

## A proud badge of honor, more than just a label of origin

The words “Made in Japan” have been a standard of quality and excellence for generations of businesses, but in the turbulent 21st century, it is the turn of internationally-minded Japanese firms to set those standards.

The phrase “Made in Japan” is supposed to mean more than just a place of origin. Such famous words have traditionally signified quality, excellence and the kind of standards that consumers and clients around the world have come to expect. Now, in the world of globalized trade, online sales and manufacturing-cost rivals, the badge of identity has become more important than ever, as Japanese businesses work to compete and succeed in an ever-changing marketplace. Powered by a traditional sense of customer service and quality known locally as *monozukuri*, hard-working firms are clinging proudly to their national trademark, while also constantly seeking to push and redefine what it means. In the pharmaceuticals sector, for example, domestic success is paving the way for international ambitions. Kunio Yamada, Chairman and CEO of Rohto Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd., is a firm believer in the strength of his industry, and most importantly, his nation.

“Some believe that the Japanese position on the global stage is declining, however, from another perspective, there is still a lot of potential for further growth,” said Yamada. “One of our strengths is a long history of tradition, as well as looking at problems from a long-term perspective.”

Another sector seeking to make a big difference is higher education, as more and more universities look to play a key role in Japan’s increasingly important role in global trade.

While secondary-level schooling has always been renowned for its high standards, universities are

working to broaden the horizons of their students, and by extension, the economy. Takashi Wada, President of Kanazawa University, said both global thinking and connections with business will be crucial going forward. “We believe that through an increased emphasis on international education, Japanese and international students can integrate with one another and develop mutually beneficial relationships,” Wada said.

Working globally to the highest possible levels of service and quality is a central tenet of Wakachiku Construction and a national characteristic, according to president and representative director Katsuhiko Karasuda. “We will never change our policy on high standards,” Karasuda said. “It is important for clients of Japanese companies to understand this.” The defining qualities of Japanese manufacturing

**“We have been seeing a growth in overseas inquiries, so we have been looking to better address these needs.”**

Taiji Aoki, CEO, Fujiseiki Co., Ltd.

**“The Japanese education system is well integrated, from elementary school to university. At each level, there is a strong connection between institutions and private-sector businesses.”**

Takashi Wada, President, Kanazawa University

might be most famously represented by machines, vehicles and electronics, but its food and drink sectors have been applying the same formula for

success to their own output.

With generations of tradition and history poured into a skilled endeavor and brought to market with the greatest attention to detail

**“There are many companies making a big difference within Japan.”**

Kunio Yamada, Chairman and CEO, Rohto Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd.

and quality, renowned confectioner Eitaro Sohonpo is proudly Japanese. “Ten years ago, Japanese food was certified as one of world heritage by UNESCO, including Japanese sweets and Japanese confectionery.” He added: “Personally, I think that my recommendation of Japanese food for people who may not be aware is something that can stand alone and be tasty,” said Makoto Hosoda, Representative Director and President of Eitaro Sohonpo.

For food-processing manufacturer Fujiseiki Co., Ltd., a global outlook is important as it caters to various markets, at home and abroad. However, CEO Taiji Aoki insisted he will always fly the flag with pride. “Despite looking to maintain close ties with overseas clients, we will continue to emphasize the benefits of Made in Japan,” he said.

## Higher learning, higher living



**“Education, culture, and peace are the three pillars of the spirit of the university.”**

Masashi Suzuki, President, Soka University

At some institutions, a successful education is about more than just what is printed on the diploma. Soka University in Japan has long championed a holistic approach to teaching that has helped produce generation after generation of thought-driven graduates ready to make their mark on the world.

Having celebrated its 50th anniversary last year, the university is famous for offering courses such as Peace Studies, and its approaches to sustainability and partner projects in the developing world. In addition to its liberal arts commitments, the institution is also a keen adopter of new technology, with certain data science classes compulsory for all students. “When we talk about new culture, the connection is between the human spirit,” said President Masashi Suzuki. “We need a fundamental philosophy to pursue peace and moral education. The underlying principle is ‘Discover your potential,’” Suzuki said.



## Tackling society’s problems with the latest science and technology

A Japanese pharmaceutical firm has social responsibility at the heart of its business and plans to make regenerative medicine more accessible.



