



EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation

Japan ICT Market Entry and Business Development Guide
for European Companies

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Disclaimer

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Introduction

What is this guide?

This guide is the product of extensive hands-on research on the topic of how to enter the Japanese ICT market. The recommendations present in this guide are based on over 30 hours of in-depth interviews with foreign and Japanese ICT companies and entrepreneurs that are successfully operating in Tokyo.

It is a practical tool describing every stage of the entry process into the Japanese ICT market, from market research to after-sales support. It presents a clear explanation of each stage with useful tips and advice for incoming companies.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is intended for small and medium-sized companies that are looking for ways to expand their activities into Japan. Businesses that are still establishing themselves in their home countries should first concentrate their efforts on their local market. Premature expansion into a challenging business environment, such as Japan, might prove too difficult for newly-founded companies.

What does this guide consist of?

This guide is divided into sections dedicated to specific issues, which every company might come across when establishing its presence in Japan. Each section includes a short explanation of challenges faced by prior companies with advice on overcoming them, whereas the final chapter presents identified investment opportunities for companies to consider. The annexes contain useful lists of ICT tradeshows, office solution providers and chambers of commerce with compact descriptions and direct links to their websites.

Japan ICT market overview¹

The ICT market accounted for about 8.9% of all industries, with a total size of 81.8 trillion yen (€04 billion) in 2012, making it the largest in the country. The market's growth levelled off between 2000 and 2005 before declining along with markets in most other industries from 2008. Growth rates declined sharply in 2009 due to the financial crisis, and this trend continued in 2012. Looking at the transitions in market size (based on real domestic production value) of the main industries in constant 2005 values, reveals that the ICT industry grew in 2010 along with most other industries, but decreased in 2011 and 2012

The ICT industry's market size in 2012 (based on real domestic production value) declined slightly

¹ <http://www.soumu.go.jp/johotsusintokei/whitepaper/eng/WP2014/chapter-5.pdf>

by 0.6% relative to the previous year to 96.9 trillion yen. The industry's average annual growth rate from 1995 to 2012 was 2.5%.

The ICT industry employed 3.968 million people in 2012 (up 1.8% from the previous year), accounting for 7.1% of total employment in all industries. Employment declined by 20% relative to 2011 in the ICT-related manufacturing sector, by 2.2% in the video, audio, and text information production sector, and by 1% in the information services sector. But employment in the internet related services sector and the ICT-related construction sector jumped by 20.9% and 14.1% respectively.

The Japanese ICT market is substantial in terms of employment, GDP participation and value added potential. Due to its saturated and matured domestic consumer base, this market proves to be a challenging but rewarding business environment. The spillover effect is also most evident in the ICT service sector which benefits and affects virtually every other segment of the Japanese economy.

Means of entry

1.1. Market research

Market research is the first step that needs to be taken in order to establish the feasibility of expanding into the Japanese market.

In the case of in-house market research, a company needs to remember that the data available in English is generally of lower quality and less reliable than data found in Japanese-language sources. There are free English resources available online that will provide a certain level of insight into the current market situation, but usually these are summaries of more detailed and comprehensive Japanese versions.

It is easier to conduct market research for solutions which bring incremental improvements to existing services. Customers are aware of the function of the product and thus the results will be more reliable and trustworthy. Disruptive technologies however, are often perceived as unsafe or unnecessary and market analyses concerning such solutions have a high chance of yielding questionable conclusions.

Companies should hire a Japanese language speaker – to conduct research and to reach out to a local chamber of commerce or embassy in order to obtain their assistance – or contract a Japan-based market research company.

1.2. Trade shows

The next step that should be taken in Japan is attending a trade show as a visitor. A company should send a representative to acquire an understanding of the business landscape and collect as many business cards as possible. No product presentation or sales pitches should take place at this stage.

- Send a representative to a trade show as a visitor in order to familiarise the company with the market landscape.

After the initial visit, once the feasibility of a business venture in Japan has been confirmed by market research, a company could consider becoming an exhibitor at a relevant trade show.

(A list of ICT industry trade shows is provided in the annexes)

The key points to keep in mind when preparing to showcase products/services at an expo in Japan are:

- Bring 1000 two-sided bilingual business cards (with a Japanese address if possible)
- Invest in a big booth to establish a strong company image
- Prepare high-quality, bilingual promotional materials
- Bring a Japanese assistant to the expo/ Japanese speaking staff to the booth
- Limit your activities to introducing your company and setting up meetings after the event. Pushing to close a sale is discouraged at this point.
- Target companies with English speaking staff – they have an international outlook and are open to collaborating with international partners.

“We spent a lot of money on an expo in 2009. The head office were not in favour of that expenditure, but I took on the responsibility. If they don't notice you at the expo, you might as well not be there. That's why I invested in a very large and impressive booth that year.”

Roman - CEO at a photo editing software company

Consistency and patience is exceptionally important when entering the Japanese market. A continuous presence and support of the community created around the product or solution will enable any new company to obtain employees, contacts and sales channels. Participation in trade shows is highly recommended and is often subsidised and supported by local chambers of commerce, governmental agencies or EU funded missions and support organisations such as the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation.

When considering trade show-related expenses, the importance of the company booth cannot be overstated. It is wise to invest extra to create a professional, presentable space that would be associated with a successful company. Doing this consistently every year will guarantee inquiries and can lead to cooperation proposals.

- Establish a consistent, professional and recurring presence at the most important trade fairs.

1.3. Prior “virtual” presence

Companies that have already established some type of business connection with Japan often have a remote market presence thanks to their online sales platform or because they offer niche solutions for local partners. Such connections are most commonly acquired via one or more of the following methods:

- Product available for purchase online with no local counterpart
- Freeware products available online for download
- Japanese employees based in Europe and selling to Japan through their local channels
- Strong European brands and solutions may attract Japanese companies on their own initiative.

“Our software is open source, so even before we entered the Japanese market we had a few customers here. We provide support for that software and we have built a community around it”

Siergiey – Server monitoring software solutions

All of the above methods are feasible ways of entering the Japanese market without requiring much preparation or resources. However, it is far more likely that active efforts to establish a foothold in Japan will bring greater profits and business opportunities.

An example of an active solution that is still relatively inexpensive is acquiring a Japanese distributor. Information about potential candidates should be readily available through local chambers of commerce, embassies and various national agencies.

- Approach business matching institutions in order to identify potential distributors.

Another important potential source of information are the company’s prior customers that have engaged in business activities with a Japanese company. Reaching out to them for an introduction can prove extremely fruitful.

- Acquiring introductions is the most effective course of action for securing business partners.

Market entry via a distributor is recommended for companies with a stable business model but

limited resources to expand into Japan. The distribution partner should supply all the necessary standards and compliance requirements for the product to be legally sold in Japan. Some ramp up time is expected on market entry, and it is fairly likely that the sales cycles in Japan will be longer than in the home market.

Physical distribution is quite strong in Japan. Boxed versions of software with instruction manuals and discs are still readily available in the biggest retailers. High quality packaging and promotional material are very important on the Japanese market.

- High-quality packaging and promotional materials are essential.

