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## "Touch the Customer"

The year of the Bull is upon us, and as the depth of the ongoing recession becomes clear on a global level, the effects on local companies in Osaka, large and small, have emerged. Among the negative economic news coming, there are also some positive stories of companies that are aiming to take advantage of the current climate.

Osaka has traditionally been the home of SMEs and service providers, both

of which thrive on strong, residual relationships.

These relationships carry us well through good times and bad, and in the Osaka market, should not be undervalued.

It's no surprise that Osaka business leaders across industries are urging their staff to "touch the customer." A quick phone call or a brief visit for *aisatsu* goes a long way.

In this issue we are pleased to welcome

Christopher Campbell to our Foreign Business Leader spotlight. Chris is the Country Manager for InterGlobal Japan, a leading "expat" insurance company with its head office in Osaka. Chris offers some valuable insights for Osaka city as we move forward through difficult times.

As always your feedback is welcome!

**Paul Dupuis**, *Adviser to Osaka City Revitalization Task Force*

## Osaka in the Driver's Seat: Steering Technology into the Future

Osaka is blessed with rich natural resources such as an abundance of water and natural scenery. There are numerous charming spots in the city to keep the eager tourist busy for weeks but another one of Osaka's strengths, which is highlighted in this issue, is the concentration of technology talent and know-how in Osaka and how this will contribute to the growth of the city in years to come.

On December 22, 2008, leading citizens of Osaka reaffirmed their commitment to revitalizing the city in the Osaka City Forum for Revitalization

held at the Jijitsushin Hall, Chuo-ku, Tokyo.

The theme of resuscitation seemed apt for a city with a rich history dating back hundreds of years; this was an acknowledgment that indeed there have been challenges in the last decade but that these challenges are not insurmountable if the citizens of Osaka put their hearts into doing their part towards the fulfillment of the dreams they hold for their beloved city.

The current crop of government and business leaders at the forum such as Shigeo Sato, CEO of

Keihan Electric Railway Co. Ltd., Mr Hideo Miahara, former Chairman of Osaka University, and Mr Naoto Noguchi, an executive officer at Panasonic Corporation and President of Energy Corporation, recognized the need to have an eye towards the future without losing sight of present needs.

In this regard, technological excellence, which has been a part of Osaka's history, seems destined to play an even greater part in the city's growth in the years to come.

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## ***Osaka: Steering Technology into the Future***

### **AUTHOR**

*The Osaka City Revitalization Task Force has commissioned Paul Dupuis to author this series of newsletters.*

*Paul Dupuis, Director of West Japan for Wall Street Associates, is a business development adviser to Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture and is a key member of the Kansai Economic Federation roundtable.*

*He is also an Adviser to the Osaka City Revitalization Task Force. Questions & suggestions about these articles can be directed to him at:*

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### **Osaka's Technology Leadership**

California has its Silicon Valley and Massachusetts has its Cambridge/Boston technology hub. In Asia, one of the hottest spots for technology development is Osaka. If this has remained a well-kept secret, this is no longer going to be the case as the Osaka City government aims to go all out in helping Asia and the rest of the world appreciate how the city is positioned to maintain leadership in this area into the future.

The range of technological expertise in the Osaka area is already incredible but the City and its people have an open door policy for businesses that can contribute to the rich business environment. Technology firms that can benefit from being close to other technology and research based companies are welcome to make their home in Osaka. In addition to the potential for collaboration with others Osaka is within one of the fastest growing markets in the world, namely, Asia. The ease with which one can travel from the Osaka area to places such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Taipei, Shanghai, and Seoul, makes Osaka one of the ideal centres for the development and marketing of products.

Here below are a few of the technologies and plans that will play a part in Osaka's continued growth as a technology hub.

