

HOW BUSHIROAD TURNS CARD BATTLES AND ANIME INTO GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT

FROM CARD BATTLES TO WRESTLING RINGS, BUSHIROAD IS BUILDING A GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT UNIVERSE POWERED BY PASSION, STRATEGY, AND STORYTELLING. *By Bernard Thompson and Daniel De Bomford*

May 2nd, 2025. *Blaster Blade* charges into the *Vanguard Circle*, his sharp attack amplified by a perfectly timed series of consecutive *Strides*, enveloping the exhibition hall in a tense atmosphere. Thousands in the Tokyo Ryūtsu Center wonder what will happen next; the anticipation is palpable. In response, a well-positioned *Trigger Check* flips the momentum, the crowd roaring in appreciation as they have done all day for the 150 players who have fought their way from 30 regional qualifiers to make the world finals. This is *Cardfight!! Vanguard*, Bushiroad’s premier trading card game (TCG), a universe where strategy, skill and split-second decisions collide.

Since its 2011 debut, Vanguard has attracted more than 10 million players worldwide. The long-running anime adaptation, now exceeding 600 episodes, streams globally in multiple languages including English, Chinese, Thai, Italian and Korean. Together, these platforms create a multi-layered engagement ecosystem that extends far beyond the tabletop.

Bushiroad founder and president Takaaki Kidani explains the franchise’s enduring appeal: “There are five key ways people engage with trading card games: playing, deck building, collecting, trading and sales. This versatility allows different types of enthusiasts to participate in their own way, making TCGs appealing to a broad audience.” Segmented and gameplay accessibility has been central to Vanguard’s success, encouraging not only players but also collectors and investors to enter the fold.

From Kabuki to Card Battles: Japan’s Entertainment DNA

Founded in 2007, Bushiroad’s vision is to create new forms of entertainment for the future. Vanguard was just the beginning. Today, the company operates across TCGs, anime, live events, and music and digital platforms, creating what Kidani describes as a “sharing of passion” ecosystem.

This diversification reflects the broader distinctiveness of Japan’s entertainment industry. Kidani notes the key conditions for intellectual properties to thrive: “A sustainable population within a cultural area, affluence and a long historical foundation—Japan meets these arguably to the greatest extent.” He also emphasizes that a lenient approach to freedom of expression has allowed manga and anime culture to flourish, directly contributing to the rise of TCGs.

The Thrill of Play: Strategy Meets Community

Vanguard’s enduring appeal lies in both its mechanics and its community. Strategy revolves around deck-building, anticipating opponent moves and timing *Triggers* or *Limit Breaks*. A single *Stride* can cascade

“Our experience gives us a deep understanding of what it takes to create a sustainable and engaging game.”

Takaaki Kidani
President, Bushiroad Inc.



into game-defining advantages, while iconic cards such as *Blaster Blade* or *Blaster Dark* transcend gameplay, appearing in cosplay, fan art and social media.

Bushiroad fosters this energy through tournaments and conventions. Monthly competitions in Japan typically tend to draw more than 15,000 participants, while global qualifiers for the Vanguard World Championship attract hundreds from North America, Europe and Southeast Asia. Online platforms extend their reach, enabling competitive play for more than five million monthly active users worldwide.

“Launching a new TCG is much like running an election,” says Kidani. “Players and investors need confidence that once the game launches, it will not suddenly disappear. Bushiroad stands out as the industry leader when it comes to successfully launching new TCGs.”

The Anime Edge: Stories That Keep the Fight Alive

One of Vanguard’s strongest differentiators is its anime tie-in. As of 2026, Vanguard will become the only TCG with an ongoing anime series, producing 26 episodes annually. Kidani emphasizes its importance: “This longevity speaks to the uniqueness and enduring appeal of *Cardfight!! Vanguard*.” Streamed in many languages, the anime expands global reach, with localization ensuring accessibility for new audiences. Kidani highlights this further: “By continuing to expand and localize content, we ensure



Vanguard remains a strong contender in the competitive TCG market.”

Beyond Cards: Wrestling Rings, Music Stages and Merch Magic

Bushiroad extends its TCG success into adjacent entertainment sectors. Collaborations with New Japan Pro-Wrestling (NJPW) and STARDOM create shared fan enthusiasm across live events, anime and card games. “Cross-promotions strengthen our brand identity and deepen fan engagement,” Kidani explains. “Bushiroad fans are often passionate about multiple properties, so these collaborations create a sense of unity across our franchises.”

Merchandising also plays a critical role. Limited-edition cards, mats and figurines regularly sell out within hours. Anime streaming on platforms like Netflix, Crunchyroll and Amazon Prime amplifies reach, while the pandemic-era surge of new collectors and investors provided an additional boost.

The Final Move: Bushiroad’s Quest to Be Number One

Japan’s shrinking population has driven entertainment companies to pursue growth overseas, and Bushiroad already is advancing in this direction. In the last fiscal year, about 30 percent of its total sales were generated outside Japan. For TCG, overseas sales accounted for around 40 percent of the total. The United States and China remain its largest markets.

Supporting this international expansion is a diverse workforce. Bushiroad’s Malaysian manufacturing facility employs more than 200 people, with overseas staff accounting for about 40% of the company’s total workforce. We aim to increase our foreign employee ratio to 50%, positioning ourselves more firmly as a global entertainment company,” Kidani says.

Just as the battle in *Cardfight!! Vanguard* begins with a single decisive strike, Bushiroad is shaping its own endgame. Every expansion, collaboration and localized release builds toward a larger strategy: to transform passion into global influence. With multiple new TCGs underway, Kidani summarizes Bushiroad’s ambition clearly: “Our ultimate ambition is to become the world’s top TCG company.”



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