1.4. Company acquisition

One of the most commonly overlooked means of entry into the Japanese market is acquiring a local company. Company valuations before entering the stock exchange are relatively low and because a number of entrepreneurs try to sell their businesses, market entry via acquisition is a viable strategy. Japanese as well as non-Japanese entrepreneurs should be considered when looking for a company to acquire. The downside of this approach is the higher than normal initial investment cost, however the new business will generate profit from day one with no ramp up time required. A relatively simple way to search for acquisition opportunities is to hire a freelance analyst to check the market and prepare the primary offer.

- Company acquisition is an alternative means of market entry.

“I recommend acquiring a company. Company valuations are very low because buyers are scarce. Entrepreneurs don't have an exit. You get a CEO, the sales people and the customer base. You invest, but you are cash flow positive on day one. I think it's a great approach that is not explored enough.”

Bassot – CEO of a green energy software solutions provider

In terms of HR, managing an already established company with a pre-existing team might be more challenging than simply creating a new entity. New European owners should exercise caution when introducing new managers to a Japanese working environment, as they could be the cause of internal friction. It is recommended to follow the suggestions in section 3 of this guide in order to

successfully hire new staff.

1.5. Governmental and third party assistance

In order to ensure a smoother transition into the Japanese market, both the European and Japanese governments have established institutions to assist with the entire process. The Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO), the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation, various chambers of commerce and embassies of individual EU member states are the best places to seek such support.

For a detailed list of chambers of commerce please see the Annexes.

JETRO

The core focus of JETRO in the 21st century has shifted towards attracting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping “small to medium size Japanese firms maximise their global export potential”.²

Invest Japan Business Support Center (IBSC)

JETRO operates IBSCs (Invest Japan Business Support Center) in six major cities: Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Osaka, Kobe and Fukuoka. Each IBSC is staffed with experienced advisors and personnel that can provide information by using a broad network across the public and private sectors. They can offer consultation services according to the specific needs of foreign companies wishing to become active or to expand their operations in the Japanese market. Most of these services are free of charge.

Importantly, IBSCs offer temporary, free office space for up to 50 working days to foreign firms that have not yet established a business base in Japan. These firms also have access to a free and comprehensive business library in Tokyo and Osaka.³ In summary, the services of the IBSCs correspond with the procedures necessary to establish a business in Japan.

² <http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/jetro/>

³ <http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/ibsc/>; http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/ibsc/pdf/ibsc_en_2014april.pdf;
<http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/ibsc/flow/>

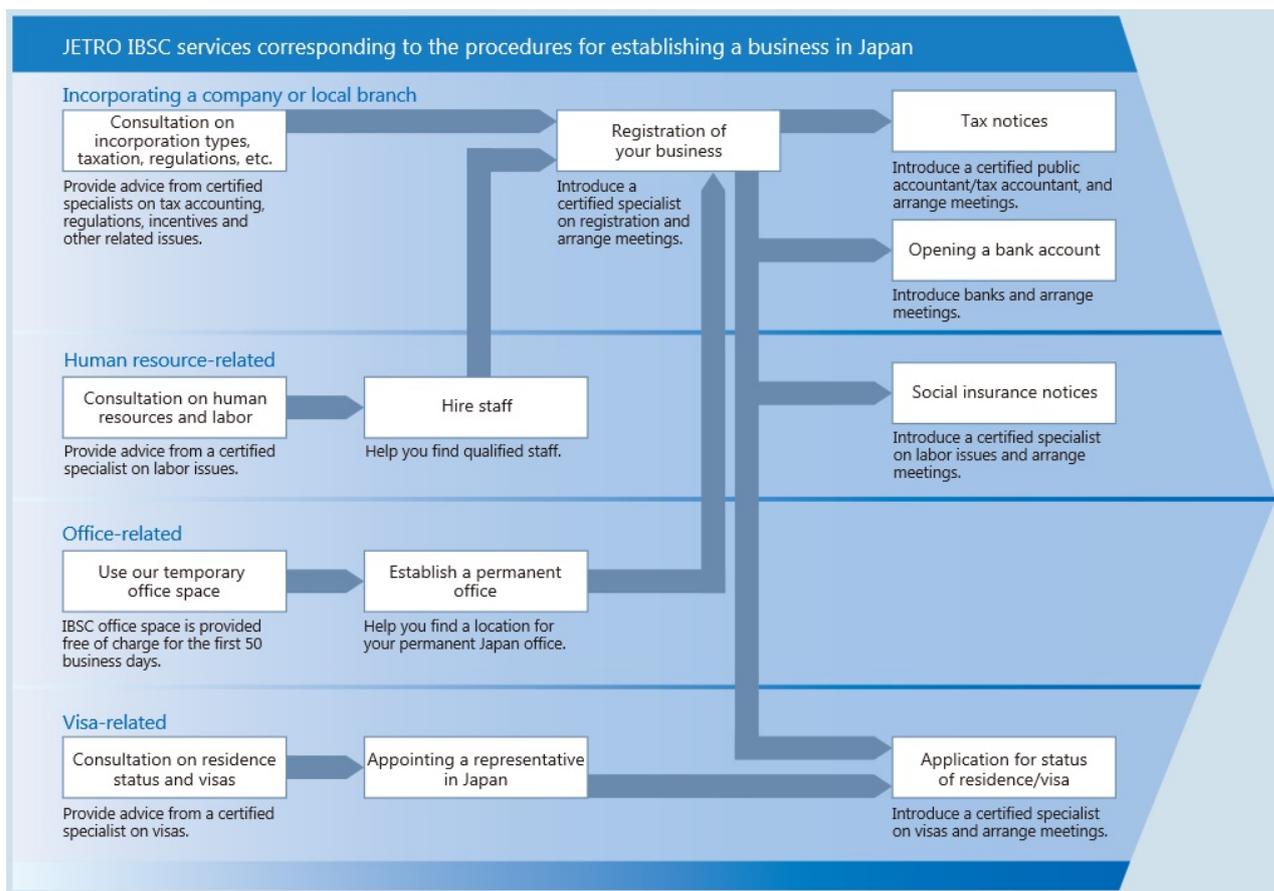


Figure 1: JETRO assistance matri

(Source): JETRO

Attracting R&D sites and regional HQs of foreign companies

JETRO is also actively involved in the "Subsidy Program for Projects Promoting Asian Site Location in Japan". This programme, created by the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), aims to attract and concentrate high-value-added business operations by supporting the establishment of new high-value-added business locations for global companies in Japan, such as Head Sites or R&D Sites.⁴

An additional emphasis is placed on active invitation in fields that are expected to introduce new business models and technologies such as environment and renewable energy, medical care and tourism, and companies in the logistics and retail industries that are expected to create new employment.⁵

⁴ http://www.meti.go.jp/english/policy/external_economy/investment/act_information.html

⁵ <http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/jetro/activities/fdi/>

The Act stipulates seven investment incentive measures, of which some specifically target SMEs.

