



Produced by: GLOBAL MEDIA POST

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## THE JAPANESE LIFELINE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

In 1862, six years before it opened up to the West, Japan sent its first diplomatic delegation to San Francisco to open an embassy in the United States. The event ushered in the first wave of Japanese immigrants, or Issei, to the West Coast. And by 1910, Los Angeles had the largest population of Japanese immigrants, many of them filling agricultural jobs that were abundant in the region.

Still the home to majority of Americans of Japanese descent, Southern California hosts nearly 900 Japanese companies, which accounts for more than 80,000 jobs and pays an estimated \$6.1 billion in wages annually. It also remains the largest foreign investor nation in the area.

"We believe that there is so much more that Japan can contribute to Southern California, such as in the area of advanced technology for purposes of ensuring clean air and water, as well as zero emissions. Since their forebears first arrived in 1868, Japanese-Americans have helped shape the history of the United States and have become a respected, valued community in the region," **Consul-General of Japan in Los Angeles Akira Muto** said.

Last September, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and U.S. President Donald Trump signed a trade deal that opened up opportunities in industrial goods, agriculture, technology and digital trade, activities that have thrived in Southern California.

"Southern California is one of the primary gateways to Japan for the United States not only because of our geographical proximity, but also because of our long history of support for the Japanese and their businesses. Our year-round pleasant climate, accessibility to local Japanese and their long-established roots help Japanese people decide to make the Los Angeles area their home away from home," **Japan America Society of Southern California Chairman Douglas Montgomery** said.

Meanwhile, **Torrance Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Donna Duperron** also pointed out: "Southern California has always been a hotbed of Japanese business activity. Trade-related businesses that came here in their initial stages are today highly successful in a wide range of essential industries, ranging from logistics, food distributors, automotive manufacturers and dealers, computer software and hardware manufacturers."

Aside from setting up operations from scratch in Southern California, Japanese companies have also acquired established businesses here, transforming them into ones that combine the values and skilled knowledge of the Japanese with the resources and stability of the Americans.

"The United States market has always appealed to Japanese businesses quick to spot an opportunity and those with vision because of the country's size and potential. The regulations and systems here make it conducive

and easy to run a business," **Japan Business Association of Southern California Executive Director Yoshinobu Fukushima** said.

Those conditions also yielded long-running relationships, like that with Japanese flag carrier Japan Airlines.

"No doubt that Southern California has been a loyal business partner for Japan over the decades. Japan has also consistently relied on this region to boost its tourism and inbound trade, resulting in a relationship between two nations that is strengthened by a shared culture and history. There is not a more familiar and comfortable place for Japanese than Southern California," **JAL Vice-President and Southwestern Regional Manager Kiichi Nakajima** said.

While the northern area of the state may be more renowned for its IT sector, Southern California, mostly due to its ideal climate and terrain and abundance of land, has become globally famous for its high quality agricultural products. Of course, there is also its multibillion-dollar entertainment sector, which lends its strength to the thriving tourism and hospitality sectors.

Also, several schools and universities have nurtured dynamic technology and biosciences firms, which have ready access to abundant world-class local talent.

Recently, the growth of integrated industries has sparked renewed interest from Japan, where businesses are encouraged by the government to look outward and expand their operations internationally. ■

### TORRANCE: GROWTH DRIVEN BY JAPANESE PARTNERS

Torrance has always valued its Japanese businesses and will continue to do so. Amid the ongoing global turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Torrance is gradually reopening for business. In the past year, the city welcomed back Sanrio and Oriental Motor.

On the road to recovery, the city will step up efforts to attract new investment and assist existing businesses. It plans to highlight the so-called Torrance Advantage, a promotional pitch that attracted long-time Japanese partners like Honda, ANA, Mayekawa and Morinaga.

"Our city is the proud home of many wonderful businesses. Everyone knows about the prominent Japanese business presence here and how they have contributed so much to Torrance. We will be always indebted to the great many Japanese residents and companies that have placed their confidence in our city, as well as for their contributions all these decades. Truly, the Japanese community here is one of the best parts of Torrance," **Mayor Patrick Furey** said.

Meanwhile, **Economic Development Manager Fran Fulton** pointed out the city's other strengths: "In terms of overall industry, biotechnology and aerospace are just two of many thriving sectors here. We also provide access to great health care and quality educational institutions.



City of Torrance Mayor Patrick Furey

On top of that, Torrance is one of the safest cities in Southern California and tops the list of medium-sized cities in the United States with the largest Japanese population."

