

Inside Japan's Model for Global Corporate Transformation

Japanese companies are combining trusted technology, human expertise and adaptable management systems to transform operations and compete across global markets.

BY DANIEL DE BOMFORD AND BERNARD THOMPSON

Japan's factory floors, offices and worksites have been shaped by kaizen. Meaning continuous improvement, kaizen helped drive Japan's industrial dominance throughout the post-war era. However, the country faltered as the digital revolution took hold worldwide. Now, as it reckons with labor challenges and intensifying global competition, rapid advances in digital transformation (DX) and AI are creating the infrastructure for Japan's evolution, but people, judgment and adaptable management systems ultimately determine its success. That interdependence is evident in the digital foundations Japan's technology companies are building. OBC provides core business functions such as accounting, human resources and payroll and sales management on a secure and reliable cloud platform. "Adapting successfully to this

changing environment begins with maintaining absolute clarity about where the company creates value," President and Representative Director Shigefumi Wada said. The company prioritizes security and human judgment to maintain efficiency while ensuring trust and accountability.

WingArc1st similarly treats trusted information as the basis of transformation. "Our objective is to develop technologies that address real business challenges while remaining practical for the people who use them every day," President, Executive Officer and CEO Jun Tanaka said. Its technologies connect enterprise data, analytics, document management and AI while helping organizations verify that digital documents remain authentic and unchanged. CAC Holdings Corporation takes this connection further; and Ryota Nishimori, president and CEO, stated that its objective is to bridge the gap between physical and digital worlds by capturing and analyzing human behavior. "By applying computer vision and AI analysis, we can convert these activities into actionable digital insights," he said.

Corporate evolution also depends on how effectively businesses use people. "Companies are beginning to think about placing people where they can create the greatest value," en world K.K. President and Representative Director Yusuke Yamamoto said. en world helps companies respond to Japan's talent shortage by identifying emerging organizational needs and defining roles that make productive use of new technologies. "DX can have an increasingly significant impact across financial services, insurance, manufacturing and other service industries," UPWARD President Ryusuke Kaneki said. Its mobile platform automatically records frontline activity and turns knowledge previously held by individual representatives into a shared corporate asset, allowing salespeople to focus more on customer relationships.

Corporate Architecture That Travels

Optimus Group demonstrates how these technological, human and organizational capabilities can be assembled into a model for international growth. The automotive-services group now operates 55 subsidiaries worldwide. More than 90 percent of its approximately 2,800 employees work outside Japan, and most of its revenue comes from overseas.

Its evolution is guided by Shikumi: an adaptable architecture through which different businesses align with local market realities and support one another. In New Zealand, Optimus connects vehicle sourcing and appraisal in Japan with inspection, biosecurity compliance, international logistics, local registration, dealership networks and automotive finance. The resulting system now touches one in every five vehicles on New Zealand roads.

Australia required a different configuration. Rather than duplicating its exported New Zealand model, Optimus built an onshore network around automotive logistics and dealerships representing more than 40 brands. The contrast illustrates why founder and President Nobuya Yamanaka said, "Shikumi flexes across markets and conditions."

Beneath this operational system is a federated leadership structure. Regional executives retain the autonomy to respond to local conditions while operating within shared governance and long-term principles. This balance between independence and alignment has enabled Optimus to expand into Australia and extend its networks into the United Kingdom, Ireland and other markets without imposing a rigid centralized model. Japan's next stage of corporate evolution is defined by a combination of DX, human relationships and organizational architectures capable of adapting to the market. In this environment, the most successful companies will connect these elements into systems that can evolve across technologies, industries and borders.

"I fully recognize AI's business potential: streamlining workflows, enhancing accuracy, and supporting data-driven decisions."

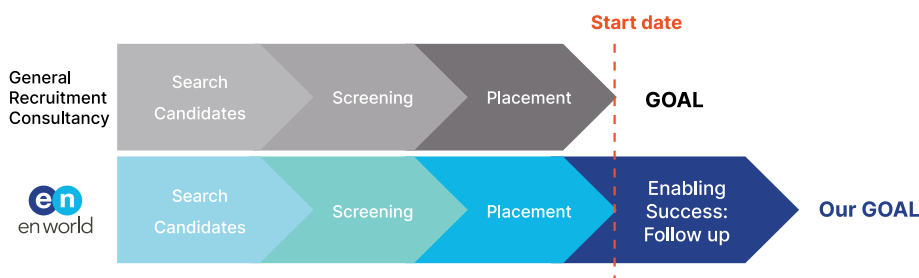
Nobuya Yamanaka
Founder and President, Optimus Group.



en world Connects Global Companies With Global Talent

en world helps global companies navigate Japan's talent shortages through strategic recruitment and local expertise.