1. Corporate tax breaks: 20% income deduction for 5 years (equivalent to an effective corporate tax rate reduction of approximately 7%).
2. Income tax breaks: Deferral of taxation upon exercising stock options granted by overseas parent companies to the time of selling the shares, in combination with income tax reduction (from 50% to 20% at most).
3. Assistance for fund raising (only for SMEs): Assistance for fund raising by the Small and Medium Business Investment & Consultation Co., Ltd. (Also covering small and medium-sized stock companies with minimum capital of 300 million yen).
4. Acceleration of patent examinations: Eligible enterprises can benefit from an acceleration of examinations and proceedings for patent applications. Whereas ordinary examinations take approximately 22 months, the accelerated examination can be completed in about 2 months (FY2011 performance).
5. Reduction of patent fees (only for SMEs): 50 % reduction of examination fees and patent fees for patent inventions.
6. Shortened investment procedures: Shortened examination period for prior notification for inward direct investment in regulated industries. Whereas ordinary examinations generally last 30 days, shortened examinations only take 2 weeks.
7. Acceleration of status of residency examinations: Acceleration of entry examinations for the Certificate of Eligibility for Status of Residence for foreign nationals who intend to work in Japan. The ordinary examination takes 1 month, while the accelerated examination requires approximately 10 days.⁶

Enterprises that wish to take advantage of these subsidies need to fulfil the following requirements:

1. The enterprise is a corporation that has established its subsidiary corporation or other similar entity at a location other than in the country or region in which its head office or principal office is located.

⁶ http://www.meti.go.jp/english/policy/external_economy/investment/act_information.html

2. The enterprise has been engaged in business activities on a global scale.
3. The enterprise has advanced knowledge or technology in a country other than Japan.⁷

JETRO is an extremely useful source of English-language translations of Japanese legislation . All of the required information and regulations are available at the following link:

http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/setting_up/laws/

In addition to the top level governmental support offered by JETRO, several major cities have established local institutions dedicated to foreign direct investment support. Examples of such entities are the Tokyo Business Development Center⁸ or Ota City Industry Promotion Organization⁹ operating within the Ota district of the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan Area.

For a list of supporting organisations on the prefectural and municipal level, please refer to Annex 2.

EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation

The EU-Japan Centre is well-placed to assist EU states in their efforts to become active in Japan, due to its status as a joint-venture between the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the European Commission.

The Centre offers a wide range of business information and support services.¹⁰

Business Information Services:

- Practical information on doing business in Japan: <http://www.eubusinessinjapan.eu/>
- Tax and public procurement helpdesk for EU SMEs:
<http://www.eu-japan.eu/japan-tax-and-public-procurement-helpdesk>
- Information desk: <http://www.eu-japan.eu/information-desk>
- Publications: <http://www.eu-japan.eu/publications>

Practical Business Support:

- Logistical support in Japan – free temporary office space “Step in Japan”:
<http://www.eu-japan.eu/other-activities/step-in-japan>
- Business plan drafting support service for EU SMEs “Keys to Japan”:
<http://www.eu-japan.eu/keys-japan>

⁷ http://www.meti.go.jp/english/policy/external_economy/investment/pdf/130612_01b.pdf

⁸ <http://www.bdc-tokyo.org/?cat=3>

⁹ <http://www.pio-ota.jp/english/>

¹⁰ <http://www.eu-japan.eu/summary-our-services>

- Business matching through Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) – the largest network of contact points providing information and support to SMEs: <http://een-japan.eu/>

Establishment of a local presence

2.1. Type of operation in Japan

An incoming company has a number of approaches to choose from when it comes to establishing its local office. Choosing which one to pursue should be based on the company's actual needs and goals as well as the resources it is willing to commit in order to secure a position on the Japanese market.

Hiring a local accountant to process all the necessary documents related to establishing ANY of the following entities is highly recommended.

a) Representative office

The cheapest option, the representative office may be established to carry out preparatory and supplemental tasks aimed at enabling foreign companies to engage in full-scale business operations in Japan. These offices may conduct market surveys, collect information, purchase goods and implement publicity/advertising efforts, but they are not permitted to engage in sales activities.¹¹ There is no registration required for a representative office, however, it cannot open a bank account in the name of the company and the lease of real estate must be handled by the home office.

In practice, a representative office is useful for prolonged market research activities, negotiations with the distributor or examining the potential future office location and acquiring all the documents required for a lease.

b) Branch office

A branch office is essentially an extension of the parent company and is not a legal entity in its own right. It can, however, open bank accounts, lease real estate and conduct all business-related activities. The branch office can begin business operations as soon as an office location is secured, the branch office representative is appointed, and the necessary information is registered.¹² It is important to note that all liability for the branch office operations lies with the home office.

c) Subsidiary company

¹¹ http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/setting_up/laws/section1/

¹² Ibid.

A subsidiary company is a separate corporate entity from the mother company and is most typically established as a joint-stock corporation (Kabushiki Kaisha – K.K.) or limited liability company (Godo Kaisha – G.K.) The joint stock corporation is the more common choice and is perceived by the Japanese corporate world as more stable and secure. However it is worth noting that companies such as Apple Japan have adopted the G.K model. Since the shareholders and managers of the companies are not separated in the case of the G.K, it has the benefit of having more management freedom (e.g., sharing of profits)

It is necessary to have at least one director who is resident in Japan to set up a K.K. In order to set up a G.K., it is necessary to have the personal seal certificate of a representative member who has to be resident in Japan.¹³

The most common case is the establishment of a joint stock corporation (K.K.), nonetheless a suitable solution should be tailored to the business model and organisational structure of the parent company.

“There are almost no capital requirements now for a K.K., and Japanese companies generally won’t take you seriously unless you have one. There are other options that are more appropriate for other situations, such as setting up a representative office. This is OK if you just want to get an idea of the Japanese market, but the K.K. is really the only option that you should consider”

Tim – CEO at a platform solutions provider company

Note:

For a detailed comparison of K.K. and G.K. solutions please refer to the following link:
http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/setting_up/laws/section1/page2.html

For a roadmap of procedures for establishing a company please refer to the following link:
http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/setting_up/laws/section1/page3.html

2.2. Type of office space solutions

Companies operating in the ICT sector in the EU often use the low touch sales model, even when dealing with business clients. This is not the case in Japan. Having a physical presence in Japan signals that your company is committed to the local market and is a promising potential partner. Japanese companies will often ask to visit the office of the company they are engaged in business relations with. Usually it is the seller that visits the buyer, but the reverse is not unheard off.

¹³ <http://www.exporttojapan.co.uk/doing-business/setting-up-a-business-in-japan>

a) Incubation / co-working space

Incubation space is a solution primarily aimed at start-ups and companies still in the setting-up phase. The benefits of this option include significantly lower costs, ready access to basic facilities and interactions with other entrepreneurs which may lead to business contacts.

The downsides are limited space, legal requirements for possessing a registered address work area (hot desk solutions will not be sufficient for company registry purposes, it is necessary to have at least a few stable desks), and a suboptimal environment for holding meetings with potential clients and investors. Incubation spaces quickly become crowded and expensive once new staff are hired, and are not well received by the business community. Such solutions are often associated with start-up enterprises which are considered very risky prospects. If any company wishes to conduct sales activity from an incubation environment it is highly recommended to look at other, more representative solutions.

- Incubation spaces are a favourable solution for companies in their setting up phase, with no external operations.

“I have set up in a co-working space and rented a dedicated booth. There are some physical requirements for your office space as a company: You can rent space in a co-working space, as long as it's fixed. [...] That being said I know plenty of other entrepreneurs that do have physical offices here, because their company has reached a certain size.”

Chris – Founder of an art hosting company

b) Serviced office

When renting a regular office it is common to be asked for a 6-month deposit as well as two months' rent up front, which could amount to ¥800,000 (around €6,200). For a new enterprise, this can be a significant challenge. A serviced office with a monthly or bi-monthly rent contract and lower initial costs is an affordable alternative.