### **Lithium-ion Batteries**

The continued presence of highly-respected companies such as Panasonic and many lesser-known companies testify to the tremendous advantages that exist for those who choose to set up business in the Osaka area. Panasonic has reaffirmed its commitment to the Osaka area by making the Panel Bay Area the home of its lithium ion battery production. The attraction of similar companies to the area supports the development of technology in general and information technology and robotics in particular.

### **Environmental Solutions**

Over the next few years, companies that are able to come up with environmentally friendly products or other environmental solutions are going to be at the forefront of growth that might continue perhaps into the next century. As the understanding seeps in for people around the world that we need to be ecologically sensitive to save our planet and ourselves, individuals, companies, and governments are all looking for leadership and true technological solutions that would help them leave a smaller carbon footprint on the earth. Not surprisingly, companies in Osaka are at the head of the pack. For example, Panasonic has developed a range of environmental products some of which are geared towards saving energy in the home and reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Panasonic's line of products, unveiled at the Eco-Products 2008 travelling exhibitions, focused on "Eco Ideas for Products," "Eco Ideas for Manufacturing," and "Eco Ideas for Everybody, Everywhere."

Osaka Steering Technology...continued

Robotics

If robots are getting much more respect these days it may be because the scientists and technologists in Osaka and around the world have been unceasing in their efforts to create robotic products that are truly useful.

The Osaka City government takes great pride in Osaka's pioneering role in robot technology and in the continuing efforts on the part of numerous companies in the Osaka area to develop the next generation of robots.

Robots are being developed not just for the entertainment of the young kids in the family. There are educational robots, cleaning robots, mobile transport robots, and industrial robots that assemble products, weld metal pieces together, or even paint. For any of these robots, you can be sure that a company or research center somewhere in the Osaka area, is fine-tuning its next

generation of products that will help shape the future for all humankind in the areas of housework, medicine, security and the handling of dangerous tasks.

3D without Glasses: Now we're talking!

No doubt, you've seen pictures of people sitting in a theatre and wearing futuristic looking glasses so that they can see images on the screen in three dimensions. Technology, ever evolving, now says, "Drop your 3D glasses. Not needed." Sharp, now under the Panasonic umbrella, has designed a display that offers the best of both worlds - 2D and 3D with just the flick of a switch. Sharp's LL-151-3D display offers a dream world of realistic looking images for those believe that their lives depend on such realism - architects, surgeons, and the super-serious gamer, of which there are quite a few these days. That's another magic coming out of Osaka!

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It's better to hang out with people better than you. Pick out associates whose behavior is better than yours and you'll drift in that direction.

Warren Buffett



Hidekazu Kitamura, Director General, Planning and Coordination Bureau, Osaka City Government



Osaka City Revitalization Forum held in Jijitsushin Hall, Chuo-ku, Tokyo on December 22, 2008

Even the sturdiest of dikes is destroyed by an ant hole.

Katsuaki Watanabe

## Knowledge Capital Osaka

### Knowledge Capital

The development of Knowledge Capital, a 7-hectare piece of land to the east of the Osaka Station North District will send a clear statement to the industry and consumers that Osaka will cede no ground in its quest to remain at the forefront of technological development. While the new development will not cater exclusively to technology related businesses, it will nevertheless showcase to the world the high level of enthusiasm that Osaka has for knowledge, research, and product development.

Knowledge Capital will have showrooms and convention facilities, which will come in handy for the large number of international visitors that are expected to visit.

As a technology and lifestyle centre, it is certain to attract sophisticated global nomads, along with businesses that appreciate the network of assets available in Osaka and the Kansai area.

The development will proceed in stages and it is envisioned that some time after 2012 there could be as many as 2.5 million people visiting in one day!

But the development is not a get-rich-quick scheme. Rather, it is geared towards long-term sustainability and contribution to

the range of great attractions that make visitors want to come back again and again to the Osaka area.

To ensure that Knowledge Capital functions at the highest standards, 12 leading companies in the Kansai area have come together to form the Knowledge Management Organization. The depth and breadth of experience of their leadership, along with advice from other interested stakeholders, promise that the concept has a high probability of success.

