biodynamically) or in the process of becoming certified, to use the prestigious appellation name.

Maybe consumers are starting to look at a winery's environmental standards after all. ●





Paul Gilsenan

Company: A global IT company
Title: Real Estate Transaction Manager
Originally from: Dublin, Ireland
Time in Japan: 18 years

Hungry? Where do you like to go for a bite?

Kyojin Stew House in Togoshi Ginza. As the only Irish eatery in the city, it's difficult to resist getting a proper Irish feed. Baileys Cheesecake ... say no more.

What do you do to stay in shape?

Cycling.

Name a favourite movie: *Platoon*.

Favourite band: Led Zeppelin.

Favourite album: Led Zeppelin's *The Song Remains the Same*.

Favourite TV show: *Only Fools and Horses*. You need to be old for this one.

Favourite book: *Thinking, Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman.

What's something a lot of people don't know about you?

I have been a vegetarian for over 25 years.

Cats or dogs?

Dogs.

Summer or winter?

Winter (especially in Japan).

What's your ideal weekend?

Mountain bike racing with the family.

Where do you go for a drink after a busy week?

An SÓLÁS, in Yoyogi. Get a pint of Guinness from Irish host Will behind the bar. Great craic and great atmosphere. The food is amazing, also.



What's your ideal weekend? "Mountain bike racing with the family."



Mats Lindstrom

Company: Ducati Japan Ltd.
Title: President & Representative Director
Originally from: Lomma, Sweden
Time in Japan: 15 years

Hungry? Where do you like to go for a bite?

Home! My wife's cooking is fantastic.

What do you do to stay in shape?

I like to exercise but, unfortunately, my job gives me very little time for it, so I try to eat right.

Name a favourite movie:

There are so many to choose from, but *North by Northwest* is great.

Favourite musician/band: My favourites are AC/DC, Frank Sinatra, David Bowie, John Coltrane, Queen, Art Blakey, Jimi Hendrix, Sonny Clark and Led Zeppelin.

Favourite album: I don't really have one favorite album.

Favourite TV show: I rarely watch TV, but *Design Ah!* on NHK is an excellent kids show.

Favourite book: *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho.

What's something a lot of people don't know about you?

I like photography.

Cats or dogs?

Cats.

Summer or winter?

Summer!!!

What's your ideal weekend?

Wake up — having not set my alarm clock — and enjoy a leisurely breakfast with my family, then take the day as it comes.

Where do you go for a drink after a busy week?

Home, I make a wicked vodka martini.



"I make a wicked vodka martini"



TAKA HIRANO, CEO

Beare Consulting KK

Founded in 1997, Beare Consulting is a leading market entry firm based in Tokyo. It offers foreign businesses an extensive suite of services, including company registration, local market assessment, the creation of market entry plans, business development and channel management.

“The most satisfying part of our work is helping business professionals attract the clients they want,” says Taka Hirano, CEO of Beare Consulting KK.

The firm’s consultants are deeply familiar with both Japanese and overseas business culture, so they are ideally placed to help their clients bridge cultural gaps — and successfully break into the Japan market. ●



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