The office space comes fully furnished, with separate meeting rooms and a reception service. It is a reasonable solution for a growing company and presents an acceptable face to the local business community. The downside of a serviced office is related to the size of the occupied space. While a small office is quite affordable and reasonably priced, when the company starts to staff up, the rent

grows disproportionately to the space acquired. This option is not recommended for ICT companies with requirements for growing server space.

- A serviced office is a sound, presentable and affordable solution for small companies.

“At the very beginning we used to be at a serviced office, because we didn’t have the staff to handle the customers when they visited us. It was quite useful, but became very expensive.”

Mark - CEO of a web hosting company

c) Physical offices

This is the most expensive of the available options and is recommended for companies with established business models and revenue streams. This solution is the preferred choice of local businesses, generates the most trust and allows for the most freedom. As stated earlier, it is not unusual to be asked for 6 months’ rent as a deposit in addition to 2 months’ rent up front. Naturally, this can change depending on the landlord, company, office size and location. Offices like this come with no additional equipment or facilities besides the regular utilities. The company is expected to furnish the office itself and to return it to its prior state when vacating the premises.

- Only pick this option when other solutions become too expensive and the company size justifies it.

“You want to hold off getting an office space for as long as possible. Get it when you absolutely need it. [...] once you start selling, customers will want to come visit you. I think it's this feeling of knowing who are they dealing with that is important [for the Japanese]: They want to get to know the real person, they want to get a feel for the people in the company to see if they're honest people. Business is very personal here”

Tim - CEO at a platform solutions provider company

For a list of selected office solution providers please refer to Annex 4.

2.3. Office supporting services

The following solutions should be considered in order to supplement the activities of small businesses in their start-up phase, and assist in creating a positive image of the company :

a) Secretary agency

The secretary service is an affordable solution which provides a professional, native Japanese secretarial and call centre service which can answer the company's phone calls and redirect them when necessary. This is a useful choice when the company is in its early stages and short on staff, as it frees up employees for other tasks, improves the external image of the company and keeps track of all incoming calls.

- Highly recommended for smaller companies in order to boost their image and manage incoming communication.

“We have outsourced our secretary service. They receive our phone calls, send me emails with the caller details and if it's necessary I call them back. When customers pick up the phone they hear a nice professional voice that will assist them with their inquiry. It builds trust in the company”

Alan - Overseas business officer at an online crowd sourcing service

b) Address renting service

Renting an actual office in a prestigious area is a significant financial strain on a newly established company's budget. This is why renting just an address with access to a meeting room and a P.O. box is an attractive solution for some. Conferences and meetings can be held at dedicated, well equipped spaces at a location closer to the centre of the city and the address can be printed on the company's business cards adding some recognisability.

This solution, however, cannot be used for the main office, or for registering the actual business. It is often used for companies with server or manufacturing facilities outside the city.

- An attractive solution for companies from different prefectures which require a Tokyo office, or for companies occupying offices not suitable for formal meetings.

“The second address is a Tokyo office: a virtual office. Before having this, we had questions like ‘When will I come to Tokyo again if the main office is in Osaka?’ The problem was that you are not in Tokyo, and had nothing to do with the office solution”

Roman - CEO at a photo editing software company

Hiring in Japan

3.1. Importance of native staff

Japanese society is highly homogenous and non-Japanese inhabitants constitute only about 1.5% of the population. Japanese individuals and corporate customers are as a result accustomed to being served in their native language, and by a native speaker who is aware of the local business culture and etiquette. It is crucial for any business to engage at least one local employee to accommodate the above-mentioned market expectations.

3.2. What are the local hiring practices?

In Japan, it is still common to be hired right out of university with the expectation of spending the rest of one's working life in the same company. In the ICT sector, large service providers and software integration companies absorb the majority of available talent, leaving very few specialists on the market. It is also not common to be hired mid-career for a full-time contracted position. Japanese job seekers, who tend to value continuity and a risk free environment, are still biased towards working for Japanese-owned companies; however this trend is changing with younger generations.

A brand new European company entering the market is not perceived as desirable in the eyes of many potential Japanese employees. It is a new and risky endeavour with little or no history in Japan. A freshly-established enterprise has limited possibilities to change this perception and to start hiring staff. However, there are alternative human resource pools that a company can tap into. Hiring on the outskirts of the common pool of candidates can provide a solution.

These overlooked jobseekers consist of four groups: women, foreigners, midcareer workers and part-time employees.

- The Japanese ICT workforce mainly consists of male workers, leaving their female counterparts with less opportunities for stable employment. While there are still far fewer female ICT graduates, the ones that are available are highly educated and motivated individuals.

- It is fairly difficult for foreigners to be hired as full-time workers in traditional Japanese companies. This opens up the possibility of a smaller, newer company acquiring their services.
- Midcareer Japanese jobseekers that have, for any reason, left their previous employer might be an option to explore, as it is challenging for them to re-enter the Japanese workforce at the same position at which they left.
- Part-time employees are usually hired and terminated depending on the economic conditions and the needs of their employer. They are a valid resource and should be considered by any company.

“One of the challenges, that I have encountered, is that many good candidates are currently working at very big system integration companies. [...] it's difficult to tempt them out because their positions are guaranteed at their current employers.”

Eeeva - CEO at AGILE gaming development solutions company

3.3. What are the channels for hiring local staff?

- a) Being a fresh company on the ground in Japan, it is of utmost importance to have at least one or two local employees in order to aid the establishment of a local presence. Ideally, a company should enter the Japanese market with a previously-existing business relationship that it can use to its advantage. A good idea is to approach a Japanese partner and request assistance in looking for new employees. The local partner is bound to have more extensive personal networks that may lead to suitable candidates.
 - Use existing business relationships to search for employees.
- b) In a situation in which there is no pre-existing relationship with a Japanese partner and no network is available, online hiring platforms might be of use. Websites such as Career Cross¹⁴ or Gaijin Pot¹⁵ are the go-to resource for bilingual jobseekers. These websites are mostly populated by jobseekers with a good, or very good command of both Japanese and

¹⁴ <http://www.careercross.com/en/>

¹⁵ <https://jobs.gaijinpot.com/>

English, and are somewhat bicultural. Such employees are very useful, when the company representative does not speak Japanese and requires assistance with culture related aspects of running an office. However, two points need to be taken into account: 1) one culture and language is usually dominant which may lead to communication issues 2) the actual work-related skills possessed by such individuals are reported to be subpar compared to their mono-lingual counterparts.

LinkedIn has not taken off in Japan as a career platform. Facebook on the other hand has and should be used as a networking tool.

- Use online bilingual hiring platforms for entry- to mid-level candidates.

„I was able to secure my support staff quite quickly using Gaijin Pot. There are a lot of expatriates looking for transition in a new line of work there”

Mark - CEO at a web hosting company

- c) Another noteworthy hiring resource is the community itself. If the company has established some market presence prior to entering Japan, a sound strategy could be to locate communities already using its ICT solutions and to hire from within them. People concentrated in such groups are usually knowledgeable about the product, want to be a part of its development or may offer new sales channels. This is especially true in open source products, apps, programming aid solutions etc.

If there is no prior market presence, the company representative should still attend meetings established by a community that he or she has identified as potentially interested in his solution or product. Networking within such communities may lead to new potential employees as well as new sales channels.

- Use communities centred around the marketed ICT product/solution for potential employees.