Kunio Yamada, Chairman & CEO, Rohto Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd.

In a fast moving society, the most responsible businesses are working not just for profit, but for meaningful change and innovation. For Japanese pharmaceuticals company Rohto Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd., the commitment stretches from children’s foundation work to disaster relief, social welfare and regenerative medicine to help address the aging crisis. The company has become a key player in healthcare and well-being with its diverse product range from skincare to over-the-counter medicines. “Looking back at our company history, social contribution has always been a strong emphasis,” said Chairman and CEO Kunio Yamada. “I would like the company to remain on this path, it contributes to our reputation and credibility. Creating hope for children is also an important matter, allowing them to develop their individual talents for the future,” he added. A huge element of that is social responsibility, including the “ROHTO Foundation for Children’s Future”, part of a



In-house manufactured animal origin-free culture media for mesenchymal stem cells.

commitment to supporting communities and making people’s lives better.

The aging population issue, in particular, is set to affect all advanced economies. While many have been

Pipelines of Regenerative Medicines (as of October 2022)

Cell type	Code	Indications	Partner	Stage				Application
				Non-clinical	P1	P2	P3	
Human adipose-derived stem cells	ADR-001	Cirrhosis of the liver	Shionogi	██████████				
	ADR-002K	Serious heart failure		██████████				
	ADR-001	Kidney diseases		██████████				
	ADR-001	Serious leg ischemia		██████████				
	ADR-001	Lung fibrosis		██████████				
	ADR-001	COVID-19 pneumonia		██████████				
Human umbilical cord-derived stem cells	UDI-001	Neurodegenerative diseases		██████████				
Cartilage cell kit <sup>※1</sup>		Traumatic cartilage defects		██████████				
		Osteoarthritis		██████████				

※1 Produced by Interstem Co., Ltd. (our subsidiary)

exploring technological solutions such as automation, the Osaka-based firm is working in the cutting-edge field of regenerative medicine to address conditions affected by unmet healthcare needs. “We currently have an issue with the aging population,” Yamada said. “The solutions and technologies that we are producing to solve this problem will have uses in other nations as time progresses.”

Rohto entered regenerative medicine full scale in 2013 and is conducting clinical trials for many conditions including COVID-19. In order to conduct clinical trials, cell cultures must meet strict regulations that have led to the development of an Animal Origin Free (AOF) culture medium containing no animal or human materials. This technology is being



Cultures and clinical trials central to research.

applied in services and products for medical practitioners and products for general use. Commitment to social causes has been crucial to the firm’s success going back more than 100 years, and is something it looks for in partners around the world. This work is part of the

**“Being a pharmaceutical company for over 100 years, R&D is a key area of our business and we have a very active relationship with universities.”**

Kunio Yamada

firm’s commitment to supporting communities and making people’s lives better. “Our R&D activities see no borders in the geographical sense. We have a range of subsidiaries in other

countries, doing well in a business sense and also share our values and desire to contribute to local communities where they operate,” Yamada said. “We want to support various aspects of people’s lives to contribute to overall well-being. This goal will be the identity of our company moving forward,” Yamada said.



Automated research tech supports cell culturing.



## A global classroom



Japanese education is famous for its traditions of hard work and results. However, one of the nation's most historic universities is driving a learning revolution to make its students more internationally minded and free-thinking.

**“We are in a transition where people value individuality more.”**

Yoko Kagami, President, Komazawa University

Tokyo's Komazawa University has celebrated its 140th anniversary, but its roots go even deeper, with educational origins dating back more than 430 years.

Its strategy has been designed as a forward-thinking approach, led by President Yoko Kagami, encouraging individual thinking, sustainability-linked lessons, and exchanges with 27 institutions all over the world.

“We take pride in meeting the needs of the times without losing sight of our founding philosophy, and the essence of education and research,” Kagami said. “Agreements with overseas partners are very important in both research and student exchange.”



## New ideas for a new world

Japanese firms of all sizes are working towards a better future with pioneering innovation and research.

