

Advice to Exporters (Part 6)

By Miyazaki Hisashi

The Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) has dispatched 31 JETRO "senior trade advisors" to trade promotion agencies of other industrialized countries with the aim of increasing exports to Japan. With abundant expertise and trade experience, these specialists give local trading firms advice on exporting through seminars, visits to individual companies and introductions to Japanese importers. They also consult with in-place JETRO staff members regarding technical and strategic measures to help smooth trade. Miyazaki Hisashi reports on his activities from the state of Wisconsin in the United States.

Wisconsin's exports to Japan have steadily risen in terms of trade figures in the past few years, so much that Japan now ranks as the state's number three trading partner behind Canada and Britain. In 1992, Wisconsin exported about \$400 million worth of products to Japan, a 150% increase in just four years. And interest is still mounting.

Wisconsin is the number one dairy product exporting state in the U.S. Dairy products, however, are not what is supporting the main industries in the state, rather, it is machine industrial products—a fact still little known by many. These products, produced by excellent companies, include metal and many other auto parts-related goods, both of which are my specialties.

Last October, specialists dispatched by JETRO to Wisconsin to find new processed food products for the Japanese market were introduced to 10 different food product companies. Out of these 10, six are being introduced to the Japanese market, and two have decided to take part in a food fair to be held in Japan sometime this year.

Of the two, one is a company that handles nuts and dried fruits and, until now, had only focused on the domestic market. Last June, when I first started working with the company, I helped set

up an exporting department, and all of the staff beginning with the president showed great enthusiasm. Based on my advice, the company, in preparation for the trade fair, has already reached the final steps in improvements on packaging and wrapping that will appeal to the Japanese market.

As for trade fairs, they are indeed the point of contact between buyers and suppliers and a ground where the best results for business negotiations can be expected. From this perspective, I sincerely hope to continue to work towards bringing as many companies from Wisconsin as possible to take part in these trade fairs.

When I encounter American companies that want to take up the challenge of entering into the Japanese market, I emphasize that, "Now that the Japanese market is open, doing business with Japan is much like doing business with New York. Business opportunities are wide open even to medium- and small-sized companies." These companies have little to worry about as long as the products are unique, quality high and prices right.

Nevertheless, I always try not to forget to add that, "The Japanese market is much like the Olympics." In order to win the "fierce competition" of the Japanese market, I have stressed again and again that the most important thing is initiative in promoting sales. As long as you have initiative, you will be provided with the support of different plans through JETRO. The Business

(BSC) is one very effective scheme provided by JETRO in their work to increase exports to Japan.

This past December, I accompanied a trade mission to Japan led by Wisconsin's Governor Tommy Thompson. Participants of the trade mission were all top management people from companies with a strong interest in the Japanese market.

I visited the BSC with the trade mission group. Until now, many companies which have made use of the BSC have achieved great results by setting up corporate bodies in Japan or finding agencies. In this mission, two companies expressed their intent to make use of the BSC.

Of the two, one is a popcorn company that I consulted with last April. It has since recognized that the Japanese market is its most promising market and has undertaken various activities accordingly.

Fortunately, BSC has stationed many advisors that are extremely well versed in the Japanese market. They can provide advice, from introduction of individual companies to making business appointments. Because of such attentive services, one can expect great results with their help.



The author with company employees who participated in the Exporting to Japan Seminar at St. Norbert College in September 1993