- d) When a company faces time constraints and the local manager does not have the knowledge to deal with recruitment on his own, HR companies dedicated to the ICT sector are a feasible solution. They have pre-existing networks, which allow for a more effective search for potential candidates and are able to advise on the current ICT HR market situation. When a business is ready to allocate some more resources towards recruitment (and in

return gain time, market insight and a potential employee) companies such as Webstaff¹⁶ may be a sound choice.

- Use recruiting agencies in order to save time and gain insight into Japan's ICT labour market.

„When hiring engineers, we asked the headhunting companies for assistance. We gave them a test to present to the potential employees and that made things easier for us.”

Mark - CEO at a web hosting company

¹⁶ www.webstaff.jp

Sales and networking

In the EU and North America, software sales are conducted on a low touch, self-service basis. Customers visit the website, select the product or solution they are interested in and purchase it using online forms and payment methods. Human interaction is minimal. However, in Japan there is still a very high demand for sales service and individual guidance throughout the sales process. Customers require a lot of attention and time in comparison to their western counterparts. It is significantly more difficult for a company to close its first sale.

This is true for both business to customer (B2C) as well as business to business (B2B) approaches. While this guide does not go into great detail regarding B2C relations, some of the B2B recommendations will be applicable.

4.1. Sales

- a) Whilst dealing with Japanese companies, knowledge of the Japanese language is extremely important. The company's sales representatives should be native Japanese speakers with a deep understanding of local business culture and etiquette. There are certain "ceremonial" activities embedded in the negotiation process which, when absent, may cause discomfort or imply lack of commitment or serious intentions. The Japanese language is also rich with standardised phrases, that, though not possessing any informative value, imply respect and understanding of the communication process.
 - For a young company, which has just entered the market, it is best to leave the negotiations in the hands of native sales representatives.

"I've noticed that the sales funnel seems to be getting people [...] sat in front of a salesman, there is this sort of procedure that keeps the customer in the funnel. And then there's sort of a social pressure that they have created this relationship with the salesperson, and they don't want to break the harmony of that by saying "you know, actually no", and just leave."

Chris – Founder of an art hosting company

b) The key to Japanese sales is building complete trust. The best way of gaining trust is by attending community events where a company can demonstrate its competence and commitment to the local market. Creating meaningful contributions, solving real challenges faced by other community members, offering guidance and educational support will greatly benefit the company's image in local circles.¹⁷ Such community events may include trade shows, networking meetings, charities, seminars and industry groups.

- Build trust by assisting communities relevant to your business

“Japan has a large number of networking events. Figure out what's your target community, and how to add some legitimate value to that community. Once you do that, the alliances and channel partners become clear.”

Tim – CEO at a platform solutions provider company

c) In order to secure sales in Japan, the role of recommendations and introductions cannot be underestimated. While working on acquiring the company's first sale, testimonials from previous satisfied foreign partners should be drawn upon. This will underline the company's achievements and may convince a prospective buyer to do business with you. For future sales however, Japanese business partners should be presented as references. Early-stage customers may also be a valuable source of future introductions and recommendations. “The only worse thing than being the first customer in Japan, is being the only customer in Japan.”

- Introductions and recommendations are of extreme value. Prioritise local endorsements over foreign ones.

d) Sales cycles in Japan are much longer than in the West. This is mostly due to the fact that Japanese customers will spend more time building trust and getting to know potential business partners. However, this is mostly offset by a significant customer retention rate. Once the sale is closed, the client tends to be very loyal to the company.

¹⁷ <https://www.techinasia.com/definitive-guide-japan-market-entry-sales-secrets/>

- Be prepared for long sales cycles.
- e) When dealing with a prospective customer, jumping hierarchy is highly discouraged. Doing so will put the initial contact in a difficult position, and communicate to the customer a lack of knowledge of business protocol on your side. Cooperation and purchasing decisions are made from the bottom up - the engineers need to forward a message to their superiors about the usefulness of the proposed solution.
- Respecting hierarchy and the decision process of Japanese companies is crucial.

“There is always a consensus building component to it. If you go to the top, the president of a substantial Japanese company, will immediately send you a few steps down, and he's trying to be helpful!”

Tim – CEO at a platform solutions provider company

4.2. The product

- a) Japan is a monolingual and homogenous society. All products offered on this market should be properly localised and optimised to accommodate the variety of characters and alphabets present in the Japanese language.
- Product localisation is key for its success.
- b) When working for a Japanese client on implementing or designing an ICT solution, it is important to account for substantial overhead, in the contract. Local companies will require a lot more time for system integration and will expect the service provider to supply an engineer for the entire process without fees in addition to the agreed sum. Preparation for this should consist of allocating additional overhead hours in the contract and periodically informing the client of the amount of time required to implement the requested change.
- Account for additional overhead in the contract drafting phase.

“A lot of the overhead in terms of customer support is not supporting the product we made together but supporting the work process”

Chris – CEO of a software development company

- c) Even though in the ICT industry the product itself is intangible, a company meaning to introduce a new solution or service will need to develop high-quality presentations and marketing materials. The amount of printed collateral is significantly higher than in Europe. Promotional materials, print outs, presentations, information pamphlets, and all other mediums used for communicating with the customer should be of the highest quality, localised and delivered in a nice package. Additionally, printed instruction manuals, guides and reference materials should also be made available to the customer (or a digital copy for download).

- All printed promotion and information materials should be of the highest quality.

4.3. After sales support

Local companies excel at delivering a high quality experience to their customers and new businesses should accordingly treat customer services as an investment for future sales. It is still common in Japan for customers to request or expect the presence of an engineer throughout the entirety of the sales and product implementation process, regardless of the product’s level of complexity. Even if the product is handled by a distributor, having a local sales and customer support representative is conducive to overall success and enables the following advantages:

- ✓ A physical link to the home office;
- ✓ Capability to address more complicated issues should they arise;
- ✓ Possibility to physically visit customers and provide assistance;
- ✓ Ability to support local sales teams with detailed explanations of the product/solution;
- ✓ Creation of a stronger relationship between the company and its resellers.

„It can be tricky with Japanese customers, they send us an email and ask ‘Can you come?’ We send an engineer and then the customer explains the problem.”

Mark - CEO at a web hosting company

The support office should be comprised of native speakers with a working knowledge of the product and should be able to address a support request in a timely manner (usually within the same or next working day). Offshore support centres are very rare in Japan.

“Our customers have one day a week when our engineer will be on-site and able to help them for half a day.”

Tim – Head of business development at an IT service integration company

Investment opportunities

Japan's ICT industry is its largest and most competitive sector. It accounts for 9% of GDP and is the biggest contributor in terms of added value for virtually every other sector in the Japanese economy. Taking into account the information gathered from interviews conducted by the author - cross-referencing them with current ICT-related policies promoted by the Japanese government and compared with current market trends - a number of potential investment opportunities can be found.

5.1. Smart solutions

In the light of the global progress towards digital economy and the implementation of intelligent technologies in virtually all aspects of daily life, the smart solutions segment seems extremely promising. Providing sensors, wireless communications solutions, embedded software solutions in the following areas is just an example of the possible business cooperation options.