Founded as an industrial center 107 years ago, modern Torrance has grown to become a blend of commercial, industrial, and residential bliss. And soon enough, its beautiful beach will draw back the tourists. ■

→ [www.torranceca.gov](http://www.torranceca.gov)



### AKT TRADING: GROWING ASIAN FOOD CULTURE IN THE U.S.

Many small- and medium-size food and beverage companies, particularly in Japan, have taken notice of a promising opportunity in the growing market for Asian food around the world, including in the United States, where the population of Asians continues to increase.

Based in Torrance in Los Angeles County, **AKT Trading Inc.** has introduced many products that satisfy Americans' craving for Japanese food across the country.

"This has always been my dream: to further serve as a bridge between the two cultures," said **AKT Trading Inc. President Akikazu Kimura**, who aims to become a behind-the-scenes ambassador for Japanese food in the United States.

Starting out as a wholesaler and importer to Japanese grocery chains in the United States, AKT now also distributes assorted imported USDA Organic Asian food products through mainstream grocery chains across the United States and sells various non-food products via the online retail giant Amazon.com.

Kimura stressed that AKT Trading's partnership with logistics company Nippon Express, via its Cross-border EC Express Service, allowed his business to establish a reputation as a reliable importer and supplier of more than 100 non-food products via Japan Global Network, its store on Amazon.com only in the U.S.

Looking toward the future, AKT Trading hopes to play a prominent



AKT TRADING INC.



AKT Trading Inc. President Akikazu Kimura

and active role in promoting nutritional food and healthy eating habits.

"We need more education on how Japanese food is beneficial to one's health, especially in the U.S. market," said Kimura, who wants to expand his distribution market from just over 100 outlets to 1,000 outlets in the next few years and help other Japanese entrepreneurs wanting to enter the American market. "A lot of Japanese companies are conservative. But to succeed here, you need to be more aggressive and AKT Trading can serve as the gateway and platform to do so," he added. ■

→ <http://aktusa.com>  
→ <https://asianorganicsfood.com>

### JAPANESE SAUCE MAKER SHARES ITS FLAVORS WITH THE WORLD

Reflective of the thriving ties between Japan and the United States, Japanese cuisine remains one of the most popular foreign cuisines in North America.

According to Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, there are more than 120,000 Japanese restaurants around the world, nearly 25 percent of which are in North America.

With the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants at the start of the 20th century, America started its love affair with the exotic flavors and dishes from Japan. This growing fondness has much to do with the efforts of the Japanese food industry to share its cuisine with the world.

"The United States is a global trendsetter. Evidence of this is the increased popularity of ramen and sushi around the world after its success in the United States. The invention of the California Roll here in the United States has also certainly increased the acknowledgment and acceptance of Japanese sushi," said **Otafuku Foods USA President Taka Ozawa**.

Founded nearly a century ago, Hiroshima-based Otafuku is committed to popularizing Japanese dishes like *okonomiyaki*, *yakisoba*, and *takoyaki*, among others, around the world but has decided to first focus on the U.S. market.



Two of Otafuku's two best-selling products are its okonomi and yakisoba sauces.

By opening a manufacturing site for its sauces in Los Angeles, Otafuku Foods is staking its overseas growth on North America.

"At the U.S. plant, we have adapted our ingredients to reflect the preferences of the local market. For instance, we do not use MSG. We can make gluten-free products and have opted for more natural ingredients to cater to the many vegans and vegetarians here," Ozawa said.

Otafuku is also able to work with large retailers and restaurant chains to create customized blends and sauces.

"Our responsibility is not only to grow our business, but also to share our culture with the world," Ozawa said. ■

→ [www.otafukufoods.com](http://otafukufoods.com)

### HIGH-PRECISION FOCUS FOR THE FUTURE

If the global economy were a jungle and companies were the organisms inhabiting that environment, then the ability to adapt is absolutely essential for survival. Amid rapid globalization and ongoing disruption of industries, entire business sectors have undergone irreversible changes overnight because of the emergence of new technologies and trends. The companies that adapted their business models to the disruptions emerged more focused, streamlined and stronger.

In Southern California's own "jungle," **Noritsu** successfully evolved to survive the disruption in the commercial photo printing industry. Set up in Buena Park in 1978 as the North American subsidiary of what is now **Noritsu Precision Co., Noritsu America Corp.** has loyally served major retailers nationwide, such as Walmart, Costco and Walgreens, as well as professional photographers and studios through its high-quality commercial printers.