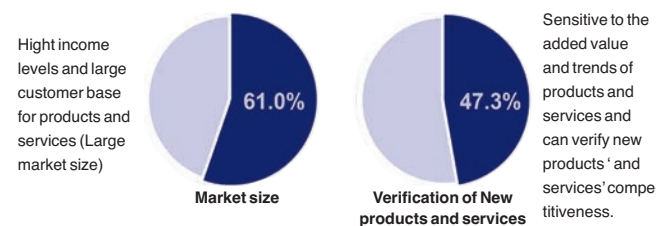
The beating entrepreneurial heart of every successful business is in the 'what next'. Whether it's new products, new ideas or new techniques, the embrace of innovation is what sets the best companies apart. In Japan, a renowned home of technology and forward thinking, this is especially true. R&D is the secret ingredient helping an army of firms lead their fields, as reflected in global statistics proving Japan leads the field for patents, expenditure and resulting success. This successful reputation is growing, and as well as driving domestic markets, has been proven to attract global investment. An intriguing aspect of this culture is the way different firms approach R&D. Takashi Kaetsu, president of infrastructure and power-connections manufacturer Doi Seisakusho Co., Ltd., said innovation is a huge part of the company's drive to take advantage of an increasing reliance on connectivity.

“As the world moves towards Society 5.0, access to information in smart cities will be as essential as access to utilities such as gas, water and electricity,” he predicted. “We update new specifications to respond to those activities and research in design and development at our Tokyo headquarters and Chiba factory,” Kaetsu said.

Innovation is also an integral part of the culture at precision-casting and molding firm Castem Co., Ltd. “Compared to

### Evaluation by Foreign Affiliates: The Greatest Attractiveness of Japan is its market

The attractiveness of investing in Japan for companies is “the large market size” and “the potentiality to verify new products and services' competitiveness.”



[Source] Compiled from “54th Survey of Trends in Business Activities of Foreign Affiliates (conducted in connection with business for FY2019)” (METI)

other companies, we think of challenging new ideas as a concept that should be thought of naturally, not as a company policy that we should strive towards,” said president Takuo Toda.

Shinichi Nakayama, president of components manufacturer Nakayama Seimitsu Co., Ltd., said that his firm's R&D is tailored to corporate needs and market movements. “We try to identify what the major field is, such as our current interest in fuel cells and molding for fuel-cell casing production,” he said. Industrial components supplier Kondotec Inc. president Katsuhiko Kondo agreed that advances play a key role in the economy, and it's vital for firms to lead the way. “We have subsidiaries where we develop new automation systems to improve productivity,” Kondo said. “We are interested in combining existing technologies for new products.”

## Making a big impact



The boldest businesses are not always judged on their size. With 160 employees, Japanese firm Kinboshi Inc. may sit on the smaller side of the SME bracket, but it is making a huge and profound impact thanks to a revolutionary powder-feeding technology with wide-ranging applications including next-gen EV batteries.

The firm, which specializes in a wide range of manufacturing including security uniforms and security equipment, while also providing management services. Kinboshi supplies products to the healthcare industry, which is a prime example of its ambition

**“We want to focus on making high-value products that only our company can produce.”**

Kazufumi Ishii, Representative Director, Kinboshi Inc.

and drive that is making a difference in terms of innovation. The common thread through all Kinboshi's products and strategies is improving lives and society. “We are working on the R&D of new products that can solve societal problems,” said President Kazufumi Ishii. “Our corporate slogan is ‘being helpful towards people’ and providing products that benefit clients,” he said.

**Brilliant Together**  
**KINBOSHI**

## Automation on the menu for Japan's food-machinery specialists

Tackling the labor shortage with automated systems should be meat-and-potatoes for a firm that has built its reputation on producing the highest-quality food-preparation machinery.



Onigiri machines play a key role at the heart of Fuji Seiki's business and are central to its automation plans.

The labor-shortage crisis and the need to move towards automation and robotic production is a major issue for every industry. Some businesses are preparing well and some are catching up fast, but some appear to have been working towards it for decades.

