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Brand marketer's career in Japan

Q Having been a marketing manager for a worldwide skin care product in Singapore and Malaysia for about four years, I would like to see if there are any opportunities for a career in Japan. As I know the work flow, operation and promotion strategies for a worldwide skin care brand name, will that be an advantage to me in gaining work in the Japanese skin care or household brand product categories? What are the differences between the Singapore and Japan markets in terms of marketing

strategies and branding? Are there any other favourable qualities a foreign marketer can have to work for a branded skin care company in Japan? I look forward to reading advice from you soon.



A Tyron Giuliani, Partner Optia Partners K.K. answered, "The skin care market in Japan is Asia's most mature. Spending is massive in Japan, with over half of the region's skin care expenditure made here alone. Marketing is geared towards the affluent consumer with higher levels of disposable income. A recent target is the 50+ market, with products like nourishers and anti-agers taking centre stage - coincidentally, the higher margin products. Unlike the West with the usual three step skin care regime, Japanese women can employ up to seven stages, comprising two cleansers, three moisturisers, a toner and a beauty lotion. Whitening products are also a major hit

product. With more women entering the workforce, there is also a new demand for products that are more convenient to use; certainly a good growth area.

"For a non-Japanese to be employed at a skin care company, the most likely targets are the foreign branded product companies operating here in Japan. However, as almost 100% of the marketing is done in Japanese to the Japanese consumer, language and cultural understanding is a major hurdle for a non-native speaker of Japanese. Even the well known foreign skin care companies in Japan have been operating here for many decades; inside their offices is nearly as 'domestic' as the larger Japanese counter-parts. This issue of language and cultural understanding is even more evident when you must inevitably deal with the retailers. They are a totally different breed and not knowing the nuances of Japanese business relationships would be akin to walking through a minefield blindfolded.

"Look for an internal transfer with your current company if they are operating in Japan - by far the most likely chance of success. Speaking with Ryo

Hoshikawa, our Japanese recruiting specialist, he can not recall the last time that one of his companies has asked for a non-Japanese in a marketing role.

One hint though, try the French companies here in Japan - they seem to be one of the most open to hiring non-Japanese." (Next issue: Macau)



Japan...language and culture are the key to working in Japan

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