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Frothy market -
Japanese beer drinkers try
the European brews

Beating the best -
How high-tech leaders
stay ahead of the pack

Absent and busy -
Mobile workers improve
production, save money

Urban mining -
Japan searches for precious
metals above ground

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The European (EU) Chamber of Commerce in Japan

The EBC is the trade policy arm of the seventeen European national chambers of commerce and business associations in Japan

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EUROBiZ Japan welcomes story ideas from readers and proposals from writers and photographers. Letters to the editor may be edited for length and style.

Contributors

Gavin Blair soldiers through an assignment involving beer, page 8



Gavin has been writing about Japan for about a decade and currently contributes articles to magazines, websites and newspapers in Asia, Europe and the United States

on a wide range of topics, from business and politics to culture and entertainment.

"Working as freelancer and covering a broad range of topics is rarely boring. Nevertheless, some assignments are more demanding or interesting than others. Being pretty much obliged to sample an eclectic mix of beers, created with love and dedication by some of Europe's finest craft breweries, definitely goes down as one of the more pleasant tasks I've soldiered through in my professional life."

Alena underwent business training in Tokyo on the Executive Training Programme, then began to write about business, culture, travel and people in Japan. A researcher at heart and by profession, she enjoys on-the-ground investigation and observation. She contributes articles to magazines and websites in Japan and in Europe.

"The greenification business is blooming, literally, in Japan's urban centres. In the past 12 years, 330ha of green have been created in the form of rooftop gardens, with another

Alena Eckelmann finds out what is happening up on the roof, page 15



48ha as vertical walls. The green provides shade in urban heat islands, purifies the air and is pleasing to the eyes, but is there a measurable climate effect?"



Geoff Botting finds a committee that really communicates, page 30

Geoff, a former newspaper and wire service reporter and copy editor, has been living in Japan for the past quarter of a century. He is now a freelance journalist and translator,

writing mainly about business, the economy and travel.

"The EBC committee in charge of the key strategic industry of telecommunications equipment comprises only two member companies. Yet we can take heart that the group is highly involved and making a difference. Over the years, the committee's efforts, such as official participation in Japanese government policy committees, have played a constructive role in the development of Japan's telecommunications industry."

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Be safe

Traffic accidents kill 1.3 million people a year worldwide every year. That is nowhere near the “nearly six million people each year” killed by tobacco, according to World Health Organization figures, but it is an outrageously high figure. It seems, 127 years since Karl Benz built the first patented automobile, that we ingenious humans have not managed to build a car that can be driven safely – at least by humans. Nor have we invented a boat guaranteed to stay above water, an aircraft that is totally certain to stay aloft, or a gun that kills only people who deserve to be shot. Throughout history, inventors have bestowed upon society benefits that have significant unintended destructive consequences. Setting out to break the pattern would be grandly ambitious.

Yet, with respect to cars, the man on our cover this month, Volvo Car Japan

CEO Alan Desselss (Investing in Japan, page 22), is brave enough to firmly reiterate the Swedish car maker’s policy goal of zero accidents with Volvo Group products. The Swedish carmaker has a long history of safety innovations and can be taken seriously when it makes such a bold statement.

Technological leadership, of course, is nothing new to European companies. Christopher Thomas (Beating the best, page 16) identifies three that have made it in Japan through sheer excellence. Plansee, of Austria, supplies high-performance materials that keep Japanese manufacturers competitive. German auto-parts maker Webasto dominates the market here with products destined mainly for export by its Japanese customers. Gadelius Holding, of Sweden, has introduced equipment that changed the way Japanese surgeons are trained.

Our story on Japan’s quest to recover higher percentages of precious metals from manufacturing processes and manufactured goods (Urban mining, page 26) features Umicore, another European company at the forefront of its field.

Perhaps Gavin Blair’s story on European beer (Frothy market, page 8) could have appeared at the top of the summer. However, the emphasis here is on the all-weather brews, sedately sipped, and not on the deeply chilled varieties for urgent quaffing to stave off heatstroke. Many distinctive and satisfying European beers are making good headway in Japan, and are just right for autumn. Please enjoy. Please be safe. [e](#)

David C Hulme
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Frothy market

Japanese beer drinkers try the European brews

Text **GAVIN BLAIR**

Sake may be the quintessential Japanese drink, but the nation's favourite tipple is actually beer, which accounts for half the value of all alcoholic beverages consumed. And although Japan's beer market has been in decline since its peak in 1995, it is still the seventh largest in the world, with the nation's drinkers having quaffed a total of 5.8 billion litres last year.

The domestic beer market is still dominated by the big four brands of Asahi, Kirin, Sapporo and Suntory, which account for around 95% of sales. International premium brands enjoyed relatively strong sales during the 1990s, but then lost ground until 2011. Growth began again last year, and has continued into this year, according to

Dominique Jung, general manager for Heineken-Kirin Japan.

"There's been a polarisation in the Japanese beer market between the premium and economy brands," says Jung.

Heineken, which has been in a joint venture with Kirin since 1989, re-launched its flagship bottled beer last year with a long-necked, slimmer design. Promoting drinking directly from the bottle, a style somewhat unfamiliar to Japanese consumers, was an integral part of the launch, explains Jung. The campaign – which included transforming a shopping mall in Tokyo's Harajuku district into a Heineken Star Lounge event space for five weeks earlier this year – helped the brand outperform the sector with double-digit growth.

The range of events at the Heineken

Star Lounge covered music, sports, film and design, and was "a good beginning to get people used to drinking from bottles, rather than cans or cups," says Tomo Murakami, a director at the UltraSuperNew creative agency that was behind the concept.

High-end imported beers still account for only 1% of the huge domestic market, but sales are definitely growing. Independent microbreweries, in particular, are doing well.

"It's still a small world for Euro craft beers here, but there's a huge spike in interest, one or two really enthusiastic promoters and some great brews, so we get big plastic kegs of beer travelling halfway around the planet now," says Nicholas Coldicott, a craft beer enthusiast and former beverage columnist at *The Japan Times*.



“IT’S STILL A SMALL WORLD FOR
EUROPEAN CRAFT BEERS HERE, BUT THERE’S
 A HUGE SPIKE IN INTEREST”
 Nicholas Coldicott

influence the drinker’s experience.

Someone who was instrumental in introducing Japan to the joys of craft beer is Phred Kaufman, a long-time resident of Sapporo on the northern island of Hokkaido, who opened his Mugishutei pub in 1980. Shortly after Japanese law was changed in 1994 to allow microbrewing, he teamed up with Rogue Ale of Newport, Oregon to create the Ezo Beer brand. He soon expanded into European brews, and now imports from Germany, Belgium, France and Norway.

Mugishutei remains a Sapporo fixture, while his company supplies craft beers from the United States and Europe to pubs, shops and individuals all the way to Okinawa.

“European beers have a very good reputation in Japan, and drinkers here are open to just about anything,” says Kaufman.

That openness is evidenced by some of the beers that Kaufman describes as favourites with both himself and his customers, including the Oesterstout from the Belgian Scheldebrouwerij brewery, which is piped over oyster shells to provide its unique flavour. The Aqua Vita Porter from Norway’s Haand Bryggeriet is another brew worth seeking out, according to Kaufman. Aged for months in old barrels, it takes on the flavours of the

wood as well as reacting with the oxygen present to create a distinctive taste.

The curiously monikered Fucking Hell from Germany is another of Kaufman’s recommendations. The Waldhaus Brewery, in the Black Forest, claims the pilsner is named after a small Austrian town known as Fucking, while *hell*, which in German means light, as against dark, is used to describe light ale. The name was originally rejected by the Trade Marks and Designs Registration Office of the European Union, but then granted permission to go on the market in 2011.

A fairly recent entrant to the world of craft beer in Japan is Eurasia Trading, led by its young founder Lennart Bollen. It is the sole importer of beers from Haacht, a family-owned Belgian brewery with a history going back more than a century. Bollen, who has been in Japan since high school, was bitten by the beer bug whilst pursuing a career in finance. Since launching the company in April 2010, his infectious enthusiasm for his products has helped him build a rapidly expanding business, establishing strong relationships with specialist bars and shops, as well as major retail chains Aeon and Seijo Ishii.

In contrast to the reputation of this market as heavily regulated and difficult to access, Bollen describes Japan as

Interest in craft beers has risen enough for glassmaker Riedel to release a specially designed IPA (Indian Pale Ale) glass this year in Japan, to add to its range for lager, *weizen* (German wheat beer) and Belgian ales.

“The leaders of the craft beer movement have discovered that the existing glasses – from the beer mug, the pint glass, chalice, flute and so on – are not really suitable for showing craft beers at their very best, says Wolfgang Angyal, president of Riedel Japan. The Austrian wine glass company has begun developing beer glasses that enhance all aspects of a brew, including visual appeal, temperature management, foam retention, aroma, mouth-feel and flavour, continues Angyal, explaining that the shape of the vessel and the composition of the glass will

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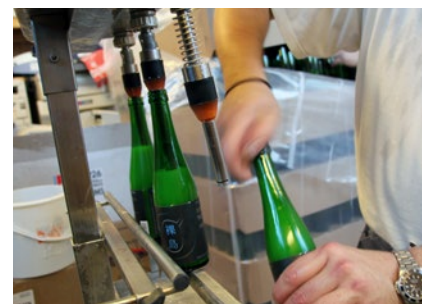
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“ALL CRAFT BREWERS ARE **MAD SCIENTISTS** AT HEART”

David Croll



New Brew Dog brewery in Scotland



Bottling sake at Nøgne Ø



Nøgne Ø-style six packs

a “very import-friendly country, for beer anyway”. He has found the authorities cooperative and willing to advise on any issues that arise.

The company's low overhead allows Bollen to offer imported Belgian brands at approximately the same price as domestic premium beers.

“Younger people in Japan are tending to drink less. I think some of that is because they're tired of the male-targeted marketing,” he says, and suggests advertising should be aimed at young women, whose spending power is increasing.

“Belgian beer has a lot of cute packaging. Brands like our Mystic Cherry, which is not at all macho, appeal to women here,” says Bollen.

Whisk-e is another company discovering the appeal of craft beers among female Japanese customers. As the name suggests, it began life as an importer of Scotch whisky, with CEO David Croll first adding a few beers to

the range about 10 years ago, largely because one of his supplying distilleries also operated a craft brewery. Whisk-e's stable has been growing since, and now contains beers from four Scottish breweries, as well as from England, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway, with new brews being steadily added.

The market has really picked up over the last 18 months, with more hotels and department stores getting interested in European craft beers, according to Croll when interviewed in September. This is in addition to the specialist shops and bars.

“All craft brewers are mad scientists at heart. They're always trying to come up with something different and slightly crazy,” suggests Croll. “And that's very suited to the Japanese market, where there's a constant demand for new products.”

One sterling example represented by Whisk-e is 100% Peated, made from pure Scottish peat-smoked whisky malt,

offering a distinct aroma and flavour of Scotch whisky, from the Norwegian Nøgne Ø brewery.

Kjetil Jikiun, head brewer and founder of Nøgne Ø, is a former airline pilot who got a taste for beers from around the world while travelling on his job. After starting a brewery, he promoted his own brews at destinations to which he flew. Nøgne Ø now exports to 29 markets, including Japan, where Jikiun recently promoted his beers to local bartenders and shops. He also undertook internships at two sake breweries in Japan before having Nøgne Ø become the first company in Europe to produce sake. He has started exporting his sake to Japan.

While his beer is at the high end of the market, Jikiun points out that a brew of outstanding quality need not be prohibitively expensive.

“The most expensive craft beer costs a few times more than the cheapest ones,” he says. “With wine, it can be 10,000 times more.” ☺

Hop News Japan

October 2013

As the man says:

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Nøgne Ø 
Nøgne GPA.

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De Molen 
Vuur & Vlam.

Apricot and mango aromas with orange bitter and fresh-baked croissant flavours. Indian Pale Ale with Dutch charisma. 6.2% 330ml

Mikkeller 
Mikkel's Dream.

