
Osaka Renaissance News

No 34. June 2008

Welcome to “Osaka Renaissance News” - the email newsletter of the Osaka City Government’s “Urban Revitalization Task Force”.

The Osaka Urban Revitalization Task Force

We are the first *City Task Force* established in Japan to address urban regeneration and revitalization issues within a common framework. We also collaborate with the central government’s “Urban Renaissance Program”. The role of the task force is to coordinate and promote the set of initiatives that taken together form the Osaka Revitalization Plan.

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“Osaka Renaissance News” is distributed through multiple email channels to spread the word about important initiatives taking place in Osaka.

This Issue: Osaka’s Tech Leaders

The Osaka City government has embarked on a new project to help promote the revitalization of Osaka’s business sector. This project is a new multimedia DVD that will contain both interviews with some of the people driving Osaka's burgeoning high tech renaissance as well as highlighting some of the interesting development projects taking place in Osaka. The DVD will be in both Japanese and English. This issue will focus on some highlights of the interviews.

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Osaka's Tech Leaders

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INTRODUCTION

The Osaka City Government has been launching promotions both domestically and abroad to highlight the business potential and the urban advantage of Osaka in order to promote development in the private sector and to encourage universities and business enterprises to come to Osaka.

The goal of this new multimedia project is to utilize dynamic, visual media to appeal to real estate investors and business executives who are considering opening new branches in Osaka or expanding existing operations. The expectation is that a visual approach will be more effective than other promotional activities. That is why the decision was made to create a DVD with interviews with local leaders in the high-tech industry as well as showing the revitalization projects taking place in the city.

The subjects of the interviews fall into two broad categories: executives from business enterprises, universities and high-tech factories which have already begun operating in Osaka and are

benefiting from subsidies and other benefits; and smaller business enterprises which have state-of-the-art technology and know-how the key industrial fields.

The other important part of the DVD is an examination of some of the ongoing revitalization projects around Osaka. Examples of topics that will be explored in the DVD content are: redevelopment of the Osaka Station North District, the revitalization of Nakanoshima Island and a variety of infrastructure improvements.

This newsletter focuses on the interview section of the DVD. The excerpts here have been translated from the original Japanese. This isn't the official translation nor is it all of the contents, so be sure to check out the DVD when it is released.

Tod Baudin

OSAKA RENAISSANCE NEWS

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Osaka's Tech Leaders

In this issue we take a look at some excerpts from interviews with Osaka's tech leaders.

(1) Message from Mayor Hiramatsu

The city of Osaka is one of the leading international business cities in Asia and many global companies have launched in the city.

The city is currently promoting the incentives being offered to companies and universities with cutting-edge technologies such as future-oriented robot technology, ubiquitous IT, and health care and preventive medical care. To understand why companies and universities choose the city of Osaka we have prepared interviews with some leaders so you can listen to them directly.

(2) Ryuichi Shiroishi, Asahi Glass Company

Asahi Glass Co., Ltd. has the number one share in the field of glass substrates for plasma displays and is one of Japan's leading companies in the state-of-the-art electronic material industry. The company established a plant in Osaka in order to process glass substrates for plasma displays. This venture was the first application of the special large-scale subsidy program created through cooperation between the municipal and prefectural governments of Osaka.

Ryuichi Shiroishi is the General Manager of the new Osaka plant.

Interviewer: Why did Asahi Glass decide to build a plant in Osaka?

Shiroishi: By Taking advantage of the one-stop initiative of the Osaka municipal government, we were able to go through set-up procedures quickly and launched our plant in an early stage. In addition, the subsidy program by the municipal and prefectural governments was very helpful.

Interviewer: Are there any geographical advantages to Osaka?

Shiroishi: Regarding shipment domestically and abroad, it is convenient for not only shipping but also improving customer services because it is just one kilometre, approximately, from our plant to Nanko (the South Port).

Interviewer: Can you tell us about cooperation with the local society?

Shiroishi: Not only our plant employees, but also local people participated in a tree-planting ceremony in Inochi-no-mori forest. We planted approximately 8,300 trees. All of our employees are making an effort to nurture the young trees planted in the ceremony as a symbol of the coexistence of nature and local society.

(3) Fusayoshi Matsuyama, Daicel Chemical Industries

Daicel Chemical Industries, Ltd., whose main products are cellulose derivatives and pyrotechnic devices, was chosen as the first beneficiary of the special support program for company headquarters. The company integrated the functions of seven group companies in Osaka, and recently moved its head office to Umeda.

Fusayoshi Matsuyama is the Administrative Manager of the Business Support Center.

Interviewer: Tell us a bit about the background around the decision to relocate your headquarters.

Matsuyama: Most of our production sites and research laboratories are located in western Japan, and therefore we favored locating our headquarters in the Kansai region from the beginning.

Interviewer: Why Osaka specifically?

Matsuyama: Partly because our business partners or customers, including financing corporations, securities firms and nonlife insurance companies, are based in Osaka. In addition to that, it is an excellent location to ease in-house communication. It is a very convenient location to take either the Shinkansen (bullet train) or an airplane, because both Shin-Osaka station and Itami airport are very near our head office.

And also, we had heard about the subsidies from the city of Osaka. We were glad to know that the city was encouraging corporations to move to Osaka. For those reasons, we decided to transfer our headquarters to Osaka.

