THE JAPANESE-AMERICAN HANDSHAKE:THE INTERNET DIMENSION

John Tanik

Kazuhiro Abe
University of Alabama at Birmingham
Electrical and Computer Engineering Department
Birmingham, Alabama

As the world begins the 21st century, Japan and the U.S. are positioning for continuous economic success and technological prowess as new Internet technologies, IT advances, broadband developments, large-scale communications infrastructure investments, mobile telecommunications, language technologies, and electronic commerce expansion occurs with government support from both countries. Corporations on both sides of the Pacific will soon be able to penetrate markets once thought culturally and geographically impregnable, utilizing the latest language facilitators, purchasing platforms, and online business strategies. The Internet is freeing office-bound workers in both countries from the drudgery of daily commutes to and from work with evolving and practical new telework arrangements. Undoubtedly, the U.S. and Japan are leading the world into the Internet Age, pushing the frontiers of cyberspace into uncharted territory. Unexpected and new business opportunities abound for those enterprising Japanese and U.S. corporations that intelligently take advantage of the Internet and its treasures.

1. Introduction

The United States and Japan have managed to develop a very important and interdependent economic relationship in the new global economy of the 21st century. Commanding the world's second largest economy, Japan has become America's largest overseas trading partner. According to the *Country Commercial Guide Japan, FY 2000* prepared by the U.S. State Department in 1999, Japan currently enjoys a robust economy larger than that of Germany and France combined. In fact, representing three-quarters of the entire Asian economy, Japan's economy is estimated to be 9 times the size of China [1]. Fueling this phenomenal economic success is Japan's technological development that may be attributed to having an enormous R&D infrastructure numbering 650,000 researchers, making Japan the country with the second largest R&D work force in the world [2]. Opportunities for joint collaboration between

businesses from both countries exist, especially as the rapid development of the Internet transcends traditional barriers and boundaries. Currently 11 percent of Japanese homes and 37 percent of U.S. homes have Internet access, as the numbers of people connecting in cyberspace are rising [3]. Geography, distance, or even culture is no longer an insurmountable obstacle in the new global economy.

With the explosion of the Internet, a whole new window to the world has opened to the Japanese and American people, as American businesses are scrambling to penetrate the Japanese markets with unprecedented opportunities through their newfound electronic portal. Already, U.S. exports to Japan alone exceed exports to China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore combined, and business volume can only increase with easy access of consumers to foreign products, services, and advertising from both sides of the Pacific.

It is not surprising that the U.S. maintains the *American Chamber of Commerce in Japan* (ACCJ) as the largest overseas *AmCham* in the world [1]. Since English is the second most widespread second-language in the country, the trends towards westernization and deregulation of business in Japan are being accelerated with the rapid diffusion of Internet access, information technology (IT), mobile telecommunications, and electronic commerce (EC). The Internet and its related technology are expected to have a tremendous impact on the future of business between Japan and the U.S in years to come.

2. The Internet in Japan and U.S

The number of Internet users in Japan steadily increased 28 percent to over 18 million by February of 2000, comprising 10 percent of total online usage in the world [2,3]. Additionally, Japan is in the forefront of pushing its ambitious initiatives for the development of advanced Internet technologies For instance, Japan is now in the process of developing a "next-generation" Internet expected to be in operation by 2001 that is more secure and reliable with speeds 1000 times faster than the current one. Furthermore, plans now exist for a network with a capacity that is more than 30,000 times larger by the end of 2010. Another goal to be achieved in the next decade is the one-terabit optical communication over a 10,000-kilometer distance that is expected to be completed by the end of 2005. Flat-rate access charges and the development of electronic signatures and authentication systems are becoming more commonly accepted electronic procedures that will further streamline business operations. The use of the Internet to promote home-based business ventures is stimulating entrepreneurial activity while electronically untethering traditional office-based workers into teleworking virtual team environments. In fact, the number of people working from outside main work areas is expected to increase in Japan to 2.5 million by the end of 2001 [4].