Japanese food-production equipment manufacturer Fujiseiki Co., Ltd. has built an international reputation for developing and supplying machines to expertly create artisan Japanese foods, such as sushi and



The company's strength is in development capability, solving detailed requests from customers.

onigiri, with the same standard and quality as hand-rolled delicacies of the past. With worldwide success in this field, thanks to years of taking the best of Japanese menus to Europe and beyond, the firm is more than well-versed in this approach to production technology. By applying its labor-saving

machine experience to the manufacturing process itself, the business is well placed not just to cope with staffing shortages and developing population crises but to thrive in the new era. This practiced approach to R&D has seen the

firm operate nimbly, offering bespoke services to clients and taking advantage of the growth in convenience shopping and eating in the last few decades. “Due to labor shortages, we have to think about how we can manage tasks with automation,” said President Taiji Aoki. This approach is particularly true of the food industry, where unimpeachable standards are required at all levels, all the time. “In food manufacturing, safety and hygiene are of top importance. To ensure this, manufacturers have to ensure consistent products. Automation is one way of accomplishing this. With delicate foods such as sushi and onigiri, we always look for new processes to produce better-tasting, higher-quality end results,” Aoki said.

The diminishing population in Japan is not just an issue for labor supply, but also for the future depth of consumer markets. In response, the firm is using its experience and techniques to branch out to interna-



The Temaki Onigiri produced by the automated Onigiri Line.

tional food-production machinery, such as pasta- and tortilla-making devices. Even with its bold international ambitions, the Fukuoka-based company is proud of its “Made in Japan” status, which has seen it work with an incredible 10,000-plus businesses in its history, creating more than 250 types of machines for customers. “With bases in Europe and Southeast Asia, we will be looking to further our presence in those areas,” said Aoki. “The next step will be a further push into the U.S. market as sushi is increasing in popularity there.” “We are currently working on these new areas, and are looking to commercialize them soon,” Aoki said.



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Sushi Machine Noodle Machine Onigiri Machine Rice Dispenser

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## Building a Better Future at Home and Overseas

The construction industry is being revolutionized by automation and sustainability.



Katsuhiko Karasuda,  
President & Representative Director, Wakachiku Construction Co., Ltd.

A Japanese construction company is proving that neither the sky nor the seas set the limits when it comes to innovation and forward thinking that can change the world. Famous for its high reputation for products such as a sea-going dredger, wind turbines and civil projects like bridges, harbors and tunnels, Wakachiku Construction Co., Ltd. has been a key player in the Japanese construction industry for more than 130 years. The company is now building upon its proud history and rich experience by making progress every day with new innovations and technologies positively impacting the future of human life on land and at sea. These include seaweed-farm carbon-capture projects, electric-vehicle (EV) ships and automation to help mitigate a looming workforce crisis. Also among them are disaster-prevention systems to help better survive natural disasters that have often caused significant damage in Japan and the Asia-Pacific region.

With extensive public and private contracts at home in Japan, and international projects in nations such as Sri Lanka and Indonesia, the company has become one of the go-to suppliers for major civil and building works across different industries and countries. According to company CEO Katsuhiko Karasuda, the simple principle for success is Wakachiku's inherent and ever-continuing commitment to high standards. "Our policy is to maintain safety and quality, it is the core of our business," he said. "That is how we get trust and reliability from customers. We have been upholding this motto for the past 130 years and will continue to do so." "Demonstrating the quality and safety of our products is the only way to persuade our customers that it is worthwhile to pay more. Although it is often difficult to do so when facing low-cost oriented

competitors, Wakachiku will never change its policy on high standards. Wakachiku has never betrayed the expectations of the clients, and they do understand our commitment to high standards," Karasuda said.

On land, the company has an excellent reputation for civil engineering projects such as bridges, tunnels and roads, as well as important infrastructure works such as airports and ports. Agility and flexibility are central to Wakachiku's corporate structure and its 800 employees. With the company's diverse range of products and technologies, Wakachiku can meet customers' every need in whichever field they require. Wakachiku is proud that its engineers can integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with R&D to create more efficient and innovative construction techniques, and can finally fulfill its social responsibilities. Regarding its innovative techniques, Karasuda said: "Achieving carbon neutrality is a major concern for the industry. Our R&D divisions are trying to develop new technologies so that we can better visualize the sea bed, as well as technologies for automating sea works. We are working on a fully electric ship that does not require any fossil fuels to operate."

**"Our number one sales point is high quality and safety. This is the top priority of Wakachiku."**

Katsuhiko Karasuda



Offshore innovation is key for Wakachiku.

