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The Land of the Rising Sun Prepares for a New Dawn

Japanese business has been the master of delivering above and beyond expectations for decades. Against much larger nations, it has worked harder and cleverer than its rivals to enjoy continued success in the top rankings of world economies. With the eleventh-largest population in the world, and the third-greatest gross domestic product (GDP), Japan has made outperforming competitors a habit. For the companies powering this success, the current level is not the goal. It's the platform for an even brighter future for products and services that are proudly "Made in Japan." This is fuelled in large part by a massive army of small- and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) making strides in technology, exports and world-class education, all relying on high standards of quality and commitment to improvement and best value. Shaping the next generation of entrepreneurs, leaders and innovators is the task given to Japan's world-renowned higher education sector.

"Monozukuri is reflected in Japanese manufacturing companies' tireless efforts."

Tomoki Okada

While academic achievement has always been of great importance in the nation, holistic teaching techniques are helping support modern business by creating well-rounded students and employees. "One of the special features of Japanese education is the emphasis on 'all-around education' that includes academic studies, student advising and extra-curricular activities such as cleaning classrooms and preparing lunches," said Kansai Gaidai University President Eiko Tanimoto. "In order to respond to an ever-changing society, I feel it is important to foster a generation that can meet diversified needs, possess resilience, and create new values," she said. These standards are valued highly by employers and often cited as one of the country's greatest advantages versus its rivals. "The education level of the Japanese citizens, I feel, is quite high," said Keiko Yamakawa, president of Sanwa Co., Ltd. "Compared to other countries, this may be a competitive factor. Japanese are very diligent, loyal and hard working. So this might be an aspect that could be considered as a competitive factor compared to other regions," she said. The recurring theme for all Japanese businesses is the Japanese tradition

"I believe that Japan has the responsibility to become a leading tech country central to the industry in Asia."

Kentaro Matsuzaki

of *monozukuri*— the mindset of constantly driving for highest possible standards and guaranteed levels of customer service. "Although it is challenging to meet both criteria at the same time, to achieve full customer satisfaction, neither area can be lacking," said Tomoki Okada, president of textiles and crafts firm Clover Mfg. Co., Ltd. "This concept is reflected in efforts to pay attention to details for the development of new products and the improvement of products that already exist.

Japanese companies see the overall perspective of consumers, identify their needs and listen to their opinions," he said. Takashi Owada, president and representative director of Toyo Kanetsu K.K., agreed this is crucial. "Quality assurance is vital, not only

for the Japanese market but also overseas and we can provide high-quality products in a stable manner," said Owada. "Prompt maintenance and prompt service, even when it comes to third-party products, are important to do business in this industry," he added. "I think the main points are a focus on quality, attention to detail and pricing. In addition to that, we have after-sales support and very high-quality products. Those are some reasons why Japanese companies can be competitive," said Mototaka Tei, president of Santec Corporation. One of the core elements of Japan's continued success has been its world leading sense of innovation,

from the ashes of World War II to developing game-changing cars and personal electronics that transformed the world. But "Made in Japan" means more than just the Game Boy, the Walkman or the Toyota Prius. It's about developing technologies that work behind-the-scenes and

inside these well-known devices and products. According to one business leader, the key to the future is seeking to learn from some international markets as well as selling to them. "There is no choice but for Japan to follow the Western countries in developing its own capabilities to reduce the level of centralization of technology in China," said Kentaro Matsuzaki, president of Geomatec Co., Ltd. "The other Asian countries have processes that have improved over the last 20 to 30 years, but in contrast, Japan has already accumulated technology and improved its management system over the past 100 years," Matsuzaki said.

Ingredients for Success



"We provide the essence of the taste to other food manufacturers so they can enjoy beautiful Hokkaido food."

Tonahichi Kaseda, Representative Director, President and CEO, Wakou Shokuhin Co., Ltd.

When your business is based around a passion and a place, it's easy to champion your product. Tonahichi Kaseda, the president of Hokkaido-based Wakou Shokuhin Co., Ltd. so appreciates the island prefecture's natural ingredients, created by its landscape and distinct seasons, that he wants to provide the best possible rich taste to the rest of Japan and the world.

He is proud of the firm's leading research and development (R&D) and factory work, which replicates hand-made taste in a professional kitchen. Fuelled in part by the ramen boom, the firm enjoys great success on a "glocalised" basis, with authentic tastes and styles. "We provide the original Japanese taste because we would like to let people know how the original ramen naturally tastes. I also understand how ramen changes as it is adopted around the world," said Kaseda.

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