BY
DANIEL DE BOMFORD, QUENTIN LANGE AND KYANN EDOUARD



"I see today's labor shortage not only as a challenge, but also as a significant opportunity for both workers and businesses."

Yusuke Yamamoto,
President and Representative Director,
en world Japan K.K.

en world

<https://www.enworld.com/en/>



Businesses often overlook how employees carry institutional knowledge, use it and pass it on to the next generation. As Japan's shrinking workforce transforms recruitment into a strategic challenge, companies must compete for a limited pool of high-performing professionals in a market where job stability and loyalty to a single company have long been the norm. For companies operating internationally, this is especially challenging, as they compete for high-performing professionals with bilingual skills, international experience and an understanding of Japanese culture.

For President and Representative Director, Yusuke Yamamoto, of en world Japan K.K., this period presents an opportunity. Japan's employment system is shaped by lifetime employment, seniority-based advancement and the annual recruitment of new graduates. As these structures become increasingly difficult to sustain, companies are reconsidering how they deploy talent.

"This represents an important turning point," Yamamoto said. "Rather than simply maintaining organizational structures, companies are beginning to think about placing people where they can create the greatest value."

Greater mobility could allow experienced professionals to move between traditional Japanese corporations, startups and international businesses, circulating knowledge and capabilities throughout the economy. However, unlocking that potential requires an understanding of the cultural and structural factors that continue to shape career decisions in Japan.

Foreign companies may arrive with clear global strategies, but have limited familiarity with Japanese candidates' expectations. Even international businesses can struggle to attract professionals who value employment stability, while less familiar market entrants must establish their credibility before competing for talent. Compa-

nies also need people who can work effectively in both Japanese and international environments. This is where en world positions itself as a strategic business partner. "Our role is not simply to introduce candidates," Yamamoto said. "We also help companies understand the market, understand what professionals and organizations aspire to achieve, bridge cultural differences and create stronger connections between organizations and professionals." The company's goal is to help both professionals, including high- and executive-level staff, and organizations realize their potential and achieve sustainable growth and success together over the mid and long term.

That consultative role begins before a job description is finalized, as digital transformation and AI create demand for new capabilities while companies are still determining which roles they need. en world works with clients to clarify their objectives, define the required roles and develop recruitment strategies aligned with their wider organizational plans.

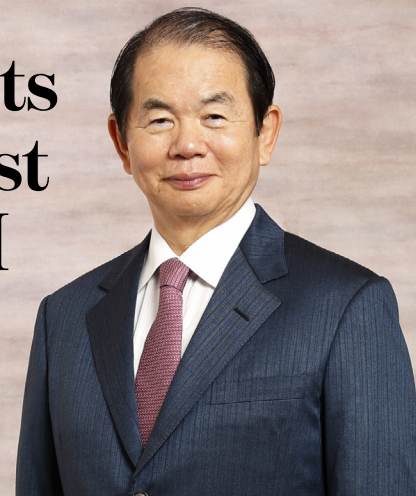
Its comprehensive offering spans four business lines: Permanent Recruitment, Contract Professionals, Executive Search and Recruitment Process Outsourcing. Specialized teams organized by industry and job function serve foreign-affiliated companies, major Japanese global corporations and startups.

This breadth gives en world an in-depth view of the different cultures, motivations and expectations found across Japan's business environment. As Japan's labor market becomes more fluid, successful recruitment will depend on more than identifying qualified candidates. Companies must understand what motivates professionals, build environments where diverse employees can thrive and connect hiring decisions to their broader ambitions. By helping organizations navigate that transition, en world is enabling success through people.

Japanese Cloud ERP Connects Global Business with a Robust Security Foundation and AI

OBC is helping Japanese companies modernize critical operations through secure cloud ERP, responsible AI and global accounting tools that securely connect Japanese headquarters with overseas subsidiaries and specialist partners.