(4) Yoshihiro Tagawa, Kyocera Mita Corporation

Kyocera Mita Corporation is an IT equipment manufacturer producing and selling copy machines and printers for business use. They constructed their new R&D center in the same location as their existing headquarter, aiming at consolidating their research facilities that were divided into separate departments and enhancing the ability to do high quality research and development.

Yoshihiro Tagawa is a Senior Managing Executive Officer with Kyocera Mita Corporation.

Interviewer: Why did your company decide to set up their new R&D centre in Osaka?

Tagawa: Our company was originally established in Osaka and expanded in Osaka. Thus we wanted to repay an obligation to the city, including contributions to the local society. All executives and employees would like to make the company continue to improve and develop here in Osaka. So we chose Osaka as the location of our headquarters.

We understand that both the municipal and prefectural governments of Osaka have been making efforts to invite corporations and hope to make Osaka as a hub of concentrated advanced technologies. The governments also offer support programs including subsidies. That is one of the reasons why we decided to locate our head office in Osaka.

Interviewer: Can you discuss Kyocera Mita's corporate vision for the future?

Tagawa: Freewheeling ideas with originality and uniqueness are required for research and develop. We therefore would like to renew our existing corporate culture and environment. One example of this is introducing non-territorial offices or plain clothes. We would like to create an open-minded atmosphere in our company.

(5) Yoshimitsu Yamazaki, Signpost Corporation

Osaka city puts a lot of effort into the creation of next-generation industries. Signpost Corporation is an Osaka University bio venture that is concerned with genetic testing and the prevention of arteriosclerosis, heart attacks, and other conditions.

Yoshimitsu Yamazaki is the president of Signpost Corporation.

Interviewer: Tell us about why you started a venture business in Osaka.

Yamazaki: As you know, Osaka was home to Tekijuku, the school where Western medicine was first introduced to Japan. Tekijuku was the forerunner of Osaka University, so you could say that the health industry has a long history in Osaka.

Osaka University has world-class micro technology and devices. Higashi-Osaka in Osaka Prefecture has world-renowned SMEs, and these have received government funding, especially in the Saito area [Saito is in North Osaka]. We used this funding to develop techniques for the prevention of arteriosclerosis.

We used micro devices from Osaka University to analyze multiple genes

simultaneously. We are now able to predict arteriosclerosis in the overweight or those suffering from lifestyle-related diseases.

Interviewer: What are you doing currently?

Yamazaki: Next we received support from Osaka City's Innovation Program run by the Industry Creation Center and used this to develop an exercise and nutrition program that uses genetic testing. We believe that we can provide guidance to healthy people regarding appropriate exercise and diet in order to prevent lifestyle-related diseases.

Interviewer: What are your plans for the future?

Yamazaki: We want to use our base of operations in Osaka to transmit information to the world, and especially to transmit information from Kansai to the rest of Asia.

(6) Prof. Hiroshi Ishiguro of Osaka University

Osaka City is aiming to be a center of the robotics industry. The city has attracted the head offices of the RoboCup Federation, which has a network of 4,000 researchers from universities and research institutions in 40 countries worldwide. Professor Asada of Osaka University acts as the president of the Federation. Team Osaka claimed its fourth consecutive victory in the RoboCup in 2007.

Professor Ishiguro of Team Osaka member Osaka University was selected by the scientific periodical *Mental Floss*, as one of the 'eight geniuses who will change the world'.

Interviewer: Why robots in Osaka?

Ishiguro: Why Osaka? Well, when you look at the development of computers and the internet, a lot of ideas were tried out in Silicon Valley, and there was a rapid technological revolution, and computers and the internet spread from there. So, if you're going to try something new, you need a place where you can try out a lot of different ideas.

Fortunately there are a lot of SMEs and large companies, and robot related companies in Osaka. There are also universities and research institutions.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on the "Knowledge Capital" in the area north of Osaka Station?

Ishiguro: I think it's important to exchange a whole lot of different ideas and recreate what happened in Silicon Valley here in Osaka. We all share the same space and exchange ideas and make things happen. I think building a system that allows us to do this is important. I think the role of Osaka Station North District is to provide us with exactly this kind of place.

(7) Shinshou Hongou, Ritsumeikan University

Since opening a satellite in Osaka in 1996, Ritsumeikan University has offered an MBA program and other post-graduate courses. Ritsumeikan also nurtures business talent in China in collaboration with Tongji University in Shanghai.

Shinshou Hongou is the Deputy Director of Ritsumeikan University.

Interviewer: Why did you open a business school in Osaka?

Hongou: In order to provide those active in the front line of business in Osaka with a place in which to further enhance their knowledge. We felt that as an economic center, Osaka was a suitable location for our new business school.

Interviewer: Tell us about your collaboration with Tongji University.

Hongou: Our Asia Pacific University in Oita Pref. has always accepted a lot of students from China. Tongji University is the top university in China in the fields of civil engineering and architecture. Ritsumeikan is among the top universities in Japan in terms of science and technology so we thought that collaboration between our two universities in terms of research and education could result in a mutually beneficial relationship, so we approached Tongji and they agreed.

(8) Last Word

The excerpts presented here are only a fraction of the interviews and other material that will be presented on the finished DVD. There will be additional interviews with members of foreign universities and other business leaders.

Be sure to check out the DVD to get a look at some of the inner workings of successful business ventures in Osaka City.

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