A hoppy and fruity American pilsner, produced in Belgium by a Danish phantom brewer. Exclusive to the Japanese market. 4.6% 330ml



Brewfist 
Spaceman IPA.

A West Coast style IPA out of Italy. The nose offers grapefruit and peach, then is dry and very hoppy on the palate. 7% 330ml.

Hop Revolution Vol. 2.

Come and meet some of the Japanese & overseas brewers at the cutting edge of the craft beer revolution!

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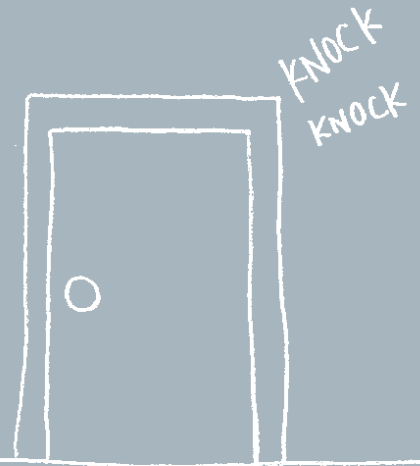
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Selling services



Harsh terrain could yield a bonanza

Foreign services companies have two strikes against them in Japan. First, for being foreign and, second, for trying to sell something intangible in a country that venerates manufacturing. This much was agreed in a recent Delphi Network event on the topic of selling services in Japan.

Despite these facts, foreign services companies just might be looking at a potential bonanza if Abenomics actually works. That is simply because, if Prime Minister Shinzo Abe really wants to drive the economy to grow 3% per year, he will have to rely on services, which make up almost 75% of the economy. Industry, of which manufacturing is a part, makes up the rest. In other words, manufacturing is a relatively small part of the economy, despite its prestige. So Abe absolutely must generate growth in the services sector if he wants to succeed. Still, it will not be easy for foreign services providers.

A person who is brilliant at selling tangible products may turn out to be terrible at selling services, said the CEO of one of the world's biggest IT outsourcing companies.

"Selling a product means you have to know the product extremely well, but selling services is far more complicated. You [also] have to understand the customer's needs," continued the CEO.

That means the services salesperson cannot, unlike many product salespeople, simply talk non-stop about specifications. Rather, he or she must listen to the needs of the client and provide solutions

to problems. Traditionally, in any market, product salespeople are not renowned as good listeners.

The other aspect is trust. Buying a service is risky. Because the delivery of services is so people-driven, quality can vary wildly. The value of the service is very difficult to gauge in advance. Anybody who has tried to hire an IT designer, a teacher, a financial planner or a lawyer will know what I mean. They may be good for some people, but dreadful for you. Sometimes they are just awful because they are paid before they deliver.

The good thing about this is that the few really good solution providers can generate huge margins (though not with every client, since people's needs are so different). Pricing is difficult, and a standard price makes little sense.

In Japan, being foreign typically makes it harder to win trust. Brand power may compensate to a certain extent, but many Western brands are obviously not as well known here as they are in the West.

At the event mentioned above, one consulting firm CEO made a brilliant point by explaining that he tries to pretend his service is a tangible product. At the first meeting with a Japanese client, he is very careful not to present something entirely abstract. He makes sure to proffer something concrete, such as a printed report, to help his client focus on the concept.


Another top executive said he spends a lot of time re-training his workforce

“YOU CAN'T BE TOO SELFISH IF YOU WANT TO SUCCEED IN JAPAN”

to be less passive and more analytical about the client's problems. He also claimed that trying to sell services to Japanese companies is difficult because of the low skill level of management and constant job rotations. He said these factors have prevented many clients from understanding their own problems.

Another tip was to provide Japanese clients with hard-to-access information and analysis, for example about foreign markets and products.

Finally, a veteran lawyer emphasised the importance of giving in order to build a relationship of trust. You can't be too selfish if you want to succeed in Japan.

One thing is for sure: With very few genuinely global banks, consulting firms and universities, Japan desperately needs service know-how. This is an area to watch carefully. Opportunity may soon be knocking on your door. 



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EU-Japan Workshop on the Power Sector Transition

Europa House, 11 September, 2013

Text and photos **JENNIFER ZYLINSKI-SPARGO**

With the energy sectors of both Europe and Japan undergoing transformational change, energy policymakers and industry executives gathered to share insights on the factors driving policy development, technological innovation and market formation.

Hosted by the EU Delegation to Japan, the workshop was organised by the European Commission, Eurelectric (the sector association representing the European electrical power industry) and the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation, in cooperation with Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

The daylong event comprised three sessions, with lively debate on every topic. Session one put the divergences and convergences of Japanese and EU energy policies in perspective. In session two, discussion and argument swirled around the lessons to be learned from European liberalisation of the energy sector. Session three, in the afternoon, tried to come to grips with the regulatory framework needed for an innovative and low-carbon energy system.

Europe's energy transition so far has been driven by early liberalisation of the sector and a political commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95% by 2050. Hans ten Berge, the Eurelectric secretary general, characterised the results of EU energy policy as a "combination of fruits and disasters".

"The huge percentage of renewables in the European energy mix was only imposed by policymakers and has nothing to do with market forces," he said, stating that this means consumers bear an unsustainable burden for the cost of renewable energy.

"If Japan can learn from Europe's mistakes, this will be a good meeting," he added.

Opposing ten Berge's view that subsidising renewable is a mistake was Tomas Kåberger, executive board chairman of the Japan Renewable Energy Foundation, brainchild of Softbank CEO Masayoshi Son.

"A major challenge in many markets is to make sure development is not blocked by incumbents who want to protect their existing investments," he said.

Ten Berge and Kåberger are known for their verbal stoushes, but observers appreciate the frank exchanges of ideas.

"It is interesting to hear opposing views," Frenk Withoos,

vice-president of ABB Japan, told EURObiZ Japan. "Japan needs to look at how power infrastructure and utilities develop elsewhere and learn what works and what does not work."

The power sector is far from straightforward, he added, as it has many stakeholders in a rapidly changing environment plus the necessity of creating facilities that have to last 30-50 years.

Withoos came down between ten Berge and Kåberger on the issue of Japan's feed-in tariffs for photovoltaics.

"Feed-in tariffs are necessary, but [the Japanese government] overdid it. Consumers are paying too much now," he said. "The Japanese photovoltaics makers are very busy, but it is only for a two-year time frame. High feed-in tariffs also mean there is no incentive to be really competitive."

Making a strong case for exchanges of ideas, information and technologies with Japan, in order to secure affordable, safe and reliable energy for the future, was Michael Hager, head of Cabinet for Günther Oettinger, member of the European Commission (EC) responsible for energy.


"The more international we are, the easier it will be," he said. "Europe can only realistically move to a decarbonised energy system if our partners also move in the same direction."

Success will depend, he added, on greater engagement from society as a whole.

Akihiro Sawa, 21st Century Public Policy Institute Executive Senior Fellow and a strong supporter of nuclear energy for the long-term provision of baseload power, said: "People in Japan think they will be able to afford any price for renewables, but that is not realistic".

Renewables will increase in Japan, he added, but development of the sector cannot be left entirely to market dynamics.

Inge Bernaerts, who leads the electricity and gas wholesale unit of the EC Directorate General for Energy, noted a radical change in the relationship between energy suppliers, distributors and consumers.

"We are moving toward a system where the power grid [rather than the generator] is the backbone of the system," she said. "We are looking for companies to introduce game-changing technologies that allow consumers to become 'prosumers', who are more active in the production of electricity." 

Urban green

Big business in leafy walls and rooftops

Text **ALENA ECKELMANN**

Grey is out, green is in! Roof gardens on high-rise buildings, vertical gardens at shopping malls, green parking lots – pockets of nature find their way into the drab landscape of Japan's urban centres.

From 2000 to 2011, nationwide, 330ha of rooftop gardens and another 48ha of vertical gardens were installed, according to a survey by the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. Survey data were gathered from 450 companies that are active in landscaping and construction, as well as in the manufacture of landscaping equipment.

In 2011 alone, at least 25.2ha of rooftop gardens and 8.9ha of vertical gardens were put in place, while in 2000 the comparable figures were just 13.5ha and 0.2ha, respectively. In particular, the demand for vertical greening on walls has been increasing in recent years.

Over 80% of rooftop gardens and green façades are constructed on new buildings, while the remaining percentage is on existing buildings and building extensions. Prefectural greenification hotspots are Tokyo and Osaka, as well as Kanagawa, Saitama, Aichi, Hyogo and Fukuoka.

Toho Leo, established in 1965, is a pioneer and leader in the field. The company provides a full range of indoor and outdoor greening services, including the planning and design of landscaping projects, sale of equipment and technology, construction and maintenance.

Toho Leo now has annual sales of about ¥6.5 billion. Commercial building owners comprise 80% of the clients. Examples of the firm's work are the rooftop gardens at JR East's Lumine department stores in Yokohama, Ikebukuro and Ogikubo.

Toyota Roof Garden, established in 2001 as a joint venture between Toyota Motor and Ohshima Landscape Construction, is a full-service provider of outdoor greening, with annual sales of ¥350 million.

About 20 landscaping projects are completed by Toyota Roof Garden each year on factories, commercial buildings and public facilities. They range in value from ¥1 million to ¥20 million. One of the showcase projects is 528m² of vertical greening at the Kanagawa prefecture Tressa Yokohama mega mall, owned by Toyota Motor.

When it comes to biotopes on buildings and walls, installation is the easy part and maintenance the real challenge.

GREENIFICATION IS BECOMING A **TRENDY HOBBY** FOR CONSUMERS

"Plants and shrubs are alive, and they are growing or withering. It is hard to keep them in good condition after construction, as the system that they are placed in is artificial. Plants and trees need regular pruning, weeding and fertilising, and withered plants must be replaced. Watering, light and atmospheric conditions need to be monitored," says Eriko Fujita, a Toho Leo green planner.

Discarded herbs and flowers are usually dumped even if they are in bloom, but Toho Leo staff give them away to passers-by. They also teach people how to care for plants and conduct many events involving herbs and flowers.

"These events give people pleasure and an impression of our green hospitality service. Also, we learn from them what our customers want," says Fujita.



Greenification is becoming a trendy hobby for consumers, and green walls and arrangements in offices are increasingly popular with businesses, according to Fujita. Pianta & Stanza, Toho Leo's green design brand, caters to such needs.

"In the past, businesses just put rented planters in their offices, but now they ask for green walls that become their own property and for the maintenance of such walls. We have just completed a project for an 18m² green wall in an office in Tokyo," says Fujita. "Generally, people love nature, and they wish for more plants and trees around them in their daily life. It makes them feel better."

Tetsuya Takizawa, section chief in the greening division of Toyota Roof Garden, says: "Vertical greening and the greening of parking lots are popular with clients who care about their enterprise image. Passers-by can actually see and appreciate the green, which is not the case with rooftop gardens."

Japan's environmental law demands that a certain percentage of a building site be covered with greenery for ecological reasons. Green walls and rooftop gardens are counted in the calculation of this percentage.

According to a test conducted by Toyota Roof Garden, buildings with more greenery could be 5°C cooler inside when the temperature outside rises above 30°C, which results in savings of up to 40% in energy costs for cooling.

Beating the best

How high-tech leaders stay ahead of the pack

Text **CHRISTOPHER THOMAS**

Japan is rightly proud of its technical prowess and manufacturing quality. In addition, business circles are famously insular and markets difficult to crack here. It takes something special for a high-tech firm to come from outside Japan and compete successfully. Though never easy, numerous European firms are showing that it can be done. It may take a lot of stamina, superior technology, unique marketing strategies and bold action, but you can beat Japanese competitors at their own game.

Plansee is an Austrian firm whose core competence is in powder metallurgy. Plansee applies high-performance alloys of molybdenum and tungsten in a broad spectrum of industries, including automobile, mechanical engineering, consumer electronics, medical equipment, construction, aerospace and semiconductors. Plansee's highly advanced thin-film technologies are used in the fabrication of semiconductors, flat-panel displays and solar panels – and for many other types of functional coating. In Japan, there is stiff competition and customers are very exacting.