- agriculture
- healthcare and elderly care
- transport networks
- power management

5.2. Robotics

Japan has invested heavily in R&D into robotics in recent years and this trend is still continuing. Companies capable of providing solutions and insight into this sector will find a number of opportunities for themselves in areas such as:

- agriculture
- manufacturing
- healthcare and elderly care, assisted living solutions

5.3. Technology marketisation

Japan is a level one consumer, which means that it will not only request final products but also individual components and partial solutions. Companies with new technologies looking for a way to get them into this market might find that big Japanese companies are interested in acquiring them and introducing them to the consumers.

5.4. Software development

Software development in Japan still lags behind the EU and the USA. Original and innovative

solutions are often brought in from overseas and adapted to the Japanese customer. Businesses able to offer new solutions for end users with more intuitive UI and more pleasant UX have the potential to succeed in Japan. The current software segments that look promising are:

- E-commerce platforms
- Gaming design software
- Corporate ICT system solutions
- Payment, invoicing and accounting software

5.5. Servicing foreign own companies in Japan

While the primary market for incoming European companies consists of Japanese consumers and businesses, servicing foreign-owned firms in Japan is also a promising potential market. Non-Japanese owned enterprises operating in Tokyo often run into language and cultural barriers whilst conducting their activities. This may cause a certain level of discomfort among managers, and presenting them with an English-language service tailored to their needs could be a solution which leads to a successful business partnership. This is especially true in the ICT sector where locally offered solutions are often sub-par compared to those available to the parent company. Currently there are a number of ICT businesses which cater to this segment, but the market is growing and shows potential.

Incoming companies can generate substantial revenue just by targeting non-Japanese businesses, but by fully adapting to the local market and incorporating Japanese partners, their profits will be much greater.

Conclusions

When a European ICT company is planning on expanding to Japan there are several important matters that need to be taken into consideration. Perhaps the most important point to be aware of is the distinction between the high touch and low touch sales models. While the low touch approach has worked well in the West where direct interactions with the customer are minimal, it is not widely used in Japan. A more human, high touch, approach combined with personal interactions is still the most successful strategy for any type of business activity.

An ICT company cannot enter this market with a technical low touch approach. It will simply not work. Time and resources are needed to develop connections, sales channels and a customer base within a strong community.

The most common sector-specific issues that were mentioned in the interviews were related to local standards and regulations, software localisation and personal data protection.

- Local regulations and standards should be easily accessible at any of the governmental or private support institutions.
- The localisation challenge can be overcome by:
 - introducing a third party translation company;
 - approaching the Japanese software community around the for support;
 - establishing a representative office in Japan and hiring local staff for translation;
 - approaching the software distributor or Japanese partner for assistance.
- Personal data security and management should be managed in accordance with the “Law Concerning the Protection of Personal Information” (April, 2005). Since the Privacy Law only applies to databases containing more than 5,000 contacts – it’s quite easy to determine whether or not the company should apply its rules.

If a company addresses all these topics prior to market entry, and puts extra effort into establishing meaningful and personal connections with the local business and support communities, it will be on the road to success.

Quick access roadmap

1. Market entry

1.1. Market research

- Results relevant for products with incremental improvements, less viable for disruptive solutions.
- Japanese materials available online will most likely be more informative than their English versions
- Hiring a Japanese language speakers to conduct research is advised

1.2. Trade shows

- Send a representative to a trade show as a visitor in order to familiarise the company with the market landscape
- Bring 1000 two-sided bilingual business cards (with a Japanese address if possible)
- Invest in a big booth to establish a strong company image
- Prepare high-quality, bilingual promotional materials
- Bring a Japanese assistant to the expo/ Japanese speaking staff to the booth
- Limit your activities to introducing your company and setting up meetings after the event. Pushing to close a sale is discouraged at this point.
- Target companies with English speaking staff – they have an international outlook and are open to collaborating with international partners.
- Establish a consistent, professional recurring presence at the most important trade fairs

1.3. Prior “virtual” presence

- Product available for purchase online with no local counterpart
- Freeware products available online for download
- Japanese employees based in Europe and selling to Japan through their local channels
- Strong European brands and solutions may attract Japanese companies on their own initiative.
- Approach business matching institutions in order to identify potential distributors.
- Acquiring introductions is the most effective course of action for securing business partners.
- High-quality packaging and promotional materials are essential.

1.4. Company acquisition is a viable alternative means of market entry.

1.5. Governmental and third party assistance

- JETRO
- EU-Japan Center for Industrial Cooperation
- Other municipal and prefectural support organisations

2. Establishment of local presence

2.1. Types of operation in Japan

- Representative office – established for market research and information collection and marketing purposes
- Branch office – does not possess separate legal entity from the parent company, however can engage in all business related activities
- Subsidiary company – Kabushiki Kaisha as the most popular choice of the local business community, Godo Kaisha being an alternative.

2.2. Type of office space solutions

- Incubation /co-working space - favourable solutions for companies in their setting up phase, with no external operations.
- Serviced office - sound, presentable and affordable solutions for small companies.
- Physical office – solutions for companies with established business models and revenue stream.

2.3. Office supporting services

- Secretary agency - recommended for smaller companies in order to boost their image and manage incoming communication
- Address renting service - attractive solution for companies from different prefectures which require a Tokyo office, or for companies occupying offices not suitable for formal meetings

3. Hiring in Japan

3.1. Importance of native staff - Japanese individuals and corporate customers are accustomed to being served in their native language, by a native speaker who is aware of the local business culture and etiquette

3.2. What are the local hiring practices?

- Hire out of university
- Low mid-career mobility

- Highly risk averse job seekers
- Recommended hiring from alternative employee pools such as: women, foreigners, midcareer workers and part-time employees.

3.3. What are the channels of hiring local staff?

- Existing business relationships should be used to search for employees
- Online bilingual hiring platforms useful for finding entry- to mid-level candidates
- Use communities centred around the marketed ICT product/solution for potential employees
- Use recruiting agencies in order to save time and gain insight into Japan's ICT labour market

4. Sales and networking

4.1. Sales

- For a young company, which has just entered the market, it is best to leave the negotiations in the hands of native sales representatives
- Build trust by assisting communities relevant to your business
- Introductions and recommendations are of extreme value. Prioritise local endorsements over foreign ones
- Be prepared for long sales cycles
- Respecting hierarchy and the decision process of Japanese companies is crucial.

4.2. The product

- Product localisation is key for its success
- Account for additional overhead in the contract drafting phase
- All printed promotion and information materials should be of the highest quality

4.3. After sales support - Having a local sales and customer support representative is conducive to overall success and enables the following advantages:

- A physical link to the home office;
- Capability to address more complicated issues should they arise;
- Possibility to physically visit customers and provide assistance;
- Ability to support local sales teams with detailed explanations of the product/solution;
- Creation of a stronger relationship between the company and its resellers

5. Investment opportunities

- Smart solutions
- Robotics
- Technology marketization
- Software development
- Servicing foreign owned companies in Japan

6. Conclusions

- Human relations and high touch approach are of crucial importance
- ICT companies need be less technical and more human
- Product localisation
- Abiding by local standards and regulations
- Abiding by the Privacy Law

Annexes:

1. LIST OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE:

The European Business Council (EBC) serves as the trade policy arm of sixteen European National Chambers of Commerce and Business Associations in Japan. It has been working to improve the trade and investment environment for European companies in Japan since 1972. The EBC is registered with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) as the European (EU) Chamber of Commerce in Japan. The EBC currently represents over 2,500 local European companies and individuals who are affiliated with the EBC through their respective national chamber of commerce. <https://www.ebc-jp.com/>