In the U.S., the development of the Next Generation Internet (NGI) and Internet2 is spawning new technologies and techniques that will boost current Internet capability which could revolutionize mainstream business functions between the two countries in the near future. Over 90 million Americans are online today as total online usage is rising fast, based on IBM's estimates that the online population of the world will have reached 1 billion by 2006 [5]. Opportunities to collaborate with American and Japanese business colleagues based anywhere in the world are becoming more pervasive as the Internet is bringing down age-old language barriers with new translation software and reasonably priced, automated language and advanced voice processing aids. These advanced Internet initiatives and new communication technologies are poised to create a rich new environment for conducting all facets of business functions. The development of broadband technology, experimentation with high-performance communications technologies, and the mutual acceptance of electronic authentication techniques will significantly effect the widespread acceptance and use of tools such as videoconferencing for closing business deals across the globe, eliminating the need for expensive business travel arrangements and unnecessary jet lag. To further reduce the need for travel, it is estimated that Internet technology will enable 10% of the U.S.

population to simply telecommute to work in the early 21st century, cutting down on fuel costs and time spent in traffic jams every day [6]. This kind of transformation can have significant social and business implications, as new possibilities are created for overseas companies. Some multi-national organizations may be capable of readily integrating these liberated mobile workers into their own domestic workforce, as cultural and language barriers gradually disappear.

3. Japanese Information Technology Market and Emerging Digital Landscape

Japan is the world's second largest market for information technology equipment and services. The forecast for growth of this sector by 2010 is estimated to become USD 1.23 trillion [1]. The push for a more advanced telecommunications infrastructure includes the Japanese government's goal to connect all Japanese businesses, government offices, schools, and homes with fiber optics by 2010 through the "Fiber to the Home" initiative. Current investments in telecommunications infrastructure is USD 33 billion annually and is expected to reach a cumulative USD 500 billion by 2007 [1]. The exponential growth of market demand for networking, personal computers, Internet applications, wireless communications, and satellite communications is anticipated to continue well into the century. In communications, digital broadcasting satellite services in Japan are expected to begin by the end of 2000. Additionally, full fiber-optic transmission, wide-broadband, and the capacity for a wide range of services are projected for independent cable television broadcasting by the end of 2005. Some analysts predict that full digitalization of cable television in Japan will have been achieved by the end of 2010. These kind of large-scale investments in the IT infrastructure of Japan will pave the way for new business opportunities in the U.S. IT sector, which is already proving to be the driving force behind the unparalleled success of the U.S. economy at the turn of the century.

4. The Merging of Mobile Telecommunications and Electronic Commerce in Japan

Japan is cultivating its IT establishment and promoting electronic commerce in different ways. One goal the country is now pursuing is an ultra high-speed multimedia mobile communication system, over 15 times faster than current systems that is to be completed by the end of 2002. Another major improvement is expected to be made in the area of satellite mobile communication technology by achieving transmission speeds of more than 800 times the current speed by the end of 2005 - at least experimentally. Today, over 50 million Japanese citizens use mobile phones and the number of Internet enabled mobile users has reached over 4 million people [3]. Some analysts believe that Internet-enabled mobile phones are the fastest-growing consumer technology in Japan's history. Electronic commerce from a mobile platform is becoming just as important as standard PC-based electronic commerce applications in the Japanese market. In fact, the micropayment charge method is making cellular telephone access to online business products and services appear to be overtaking the PC as an e-commerce platform of choice for Japanese consumers. This can be attributed to not only new payment schemes via phone but also due to the many hours spent during public transit that creates the need for convenient access to Internet content on trains through lightweight and handy cellular technology. In total, Japanese consumers spent roughly 6% of the 33.6 billion spent online in 1999 by all countries, but U.S. consumers still dominated online spending at 80% of market share last year [7]. However, IDC estimates that U.S. consumers will make up just 35 percent of the world's online consumers by 2003, as Japanese online presence is expected to rise significantly in the next few years [7]. It is expected that mobile communications will significantly boost Japanese consumer demand for electronic commerce applications through any number of hand-held device platforms in the near future.

5. Language Technologies still Need the Human Touch

The web has made possible fast, easy, and cheap communications between parties separated by continents and oceans, as it rapidly is spearheading the development of digital technology with such manifestations as the Internet phone , which will begin to play a significant role in the future of global communications infrastructure. Increased interactions will mean proficiency in a common business, social, and technology language, especially English, will become critical to success. The volume of correspondence will rise in the future, as the globalization forces continue to bring together the world under one multicultural umbrella – the Internet. Due to the profusion of electronic commerce through millions of mobile and stationary online portals, business opportunities now exist for domestic businessmen to begin servicing international clients and customers. Already, businessmen from both countries are being put in positions where they will need all sorts of peripheral language support, and the WWW is becoming populated with outstanding companies that are ready to offer the language support today and into the future.