"The biggest challenge for us has been the difference between Japanese and Western customers with regard to their understanding of quality issues," says Plansee Japan president Peter Aldrian. "The Japanese market is definitely one of the most challenging in terms of quality. Of course there are positive aspects to this as well – it makes us better in overall quality."

Plansee began local production for certain products and applications when it began operations in Japan some 25 years ago.

"And, in the beginning, we channeled all our production with the Japanese customer in mind. It was more expensive, but also good training for our people. And in the long run it has made the company much more competitive, both in Japan and in operations worldwide," Aldrian explains.

Plansee is well positioned to take advantage of Japan's recent move towards alternative energy sources, especially photovoltaics. Aldrian also sees potential here for solid oxide

fuel cells, for which Plansee is developing new and improved materials.

"Our competitive edge is in R&D, finding new ideas, production methods and technologies that keep costs down and bring new products to market," he says. "We produce in Japan to be close to the customer, to have direct interaction and greater flexibility, for better service. Since we have similar manufacturing standards at all our sites, it makes sense to have local production here so we can respond quickly to the customer."

“OUR BIGGEST STRENGTH IS
OUR **ENGINEERING PRESENCE**
WITH OUR CUSTOMERS”

Joerg Sandmann, Webasto Roof Systems

German auto-parts maker Webasto has made staying close to customers a driving principle during its 35 years in Japan. That closeness pays off in the long run, especially here, where relationships are such a crucial part of doing business and carmakers are on an aggressive course of global expansion. Webasto is the leading maker of automotive sliding roofs, and its main customers are Japanese. The company's advanced products include roofs with integrated photovoltaic cells that can help charge an electric or hybrid vehicle, and polycarbonate roofs that significantly decrease the vehicle's weight. These innovations have been slow to gain acceptance among Japanese car buyers. Nevertheless, global automakers here are snapping them up for local installation and shipping the finished vehicles to eager buyers overseas.

Webasto got a foot in the door in the mid-1970s, when there were no vehicles with sliding roofs on the Japanese market. The company took the bold step of becoming the

“IN THE BEGINNING,
WE **CHANNELED ALL OUR
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Peter Aldrian, Plansee Japan



CHRISTOPHER THOMAS



CHRISTOPHER THOMAS

“WE ALWAYS **WORK IN NARROW
NICHES**, AND WITHIN THOSE
NICHES WE HAVE SUPERIOR
PRODUCTS”

Gosta Tyrefors, Gadelius Holding

first auto-roof supplier in Japan, and energetic expansion has made it the market leader, producing 700,000 units a year at its Hiroshima plant. There is additional capacity in China, under a strategy of “We follow our customers”.

The strategy has paid off. “Our biggest strength is our engineering presence with our customers,” says Joerg Sandmann, president of Webasto Roof Systems for the Japan and Korea region.

The company recently began production of engine-independent thermo systems for commercial vehicles. The compact heaters warm the cabin of a stationary vehicle while the engine is off, as well as sufficiently warm the engine for fuel-efficient ignition. The innovation has rapidly become popular as an environment-friendly solution to the heating of vehicle cabins, while also improving driver safety and comfort.

Gadelius Holding is a Swedish firm that has been in Japan since the 1890s. “Our only secret is that we always work in narrow niches, and within those niches we have superior products,” says Gosta Tyrefors, president and CEO. “We are a diversified company, so we may seem unfocused. But really, we’re a multi-focused company, with extreme focus in fields where we have high market share and uniqueness of product.”

Often, Gadelius has to educate customers so that they understand what the new technology can do.

“So they desire this uniqueness,” Tyrefors says. “The wonderful thing about Japan – and this was true in the early days, too – is that if you come with a new product, they really want to hear about it. They’re always interested in new solutions.”


Gadelius maintains a nice mix of product lines handled by eight divisions. While the company can show resilience should one sector take a dip, the leading division is medical equipment.

“When we go head-to-head with a Japanese competitor in the same product, we always have a very difficult time – and that is where many foreign companies go wrong,” Tyrefors notes. “We’re not a threat to the big Japanese companies. We’re not taking away jobs; we’re expanding the market. Small and mid-size companies may feel threatened; but we represent companies selling all over the world. Our Japanese competitors only work in Japan with their own customers.”

In the medical field, the company has carved out a position in simulators for use with robotic surgery systems. Gadelius started with laproscopic surgery simulators for practicing minimally invasive keyhole surgery. Before these simulators were introduced into the Japan marketplace, doctors had to practice on live animals.

“When I first heard about this, I thought there would be no way Japanese doctors could accept the simulators. But we brought in the system from Sweden, and brought in Nobel Prize winners as part of the campaign,” says Tyrefors. “The doctors were impressed by the precision and the sensory feedback [of the simulators], and sales took off.”

The firm has since launched simulators for other kinds of surgery, endoscopy, ultrasound imaging and more.

“Our customers are getting used to meeting our people and finding out about something totally unique, innovative and useful,” adds Tyrefors. 



Finland

Trade relations between Japan and Finland have a long tradition, with Japanese silk and pottery already known in Finland by the early 1920s and some Finnish industrial products like pulp finding their way to Japan in the 1930s. Finland joined the EU in 1995, and the Finnish Chamber of Commerce in Japan was established in 1999 with the purpose of promoting trade and economic exchange between Japan and Finland.

Major cities: Helsinki (capital), Tampere, Turku, Oulu, and Jyväskylä

Population: 5,266,114 (July 2013 est.). Urban population: 85% (2010). 38.3% 25-54 years.

Area: 338,145 sq. km. Coastline: 1,250km. More than 60,000 lakes.

Climate: Cold temperate, potentially subarctic, but comparatively mild.

Natural resources: Timber, iron ore, copper, lead, zinc, nickel, gold, silver and limestone.



Asamalab

www.asamalab.com

Phone/Fax: 0267-62-7000

Asamalab is a full-service electronics design and prototyping company. With a unique blend of expertise, Asamalab delivers full-custom solutions to the high-technology industry and academia for their demonstration, characterisation, instrumentation and testing needs. Typically, our customer is a university or industry research laboratory, individual inventor or start-up company.



Foresight Marketing K.K.

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Foresight Marketing is a tourism marketing specialist in the Japanese and South Korean markets. They enjoy a wide network among the travel trade/press, and their expertise is also far-reaching – from online marketing such as executing SNS promotion to offline that includes coordinating workshops, seminars, and more. Foresight Marketing is especially experienced in European destinations. Their deep knowledge of the relevant markets continues to help clients succeed in a very competitive environment. Foresight Marketing welcomes enquiries.



Mondi Tokyo

www.mondigroup.com

Mondi is an international packaging and paper group, with production operations across 30 countries and over 25,700 employees. Mondi is listed on the London Stock Exchange and Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Key operations and interests are in central Europe, Russia and South Africa.

Mondi is a leading global supplier of silicone-coated and speciality release liners designed for the pressure-sensitive adhesives industry. They offer high-quality, competitive solutions – and a reliable supply chain for applications, including graphic arts, medical, hygiene, fibre composites, tapes and labels.



Wärtsilä

www.wartsila.com/en_JP/Home

Wärtsilä is a global leader in complete lifecycle power solutions for the marine and energy markets with over 18,900 employees at 170 locations in 70 countries. Wärtsilä is listed on the NASDAQ OMX Helsinki, Finland. Wärtsilä Japan Ltd. is part of the Wärtsilä group and employs about 200 people in Tokyo, Kobe and Toyama.

Wärtsilä delivers seals and bearings for marine applications in Toyama, and handles sales for marine and power plants, along with after-sales services and licensing, in Tokyo and Kobe.

Marko Saarelainen

President, Finnish Chamber of Commerce in Japan

www.fccj.or.jp

Text and photo **CHRISTOPHER THOMAS**

For the Finnish Chamber of Commerce in Japan (FCCJ) president, Marko Saarelainen, chamber membership is all about participation in the broader business community.

"Really, if we want to raise awareness of issues important to Finland, the most important thing is to be active in the EBC and to participate in the various committees," Saarelainen says. "Finland is a small country, and we are a small chamber, so it's very difficult for us to have much effect, or to boost awareness in Japan. But working within the EBC, we can have much greater influence."

The traditional trade in forestry products such as paper, timber and log homes until recently also included a healthy IT and telecom sector, thanks to the influence of telecommunications and IT powerhouse Nokia. But Nokia became a victim of fierce global smartphone wars, and its handset division was recently bought by Microsoft. So, Finland is looking for other ways to balance trade, and the picture has been improving.

"Recently there's been a lot of interest from the Japanese side," says Saarelainen. "For instance, JAL has just begun a daily direct route from Narita to Helsinki, and Finnair has daily flights from three Japanese airports – Narita, Haneda and Kansai International – so that now there are 1,000 Japanese landing in Helsinki every day. But only a small portion of them stay over; most catch flights to the rest of Europe. We're looking for ways to get them to stop over for a few days."

The number of Japanese visitors has been getting more solid lately, Saarelainen notes, especially with a spate of enquiries since renowned Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami wrote an

article on his experiences in a small town in central Finland for JAL's in-flight magazine.

The FCCJ's customary way of conducting chamber business has focused on luncheon meetings, often including speakers such as Japanese government ministers or prominent business leaders. Recent guest speakers include Yoshiyuki Kasai, chairman of JR Tokai (Central Japan Railway); and Norio Sasaki, president and CEO of Toshiba.

"These meetings are quite popular," Saarelainen notes. "If someone famous comes to Japan, we often make a joint event with other chambers."

Another important item on the FCCJ's agenda is the twice-yearly Business Confidence Survey of EBC members, arranged by executive director Clas Bystedt in the spring and autumn.

The focus during the summer has been on other kinds of social events, such as a yakatabune cruise aboard a traditional Japanese party boat around Tokyo Bay, which attracted 94 participants. There has also been a tour of the Nissan Oppama assembly plant in Kanagawa prefecture and a tour of the Japanese Diet. The highlight each year is still the Scandinavian Christmas Ball, which attracts up to 500 people.

Membership at the FCCJ has experienced the usual amount of turnover as people come and go, but management has been steady, with Bystedt as executive director since the chamber's founding more than 10 years ago and Saarelainen now in his fourth year as president.

The FCCJ welcomes the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo and has begun studying ways to participate with Team



If we want to raise awareness of issues important to Finland, the **most important thing** is to be active in the EBC

Finland. Saarelainen himself was deeply involved as a Finnish Olympic Committee attaché at the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, and he plans to get the chamber involved in the 2020 events as well.

The EU-Japan free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations are another issue demanding the FCCJ's attention.

"We are active in the EBC deliberations, the annual white paper and committees. Being active there and supporting the white paper is a way we can really make a difference," Saarelainen says. "The FTA negotiations have just started and are proceeding well, and that is very positive. With the new Abe administration, things have started going really smoothly."



Absent and busy

Mobile workers improve production, save money

Text CATHERINE MAKINO

They are called telecommuters. They set up their laptops and other mobile devices at cafés such as Starbucks, in serviced offices or at home.

Advances in technology, such as video- and tele-conferencing, smartphones and tablets, are cutting the ties between people and offices – and letting them work almost anywhere, any time. An increasing number of companies have done away with assigned desks, encouraging their employees to telecommute.

In fact, a Reuters poll finds that approximately one in five workers around the globe telecommutes. The International Data Corporation (IDC) puts the number of mobile workers worldwide at an even higher 30%, or 1.3 billion people. The IDC figure for Japan is 21.2% of the total workforce, or 13.9 million mobile workers – and growing.

Financial services giant State Street, with 29,000 employees in 26 countries managing \$2.1 trillion in assets, found that 67% of its workers wanted a more flexible work schedule.

“We have a global strategy for ‘flex’ with a local approach,”

says Michael Scannell, senior vice-president of global human resources at State Street. “We work with local management teams and human resources departments in each region, implementing the best programme for that area.”