"Since arriving in 2016, I have taken pride in being able to generate new revenue streams for the company and I'm pleased to say that our business has been growing ever since. Utilizing the high technical ability and knowledge of

### NORITSU



Noritsu America Corp. President and CEO Go Yoshii

our engineers, we offer professional technical services to our customers. We're very successful with companies that require highly skilled maintenance work, knowledge of what manufacturers need, and service and sales processes that scale nationwide. Our technical sales business has grown by 30 percent since we started," **Noritsu America Corp. President and CEO Go Yoshii** said.

"Also, Noritsu's pharmacy automation business is doing quite well. Last year, we entered the medical imaging space by purchasing RFI, a medical imaging company that provides service and sales of MRI, CT, and X-ray equipment. Today, pharmacy automation and medical imaging are our most profitable business segments," Yoshii added. ■

→ [www.noritsu.com](http://www.noritsu.com)  
→ [www.noritsu-rx.com](http://www.noritsu-rx.com)

### AJINOMOTO FOODS: PRESERVING HEALTHY EATING IN THE AMERICAS

A melting pot of cultures, the United States has a complex food and beverage industry and a diverse culinary landscape, reflecting the country's very long history of immigration and welcoming attitude toward other traditions.

Although the Ajinomoto Group has built its global reputation on its popular seasonings and sauces, **Ajinomoto Foods North America** has been among the leading frozen foods manufacturer in the region. Present for more than 100 years in the United States, it continues to play a significant role in preserving the taste of ethnic and specialty dishes without compromising the health benefits of its products.

"Ajinomoto Foods has always been a big proponent of healthy eating. By prioritizing continuous innovation and manufacturing excellence, our company has been able to provide the market with great products across the largest categories of ethnic and specialty dishes. Mainstream customers and consumers have started to realize the value of ethnic and high-quality frozen foods. We are successful because of our excellence and we take a pride in the quality of our products," **Ajinomoto Foods North America**

Eat Well, Live Well.



Ajinomoto Foods North America President and CEO Sumio Maeda

**President and CEO Sumio Maeda** said.

"Through our recent rebranding, we hope that our customers will note our desire to set ourselves apart from the rest as the leading frozen food company in North America through our commitment to the quality of our products and services and ultimately to our customers, consumers and environment. In light of the current situation, we wish that all of you are staying safe," Maeda added. ■

→ [www.ajinomotofoods.com](http://www.ajinomotofoods.com)

### EUREKA GLOBAL SOLUTIONS: YOUR TRUSTED PARTNER IN NAVIGATING U.S. REGULATIONS AND MARKETS

Having worked for large multinational corporations for many years, **Toshiko Boyd** had long nurtured a goal of founding her own company to help others. That deep and broad experience sharpened her research abilities, leadership skills and effective decision-making ability, reinforcing her desire to deliver superior service to her clients.

In 2010, Boyd launched **Eureka Global Solutions** to provide information and advice on products regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Department of Agriculture (USDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state-level agencies. It also helps clients make marketing and distribution decisions to successfully launch their products in the U.S. market.

"Due to my extensive corporate background, my firm has been able to successfully work with Japanese companies of all sizes and business cultures. Our key consultants, which include a former senior FDA Official and a number of Ph.D.s in multiple science disciplines, have been with us since the beginning of our firm. This breadth of experience and commitment allows us to provide a great service that prioritizes our clients' needs and concerns," Boyd said.

This year, Eureka Global Solutions proudly marks 10 years as a trusted partner to companies that are expanding their operations in the United States. The company gives specific and actionable advice based on expertise in regulatory consultancy, business advisory, market research and consumer focus groups, among others. ■

→ <http://eureka-global.net>



Eureka Global Solutions Co-founder and President Toshiko Boyd

### CALSOFT SYSTEMS PROVIDES COMPLETE BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

When starting Calsoft Systems 25 years ago, **CEO Nem Bajra** foresaw the exciting potential of technology and had a vision to contribute to society by "putting humanity into IT." Amid the continuing rise of globalization, Bajra knew that every business would need cutting-edge technology solutions to optimize its performance.

As a recognized Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, Calsoft Systems has built an impressive reputation in the U.S. and around the world, particularly among Japanese companies expanding to global markets, as a reliable service provider of software development, ERP systems implementation, network services and consulting.