### Cyber Art Center

This is envisioned as one of the centerpieces of the Knowledge Capital. At the top of the four-level structure is a place for collaboration among different players in the field of technology and art. The third level will be geared towards media art, and the second level would be a place where people can have a rich tapestry of experience for all five senses. At level 1 there will be a café.

This melding together of technology and art is certain to attract new groups to Osaka, including the large number of young computer-savvy individuals around the world who are at home behind the computer game console and equally at home making their own creations through the use of the latest technology tools.

## Keihan-Nakanoshima Line Open!

The opening of the Keihan-Nakanoshima line in October 2008, serves to advance the goal of facilitating life for the people of Osaka and its environs. With this new line, the trip from Nakanoshima in Osaka to Sanyo in Kyoto takes only 65 minutes. It is also only an 85-minute trip between the international meeting centre in Kyoto and its counterpart in Osaka.

The opening of the Hanshin-Namba line in March 2009, which will link Sannomiya in Kobe to Osaka and Nara directly will also be a step in the right direction for those who have to do a lot of traveling in the Kansai area. Going from Kobe to Nara in 80 minutes will be a great time saver in a period when more than ever time truly means money!

*Osaka Foreign Business Spotlight:***Chris Campbell, InterGlobal Japan****Tell us a bit about yourself, home country, hobbies etc.**

I was born in Montreal, Quebec in Canada, but this was short-lived as my father was posted to Germany when I was only 10 months old. We returned to Canada when I was 3, but as my father was in the Canadian Armed Forces, every 3 years we had to pick up and move to another province.

After living in Ontario, Alberta, and New Brunswick we ended up in Comox on Vancouver Island, where I call home; well, that is, until I came to Japan. Ironically, I have lived longer in Japan than I have lived in any of the postings we had in Canada!

Moving from town to town as a young child, you learn very quickly how to make new friends and fit in. At the time it was very difficult, but I now realize that it builds good character in a person, and for those of you who know me, I am not a shy person.

The morning after my high school graduation, I had a knock on my apartment door at 6 am. It was my parents coming to say good-bye as my

father had been posted back to Germany for the closure of the Canadian Armed Forces bases there.

So at the young age of 18, I was living on my own and working construction jobs for a local contractor. After a few years, my employer sponsored me for an apprenticeship, and I received my ticket for carpentry when I was 24. A year later, I took a position to manage 10 carpenters that were being sent to Japan to help rebuild Kobe after the devastating Hanshin Earthquake in 1995.

I arrived at KIX on January 10, 1996 and have been living in Kansai since and loving every minute of it. I soon made connections with a local real estate company, and then started importing materials and bringing over carpenters from Canada. As if this was not challenging enough, I thought it would be interesting to run a restaurant bar in Sannomiya just for fun!!

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## Osaka City Urban Revitalization Task Force

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See us at:

[www.osaka-saisei.jp/eng/index.html](http://www.osaka-saisei.jp/eng/index.html)

## *Business Spotlight: Chris Campbell interview*

Although I greatly enjoyed being involved in the building and restaurant businesses, I wanted to add to my portfolio, so in 2001, I took on a position as Operations Manager for InterGlobal.

Recently, my greatest hobby is playing golf. Not well, but I think a majority of us golfers fall into the same boat. Living in the Kansai area, with its vast range of golf courses, accommodates this recent passion. I have played some beautiful courses in the area, including some that are brutally challenging, so much so, that even the PGA pros refuse to play, and the oldest golf course in Japan. As with many things in Japan, the style of play is unique, but again with many things in Japan you learn to adjust and eventually appreciate.

### **Tell us a bit about your Company!**

InterGlobal Japan is a support/assistance company for our parent company InterGlobal Insurance Company Limited (IICL) based in the United Kingdom. InterGlobal is a Private Medical Insurance Company with offices in 11 countries around the world and with policyholders in 180 countries.