Scannell describes five standard types of flexible working. There is flextime (altering the daily start/finish time); compressed schedules; flex place (routinely working away from assigned office, working from home or a remote location); reduced hours; and job shares.

“Through employee engagement surveys, we’ve learned clearly from our employees that this is very important to them,” he says. Reduced travel, teleconferences and virtual meetings with videoconferences for staff meetings save money. State Street found that telecommuting led to better business results and higher employee satisfaction.

It is much the same for Boehringer Ingelheim, a German pharmaceuticals company with 140 affiliates and more than 46,000 employees worldwide.

“On any given day, approximately 20% of the workforce [of

3,500] at Ridgefield, Connecticut [US] works remotely,” says Tetsuya Owari, a spokesman for the company in Japan. “The balance between work and private life is not only important to our employees, but is also a key driver of our overall success.”

For entrepreneurs and smaller businesses, especially start-ups, the serviced offices may be the best solution, says John Morris, owner and president of Strategic Consulting Japan.

“In Japan, stand-alone commercial real estate requires a 10-month deposit, which is not viable for small businesses, as cash flow can be difficult, especially in the first few years,” Morris says. “Additionally, commercial real estate requires a guarantor. That’s another hurdle, unless you have a wealthy local family to back you.”

When it comes to employees operating away from the office, some managers have real concerns that such remote workers may not be as productive.

“The traditional management mentality was that unless you are working at your desk, you are not working at all, and that workers need to be monitored and physically watched,” says Laura Schmelling, business development manager at Compass Office in Tokyo. “But studies in worker productivity prove that people work best when they can vary their models, have more freedom of mobility, and opportunities to collaborate and meet face to face.”

Compass offers a large co-working lounge, called the Compass Habitat, which includes lounge seats, desk spaces, and relaxation zones for client meetings. There is a pantry stocked with fresh coffee, drinks and snacks. The lounge even has a gym and massage chairs. Compass has seen its client list grow as a direct result of this facility.

“To remain competitive, serviced offices also invest heavily in the latest IT and phone technology, so the immediate benefit from this infrastructure is huge,” says Schmelling.

According to Yukiko Harada of Regus: “Many business workers may encounter stress due to the lack of an appropriate working environment, especially at home or in cafés.” The multinational serviced office provider operates 1,411 serviced business centres, including 30 in Japan. Harada also notes that European workers are more accustomed to operating in a telecommuting environment than are their Japanese counterparts.

The Japanese government, under its IT strategy, is keen to increase the number of serviced offices, believing that telecommuting will appeal to a greater number of workers who are raising children. Employees working from home for at least one day a week accounted for 12.5% of Japan’s workforce in 2012. The government’s goal is to double it to 25%.

Telecommuting increases flexibility, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. Only 9.7% of companies in Japan offered telecommuting at the end of 2011, when about 66% of women aged 25-44 had jobs. The government wants to see 73% of that group employed. It also wants to have at least 55% of working women keeping their jobs after their first child.

The ministry is aware that cheap and reliable broadband throughout Japan, as well as increased IT awareness among the population, are needed to spur this growth.

The government plans to collaborate with industry to

establish a telecommuting business model by 2016, and to set up guidelines that will help nearly 20% of registered disabled individuals to work by telecommuting.

Lifeness, specialising in telework recruiting, last year partnered with major Japanese human resources firm Intelligence to launch a new service for the disabled.

“We renovate offices and homes to allow people with disabilities to telecommute from these locations,” says Ryouichi Kisaka, a director at Lifeness. “This will reduce the cost and time required for them to work in company offices.”

For working mothers, home telecommuting solves the problem of caring for sick children and eliminates long rush hour commutes.

Telecommuting can also have a downside.

“Sometimes we work at home for months without loneliness becoming an issue,” wrote entrepreneur Brooke Simmons. “Then all of a sudden, one day, you’ve realised that you might be going crackers, or that you have been living in your pajamas, or you miss that co-worker drama. At least there was someone to talk to.”


“THE TRADITIONAL
MANAGEMENT MENTALITY WAS
THAT UNLESS YOU ARE WORKING
AT YOUR DESK, YOU ARE NOT
WORKING AT ALL”
Laura Schmelling, Compass Office

Telecommuting might be more productive because you don’t waste time chitchatting with co-workers, but gossip, brainstorming and information sharing serves the purpose of building relationships. Informal after-hours gatherings can also be important.

Employers have to consider security as well. If the electronic links between the employee and the company are not secure, a hacker could pick up valuable corporate information. VPNs (virtual private networks) go some way towards mitigating this threat. Yet, workers carelessly discarding confidential documents at home also pose a risk. Strict rules must be drawn up to prevent such breaches.

If working at home doesn’t appeal, there’s always the local Starbucks, one of the first coffee shops to make available free WiFi. Some regard as risky the open WiFi networks of such establishments, but many coffee shops provide decent workspaces with power sockets, space to spread papers and good lighting. There are even Starbucks coffee shops with conference rooms.

For large enterprises, especially, there will always be a place for the traditional office, and some tasks will require people to be physically in the same workspace.

Nevertheless, for many business activities, it is becoming increasingly attractive to work at home or in serviced offices – where a company can set up shop almost overnight and almost entirely eliminate the need for traditional office space. 

Safe and sound

Volvo Car Japan

Text **DAVID C HULME** Photo **BENJAMIN PARKS**

When Alan Desselss was appointed president and CEO of Volvo Cars Japan, in January 2010, the first order of business was to reverse a “culture of decline”.

“From 1996 to 2009, sales went down from a peak of about 24,000 to 6,700,” he says. “We lost a lot of good people. It was a case of rebuilding confidence.”

Fortunately, the effort coincided with the launch of the Volvo S60 luxury sports sedan and V60 premium five-door sportswagon. These models were popular among the company’s core target market, apparently for their “Scandinavian design and sophisticated simplicity”, according to officials.

“They were ideal for the Japanese market. That gave us the first boost,” says Desselss. Sales for 2011 were up 58.0% over the previous year and climbed another 17.7% in 2012, to 13,878 units. “This year, we launched the V40, again ideal for Japan, and that gave us the next boost. We think sales will grow another 35% this year.” The V40 hatchback is described as an entry-level purchase for the core market. Volvo “fans” go for the V70 mid-size estate car, XC70 all-wheel drive wagon and XC90 luxury SUV.

Japanese car buyers, Desselss says, like the new Volvos for their ergonomic interiors, the use of non-allergenic materials, environment-friendliness and built-in safety features. Safety is a recurring theme for the head of Volvo Car Japan – the name change, to the singular, was effected this year mainly for the sake of worldwide consistency – as he describes the world-first City Safety collision avoidance system of the

S60 sedan and V60 sportswagon.

“Previous models could automatically brake to completely avoid a collision at speeds up to 30 kph. That has now been upgraded to 50 kph,” he says. Moreover, 2013 models have a cyclist detection system that uses a grille-mounted radar and a camera in front of the interior rear view mirror to constantly assess potential collisions.

With the V40 hatchback, Desselss continues, the Swedish carmaker launched the world’s first pedestrian airbag. This is deployed from between the bonnet and windshield of the car, protecting the head of anyone so unfortunate as to be hit at speed.

Volvo’s presence in Japan goes back to 1974, when Teijin Volvo was established. Volvo Japan was established in 1986.

Formerly a Volvo distributor in Australia, South African Desselss joined Volvo Car Australia in 2001, as sales director, and became managing director of Volvo Car Australia and New Zealand in late 2005. He had guided the brand to a 60% sales increase in the territory before taking up his current post. Japan, he says, is refreshingly free of a particular prejudice that Volvo faced in Australia.

“Every market has its own idiosyncrasies. In Australia we had to counter a perception of Volvo as a boxy car belonging to older people who are not very good drivers. We are committed to safety. People see safety as boring and we had to change that perception,” he says. “Here in Japan, people recognise the contribution that Volvo is making to safety on the roads. My job is to make sure that we capitalise on that difference.”

A change of ownership and a cash infusion in 2010 have given Volvo

more freedom to invest in R&D, and make significant strides in design and performance.

“We want people to understand that Volvo now makes cars that are highly attractive, very safe and closely tuned to the environment,” says Desselss. “This is an exciting time. We can really make headway. We have products – especially the S60, V60, XC60 [crossover SUV] and now the V40 – that are certainly equal to, or better than, the German brands.


“We still have a bit of an image deficit versus the German brands, in terms of performance, but we are getting there. We had to add that to our leadership in safety and environmental friendliness.”

Such is Volvo’s confidence in terms of performance that Volvo Car Australia plans to enter the V8 Supercars Championship in 2014.

“We would never have such an activity in Japan,” notes Desselss.

The focus in Japan is on customer satisfaction, which means organising and equipping dealers so they can be more customer-friendly.

With regular launches of new and better cars, the prospects for further sales growth in Japan are excellent, says Desselss. It does not take him long to return to the topic of safety, noting that the modern three-point seat belt was developed at Volvo and that the car maker continues to put safety first.

“Our vision is that, by 2020, nobody will be killed or seriously injured in a new Volvo. That is a huge statement, but we believe absolutely that we are the pioneers in safety technology,” he says, adding that many standard safety features of modern cars were invented by Volvo. “There is a little bit of Volvo in every single motor car today.” 



“VOLVO NOW MAKES CARS
THAT ARE **HIGHLY ATTRACTIVE**,
VERY SAFE AND CLOSELY TUNED
TO THE ENVIRONMENT”

Anytime Shopping


In the most advanced technological society, e-commerce and online shopping prevail

Text **DAVID UMEDA**

In terms of satisfying the expats and Japanese consumers, taste is everything at TMG International K.K.'s The Meat Guy. "We strive to produce and sell products that aren't just tasty, but will make you say, 'Holy Cow, that's good!'" says Jason P Morgan, president. "If we succeed in making you evoke both religion and cattle in the same mouthful, then we consider that a win." They have the strongest line of sausages, steaks, turkeys, and anything else meat-related that you can think of, he adds. "The only place with a greater variety of meat on

display is the zoo."

Website features and functions are essential to effectively reach the highly "mobile" consumer here. The strong and interesting strategic marketing point of yoox.com is that YOOX Group – global Internet retailing partner for leading "fashion & design" brands – can operate the business worldwide. Wherever you go, whenever it is, yoox.com is there to let you enjoy a unique shopping experience. You are able to access the fresh show-window 24/7, and the product will be delivered from Italy every day.

The discerning Japanese urban-ite uses any "free" time to search for consumer-related information on their smartphones and iPads, while on the train or strolling down the street. "Royal Tirrenian offers such an extensive range of genuine food/wine products imported from Italy that we want to educate as much as inform," explains Erica Borile, president. "Detailed locality descriptions on the origins of our goods and foods, and introductions to our local growers and suppliers are at the heart of our website." 

YOOX GROUP

YOOX Group

www.yooxgroup.com

YOOX Group is the global Internet retailing partner for leading "fashion & design" brands. It is amongst the market leaders with its multi-brand online stores yoox.com, thecorner.com and shoecscribe.com, plus numerous mono-brand online stores, from armani.com to zegna.com, all powered by YOOX Group. The joint venture with Kering is dedicated to managing the mono-brand online stores of several Kering luxury brands. Their offices and operations in Europe, the United States, Japan, China and Hong Kong deliver to more than 100 countries.

The Meat Guy

TMG International K.K.

TMG International K.K.

info@themeatguy.jp

www.TheMeatGuy.jp

TMG International K.K. – The Meat Guy commenced operations in 1997. Since 2004, they have been producing their own sausages, now thousands every week. Main meats also include beef from Australia and America, New Zealand meat, chicken, pork, lamb, turkey, veal, kangaroo, and game and exotic meats. There is also online cheese, sweets and cakes, as well as frozen food, dry groceries, spices and sauces. Their specialities include organic and natural, Halal, vegetarian, sets/gifts, party foods, hardware/grills, pet deli and more.