"We're thankful for our loyal customers. Through them, we found our success. Calsoft has always been in a unique, honored position to bridge American and Japanese business cultures. At the same time, we are a proud American company," said Bajra, a Kyoto University graduate who got married in Japan. In 1999,



Calsoft Systems CEO Nem Bajra

Bajra recruited technology expert Bo Shao, who is now company president.

"In the beginning, our friend worked for a Japanese tour company, so we simply created software for them. The word spread and we got more business from Japanese companies," he added.

Today, Calsoft has a diverse multilingual staff working closely with clients using the best Japanese and American management principles. ■

→ [www.calsoft.com](http://www.calsoft.com)  
→ [www.spark-365.com](http://www.spark-365.com)

### FUJI NATURAL FOODS: SAFETY IS TOP-OF-MIND

For more than 40 years, **Fuji Natural Foods** has actively advocated for higher food quality and safety standards in the United States. Beginning its operations in 1979 as a sprout grower in California, Fuji has developed a food safety plan that has played an important role in the company's success.

Determined to provide customers with the highest quality and safest sprouts possible, Fuji carried out a risk analysis and determined which sprouts it would continue growing. Also, an unflinching commitment to its community and customers has paid off. Today, Fuji Natural Foods is the country's largest sprout producer and a highly valued member of Ontario, California.

Aside from meeting U.S. Food and Drug Administration standards, Fuji Natural Foods also uses technology from Japan to pasteurize seeds before sprouting and reduce chemical usage.

"We produce a variety of sprouts – mung bean, soy bean, pea and radish – all staples of healthy, timeless cuisines. We supply many different customers in California and Arizona, from local produce markets, wholesalers,



Fuji Natural Foods President Katsushiro Nakagawa

restaurants and grocery stores," **Fuji Natural Foods President Katsushiro Nakagawa** said.

"It is essential that we create products of great quality while adhering to the industry safety standards upheld in Japan. For example, our products pass our strict shelf-life tests. Before our sprouts leave the facility, we run a series of tests to confirm if they're safe to eat and frequently undergo third-party food safety audits, as well as constant training," Nakagawa added. ■

→ <http://fujinf.com>

### MYOJO USA: PACKING THE RIGHT FLAVOR FOR THE MARKET

Starting as a maker of dry noodles in 1950, Myojo Foods found much success after it began selling instant ramen, particularly its world-famous Charumera line. Having grown steadily in Japan for decades, Myojo Foods and JFC International (a subsidiary of Kikkoman Corp.) formed a partnership in 1991 to distribute popular Japanese food products across the United States.

Headquartered in Chino, California, **Myojo USA** started with udon before eventually adding ramen and yakisoba, as well as gyoza and wonton wrappers to its offerings. Unlike its parent company in Japan, which sells dry instant noodle products, Myojo USA's products are made fresh, then packaged frozen before they are delivered to customers across North America.

Myojo USA caters to two customer bases: food service and retail. Its food service products are fresh noodles packaged in bulk and sold to a variety of restaurants and ramen shops. Its retail products, meanwhile, include ramen, udon and yakisoba, as well as gyoza and wonton wrappers, with its most popular being the Goku Uma Premium Ramen.

After nearly 30 years in the noodle business, Myojo USA is embarking on a rebranding process that will involve their first retail packaging redesign. It also launched a website with more information about its products and set up social media platforms, like Instagram, among others. Through social media, Myojo hopes to spread its love for Japanese noodles and share its knowledge of lesser known dishes, such as *hiyashi chuka*, a summer-time cold noodle.

With over 100 different types of noodles in its product catalog, Myojo USA has a noodle for every type of dish, like the *tsukemen* and *mazemen*, which are gaining popularity in the United States. It has also developed unique and colorful vegan noodles that bring a fresh twist to traditional Japanese dishes.

Through hard work and passion for noodles, Myojo USA is confident it will soon become a household name in North America. ■

→ [www.myojousa.com](http://www.myojousa.com)



Myojo USA offers bowlfuls of authentic Japanese flavors with these two of several varieties.

RELIABILITY.

It's what drives us. It's what inspires us every day to be the best business partner to our customers. It's what we expect of our products, of our employees, and of the entire company. And, it's why we've had customers stay with us for over 50 years.

I made the right choice in **Noritsu**. They are there for me as a partner and we continuously communicate about how to make my operation and systems run better.

"Mick" Blazier, Director of Pharmacy  
EverSpring Pharmacy  
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