One avenue of language help on the Internet is through automated machine translation technology. Currently there is a burgeoning corporate translation software market serving companies to the tune of 30 billion dollars [8]. Despite the advent of the Internet and other advances, the language translation market is still undergoing its fair share of growing pains, especially as it realizes how significant the role of the human element is in natural language processing [9,10,11]. In Tokyo, Japan, the United Nations University is working on decentralizing machine translations on the Web, enabling users with a specialized Web browser add-on to automatically translate into one of the 185 UN languages by 2006. In Kyoto, Japan, NTT released *Altflash*, which is a system for translating between Japanese and English. Although a human translator is apparently not needed to check for mistakes, *Altflash* is limited only to financial reports. Other applications research is being conducted in Japan at Advanced Telecommunications Research (ATR) that would enable two foreigners meeting at an airport, for instance, to conduct a conversation in both Japanese and English at the same time. Each person simply dials-up a central computer through the Internet and proceeds to speak into their cellphones in their own language, hearing the translated version on his handset immediately – thanks to the processing power of the central computer they invoked. In the U.S., the Language Technologies Institute (LTI) at Carnegie Mellon University has developed *Diplomat*. This software learns by example and can make rough translations of a foreign languages after only two days of lessons. LTI and Lockheed Martin intend to build wearable translation computers for field-testing by the U.S Army. Another technology under development is a knowledge-based technical document translator with a respectable degree of accuracy. Also from the U.S., AT&T researchers have teamed up with ATR researchers in Kyoto, Japan to develop an automated telephony system for translating queries between English and Japanese. Currently, AT&T is in the process of developing a Very Large Vocabulary Speech Recognition (VLVSR) database, the world's largest for continuous speech dictation systems, that can handle more than a million words [9].

Despite these technological advances in language automation that we are witnessing now and projecting into the future, nothing can fully replace the significance of the human being in the process of language cognition. When a document is submitted for translation or proofreading, a quick and dirty translation or grammar/spellcheck can be made by a computer readily even today. However, In the case of automatic translation, there will be many hurdles to overcome before automated translations will become reliable enough for regular use. No matter how advanced a computer is in deciphering the meanings of sentences, automated computer translation systems cannot "get a feel" for what the writer was intending to truly convey or impart, so the translations are expected to continue to remain stilted and rudimentary for some time.

In the meantime though, many other effective companies are being formed that are offering services that are in many ways more practical, cheaper, and more reliable than automated machine translation. Considering that English is the common spoken language between the U.S. and Japan, millions of students and professionals at all levels in business stand to benefit from services setup not necessarily to translate between languages, but to improve on the language they are using to communicate instead. For instance, the user would not necessarily have to submit a document in pure Japanese, but instead he could submit his document in his best English to be expediently edited by an online service with a relatively quick response time. First, his English skills would grow every time he uses the service, since some of the more advanced proofreading services would be able to return a corrected document that is not only free of mistakes, but also clearly marked by a professional editor showing exactly what he did wrong. In fact, further recommendations and advice can be provided for each and every submission upon request. A computer would be hard-pressed to deliver such quality and personal service, if at all. Second, the quality of the editing can be maintained by ensuring that the professionals that are actually doing the editing are well-qualified themselves. Consequently, Japanese businessmen could always rely on the Internet for fast and easy proofreading in order to clean up and polish their writing in English before sending to their foreign clients. However, a straightforward translation machine may not be so readily entrusted to make quality translations with too much reliability at the present time, so businessmen would most likely find it more convenient to simply send their work, already written in broken English, to a reliable, qualified proofreading service on the Internet. In effect, Japanese and American businessmen can now send their English work with the confidence of having quality proofreading right at their fingertips online, anytime, and anywhere.