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As an affiliated company of Kioi Corporation, Royal Tirrenian Co., Ltd. imports and sells foods, alcoholic beverages and goods from Italy, as well as handling the planning and marketing research and development. Online consumers can fill their shopping carts with standard fare (pasta, tomato sauce, olive oil, balsamic vinegar, raw ham, salami, cheeses, porcini, chocolates, honey, jam, wines and coffee), as well as gourmet foods and organic products, jewellery and Venetian glass. There is also an extensive listing of exclusive original products.

Get involved

Some 400 of the over 2,500 affiliated local European companies and individuals participate directly in one or more of the EBC's 30 industry committees covering a wide variety of economic sectors.

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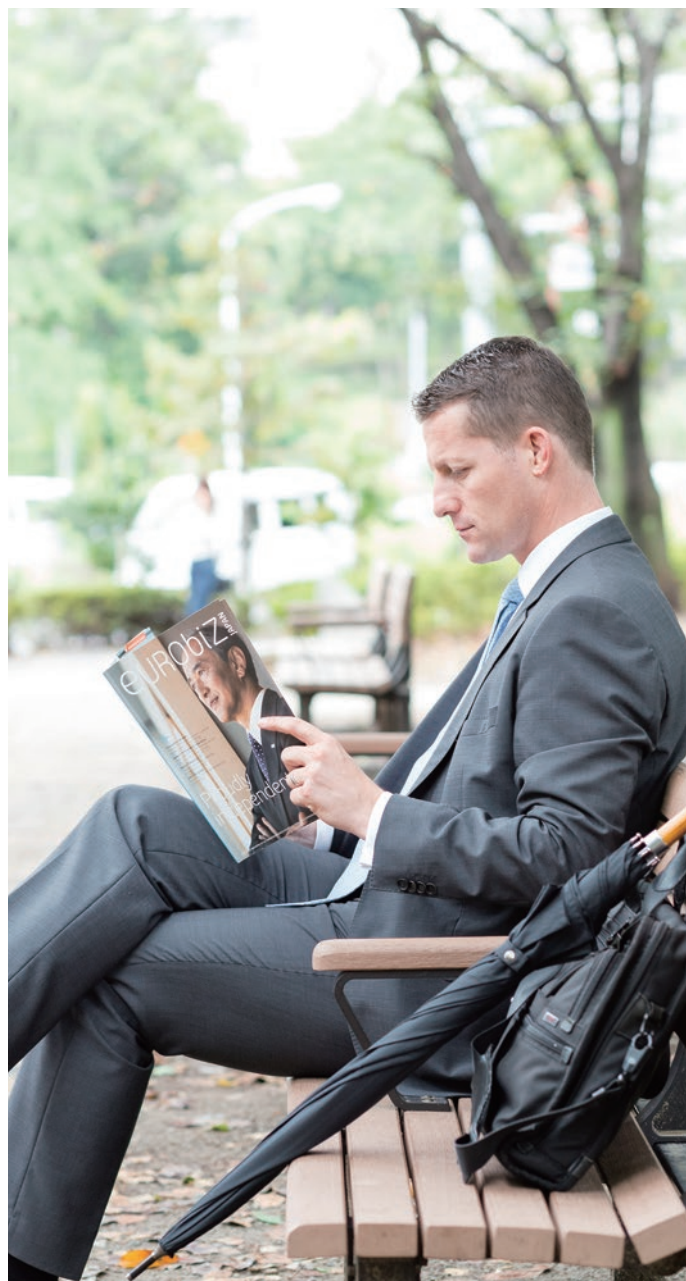
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Trevor Webster

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reads
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Urban mining

Japan searches for precious metals above ground

Text **DAVID C HULME**

“THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT **MUST BE VERY CAREFUL** NOT TO FOCUS TOO MUCH ON THE TECHNOLOGY SIDE”

Luc Gellens, Umicore Japan

Why bury gold in landfill? Or lithium, for that matter? Or molybdenum, tungsten, cobalt and any number of metals that are increasingly important as well as expensive? That is what is happening now in Japan, but change is on the way.

Already, high proportions of the steel and copper used to make vehicles and large household appliances are recovered through efficient recycling systems. A new national law covering small appliances such as mobile phones and personal computers took effect 1 April. Implementation has begun, slowly, and progress varies by municipality. In Tokyo, the wards of Minato, Setagaya and Nerima are leading the way.

“We have to help the wards collect scrap as a marketable commodity rather than merely as waste,” says Motoaki Sakakibara of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) Environment Bureau. The city will give its 23 wards subsidies, advice and matching services involving scrap dealers, recyclers and refiners, says Sakakibara.

Japan’s Ministry of Environment estimates that 284,000 tonnes of recyclable metal, worth around ¥90 billion, is contained in compact appliances discarded every year. The ministry lists 45 compact electronic items from which municipalities could profitably recover metals such as gold, silver, copper, zinc and palladium.

The TMG has chosen to focus on mobile phones, digital cameras, portable music players, game players, video cameras, vehicle navigation systems, electronic diaries, calculators and AC adaptors. It will take time to establish profitable systems, cautions Kazuhiro Yano, a colleague of Sakakibara.

“You can’t just jump straight to a large system. With [such] a small amount of money, the municipalities

can [only] be encouraged to make a start and grow the systems,” says Yano. “They can sell their waste now, but so far they are all in the red.”

According to Luc Gellens, president of Umicore Japan, “The question with recycling of consumer goods is always: ‘Who pays and how to get access to the end-of-life devices?’ In several countries in Europe, when you buy a phone, the cost of recycling is already in the price, and in several cases the industry is responsible for organising the recovery.”

Umicore, based in Hoboken, Belgium, is a global materials technology group with a focus on the recycling of precious metals.

“The most essential investment is in setting up a good collection system and incentivising consumers to return end-of-life devices,” says Gellens, adding that recycling technology is already highly advanced in Japan. “The Japanese government must be very careful not to focus too much on the technology side of it. If there are 20 advanced recyclers competing in the market, but an inefficient collection system, nobody makes any money and the recycling scheme falls apart.”

The beautiful thing about metals is that they can be used over and over again without losing any of their physical properties. Increasing proportions of most metals come from recycling, rather than out of the ground – a trend that will continue as the cost of mining goes up and the amount of metal in circulation above ground increases. Miners dig up, crush and process a tonne of rock for the sake of 5g of gold, for example. Umicore, which has roots in the mining and smelting industries, gets 250g of gold from a single tonne of printed circuit boards (PCBs).

Umicore’s business model is to complete a perpetual loop of supplying materials for manufacturing, recovering those materials from manufactured goods and resupplying manufacturers.

Umicore is also a global leader in catalysts (for auto exhausts), energy

materials (batteries and photovoltaics), and performance materials. It buys and ships to its 116ha facility in Hoboken materials that are just too complex and difficult for anyone in Japan to reprocess.

“We are the last step,” says Gellens.

From industrial by-products – some of them, such as drosses, mattes and anode slimes, pretty disgusting – and from consumer and industrial recyclable products, Umicore recovers precious metals (silver, gold, platinum, palladium, rhodium, iridium, ruthenium), special metals (indium, selenium, tellurium), secondary metals (antimony, tin, bismuth) and base metals (lead, copper, nickel).

“We put them back in the cycle for a better life,” states the company’s website.

Gellens lauds Japan’s legislation on recycling as “probably one of the most advanced in the world”. Strict laws are designed to avoid waste being simply shifted from one country to another, and Umicore can only ship from Japan materials that it is able to process profitably. Without controls, Gellens explains, end-of-life materials may end up somewhere in China or India, for example, “where someone boils off the plastic in their backyard, recovering a small amount of metal-rich sludge for a very low price, but at tremendous cost to their own health and the environment”.

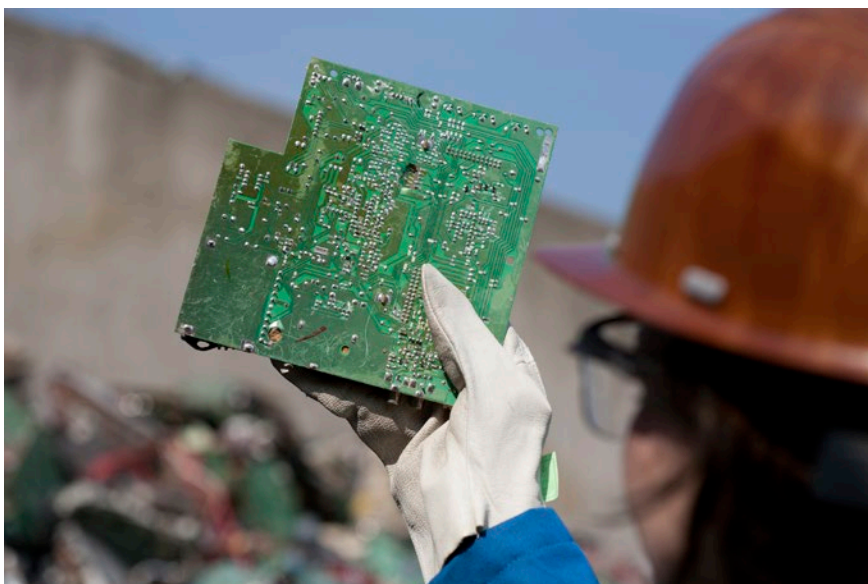
Umicore is extremely serious about sustainability, and in 2013 is ranked as the world’s most sustainable corporation by Corporate Knights, the Canadian magazine for clean capitalism. In addition, the Hoboken plant was recently recognised as a conflict-free smelter for gold – meaning that it recovers the metal in a manner that does not fund conflicts or fuel the abuse of human rights.

Precious metals recovered in Belgium are sold on the global market or used in various downstream businesses.

Umicore also does “toll manufacturing”, ➔



Residue containing precious metals is treated at Umicore's Precious Metals Operations in Hoboken, Belgium



UMICORE

returning to manufacturers specific metals recovered from their scrap. Once Umicore has squeezed out every possible atom of marketable material, the remainder is used as bulk material in construction and road building.

“WE HAVE TO HELP THE WARDS COLLECT SCRAP AS A **MARKETABLE COMMODITY** RATHER THAN MERELY AS WASTE”

Motoaki Sakakibara,
Tokyo Metropolitan Government

The problem is not in processing, but in collection.

“In Tokyo, the collectors and recyclers, large and small, are the key players,” says Yano of the TMG. “The scrap dealers are really important as middlemen, collecting from wards and selling to refiners.”

The most important metals at this stage are copper and gold.

“These are the ones that make the businesses viable,” says Yano. “We will be able to focus more on other high-priced metals – such as cobalt, tungsten and molybdenum – if it becomes easier to recover them.”

Shinya Baba, president of the Japan Tungsten & Molybdenum Industries Association, says the first priority for increasing the recycling of rare metals

in Japan is to increase public awareness of their real value. So far, he adds, about 30% of the tungsten used by manufacturers in Japan comes from recycling, and the proportion is gradually increasing. He also wants Japan's recycling industry to become more competitive so that scrap does not have to be sent overseas.

“Continuous effort to decrease the cost of recycling rare metals will help to increase recycling in Japan,” he says.

Small batteries are a category in need of far greater effort. Umicore collects rechargeable lithium-ion and nickel-metal hydride batteries, along with volumes of waste from battery manufacturers in Japan, shipping all of it either to a Umicore plant in China or to Hoboken.

According to law, makers of batteries and devices are responsible for recovering batteries.

“So there are collection points at stores, but they are not conspicuous enough,” says Yano of the TMG. “The only obligation is to establish a collection system, but what they actually do is really weak.”

All in all, an estimated 95% of the batteries produced for domestic consumption in Japan ends up in a landfill.

“Not good,” Yano concedes.

Lanthanum, used in battery electrodes, belongs to a group of 17 elements called rare earths, which are vital to a host of modern technologies. Average prices quadrupled from 2005 to 2011. Shortages fuelled tensions


between advanced economies and

China, which produces 97% of the global supply and has not been above manipulating supplies for political as well as economic advantage.

Accordingly, the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry has drawn up a set of “comprehensive rare earth measures”, including a plan to turn Japan into a “major global centre for rare earth recycling”.