Ireland Japan Chamber of Commerce (IJCC): The Chamber supports its Members through a variety of regular activities and works closely with the Embassy of Ireland and other Ireland-related institutions. The IJCC supports its members in a variety of ways, including organising speaker events, seminars and networking events in Tokyo and other cities; lobbying and supporting enhancement of Ireland-Japan business and trade; providing a forum in which to raise issues of interest to the Japan-Ireland business community. <http://www.ijcc.jp/>

Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan: The Chamber provides Italian and Japanese companies with a wide range of services such as market research, mission planning, event organisation, seminars and courses. Moreover, the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan offers an office incubator service at its premises in Mita, renting out private offices and desks in order to help the establishment of Italian companies in Japan. <http://www.iccj.or.jp/>

Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in Japan (NCCJ): The Chamber's primary objective is to expand professional and personal networks that facilitate the pursuit of business activities in Japan, or the promotion of trade between the Netherlands and Japan. It has about 45 member companies that are either Dutch companies or companies that seek business and/or friendly relationships with the Netherlands in general or with Dutch companies in Japan in particular. The Chamber organises many activities, including breakfast/lunch meetings, seminars and workshops. It also provides its members with information and resources, and provides ample opportunities to network. <http://www.nccj.jp/>

Polish Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan: This relatively new (founded in 2007) Chamber's purpose is to promote economic exchange between Japan and the Republic of Poland. In order to fulfil its mission, the Chamber collect and analyses relevant information on the Japanese economy, economic trends and dynamics; conducts educational activities and undertakes lobbying activities targeting the governments and economic organisations of Japan and the Republic of Poland.

Furthermore, it provides Japanese economic organisations and corporations with information about trade with the Republic of Poland. <http://www.pccij.or.jp/>

Swedish Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan (SCCJ): The SCCJ promotes Sweden-related business in Japan by supporting the Swedish business community and by creating a more favourable market environment for its Swedish, Japanese, and other member companies. Its activities are aimed at creating a forum to meet up with other companies in Japan in order to promote networking and exchange of experiences. <http://www.sccj.org>

Austrian Business Council (ABC): ABC represents the interests of the Austrian Business Community in Japan, as well as its Japanese Members. It promotes measures that benefit and protect the interests of Austrian companies in Japan and provides assistance in promoting trade, investment and economic cooperation between Japan and Austria. The Council mainly provides its Members – Japanese as well as Austrian – with information concerning company activities and related matters of interest. <https://www.abc-jpn.net/>

Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BLCCJ): The organisation promotes business in the Japanese market by supporting the Belgian-Luxembourg business community and creating a more favourable market environment for its member companies. Services include access to seminars, business meetings or events; promotion of BLCCJ member business activities; support to business(wo)men visiting Japan; organisation of trade missions and other modes of tailor-made assistance (partner search, meeting scheduling, logistical support etc.) <http://www.blccj.or.jp/>

British Chamber of Commerce in Japan (BCCJ): This very active Chamber delivers a high-value events programme, productive networking and promotional opportunities, valuable information services, and access to influential individuals and institutions. The Chamber welcomes members of all nationalities. <https://www.bccjapan.com/>

Danish Chamber of Commerce in Japan: The DCCJ promotes the interests of DCCJ Members, and strives to improve and strengthen the business environment between Denmark and Japan. The benefits of joining this Chamber include access to events (including Ambassador and Embassy briefings, breakfast speaker series, guest speaker luncheons, etc.); receiving periodic information on key issues facing business in Japan; joint Nordic chamber networking opportunities in Japan; access to government policy makers; and much more. <http://www.dccj.org/>

Finnish Chamber of Commerce in Japan (FCCJ): The main purpose of FCCJ is to promote trade and economic exchange between Japan and Finland. This non-profit organisation's members are Finnish companies established in Japan and Japanese companies having, or seeking business operations with Finland. FCCJ also accepts individual members. The Chamber provides information

to its members, organises business-related as well as social activities, and it offers advisory services.
<http://www.fcc.or.jp/>

Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie Française au Japon (CCIFJ): CCIFJ, being the first European Chamber of Commerce in Japan, founded in 1918, has built up a large membership of more than 480 companies across all sectors, of which a third are Japanese enterprises. Its services include the organisation of about a hundred events each year, providing access to large business networks and influence; providing up-to-date information on Japan's business life; give visibility to its member enterprises; employment training services; etc.. Moreover, the Chamber offer a range of practical business support services including market research, assistance with prospecting and relationship management, partner search, and even the provision of serviced offices.
www.ccifj.or.jp/

German Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan (Deutsche Industrie- und Handelskammer in Japan - AHK Japan): The Chamber is the key institution for promoting Germany's overseas business development in Japan. The Chamber offers practical support and advice in market entry, change-management, trade fair management, event management and HR management. <http://www.japan.ahk.de/>

2. PREFECTURAL AND MUNICIPAL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE CENTERES.

- Osaka Business and Investment Center (O-BIC): <http://o-bic.net/e/about/>
- Manufactured Imports & Investment Promotion Organization(MIPRO):
<http://www.mipro.or.jp/english/about/>
- Invest Fukuoka: <http://www.investfk.jp>
- Fukuoka International Business Association (FIBA): <http://www.fiba.jp/about-2/>
- Organization for Small & Medium Enterprises and Regional Innovation:
<http://www.smrj.go.jp/english/activities/index.html>
- Aichi-Nagoya International Business Access Center (I-BAC): <http://www.i-bac.jp/index.html>
- Chiba Investment Support Center (CISC):
<http://www.businesssupport-chiba.jp/eng/support/services/>
- Gifu Economic and Industrial Promotion Center (GPC): <http://www.gpc-gifu.or.jp/en.html>
- Hyogo-Kobe Investment Support Center: <http://www.hyogo-kobe.jp/his/english/services.html>
- Saitama International Business Support Center (SBSC):
<http://www.saitama-j.or.jp>
- Business Development Center TOKYO: <http://www.bdc-tokyo.org/?cat=3>
- Sagami-hara Industrial Promotion Foundation:

<http://www.ssz.or.jp/en/>

- Sakai City Industrial Promotion Center: <http://www.sakai-ipc.jp/en>
- Yokohama World Business Support Center (WBC):
<http://www.city.yokohama.lg.jp/keizai/yuchi/sinsyutu-e/support1.html>

According to JETRO, the following regions and cities offer the most interesting opportunities for ICT-related enterprises.¹⁸

- **Hokkaido:** <http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/region/hokkaido/>
- **Iwate:** <http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/region/iwate/>; <http://www2.pref.iwate.jp/~ritti/english/english%2006yugu.html>
- **Ishikawa:** <http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/region/ishikawa/>; <http://www.pref.ishikawa.jp/kigyoe/eng/index.html>
- **Kyoto:** Kyoto prefecture is home to a number of content software development company clusters, representing a range of state-of-the-art technologies.¹⁹
- **Nara:** Nara prefecture has the advantage that it is possible to establish ICT-related companies there with lower costs, while it is still close to multiple major cities.²⁰
- **Kanagawa:** <http://www.k-yuchi.jp/eng/incentive/incentive.html>; <http://www.pref.kanagawa.jp/mlt/f470406/>
- **Tokushima:** <http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/region/tokushima/>
- **Nagasaki:** <http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/region/nagasaki/>
- **Fukuoka city:** <http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/region/fukuoka-city/>;
<http://asiabiz.city.fukuoka.lg.jp/advance/?type=incentive&lang=en>
- **Sendai city:** <http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/region/sendai-city/>;
<http://www.city.sendai.jp/keizai/sangaku/english/recommendation/investment/index.html>