English is the language of choice for conducting business throughout the world and will be important well into the 21st century. Internet companies that specialize in assisting foreigners as well as native English speakers by improving their communications efforts by offering cost-effective and immediate access to English resources on the Internet, such as editing and proofreading services online, will be in great demand. Those services will require a human touch in order to point out proper usage of language constructs, to show alternate ways of expression, to edit awkward writing, to incorporate various nuances of meaning, and to denote various connotations of the same word conveyed in natural languages – all of which would be a major weakness in automated computer translations. Although a computer may be able to suggest alternative ways of saying or writing human thoughts, it falls short in raw creativity. A computer would find it extremely difficult to suggest relevant, novel, and imaginative approaches through creative editing, especially for all writing submissions that are distinctly outside its scope and programming. Thus, those services that are able to combine the best features and technologies of the Internet while still retaining the flexibility and creativity of the human being will succeed in the facilitation of global business for decades into the future.

6. Conclusion

As the world begins the 21st century, Japan and America are positioning for continuous economic success and technological prowess as new Internet technologies, IT advances, broadband developments, large-scale communications infrastructure investments, mobile telecommunications, language technologies and electronic commerce expansion occurs with government support from both countries. Corporations on both sides of the Pacific will soon be able to penetrate markets once thought culturally and geographically impregnable, utilizing the latest language facilitators, purchasing platforms, and online business strategies. The Internet is freeing office-bound workers in both countries from the drudgery of daily commutes to and from work with evolving and practical new telework arrangements. Undoubtedly, the U.S. and

Japan are leading the world into the Internet Age, pushing the frontiers of cyberspace into uncharted territory. Unexpected and new business opportunities abound for those enterprising Japanese and U.S. corporations that intelligently take advantage of the Internet and its treasures.

7.1. Appendix A: Tables

Table 1. FY 2000 CS TradePromotion Events for Japan (Tentative).

NAME OF EVENT	SITE	TYPE	DATE
U.S. Pavilion at Environment Japan 99	Osaka	TFO	10/22-23/99
U.S. Pavilion at JATA Travel Trade Show	Tokyo	TFO	11/30-12/3/99
Hightech Security ?99	Tokyo	SFO	12/15-16/99
19th U.S. Apparel Show 2000	Tokyo	SFW	1/25-27/2000
JAPANTEX 2000	Tokyo	TFW	1/26-29/2000
2nd U.S. Executive Airport Seminar	Nagoya	SEM	2/17/2000
Advanced Telephony	Tokyo	SFO	2/24-25/2000
Internet Software	Tokyo	SFO	3/16-17/2000
Entertainment Software	Tokyo	SFO	3/23-24/2000
U.S. Pavilion in 2000 Japan Golf Fair	Tokyo	TFO	Feb., 2000
American Home and Garden Collection	Tokyo	SFO	March, 2000
2000 Security Show	Tokyo	RC	March, 2000
Franchise Show & Business Expo	Tokyo	TFO	March, 2000
The 19th Western Japan Total Living Show	Kitakyushu	BFC	March, 2000
Business Show	Tokyo	RC	May, 2000
The 14th American Electronics Show	Fukuoka	SFO	May, 2000
The Western Japan Import Fair 2000	Kitakyushu	BFC	May, 2000
Internet/Direct Marketing	Tokyo	RC	June, 2000
Home Health Care Japan	Fukuoka	RC	June, 2000
The 40th Western Japan General Machinery	Kitakyushu	BFC	June, 2000
Show/CADMEC			
International Modern Hospital Show	Tokyo	RC	July, 2000
Wireless Technology Exhibition/Seminar	Tokyo	SFO	July, 2000
Japan International Seafood Show	Tokyo	TFO	July, 2000
Electric Test & Measuring Instruments	Tokyo	SFO	Sept., 2000
The 9th U.S. Construction & Design Show	Fukuoka	SFO	Sept., 2000
U.S. Construction & Design Fair	Tokyo	SFO	Sept., 2000
Japan Home Show 2000	Tokyo	TFO	Sept., 2000

Source: http://www.csjapan.doc.gov/market/2000ccg.html

Table 2. FY 2000 CS JapanInternational Buyers Program.