Rare earths are used in high-performance alloys, lasers and nuclear medicine. Yttrium, named after the village of Ytterby, Sweden, where the first rare earth ore was discovered, is used in making energy-efficient light bulbs, sparkplugs and gas mantles, among other items. Cerium is used, for example, as a chemical oxidising agent, for yellow colours in glass and ceramics, and as a catalyst for self-cleaning ovens. Uses for gadolinium include highly refractive glass, lasers, X-ray tubes, and as a contrast agent for magnetic resonance imaging.

A number of European companies stand to benefit from higher recycling volume in Japan. Norway-based Tomra Sorting Solutions manufactures automated used material sorters, under the Titech brand, that are becoming increasingly popular among Japanese recycling companies. German chemicals giant BASF has a 50/50 joint venture in Japan with Sumitomo Metal Mining that manufactures and sells various catalysts, in addition to recovering and refining precious metals.

In the end, though, everybody benefits from more and better recycling. 



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検索 

Telecommunications Equipment //

Deep in discussion

Text **GEOFF BOTTING**

While foreign companies have often struggled to make a dent in some Japanese industries, especially ones the authorities deem strategic, the telecom equipment industry has proved to be relatively open to outsiders.

Worth around ¥3.5 trillion annually, the industry has been working on harmonising its standards and practices with the aim of becoming more competitive globally. Government regulators have, in recent years, done a laudable job of adapting to the ongoing rush of technological innovations, such as the 2010 rollout of long-term evolution (LTE), the standard for high-speed data for mobile phones and other terminals.

“Compared to other industries, it’s a fairly easy situation for us, thanks to discussions that have taken place on international standards,” says Yoshio Honda, chairman of the EBC Telecommunications Equipment Committee.

Telecommunications Equipment Key advocacy issues

- **Standards and certification** – The EU and Japan should accept each other’s technical standards and certifications, thereby eliminating duplicate testing of telecom equipment.
- **SVC** – This should be expanded to include all wireless equipment.
- **Spectrum harmonisation** – The MIC should allocate frequencies based on global harmonisation, thus doing away with having to manufacture products especially for the Japanese market.

The 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP), a joint effort by telecom-related organisations, whose original goal was to set standards for the 3G mobile phone system, is a case in point. The project’s discussions, launched in 1998, have been truly global in nature, involving collaboration not just between the Japanese and the

Europeans and Americans, but with the South Koreans and Chinese as well.

Honda, who is general manager of standardisation and regulation, technology and research at Ericsson Japan, was among those involved in 3GPP. He participates in about half a dozen such telecom industry groups working on harmonisation. The sustained effort has borne fruit, he says.

“With Softbank [a Japanese carrier], for example, there are three vendors on the radio side: Ericsson, NSN [Nokia Solutions and Networks] and NEC, all at equal levels of participation. So that would make a two-thirds share [for the foreign suppliers],” Honda points out.

“In the old days, the Japanese domestic market was huge, and it was growing relative to the global market. But now it’s small and not growing, while the global market is huge. So, they really need to think about the global market,” Honda explains. “I think the government probably realises that the industry needs to have some global links.”

One area where the Japanese government is working on global



harmonisation is the allocation of frequency bands. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) has completed a report on the technical requirements for International Mobile Telecommunications-Advanced (IMT-Advanced) systems, especially the 3400-3600 MHz band. Based on precedent, Honda is confident of success.

The EBC committee may be very small, with NSN the only member besides Ericsson Japan, but it has been strongly engaged in its role as an official participant in the MIC policy committees. The committee has regular quarterly meetings, always held jointly with the EBC Telecommunications Carriers Committee due to overlapping issues, so five or six people usually attend, according to Honda.

The committee submitted two of its issues in the scoping process for the proposed EU-Japan free trade agreement (FTA) now being negotiated. One issue concerns the translation into English of official Japanese documents on wireless equipment and related laws. In the past, the EBC group has

urged the government to provide these translations in a timely fashion. This would make it easier for smaller newcomers from overseas to enter the Japanese market, since the cost of doing their own translations quickly can be prohibitive.

The other issue is certification. In the EBC 2012 white paper, the committee urges “true mutual acceptance in which telecommunications equipment products certified for either the European or Japanese market would automatically be approved in the other”.

As it stands, the two sides have somewhat different technical standards for electrical and electronic equipment, leading to the need for double testing. In addition, Japan introduced its suppliers’ Self Verification of Conformity (SVC) in 2004, which is similar to the Suppliers’ Declaration of Conformity (SDoC) used in Europe.


The committee welcomed the SVC rollout. Yet it has since been disappointed that the SVC’s scope hasn’t been fully widened to include wireless equipment, apart from some accommodation made this year to cover

“THE GOVERNMENT
PROBABLY REALISES THAT
THE INDUSTRY NEEDS TO
HAVE SOME GLOBAL
LINKS”

Yoshio Honda

WiFi functions in mobile devices.

The committee hopes that a successful conclusion of the FTA will lead to the full acceptance by Japan of SDoc-certified equipment, and hence the elimination of duplicate testing.

“In general, the government wants everything to be very safe,” says Honda, speculating on why the MIC has dragged its feet on the SVC issue. “They think that if they have strong regulation, then the situation is safe. They are afraid of the presence of bad vendors. I can understand that, but if the regulation is too strong, then they might block innovation and state-of-the-art technology.” 



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Besides points of sale in Japan's best department stores and interior shops, the three brands of ZWIESEL KRISTALLGLAS are available at the company's flagship store in Daikanyama. Customers can get hands on with the stemware and serving utensils – experiencing firsthand a range of products with a singular style and unique craftsmanship that can fit your preferred lifestyle.

ZWIESEL KRISTALLGLAS has renewed its Japanese/English website (www.zwiesel-kristallglas.jp/english/) that includes the three brands, corporate gift ideas, and handy shop locator.

The newly launched Online Shop (www.zwiesel-shop.com) earmarked for the Japanese consumer includes also timely seasonal gift ideas.

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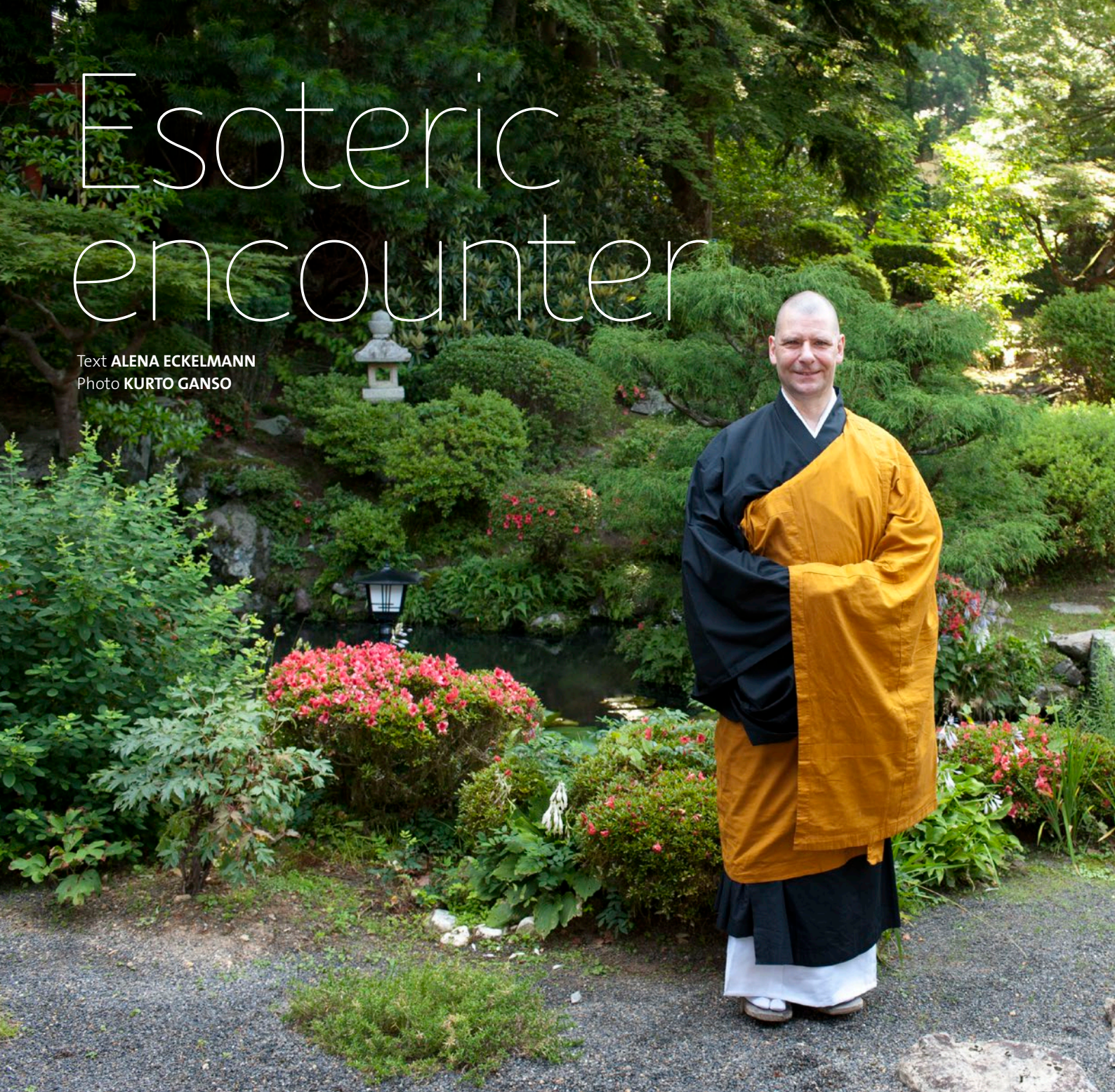
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Esoteric encounter

Text **ALENA ECKELMANN**
Photo **KURTO GANSO**



Would you associate logical thinking with religion? Matthias Schmidt has no problem with chanting Buddhist sutras for morning and evening service, and programming computer software during the day.

Originally from the Nuremberg area in Germany, Schmidt has been living in Koyasan, a small town, at a Buddhist monastery in the mountains of the Kii peninsula, south of Osaka, for several


years. In Koyasan, there are no fewer than 120 temples, a university and the headquarters of the Shingon branch of mantra Buddhism.

Schmidt studied Protestant theology at the University of Erlangen, but went into business instead of graduating. He then practiced Zen meditation and yoga in Germany, and might never have come to Japan if not for his Croatian wife Sanja.

As a student of Japanese, Chinese and English in Germany, Sanja took part in a university exchange

programme that brought her to Utsunomiya University in Tokyo. Schmidt visited her there, and together they explored Japan until they came across a large Shingon temple in Hakata, on the southern island of Kyushu.

"The monks were chanting the Heart Sutra, accompanied by the beat of a taiko drum, which was so impressive that we started asking questions of the priest. He recommended visiting Koyasan, and we decided on the spot to go there," Schmidt recalls. "In Koyasan,



“IT WAS THE
ENERGY CONNECTION,
OR A CALLING, THAT
BROUGHT ME HERE, I
REALLY DIDN'T HAVE A
CHOICE”

we were sent to Muryokoin temple, where the head priest speaks English and Chinese, and a Swiss monk also practices. We were welcomed warmly and started participating in the daily routine and the morning ceremonies.”

Soon Sanja decided to give up her exchange with Utsunomiya University. She enrolled at Koya University for an MA, followed by a PhD in Mikkyo (esoteric Japanese Buddhism).

“I too decided to leave everything in Germany. I sold my house and gave

up my well-paid freelance programming job to join her in Koyasan,” says Schmidt.

This was back in 2001. He has been there since, and is now an ordained priest in the Shingon tradition, with the monastic name of Shumitsu (Pearl of Honesty).

“*En ga aru* – it was the energy connection, or a calling, that brought me here, I really didn’t have a choice,” he muses.