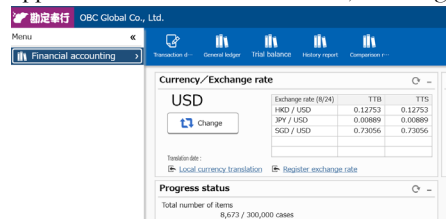
BY DANIEL DE BOMFORD, BERNARD THOMPSON AND QUENTIN LANGE



As Japan turns to digital transformation (DX) to offset a shrinking workforce, many companies now see it as an economic and operational advantage. For OBIC Business Consultants Co., Ltd. (OBC), the response begins with helping companies move critical operations to secure, connected cloud platforms. “Digital transformation is therefore no longer simply an opportunity to improve efficiency,” President and Representative Director Shigefumi Wada said. “It has become an essential requirement for maintaining corporate competitiveness and ensuring long-term business continuity.”

Since its founding in 1980, OBC has provided solutions to support accounting, finance, payroll, human resources and cor-

porate management. Guided by its founding philosophy of “Customer First” and driven by its mission to “Bring Innovation to Business Operations and Delight Our Customers,” the company continues to evolve its products and services by addressing its customers’ business challenges. With a cumulative total of 860,000 companies using the service, OBC has built an ecosystem comprising approximately 3,000 sales, development, implementation and specialized support partners. The company is now accelerating its transition from on-premises software to Azure-native services. According to Wada, new implementations are now entirely cloud-based, while existing customers are progressively migrating. “Cloud



adoption is no longer simply about replacing existing infrastructure,” he said. “It is about creating the secure digital foundation necessary for the next generation of enterprise management, productivity and AI-driven innovation.” OBC builds its business applications on Microsoft Azure, allowing

both companies to focus on their respective strengths. Microsoft provides the infrastructure, databases and security technologies, while OBC applies its understanding of Japanese corporate operations. That foundation supports international growth, with Kanjo Bugyo Cloud Global Edition allowing overseas subsidiaries to conduct transactions in local languages and currencies while giving Japanese headquarters more real-time visibility. The system supports multilingual reporting and document-based approvals, automatic translation and connections with consolidating systems. It is already used in 41 countries and regions. The platform addresses a persistent challenge for international

businesses. Overseas financial information can arrive late, in incompatible formats or without the documentation headquarters needs to verify it. OBC combines standard software with support from partners such as Fair Consulting, whose local accounting, tax and advisory expertise helps companies navigate regulatory environments.

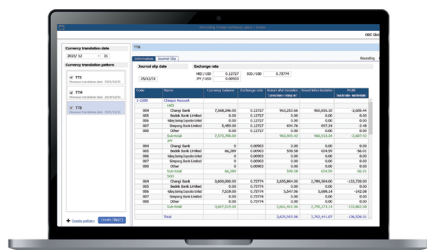
OBC’s next phase extends from DX into AI transformation, or AX. The company is already utilizing machine learning, deep learning and generative AI to help classify financial transactions and generate accounting entries. Its “Bugyo AI Agent: New Cloud-Based Lease Accounting Identification” proves its capability. The cloud-based agent can identify whether a contract includes a lease instantly upon upload. This ensures anyone can assess contracts to a

consistent standard and eliminates reliance on individual expertise. While generative AI can support assistants and agents, OBC draws a boundary at decision-making. “When generative AI is used in areas that influence financial management, accounting or other critical business decisions, the

final judgment should always remain with a human decision-maker,” Wada said. OBC measures innovation by its practical value rather than novelty. “Whether we are developing enterprise software, cloud services or artificial intelligence, every innovation must ultimately create meaningful value for our customers,” he said.

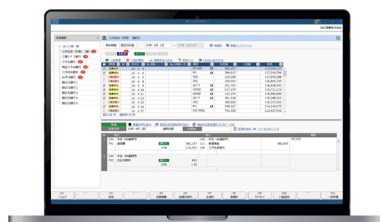
“Rather than attempting to compete in every technological field simultaneously, OBC carefully selects where it can create the greatest value and concentrates its resources accordingly.”

Shigefumi Wada,
President and Representative Director
OBIC Business Consultants Co., Ltd.



Kanjo Bugyo Cloud Global Edition

porate management. Guided by its founding philosophy of “Customer First” and driven by its mission to “Bring Innovation to Business Operations and Delight Our Customers,” the company continues to evolve its products and services by addressing its customers’ business challenges. With a cumulative total of 860,000 companies using the service, OBC has built an ecosystem comprising approximately 3,000 sales, development, implementation and specialized support partners. The company is now accelerating its transition from on-premises software to Azure-native services. According to Wada, new implementations are now entirely cloud-based, while existing customers are progressively migrating. “Cloud



OBC
OBIC BUSINESS CONSULTANTS CO., LTD.
<https://corp.obc.co.jp/en/>



How WingArc1st Connects Data to Drive Digital Transformation

WingArc1st helps businesses and local governments unlock trusted data, modernize documents and adopt secure, practical AI solutions.