Home Health Care Japan	Fukuoka	RC	June, 2000
The 40th Western Japan General Machinery	Kitakyushu	BFC	June, 2000
Show/CADMEC			
International Modern Hospital Show	Tokyo	RC	July, 2000
Wireless Technology Exhibition/Seminar	Tokyo	SFO	July, 2000
Japan International Seafood Show	Tokyo	TFO	July, 2000
Electric Test & Measuring Instruments	Tokyo	SFO	Sept, 2000
The 9th U.S. Construction & Design Show	Fukuoka	SFO	Sept, 2000
U.S. Construction & Design Fair	Tokyo	SFO	Sept, 2000
Japan Home Show 2000	Tokyo	TFO	Sept, 2000

Source: http://www.csjapan.doc.gov/market/2000ccg.html

7.2. Appendix B: U.S. and Japanese Business Contact Lists

7.2.1. Contact List 1

U.S. Embassy Trade Personnel
Commercial Service Tokyo
Samuel H. Kidder, Minister-Counselor for Commercial Affairs
U.S. Embassy, Tokyo
1-10-5 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-8420
Phone: +81/3/3224-5060 Fax: +81/3/3589-4235
www.csjapan.doc.gov

American Business Information Center (ABIC)
Phone: +81/3/3224-5075 Fax: +81/3/3589-4235
(U.S. Address: Unit 45004, Box 204, APO AP 96337-5004)
Craig B. Allen, Counselor
Edward Yagi, Attache, Information Technology
Kenneth B. Reidbord, Attache, Major Projects
Frank G. Carrico, Attache, Consumer Goods
Rick de Lambert, Transport, Machinery & Safety
John Simmons, Medical & Environment

U.S. Trade Center
E. Keith Kirkham, Director
Jennifer Alston, Deputy Director
World Import Mart 7F
3-1-3 Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku, Tokyo 170-8630
Phone: +81/3/3987-2441 Fax: +81/3/3987-2447
(U.S. Address: c/o American Embassy Tokyo
Unit 45004, Box 229, APO AP 96337-5004)

Commercial Service Osaka
Todd Thurwachter, Principal Commercial Consul
American Consulate General Osaka-Kobe
2-11-5 Nishitenma, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-8543
Phone: +81/6/315-5957 Fax: +81/6/315-5963
(U.S. Address: Unit 45004, Box 239, APO AP 96337-5004)

Commercial Service Nagoya
Gary Konop, Principal Commercial Consul
American Consulate Nagoya
3-10-33 Nishiki, Naka-ku, Nagoya 460-0003
Phone: +81/52/203-4277 Fax: +81/52/201-4612
(U.S. Address: Unit 45004, Box 280, APO AP 96337-5004)
www.japan-net.ne.jp/~amconnge/cshome.html

Commercial Service Sapporo
Michael Meserve, Consul General
Michael A. Gayle, Econ/Commercial Officer
American Consulate General Sapporo
Nishi 28, Kita 1, Chuo-ku, Sapporo 064-0821
Phone: +81/11/641-1115 Fax: +81/11/643-1283
(U.S. Address: Unit 45004, Box 276, APO AP 96337-5004)
plaza12.mbn.or.jp/~AmConGenSapporo/

Commercial Service Fukuoka
Martin Murphy, Consul
American Consulate Fukuoka
2-5-26 Ohori, Chuo-ku, Fukuoka 810-0052
Phone: +81/92/751-9331 Fax: +81/92/725-3772
(U.S. Address: Unit 45004, Box 242, APO AP 96337-5004)
www.usia.gov/abtusia/posts/JA3/wwwh4cmf.html

Naha Consulate
Robert S. Luke, Consul General
American Consulate General Naha
No.2564 Nishihara, Urasoe City, Okinawa 901-2101
Phone: +81/98/876-4211 Fax: +81/98/876-4243
(U.S. Address: PSC 556, Box 840, FPO AP 96372-0840)

State Department Economic Section
C. Lawrence Greenwood, Jr., Minister-Counselor for Economic Affairs
U.S. Embassy, Tokyo
1-10-5 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-8420
(U.S. Address: Unit 45004, Box 203, APO AP 96337-5004)
Phone: +81/3/3224-5022 Fax: +81/3/3224-5010

Energy Department
U.S. Embassy, Tokyo
1-10-5 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-8420
(U.S. Address: Unit 45004, Box 219, APO AP 96337-5004)
Phone: +81/3/3224-5444 Fax: +81/3/3224-5769

Treasury Department
Robert Dohner, Financial Attache
U.S. Embassy, Tokyo
1-10-5 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-8420
(U.S. Address: Unit 45004, Box 216, APO AP 96337-5004)
Phone: +81/3/3224-5486 Fax: +81/3/3224-5490

7.2.2. Contact List 2

U.S. Department of Commerce
Awilda R. Marquez, Assistant Secretary and Director General of the U.S. Foreign and Commercial Service

Robert Francis, Office Director, Japan
Office of Japan (OJ)
International Trade Administration
Room 2320, Washington DC 20230
OJ Phone: 202-482-1820 Fax: 202-482-0469
For further contact information on the U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. based multipliers relevant for Japan, please contact the OJ.

