

Comprehensive centers providing one-stop services to Japanese and foreign companies wishing to start businesses in Hyogo-Kobe

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ACCJ Hyogo Forum Vitalizing Japan through Kansai !

In October 2012, the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ) and Hyogo hosted the "Vitalizing Japan through Kansai" Panel Discussion. Mr. Ido, the governor of Hyogo, lectured on how the Union of Kansai Governments has been working in tandem with local industries, and how Hyogo prefecture has been working to attract global companies. The second portion of the event was led by five panelists from the ACCJ who shared their perspective on the business expectations of global companies in terms of what the Kansai region has to offer.

(Due to the limited length of this article, only panelist opinions have been included.)

Panelists

Mr. Michael Alfant, ACCJ President/ Chairman and CEO at Fusion Systems Group
Mr. Laurence W. Bates, ACCJ Vice President/ Japan General Counsel at GE Japan
Mr. Jeffrey S. Bernier, ACCJ Vice President/ Managing Director Asia Pacific at Delta Air Lines
Mr. George L. Maffeo, Vice President at Boeing International, President at Boeing Japan
Mr. Kiran S. Sethi, ACCJ Vice President-Kansai/ President at Jupiter International Corporation
(The moderator Mr. Akio Matsumoto, ACCJ External Affairs Committee Chair-Kansai)

Emphasis on infrastructure, capital and talent Mr. Michael J. Alfant

There are four key elements executives desire from Kansai in order to promote successful business in the region. Infrastructure is the first element. Not only the port and transportation but also include conveniences which are available to small companies such as child care and leisure facilities as well as wireless Internet access across all areas. The second element is venture capital. Expedite financial projection and implementation is a crucial part to small business success. Thirdly, the availability of a rich labor pool which includes talented managers and experienced executives with the knowledge of sales and business culture. Lastly, and most important to business is the need for a strong customer base. Strength in business comes from customers who are willing to work with small firms and look for top value and competitive advantages.

Connecting techniques and companies Mr. Laurence W. Bates

General Electric recognizes Japan as an important location for advanced technology. GE is very interested in the untapped technology that exists in Kansai and other areas in Japan. The "Japan Technology Matching Forum" sponsored by GE, is held annually and receives hundreds of applications. This event is held to give GE engineers and businesses the ability to share their technologies. The event has brought

many successful cases here in Kansai as well. GE has joint ventures in Kobe in biomedical research and innovations. We would like to ask Kansai region to help linkage from local technologies to the foreign companies like ours.

Strengthen the sustainability of aviation and transportation Mr. Jeffrey S. Bernier

The aviation and transportation industry enables connectivity between people and businesses. What can Hyogo or Kansai do to improve sustainability? Airports and infrastructure should work collaboratively in order to compete globally, with the transportation system working more effectively as one entity as opposed to many separate systems. Airports should be more cost efficient, and the aviation and transportation industry should be viewed as the backbone of economic growth. Kansai should strive to be proactive in establishing long-term, longer-view economic incentives. A partnership between Japan and the U.S. could be beneficial in this field.

Creating job training and employments Mr. George L. Maffeo

What we would like to directly cooperate with Kansai is aerospace high-tech job training. The number of airplanes is expected to be about double (20,000 airplanes) in next twenty years. This will lead us to create aerospace job trainings as well as employments in the future. We focus on two main areas. Those are increasing our

production rates and continuing the development of production. They will provide employments. This cannot be done without our partnership with Japan and especially the Kansai region. So we (have to) work closely together in Japan as well as in Kansai region.

Importance of strategic marketing Mr. Kiran S. Sethi,

ACCJ Kansai continually requests that the Union of Kansai governments and Kansai local governments to promote Kansai as "one". Osaka, Kobe and Kyoto are represented as separate from Kansai, and this has been proven to be an inefficient marketing approach. The name "Kansai", is not recognized by many in the U.S. Therefore, business strategy should adopt and market the area more broadly as "Kansai". "I am a second generation business owner and realize the importance of a strategic marketing initiative for Kansai."



Panel discussion at ACCJ Hyogo Forum
※From the left: Mr. Matsumoto (the moderator), Mr. Sethi, Mr. Ido (the governor), Mr. Alfant, Mr. Bates, Mr. Bernier and Mr. Maffeo

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Hyogo-Kobe comes up with various prominence in tourism

Every year Kobe, a bright and international tourism city with the contrast of sea-blue and mountain-green, mesmerizes 30 million visitors. The Akashi Kaikyo Bridge, the longest suspension structure bridge in the world, and the rest of sightseeing spots in "Hyogo-Kobe" also attract visitors from all over the world. The topography of Hyogo spans from Japan sea in north, to the Seto inland sea, and to the Pacific Ocean through Kitan Strait in south. The Hyogo region is home to a variety of cities, fishing villages and countryside areas. As is known as a microcosm of Japan because of its distinct weather and diverse climate, the prefecture is blessed with various tourism resources, an array of which is mentioned hereafter.



Nature's beautiful seasons

Hyogo has an abundance of beautiful nature. San'in Kaigan Geo-park is open out across Toyooka City, Kami-cho and Shin-onsen-cho and is just one of many gorgeous areas. San'in Kaigan Geo-park was certified as a world-geo-park in 2010, and is home to the museum of "Topography and Geology". View the beautiful coastline and diverse landscape this area has to offer.

Hyogo is also cradle to numerous mountains. Travel to Mt. Hyonoson in Tajima and Mt. Seppiko in Harima or, take a hike up the popular Rokko mountains which are close to Kobe and stretch to Takarazuka. Tour Tonomine, known as table-land, in Kamikawa-cho. Once a movies have been filmed in the Tonomine region so, it has become a desirable place to visit. If you're looking for a water adventure, try canoeing down the Maruyama river. Enjoy the plentiful nature of "Hyogo-Kobe".



San'in Kaigan Geo-park

Affluent history created with the castle and the traditional town

Learn the rich history of the Hyogo area. Built in 1346, Himeji Castle is a national treasure and was the first site to be listed as a "World Heritage" in Japan. The castle is currently under restoration however, you may tour the observatory named "Egret in the Sky" from which you can watch the site.

Jump back in time and immerse yourself in the Edo period. Kawaramachi Tsuma-iri Shoka-gun (Japanese traditional merchant houses with entrances on the sides) in Sasayama City preserves a town from the period. It offers an old pottery museum, a Noh art museum and many archaic shops which deal traditional products and foods. While you are there, visit the Daishoin (main drawing room) in the castle, which was completely restored in the year 2000. There are conserved many relics of Japanese castles in this area, such as Takeda Castle which reportedly described floating in the cloud stream in the sky.



Daishoin (main drawing room) at Sasayama Castle Park

Teeming with traditional cultural property from the good old days

For a profound cultural experience in Hyogo, see an Awaji doll Joruri, a traditional puppet play. This puppet shows reportedly started 500 years ago, and are now certified as "intangible folk" cultural property. For a long time puppet show has been come by with the themes from worshipping Gods, to praying for a successful fishing trip. Enjoy a performance at the new Awaji doll theater located by the Fukura seaport.

Onsens (hot springs) are an integral part of Japanese culture. Soak yourself in one of the three oldest onsens in Japan. Welcoming tourists from around the world, Kinosaki onsen (founded about 1400 years ago), Yumura onsen (founded about 1150 years ago) and Arima onsen (oldest in Japan) boast therapeutic water. The Arima and Kinosaki are featured in the 2013 "Michelin Green Guide Japon".



Kinosaki onsen motoyu (the source of the hot spring)



Awaji doll Joruri