In addition to groundbreaking work in wind turbines, the company is extending work in solar and biomass generation. While the company's key commitment to the SDGs is also shown in its Blue-Carbon projects that encourage carbon-capturing seaweed growth in the ocean. This system of seaweed farming

is under trial in the waters along the coast of Iwate Prefecture. This project can be rolled out across the nation - and possibly around the world - in due course. "In Japan, it was more than 20 years ago that the first wind turbines were introduced, and now it is the time for maintenance and replacement," Karasuda said. "An interesting area we have been recently looking at is renewable energy and we have quite a lot of experience in wind energy, as well as solar, water, and biomass energy systems," he added. "Engaging ourselves with producing off-shore windmills is just a step forward. We see these fields of renewable energy as areas with high potential for future growth," Karasuda said.



## The domestic hidden heroes

Small appliances in the home are often made by hidden champion firms shining brighter than ever.

When it comes to next-gen technology, much is said about glamorous and exciting products such as electric vehicles or robotics. But the SME business wave sweeping Japan has many more humble, but just as crucial, participants. From kitchen utensils to the very water the nation drinks and cleans with, the firms behind products often taken for granted are among the nation's hidden champions doing simple things very well. Toshiaki Nishioka, president of water faucet and supply firm SANEI Co., Ltd., said that domestic interests are the key-stone of the firm's model and the base for wider expansion elsewhere.

"Our largest proportion of the business is the household area," he said. "I believe the most profitable business for us is the flat-type house. These are our strengths and the largest proportion of our business. Our next target is to enhance the non-household market areas." A staple of commercial kitchens and industrial sharpening is the successful whetstone and wheel grinder firm Fuji Grinding Wheel Mfg. Co., Ltd. The firm's President Ri Gakusho said he takes the role of his business in Japan's manufacturing culture very seriously. "I have been trying to make a difference in our society for 12 to 15 years," Gakusho said. "We make products that cut, sharpen, and grind. We are thinking together about what kind of products we should create depending on how society and the market would change in the future. I believe it is my job to create something for the next generation."

## STEAMing into the future with global learning

Kanazawa University is working to attract more international students by offering top class research, liberal arts, and science subjects as part of a plan to produce leaders of the future.



Takashi Wada,  
President, Kanazawa University

A forward-thinking university is planning to revolutionize education for the next generation by bringing the world to Japan. The ground-breaking faculty of Kanazawa University is working to improve not just the life and performance of its students, but of the

wider society and economy.

The institution not only works to attract international learners but has developed a specially designed social system to support their local integration and well-being. Now Kanazawa University President, Takashi Wada said they need to work harder to open to the wider world while strengthening ties with local society. "Being an island country is part of what makes Japan's culture so special and inviting more international students enhances that culture, nationally and at Kanazawa University, in terms of research, the educational atmosphere, and the local community," he said. Attracting and getting the best out of the next generation of students requires a multifaceted approach combining welfare, academics, and creative thinking.

As well as its strong commitment to life sciences research, and ICT systems that support remote learning and the web-enabled smart society of the future, the Kanazawa faculty are keen enthusiasts for STEAM

## One-of-a-kind protection



**"The reputation of our company has preceded us and customer satisfaction has been maintained."**

Satoshi Morita,  
President, Aicello Corporation

Every company wants to be the very best it can be. For technology-packaging firm Aicello Corporation, the target is to go one step further, by creating products and customer service that are entirely one of a kind. A producer of protective packaging for precision technology manufacturing of process chemicals and components for items such as semiconductors, the company bases its business model around the Japanese concept of *dantotsu* as an essential factor in its growth.

"We have been pursuing niche markets with *dantotsu* products, meaning tangible or intangible advantages over the competition that cannot be replicated," said Satoshi Morita, president of Aicello. Creating products to keep the most precise components uncontaminated is a delicate task. "Tangible elements are things like product quality, but intangible elements refer to things like marketing, and business know-how. Mixing all these elements into our business is the *dantotsu* concept," Morita said.



studies, the modern idea of integrating arts teaching alongside technical subjects. "The newer generation requires a higher level of resourcefulness, with a wide skill set gained from a variety of areas," Wada said. "We ensure liberal arts are taught across a wide range of degree disciplines." With 160 years of history, the university is proud to look back while planning forward. "The vision for the future involves ideas of what we 'should' be. Our first and most important mission is to foster the next generation of leaders and thinkers," Wada said.