Japanese Trade Associations/Chambers of Commerce
Keid Anren
Akinori Shimamoto, Director
International Relations Bureau
1-9-4 Ohtemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8188
Phone: +81/3/3279-1411 Fax: +81/3/5255-6255
www.keidanren.or.jp

Japan Foreign Trade Council, Inc.
Shigetoshi Matsumoto, General Manager, International Affairs and Research Group
World Trade Center Bldg.
2-4-1 Hamamatsu-cho, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-6106
Phone: +81/3/3435-5950 Fax: +81/3/3435-5979
www.jftc.or.jp

Japan-U.S. Business Council
Kunihiko Maeda, Executive Director
Otemachi Bldg. Suite 439, 1-6-1 Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0004
Phone: +81/3/3216-5823 Fax: +81/3/3284-1576

Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Matsuo Shimojima, General Manager
International Div.
Tosho Bldg., 3-2-2 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0005
Phone: +81/3/3283-7607 Fax: +81/3/3216-6497
www.jcci.or.jp/home-e.html

Tokyo Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Matsuo Shimojima, General Manager
International Div.
Tosho Bldg., 3-2-2 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0005
Phone: +81/3/3283-7607 Fax: +81/3/3216-6497
www.tokyo-cci.or.jp

Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry
International Division
Shunji Kawamura, Director
2-8 Honmachi-bashi, Chuo-ku, Osaka 540-0029
Phone: +81/6/6944-6400 Fax: +81/6/6944-6248
www.osaka.cci.or.jp

Kansai Economic Federation (Kankeiren)
Teruo Aoyagi, General Manager
International Affairs Department
Nakanoshima Center Bldg. 30F
6-2-27, Nakanoshima, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-6691
Phone: +81/6/6441-0104 Fax: +81/6/6441-0443
www.kankeiren.or.jp

The Kansai Committee for Economic Development
(KANSAI KEIZAI DOYUKAI)
Shuichi Kaneko, Senior Researcher
Nakanoshima Center Bldg. 28F
6-2-27, Nakanoshima, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-6691
Phone: +81/6/6441-1031 Fax: +81/6/6441-1030
http://kdoyukai.on.arena.ne.jp

Nagoya Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Takanori Kitamura, General Manager, International Division
2-10-19 Sakae, Naka-ku, Nagoya 460-8422
Phone: +81/52/223-5729 Fax: +81/52/232-5751
www.nagoya-cci.or.jp

The American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ)
5F, Bridgestone Toranomon Bldg.
3-25-2 Toranomon, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-0001
Phone: +81/3/3433-5381 Fax: +81/3/3436-1446
www.accj.or.jp

The American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ) Kansai Chapter
Herbis Plaza Bldg. 6F, 2-5-25 Umeda, Kita-ku
Osaka 530-0001
Phone: +81/6/6343-7505 Fax: +81/6/6343-7506
www.accj.or.jp

Tosho Bldg., 3-2-2 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0005
Phone: +81/3/3283-7607 Fax: +81/3/3216-6497
www.jcci.or.jp/home-e.html

Tokyo Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Matsuo Shimojima, General Manager

International Div.
Tosho Bldg., 3-2-2 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0005
Phone: +81/3/3283-7607 Fax: +81/3/3216-6497
www.tokyo-cci.or.jp

Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry
International Division
Shunji Kawamura, Director
2-8 Honmachi-bashi, Chuo-ku, Osaka 540-0029
Phone: +81/6/6944-6400 Fax: +81/6/6944-6248
www.osaka.cci.or.jp

Kansai Economic Federation (Kankeiren)
Teruo Aoyagi, General Manager
International Affairs Department
Nakanoshima Center Bldg. 30F
6-2-27, Nakanoshima, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-6691
Phone: +81/6/6441-0104 Fax: +81/6/6441-0443
www.kankeiren.or.jp