BY DANIEL DE BOMFORD, BERNARD THOMPSON AND JANANI SAMPATH

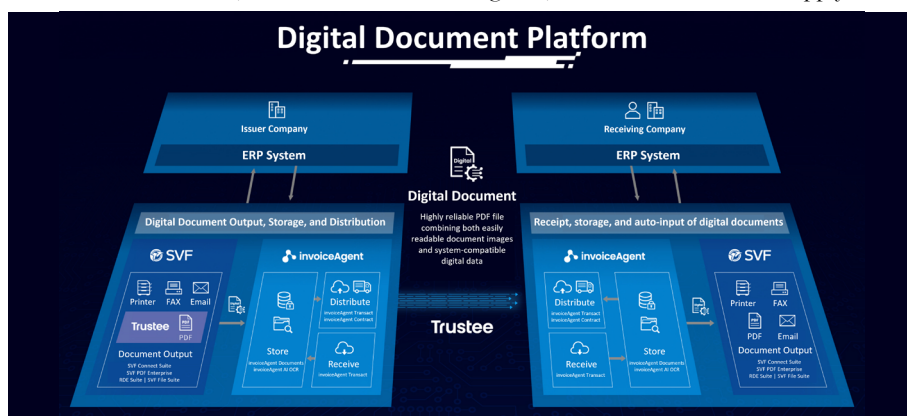


For businesses and governments, digital transformation (DX) offers an opportunity to leverage disparate data through analytics, process optimization and AI to overcome challenges created by paper-based processes, siloed offices and disconnected departments. WingArc1st Inc. is answering these challenges by working with organizations, listening to the people on the ground and understanding operational needs. President, CEO and Executive

The company has expanded from document output to the full document lifecycle. AI is another core component of the company's offerings. Dr.Sum provides customers with a secure, integrated data platform, allowing them to use their data seamlessly across operations. With MotionBoard, customers can visualize, manage and utilize that information across the business. "By combining MotionBoard with artificial intelligence, customers are able to apply AI di-

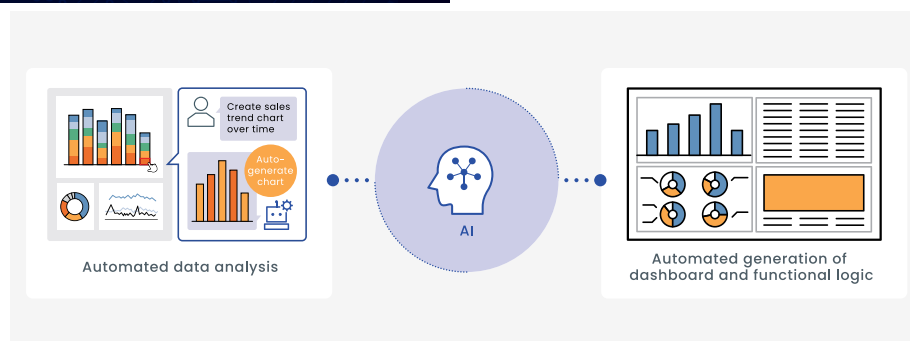
"Our objective is to develop technologies that address real business challenges while remaining practical for the people who use them every day."

Jun Tanaka, President, CEO and Executive Officer, WingArc1st Inc.



ties as local governments adopt integrated data platforms to modernize documents and communications that continue to rely on paper. As Japan faces growing labor shortages driven by demographic change, digital transformation is becoming increasingly important to preserve institutional knowledge and use data effectively. "Our objective is to develop technologies that address real business challenges while remaining practical for the people who use them every day," Tanaka said.