¹⁸ http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/region/icinfo/pdf/cluster_ict_en.pdf

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

3. ICT TRADE FAIRS LISTING

Japan ICT Week	<p>Takes place twice a year: in Spring and Summer. It includes a sub-trade fair called the Software Development Expo (SODEC), Smartphone & Mobile Expo (Smartphone Japan), Data Storage Expo (DSE) and Cloud Computing Expo Japan (CLOUD JAPAN)</p> <p>http://www.japan-it.jp/en/</p>
3D & Virtual Reality Expo	<p>Japan's largest exhibition where you can experience all kinds of cutting-edge 3D technology and super high definition image technology.</p> <p>http://www.ivr.jp/en/Home/</p>
CEATEC	<p>One of the biggest electronics trade fairs in South-East Asia. It takes place in early October and draws around 600 exhibitors and between 150,000 and 200,000 visitors.</p> <p>http://www.ceatec.com/</p>
Data Storage Expo & Data Center Expo	<p>Organised by Reed Exhibitions Japan, the Data Storage Expo (DSE) and Data Center Expo (DCE) run at the same time in the middle of May. DSE is Asia's largest exhibition featuring essential data storage solutions to manage and protect enormous volume of information.</p> <p>http://www.japan-it.jp/en/Concurrent-Shows_Spring/DC/About/ http://www.japan-it.jp/en/Concurrent-Shows_Spring/DSE/About/</p>
Semicon Japan	<p>First held in 1977, SEMICON Japan has grown to become the largest international exhibition of semiconductor equipment and materials. Bringing companies and their technologies together with customers and partners, as well as providing a setting for technical seminars and meetings. The trade fair takes place at Makuhari Messe, in early December every year.</p> <p>http://www.semi.org/</p>
Wireless Japan	<p>A yearly conference, organised at the end of May, which focuses on mobile computing hardware as well as content/software. The trade fair takes place at Tokyo Big Sight.</p> <p>http://www8.ric.co.jp/expo/wj/</p>
Smartphone & Tablet	<p>Organised by the NikkeiBP publishing group, the Smartphone & Tablet trade fair is a fairly niche event focused on the handset hardware, software (e.g. development environment tools) and content, including security solutions.</p> <p>http://expo.nikkeibp.co.jp/sma/</p>

AutoID & Communication EXPO	<p>Organised by Japan Automatic Identification System Association (JAISA), AutoID & Communication EXPO is held twice a year in Tokyo and in Osaka. The only exhibition in Japan devoted exclusively to cutting-edge automatic identification products, technologies, and solutions.</p> <p>http://www.autoid-expo.com/tokyo/en/</p>
RETAILTECH JAPAN	<p>RETAILTECH JAPAN is Japan's largest and most influential trade show specialising in retail information systems, organised by Nikkei Inc. There is a vast collection of cutting-edge retail information technology ranging from store systems (e.g., Point-of-Sale registers) to head-office systems, in-store promotion devices, RFID / IC tags, backyard system and logistics.</p> <p>http://www.shopbiz.jp/en/rt/</p>
NIKKEI MESSE	<p>NIKKEI MESSE is one of Asia's largest events offering the latest information to create an eco-friendly, energy-saving, comfortable and safe urban environment and shops. It consists of seven exhibitors including RETAILTECH JAPAN, NFC SMART WORLD and SECURITY SHOW.</p> <p>http://www.shopbiz.jp/en/</p>
Nano Micro Biz / ROBOTECH	<p>Nano Micro Biz / ROBOTECH is the world's largest fair focusing on Micro/MEMS, Nano technologies & ROBOT technologies, organised by Mesago Messe Frankfurt Corporation. The main exhibits will showcase a wide array of key devices and the latest technologies related to research and development, fabrication, quality control and countless other applications.</p> <p>http://www.micromachine.jp/en/</p>
WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY PARK	<p>The leading wireless communication technology event in Japan, where professionals in wireless communication technology / R&D industry gather. WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY PARK brings carriers, manufacturers, and technology users together to connect on several levels involving wireless and network technologies.</p> <p>http://www.wt-park.com/eng/outline.html</p>
Educational ICT Solutions Expo	<p>Educational ICT Solutions Expo (EDIX), organised by Reed Exhibitions Japan, is Japan's largest industry trade show gathering top ICT service providers, electronic manufacturers and content providers, etc., who aim to expand their business in the Japanese education field.</p> <p>http://www.edix-expo.jp/en/Home/</p>

e-Book Expo Tokyo	e-Book Expo Tokyo is the world's leading e-Book industry trade show for e-Book devices, contents, and technologies. Held in Tokyo, the centre of new innovations and technologies, e-Book Expo Tokyo is a key marketplace for promoting your products and expanding your business not only in Japan, but also throughout the Asian and global e-Book industries.
	http://www.ebooks-expo.jp/en/Home/

4. OFFICE SPACE SOLUTION PROVIDERS

officee	An internet service operated by 47 CO., LTD. that provides information about renting office space in Japan. The website specialises in finding office space for internet based ICT corporations.	http://officee.jp/en
HAPON Shinjuku	A fully equipped shared office with a large open area opened in 2011. Situated in the heart of Tokyo metropolis, nearby Shinjuku station, The office offers reasonable business bases for small-sized firms, startups, freelancers, and companies seeking for a branch in Shinjuku area. The place also welcomes non-member one-day visitors who are seeking a quiet working environment with an innovative atmosphere.	http://hapon.asia
EGG JAPAN (Entrepreneur Group for Growing JAPAN)	A platform for creating new businesses located in Marunouchi, Tokyo, one of the world's premier business districts where about 4,000 businesses have their offices, employing over 230,000 people. EGG JAPAN's services include business support, a business club and office space.	http://www.egg-japan.com
KOIL	KOIL is located in Kashiwa City, a 30-min train ride from central Tokyo. In addition to seating for up to 170, the facilities at KOIL (which stands for Kashiwa-no-ha Open Innovation Lab) include several meeting rooms, a cafe and a fully equipped space with various tools for electronic work, as well as the latest digital fabrication equipment, including 3D printers and laser cutters.	http://koil.jp/en

SERVCORP	Apart from its shared office solutions (co-working space) and private offices across Japan, SERVCORP provides serviced offices, virtual office solutions and meeting rooms.	http://www.servcorp.co.jp
Compass Offices	Serviced office facilities designed around the specific needs of the client, from large office spaces that can host up to 100 workers to personal booths and virtual offices.	http://www.compassoffices.co.jp/en
The Executive Centre	On-demand serviced offices, virtual offices, meeting facilities, video conferencing and a broad range of business concierge services in the most prestigious Grade A office buildings in the central business districts of every city in which it operates, with a dedication to serving the business interests of multinational corporations, small and medium enterprises, and start-ups locally, regionally and internationally.	http://www.executivecentre.com
Regus	Offices for rent available throughout Japan in premium business locations. The offices are equipped with the latest technology, flexible lease terms (available on daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly basis) and portable working options for travelling professionals.	http://www.en.regus.co.jp