InterGlobal provides customer and claims support to its 8,000+ policyholders in Japan. As our parent company is based in the UK, we offer real-time support with our local knowledge and our professional bilingual staff. Our main model is to instill peace of mind to the Expats in Japan. That is, if something happens to them, we can assist (in English and Japanese) and act as a conduit between them, the hospitals and our parent/assistance company.

Our products are very comprehensive and competitively-priced. We cover medical and other essential benefits that foreigners (living and working abroad) should have, in case the worst should happen. These include benefits, such as dental, wellness checkups, repatriation, medical evacuation, and compassionate home visits.

### **What is your current role at InterGlobal Japan?**

I started off as Operations Manager and within a year I took on the position as Country Manager. I am responsible for the entire operation in Japan and business development. My success would not be possible without the very dedicated and professional staff at InterGlobal.

My role as Country Manager has taken me away from dealing with a majority of the individual clients in Japan, but I know our clients are in very competent hands with the professional customer support and claims team we have developed.

This enables me to focus on developing new business relationships and constantly looking for innovative solutions that our current and potential clients are looking for. Yes, developing new business relationships has really helped my golf handicap!!

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*Business Spotlight: Chris Campbell interview***What is the vision for the Future of your organization in the Kansai area and in general?**

Since 2001 our client base has almost quadrupled, and I would like to see that happen again within the next two years. InterGlobal prides itself on its products and on the highest level of customer support. Although we cannot be everything to everyone, we go out of our way to try.

Our main vision is to provide a “glo-cal” presence by educating our clients and our Headquarters. As an international player in the industry, each country has different cultures and systems. There are many niche areas in our industry, and we would like to be able to provide solutions in those areas.

Our brand is well known in the Expat community and this has evolved over the years by word of mouth. We do not advertise in Japan. However, by supporting our clients when the unfortunate happens, good word spreads like wildfire in the community.

**What is the attraction of Osaka as a place to do business and Kansai as a place to live?**

I am always asked, “Why is your company based in Osaka?” The answer is relatively simple. Location, people, cost!! As a support office, we have clients all over Japan, therefore being centrally located is very convenient for us. The people of Kansai are very kind and open and in our industry this is very important. We have a great team of bilingual Kansai-jin that keep our policyholders happy.

Cost is a huge factor for InterGlobal as reducing our fixed operating costs helps keep insurance premiums low for our clients. To have a similarly sized operation in Tokyo would triple our operating costs across the board.

Osaka is a very professional, relaxed, and beautiful environment for business, and I do not know why every company does not have their headquarters or a branch in Osaka.

**What opportunities do you see for the Osaka business area in regard to foreign investment?**

With the current financial crisis the world is in, I think we will see more companies thinking of starting up in Osaka rather than Tokyo. With the current strength of the yen, our operating costs seem about 25% higher (relative to the British Pound, the currency of our head office) than they were last year. I dare to think what our relative costs would be if we had an office in Tokyo.

Osaka's recent development of the Kintentsu and Keihan lines will bring many opportunities for investment in the region. Osaka's constant redevelopment programs will make the region a very attractive place to open a new business or expand an existing business.

**Any final comments or advice as a member of the foreign network in Osaka?**

This initiative, headed by Mayor Hiramatsu is a great opportunity for all of us to be able to contribute and assist with some of the recent developments in Osaka. The outlook for 2009 is very unknown, but with networks like this we can all learn together, build together, and contribute together to survive.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my views and I look forward to seeing you all in the near future.

***About Our Organization...***

Since 2003, **Osaka City Urban Revitalization Task Force** has been seeking to attract individuals, businesses, and educational institutions that can contribute to the dynamism, creativity, and vibrancy of the Osaka area. Contact us with feedback and suggestions at: [info@osaka-saisei.jp](mailto:info@osaka-saisei.jp)