Officer Jun Tanaka described the business as built around two pillars: business documents and data utilization. "Although they began as separate businesses, they are becoming increasingly interconnected as organizations continue their digital transformation," he said. Its solutions break down data silos, connecting company departments and enabling data analytics and AI to improve operations. At the same time, digitalization and AI introduce new challenges for document authenticity. In August 2025, WingArc1st became the sixth company certified by Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications to provide time-stamping services. "It is no longer sufficient simply to convert paper documents into electronic files," he said. "Companies must also be able to demonstrate that those files are genuine, secure and unchanged."



rectly to their own trusted enterprise data while maintaining proper governance and security throughout the process," Tanaka said. For Japan's public sector, where many administrative processes still rely on paper and manual processes, WingArc1st provides solutions to more than 500 local governments in Japan to build data infrastructure for DX. Tanaka sees significant opportuni-



<https://corp.wingarc.com/en/>

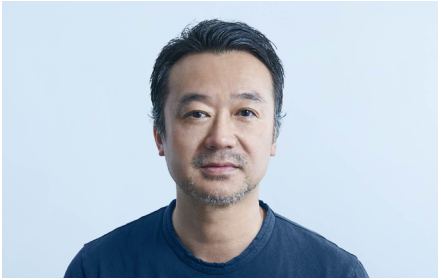
WingArc1st

The Data Empowerment Company

“UPWARD AI” Made for Field Sales

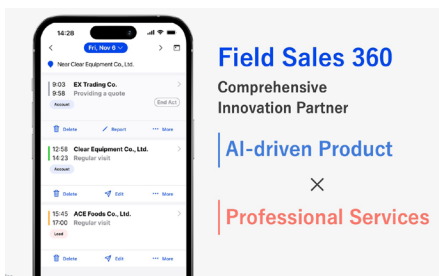
UPWARD combines AI-powered automation with human insight, helping field salespeople strengthen customer relationships while transforming activity into valuable business data.

BY DANIEL DE BOMFORD, KYANN EDOUARD AND QUENTIN LANGE



“The last mile is where technology reaches the actual field and where digital capabilities connect with human activity.”

Ryusuke Kaneki
President, UPWARD.



UPWARD



<https://upward.jp/en/>

As AI takes on more knowledge-based work, field sales is becoming essential for products that are difficult to differentiate from competing products. Face-to-face meetings allow representatives to explain technical differences, understand a customer's circumstances and build trust. UPWARD President Ryusuke Kaneki argues that when competing offers are similar, “the salesperson can become an important differentiating factor.”

UPWARD aims to preserve that human advantage while removing the administrative burden. Its mobile interface requires only one or two taps, while location technology can automatically record who visited a customer, when the meeting occurred and how long it lasted. The information flows into CRM systems, turning knowledge once held by individual representatives into a corporate asset. AI can then recommend which customers to visit next. Rather than competing with broad CRM platforms, UPWARD specializes in the physical “last mile”: the frontline workflows global providers cannot address in comparable depth, enabling salespeople to focus on human-centric, value-creating activities.

CAC Targets Real-World AI

CAC Holdings is investing in physical AI to improve industrial safety, productivity and social outcomes while supporting long-term growth.

BY DANIEL DE BOMFORD, QUENTIN LANGE AND KYANN EDOUARD

Celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2026, CAC Holdings Corporation has anticipated technological change and created new value since its founding in 1966. The group has been engaged in AI research and development since 1984, building expertise that today supports initiatives such as its OCTOps platform and broader AI Transformation strategy. Today, software is beginning to interact with the real world in ways previously confined to science fiction. In a world where AI can automate tasks and process enormous amounts of data from the physical world, President and CEO Ryota Nishimori wants the global technology group to drive positive change. Its OCTOps platform is built on AI technology that captures and analyzes human posture, movement and behavior. This data can be leveraged to create safer working conditions and more efficient systems, like on a factory floor or in the halls of a hospital. “Our objective is to bridge the gap between the physical and digital worlds,” Nishimori said. Under CAC Vision 2030 Phase 2, the group is investing 2 billion yen in AI Transformation while expanding product and service businesses, new ventures and strategic acquisitions. By applying AI across established operations and emerging fields, CAC aims to strengthen recurring value creation while addressing pressing industrial and social challenges.

<https://www.cac-holdings.com/eng/>

“Ignite Bold Change. That’s what we’re here to do. We are building an organization that creates opportunities, drives innovation, and shapes a better future.”

Ryota Nishimori
President and CEO, CAC Holdings Corporation.



OCTOps
demonstration

Labour Analytics

Safety Management

Inventory Management

Panel & Display Monitoring

Visual Quality Inspection

Anomaly Detection

AI Model Enhancement

See OCTOps in Action
Scan to explore

<https://www.octops.tech>



*This report has been paid for by a third party. The views and opinions expressed are not those of Newsweek
and are not an endorsement of the products, services or persons mentioned.*