Shingon is a form of tantric Buddhism. Practitioners use meditation and rituals that involve mantras, mudras and mandalas, as well as rituals to cultivate their innate Buddha-nature, or spiritual potential. The ultimate goal is enlightenment in this life.

“The Christian belief system did not work out for me, and I was on a search for spirituality. When I studied theology, I had many questions: ‘If God made me and this world, how did this God come into being?’ ‘What was before Creation?’ ‘What will be after the Last Judgment?’,” Schmidt says.

“There were no satisfying answers. Most unsatisfying was the idea of God being an external entity, communicating with people through an ancient text and influencing their lives,” he adds.


At Muryokoin, after a few months of initial training, Schmidt received *tokodo* (ordination). Then he did the *Shido Kegyo*, a 100-day retreat, during which he learned the basic methods of meditation and ritual of the Shingon

school. More training over the course of several years led to his *Dempo Kanjo* (initiation) as a Shingon priest.

Schmidt is not fluent in Japanese, and reads the Buddhist texts in English. “Unless you want to study the script in the original, you don’t need to know Japanese or Chinese; but if you do, it helps a lot, of course,” he says, adding that he enjoys the meditation practices of chanting and the *goma* fire ceremony.

“Chanting the long sutras is not difficult for me. After 10 years I know them nearly by heart,” he says. “Practice is ‘just do’. As time goes by, and the more you practice, you realise what an impact it has on your mind. This is what Shingon – and Zen, for that matter – is all about: making you aware of your mind and finding out about yourself. All the rest is just drapery,” he states.

“When people run into conflict in their lives, they start searching for spiritual truth. This you cannot find in the outside world, but only inside yourself. It requires continuous practice. Never give up searching; with discipline and persistence you will find this truth for you,” he adds.

Schmidt’s wife has returned to Croatia, where she has helped to open a Buddhist institute at which she is now teaching Shingon Buddhism. They hope their future will be in Japan, however. They would like to move to Miyakojima, an island south of Okinawa, to run a Shingon temple and teach meditation yoga. 



Upcoming meetings

→ Animal Health

28 November, Thursday, 15:00, off-site

→ Asset Management

22 November, Friday, 12:00 noon, EBC

→ Automotive Components

10 October, Thursday, 16:00, EBC

→ Energy

12 December, Thursday, 14:00, EBC

→ Food

4 December, Wednesday, 09:00, EBC

→ Human Resources

6 November, Wednesday, 19:00, EBC

→ Legal Services

21 November, Thursday, 18:30, off-site

→ Logistics and Freight

18 November, Monday, 17:00, EBC

→ Materials

11 November, Monday, 17:30, EBC

→ Medical Equipment

24 October, Thursday, 14:00, off-site

→ Railways

21 October, Monday, 09:00, EBC

→ Tax

17 December, Tuesday, 12:00 noon, EBC

→ Telecommunications Carriers and Equipment

12 December, Thursday, 10:00, EBC

Committee meeting dates are subject to change. Please contact the EBC secretariat for confirmation.

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Does HR Have an Image Problem?

The acclaimed chief executive officer of General Electric during the 1980s and 1990s remarked that human resources (HR) should have as high a profile as finance within an organisation. He used the analogy of a sporting organisation where one of its most valued functions is player management and recruiting the right talent. If any company or sports team is to succeed, its people are an important factor.

Morunda K.K. recently surveyed Japan's pharmaceutical industry and asked how HR is perceived. We divided our survey into two groups: those that work in HR and those handling other functions (commercial, development and finance). Historically, Japan is a very sales-orientated market (as opposed to others that are more marketing-focused), so it was not surprising to find that over 75% of respondents gave sales a ranking of number one or two out of five. HR received only 5% of the top choices for being of most importance.

The human resource community ranked its functions as equally important as sales/marketing, with clinical development holding around 47% of the top choices. The finance function, however, only received 7% among the top two choices.

Why is HR seen as a lesser function? The non-HR respondents overwhelmingly perceive HR as administrative, with over 80% indicating the primary function to be processing information – as opposed to determining strategy.

It appears that HR in Japan's pharmaceutical industry has not been able to define – or at least communicate – its value proposition. Citing Wikipedia, a value proposition is a promise of value to be delivered and a belief from the customer that value will be experienced. A value proposition can apply to an entire organisation – or parts thereof – or customer accounts, or products or services. A value proposition is based on a review and analysis of the benefits, costs and value that an organisation can deliver to its customers, prospective customers, and other constituent groups within and outside the organisation. A value proposition is also a positioning of value, where value equals benefits minus costs (which includes economic risk).

When evaluating the value that HR brings to an organisation over the long term, the impact can be substantial. The right talent can ensure – and execute smoothly – a new drug



application or successful product launch. The right HR strategy can retain what the company plans and initiates for leadership succession, thereby impacting sales and reducing cost.

At least one pharma company we have observed acknowledges the strong value proposition of HR by rewarding its recruiting director financially equal to its sales and marketing directors. The company also offered an incentive trip that was previously only available to its top salespeople. This director saved the company money by shortening the time to fill recruited positions and impacting the top line by recruiting the right candidates. Also, the percentage of rejected offers was 20% less than the competition's average. The HR director was able to source and land top talent who have been instrumental in growing sales and securing new drug applications.

Howard Schultz, chairman, president and CEO of Starbucks, explains: "The discipline I believe so strongly in is HR, and it's the last discipline that gets funded. Marketing, manufacturing – all these things are important. But more often than not, the head of HR does not have a seat at the table. Big mistake. You are imprinting decisions, values and memories onto an organization. In a sense, you're building a house, and you can't add stories onto a house until you have built the kind of foundation that will support them."

Changing the mind-set of employees to acknowledge the important role HR plays requires the right message through internal communication and recognition. Communicating success stories and quantifying the performance of HR to the success of the company can help counter some misperceptions.

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Text **DAVID UMEDA**

Japanese companies are on the globalisation fast track, while negotiations on free trade agreements are accelerating. The demand for executive-level management know-how and leadership requires HR recruitment services that are well positioned inside Japan. They also must possess a regional and global market reach across industry sectors.

In this context, employees need to know what traits are most attractive. "Given the rise in globalisation, overseas experience and English ability remain valuable assets for career advancement," explains David Swan, managing director of Robert Walters Japan and Korea. "More importantly, it is essential that professionals possess a well-developed knowledge of their business area and are able to perform their job well."

Overseas experience can be especially pivotal in advancing a career in Japan. "Professionals who work outside of Japan typically embrace new challenges and exhibit a sense of flexibility and agility that is hard to find among those who have only worked solely within the Japan business environment," points out Paul Dupuis, managing director, Professionals, at Randstad K.K. "These global business 'challengers' bring a unique, hybrid perspective on their company's strategy and tactics in Japan."

According to Morunda K.K., working overseas certainly can indicate a global mindset and bicultural capability if a candidate has worked on global projects – particularly if Japan is a part of their scope. "However, too many years abroad can lead to some companies

thinking that the candidate has lost touch with the Japan market," cautions Philip Carrigan, representative director. "Morunda does search the globe for the best talent for the Japanese and Singapore markets."

Progressing into more senior roles in Japan could involve managers gaining more responsibilities that span regions and involve working with multi-discipline teams, says Swan. "Interpersonal skills take on added importance, such as an ability to persuade your team and stakeholders, or display enough humility to accept outside opinions."

There is no doubt that employee awareness of what's available can make a difference. "Stepping out of Japan for a time inevitably leads to a better understanding of the challenges and, more importantly, the opportunities in Japan," says Dupuis.

Other considerations

Intangibles, such as integrity and motivation, also need to be convincingly measured. "Companies evaluating professionals for intangible traits need to look beyond the CV. One approach is to ask applicants open-ended questions about their experiences: 'Tell me about a time you have successfully managed a team to achieve a goal'," explains Swan of Robert Walters. "Afterwards, employers can ask more targeted questions to explore the motivations behind the actions."


These so-called competency-based questions are particularly useful for assessing intangible qualities, Swan

adds, "because discovering how professionals handled past situations can be indicative of how they may approach future challenges."

Morunda believes a good headhunter should always be well informed and plugged into the market so that some of these intangibles can be picked up through conversations with key contacts in the industry. "How motivated a candidate is and their integrity, for example, are intangibles that we can often pick up through confidential enquiries within the industry," explains Michael Huberts, director. "When working on specific roles, we work hard to conduct an in-depth analysis of our candidates, and this includes a variety of metrics."

The various pending free trade agreements – such as the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement, Trans-Pacific Partnership, and ASEAN+3 (Japan, South Korea and China) – will have an impact on the recruitment industry.

"An overlooked important outcome is the drastic increased need to hire talent at the mid- to upper level who can drive this new borderless, dynamic global business opportunity," emphasises Dupuis of Randstad.

He points out that Japanese companies hiring foreign talent are still in the minority. Many who don't hire such personnel cite lack of ability to integrate the foreign talent and/or lack of awareness of Japanese business customs and language ability, according to Dupuis. "These are superficial and overlook the most crucial factor – How can this person add value to the team?" 



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Consistency in Employer Branding

— *perception being reality*

As the Japanese economy continues to improve, it has become a candidate-driven market. Many HR managers are distressed about the increasing decline in the job offers at their companies. Clearly, candidates have more choices than in the past – receiving a better job title, more money and perks. However, the story is not as simple as it may seem.

Recently, we had a case where a high-potential bilingual candidate turned down an extremely appealing offer from a Global Fortune 500 company. Obviously, the HR manager was puzzled and quite disappointed. She asked me to dig deeper to find out the reason.

I met with the candidate, who mentioned that the role was not attractive and the job title not what he wanted. After more discussion, he confessed about the real reason. Initially, he was excited about the job opportunity, career path and training possibility after the first HR interview, reflecting the best-in-class employee career development and a working atmosphere described in a global policy. He walked away from the first interview motivated and eager to proceed to the next step. However, things changed after the second and third interviews.

Much of what he was told in the first interview by the HR manager contradicted the subsequent messages from the Japanese line manager and the senior expat executive. Also, the mission explained by the former was different from the latter. The candidate initially was especially interested in the company's core values and strong sense of social responsibility. In the end, however, the inconsistency in the

messages made him reject the offer.

This case is a valuable lesson on the importance of consistency throughout the hiring process in order to attract the best candidates – the “A-players”. Great candidates come to interviews with an open-mind and are keen to win the role. In return, a company needs to make a strong effort to “win” the candidate.

In a modern world of information fuelled by social media, companies more than ever need to maintain consistent messages. Candidates are savvy and in-touch with the latest news and opinions about the prospective employer. In effect, the candidate can be your best – or worst – marketing channel.

I've met countless numbers of candidates emerging from the interview process disappointed and demotivated. They became detractors of the company and were not hesitant to talk about their experiences. On the other hand, companies with consistent messages throughout the interview process, regardless of whether the candidate is hired or not, will create an army of promoters. Like any public brand, an employer brand is fragile, so we need to protect it at any cost.

One effective way to strengthen your brand is to work with a trusted recruiting partner. This is someone who understands your company at a deep level, has met your key people across the organisation, and can speak with confidence about what makes the company attractive. It's not easy to open your door to a third party, but it is crucial that your recruitment partner has a clear idea of your strengths and weaknesses. A-players appreciate honesty, so be prepared to share



not only the good stuff, but also the challenges in your company.

Finally, I would like to stress the importance of being objective towards your employer branding. Every year, Randstad conducts an employer branding survey globally. In Japan we have supported 170 companies to have them learn more about how they are perceived. The results often surprise their HR managers – when there's a gap between the perception held by the general public and the reality. A good company often can be perceived as a bad one, but a mediocre company rarely is seen as a good one. The perception has become the reality. A company, therefore, needs to make an extra effort to ensure that perception matches reality.

As a leading global HR services provider, Randstad is committed to understanding your world of work to provide quality services with an objective approach.