The Kansai Committee for Economic Development
(KANSAI KEIZAI DOYUKAI)
Shuichi Kaneko, Senior Researcher
Nakanoshima Center Bldg. 28F
6-2-27, Nakanoshima, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-6691
Phone: +81/6/6441-1031 Fax: +81/6/6441-1030
http://kdoyukai.on.arena.ne.jp

Nagoya Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Takanori Kitamura, General Manager, International Division
2-10-19 Sakae, Naka-ku, Nagoya 460-8422
Phone: +81/52/223-5729 Fax: +81/52/232-5751
www.nagoya-cci.or.jp

The American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ)
5F, Bridgestone Toranomon Bldg.
3-25-2 Toranomon, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-0001
Phone: +81/3/3433-5381 Fax: +81/3/3436-1446
www.accj.or.jp

The American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ) Kansai Chapter
Herbis Plaza Bldg. 6F, 2-5-25 Umeda, Kita-ku
Osaka 530-0001
Phone: +81/6/6343-7505 Fax: +81/6/6343-7506
www.accj.or.jp

7.2.3. Contact List 3

Japanese Government Agencies
Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI)
Toshiki Kanamori, Director, Import Division
1-3-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8901
Phone: +81/3/3501-1659 Fax: +81/3/3501-5997
www.miti.go.jp

JETRO
Toshiaki Endo, Director
Import Promotion Dept.
2-2-5 Toranomon, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-8466
Phone: +81/3/3582-5562 Fax: +81/3/5572-7044
www.jetro.go.jp

JETRO Business Support Center
Hiroshi Sakuramoto, Chief Director
ATT Main Bldg. 2F, 2-17-22 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052
Phone: +81/3/5562-3131 Fax: +81/3/5562-3100

Foreign Investment Promotion Development Corporation (FIND)
Shuro Karashima, President & CEO
Akasaka Annex Bldg. 6F, 2-17-42 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052
Phone: +81/3/3224-1203 Fax: +81/3/3224-9871
www.fid.com

Manufactured Imports Promotion Organization (MIPRO)
Kunio Yagi, President
World Import Mart Bldg. 6F
3-1-3 Higashi Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku, Tokyo 170-8630
Phone: +81/3/3988-2791 Fax: +81/3/3988-1629

For further contact information of Japanese Government Agencies and quasi-governmental organizations, please contact Commercial Service Japan offices.

Market Research Firms in Japan
A.T. Kearney K.K.
ARK Mori Bldg., East 32F
1-12-32 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-6032
Phone: +81/3/5561-9155 Fax: +81/3/5561-9190
www.atkearney.com

Boston Consulting Group K.K.
New Otani Garden Court, 4-1 Kioi-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0094
Phone: +81/3/5211-0300 Fax: +81/3/5211-0333
www.bcg.com

Deloitte & Tohmatsu Consulting Co., Ltd.
Toranomon Kotohira Kaikan
1-2-8 Toranomon, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-0001
Phone: +81/3/5521-5555 Fax: +81/3/5512-6271
www.dtcg.tohmatsu.co.jp

Fuji Chimera Research Institute, Inc.
F.K Bldg., 2-5 Nihonbashi Kodenma-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 103-0001
Phone: +81/3/3664-5815 Fax: +81/3/3661-5134
www.fcr.co.jp

The Japan Research Institute, Ltd.
16 Ichibancho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0082
Phone: +81/3/3288-4700 Fax: +81/3/3288-4750
www.jri.co.jp

Nikkei Research Inc.
Park Side 1 Bldg., 2-2-7 Kanda Tsukasa-cho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0048
Phone: +81/3/5296-5161 Fax: +81/3/5281-2890
www.nikkei-r.co.jp

Sanwa Research Institute Corp.
Shimbashi Sanwa Toyo Bldg., 1-11-7 Shimbashi, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-8631
Phone: +81/3/3572-9030 Fax: +81/3/3572-6230
www.sric.co.jp

Yano Research Institute Ltd.
2-46-2, Honcho, Nakano-ku, Tokyo 164-8620
Phone: +81/3/5371-6900 Fax: +81/3/5371-6967
www.yano.co.jp
www.daiwabank.co.jp

The Export-Import Bank of Japan
(Rename Japan Bank for International Cooperation on October 1, 1999)
1-4-1 Ohtemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8144
Phone: +81/3/3287-9500 Fax: +81/3/3287-9579

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