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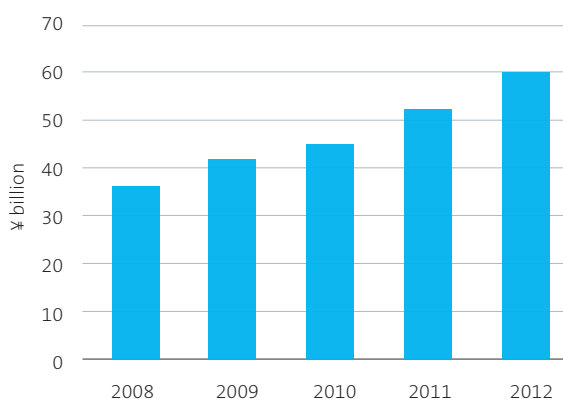


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Belle International buys into Japan

Baroque Japan consolidated sales




With brands like moussy and SLY, Baroque Japan is not only a well-respected fashion design firm, it is also one of the most shareholder-oriented fashion retailers in Japan. CLSA, an investment fund linked to France's Crédit Agricole and previously Baroque Japan's largest shareholder, recently sold its stake to CDH Investments and Chinese footwear retailer Belle International, both of Hong Kong. CDH took a 23.00% stake in Baroque Japan, while Belle International paid almost \$94 million for a 31.96% stake.

For Belle International, Baroque is the key to a longstanding ambition to expand beyond footwear into apparel and accessories while continuing to exploit the Japanese shoe market. Belle International owns mid-range brands like Staccato, Joy & Peace and Millie's, in addition to distributing foreign brands such as Nike, Clarks, Merrell, adidas, Puma and BCBG. It is already a huge company, with a 20 to 25% share of the market for women's shoes in China. The number of its stores is said to have more than tripled since

2008, to 18,000, and annual sales have grown to about 33 billion yuan (¥530 billion).

Baroque is a good buy even for just its potential in the Japanese market, let alone in the rest of Asia. It is one of a small cohort of fashion retailers that grew from nothing at the start of the new millennium to dominate the trade in young women's fashion in city centres. Formerly known as Fakedelic, the company was acquired by CLSA, which put the business under professional management. Since then it has added new brands to reach a wider catchment area, creating a fashion retail group with 350 stores and sales of ¥59.8 billion in fiscal 2012. Its key brands also include Rodeo Crowns, Shelter, Black and Rienda.

The new deal suggests serious potential for Baroque, given Belle's reach, supply chain network and logistics – with more than 100 distribution centres across China – and access to capital through CDH and other investors. Belle already has footwear stores in 80% of China's shopping centres, making it easy work to propose Baroque stores. Baroque plans to open 100 outlets a year in China, building to several thousand in the medium term. 



ROY LARKE

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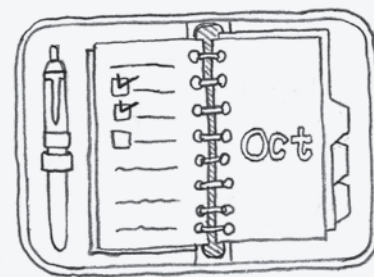
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Upcoming events



► Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Japan

www.blccj.or.jp

BLCCJ/ICCJ/SCCIJ Joint Networking Event in Kansai

17 October, Thursday, 18:30-21:00

Venue: Swissôtel Nankai Osaka, Namba

Fee: ¥5,500 (members), ¥6,500 (non-members)

Contact: info@blccj.or.jp OR info@sccij.jp

► British Chamber of Commerce in Japan

www.bccjapan.com

2013 British Business Awards

1 November, Friday, 18:30-22:30

Venue: Mandarin Oriental Tokyo, 3F, Grand Ballroom

Fee: ¥25,000 (members), ¥28,000 (non-members)

Contact: info@bccjapan.com

► Finnish Chamber of Commerce in Japan

www.fcc.or.jp

Stora Enso Cup Sweden-Finland Golf Challenge

22 November, Friday, 09:00-17:30

Venue: Taiheiyō Club Gotemba West, Shizuoka

Fee: ¥17,500

Contact: fccj@gol.com

► German Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan

www.japan.ahk.de/en/

German Wine Festival 2013

22-23 October, Tuesday-Wednesday, 18:30-21:30 (Tokyo)

1 November, Friday, 18:30-21:00 (Osaka)

Venue: Happon-en, Nait Room, Shirokanedai (Tokyo). River Suite Osaka, Temmabashi station (Osaka).

Fee: ¥6,500 for each day

Contact: events@dihkj.or.jp

► Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan

www.iccj.or.jp

Italian food fair: "ICCJ@ACCIGusto"

26-27 November, Tuesday-Wednesday, 10:00-17:00

Venue: Metropolitan Industrial Trade Center, Hamamatsucho

Contact: iccj@iccj.or.jp

► Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in Japan

www.nccj.jp

Briefing and Drinks – A brief guide to Japanese rule-making procedure

17 October, Thursday, 18:00-21:00

Speaker: Takeo Nishitani, chairman, Weber Shandwick

Venue: Randstad K.K., New Otani Garden Court, Akasaka-mitsuke

Fee: ¥4,000 (members), ¥5,000 (non-members)

Contact: nccj@nccj.jp

OCTOBER

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► Norwegian Chamber of Commerce in Japan

www.nccj.or.jp

NCCJ 10th Anniversary

16 October, Wednesday, 19:00-21:00 (doors open 18:30)

Venue: Restaurant Aquavit, Gaienmae

Fee: ¥8,000

Contact: michal.berg@nccj.or.jp

► European Institute of Japanese Studies

www.hhs.se/eijs/

Academy Seminar

"Will Abenomics Restore Japan's Growth?"

21 October, Monday, 18:30-21:00

Speaker: Prof Takeo Hoshi, Stanford University

Venue: Alfred Nobel Auditorium, Embassy of Sweden, Roppongi

Fee: ¥3,000 (pay at the door), free for students

Contact: eijsjp@gmail.com

Compiled by **DAVID UMEDA**



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The Chef's Table at Azabujuban

www.chefstable.jp

Frenk Withoos

Eye on the ball

Text **DAVID C HULME**

Photo **BENJAMIN PARKS**

“ I HAD **NO INTEREST IN SCHOOL** AND DID NO HOMEWORK. I ONLY WANTED TO PLAY SOCCER ”



When young Dutch process engineer Frenk Withoos was asked by his employer, Alpha Laval,

to spend six weeks on a project in Singapore, he asked his wife of six months whether this was a good idea.

"She said it will be a good experience, so I should go for it. The six weeks just flew by," Withoos recalls. "Then they told me this was phase one. Could I do another two months?" His reluctance was met with an offer to bring his wife to Singapore for a holiday, which was accepted. Two months later, his boss proposed to Withoos that his stay in Singapore be extended to six months.

"I said, 'Hey! Come on! I can't sell that to my wife,'" he recalls with a boyish laugh. The next day the young couple received an invitation to dine at the luxury home of Alpha Laval's Singapore CEO. As they relaxed on the verandah, overlooking extensive gardens and a swimming pool, they mulled a new idea: How about both of you stay in Singapore for three years?

"We were pretty quickly convinced," says Withoos. "It was tough, though, because it was a big change for my wife." It was also a sudden acceleration in the career of a 27-year-old who had taken longer than most to finish high school.

"I had no interest in school and did no homework. I only wanted to play soccer," recalls the tall Utrecht native. Towards the end of high school, however, as the football training regime intensified, he confronted his prospects realistically and talked things over with his parents.

"It takes a lot of luck, as well as skill, to become a pro. Also, I had met my future wife," he explains. "So, I decided to go to university, with less soccer."

Having given little thought to an academic path, Withoos chose an institution offering a broad range of operational technology studies.

"There were many different areas to choose from: mechanical, electrical, automation – and a lot of hands-on activity. It was a good mixture of theory and practice," he says, adding that there was also a "very scary" teacher who created the kind of pressure he knew he would encounter in real-life situations

as an engineer. The four-year course culminated in a series of attachments at companies and a final year report.

Withoos found himself programming a centrifuge used in a flight simulator for training NATO fighter pilots, and successfully applied for a position at Alpha Laval Automation, the maker of the equipment. As a process engineer, his expertise with the centrifuge control system was now applied in the food industry.

"I was thrown in the deep end," he says. "If I was sent to a milk processing plant factory to fix something, they would insist on getting it done quickly. The milk keeps coming, so as the hours went by they would insist even more urgently."

Withoos married in 1993, two years after joining Alpha Laval, and the couple were soon in Singapore, where first a daughter and then a son were born. They returned to the Netherlands after the prescribed three years, and Withoos worked for ABB Netherlands, as the Swiss ABB had meanwhile acquired the Swedish Alpha Laval. Returning to the homeland, and a far larger, more structured organization, was a tough transition.

"It feels like moving back into your parents' house again," Withoos remarks. In the smaller Singapore operation, his responsibilities had broadened well beyond engineering to customer relations and even making sales presentations. Accordingly, it was not an extreme change when, in 1997, he was appointed ABB Netherlands sales manager for the Benelux region.

It was four years later that he was asked to move back to Singapore to start the ABB utilities business there. He extended his stay several times, and the family became very settled. During this second stint in Singapore, he says, his "best soccer memory of all time" originated.

"My son played in a junior team and turned out to be a very good goalkeeper. When he was about nine, his team played its archrival to a nil-all draw," he relates. "My wife was extremely nervous, because so much rests on the goalkeeper, but he was doing great. The penalty shootout also ended up as a draw, so my son had to take the final shot. By this time, the other matches had ended

i Do you like natto?

Title: Vice President, ABB Japan

Time in Japan: "Four years"

Career highlight: "When I retire"

Career regret: "I should have been a soccer player"

Favourite saying: "Every disadvantage contains an advantage"

Favourite book: "I like *The Economist* for its weekly update"

Cannot live without: "Coffee in the morning"

Lesson learned in Japan: "Don't stand on the right side of the escalator"

Secret of success in business: "Never stop trying"

Do you like natto?: "Absolutely not"

and players from all teams had gathered around. Everyone was watching, except my wife."

Like most goalkeepers, young Withoos was not known as a reliable striker of the ball.


"In practice sessions, he could miss by a lot," says the proud father. "But this time he struck it hard and high into the corner for the win. That's my greatest soccer moment."

In 2009, a position in Tokyo was offered, and now Withoos is vice-president of ABB Japan, in charge of the local process automation division. He also serves as chair of the EBC Energy Committee.

"I never imagined that I would be in Japan," he says.

Before the decision to leave Singapore, the children, by then 12 and 14, were consulted and taken to visit Yokohama and Yokohama International School.

"It was their choice," says Withoos. "They liked the school and the look of the neighbourhood. We have never regretted this move."

He still loves to play soccer every weekend in Yokohama, where he and his family live. At this writing, however, he is recovering, and recovering well, from a knee injury sustained about six months ago. Rehabilitation has involved running in the gym, reminding him of the half-marathons he used to run in Singapore. The first one was very difficult, he remembers, adding that he told a colleague at the time: "I decided to do the half-marathon and I will, even if I have to do it on my knees." 



Marine harvest

Photos and text **TONY MCNICOL**

Much of Japan's finest wakame seaweed comes from Naruto, on Shikoku's northwest coast. The boats leave port in the pitch dark and return as the first rays of dawn strike the quayside. First the long reels of seaweed are unwound, then the glistening green stalks and leaves are cut from the ropes. When boiled in huge vats, the seaweed turns a rich brown, as if having soaked up the golden rays of the Shikoku dawn. ©



Osamu Wada

Hulic Hotel Management

The Gate Hotel Kaminarimon, in Asakusa, is right in the heart of old Tokyo. Within a few steps of iconic Sensoji Temple and its Kaminarimon (Thunder Gate), the district attracts millions of tourists, and some use the Gate Hotel as a landmark in its own right to get their bearings.

Osamu Wada was appointed president of Hulic Hotel Management, the hotel's operator, in February. "It is the Gate Hotel's mission to contribute further to local revitalisation," says Wada. "Our guests enjoy the best of Tokyo, from historic Edo to the most modern, plus excellent shopping nearby."



Photo **BENJAMIN PARKS**



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