



## Our Current Status

Happy New Year! In Japan, New Year is the biggest event of the year, and there is a holiday of around one week from the end of December through into early January. On New Year's Day (January 1st), many people welcome the new year by relaxing at home with family and friends rather than going off traveling. I sincerely hope that all of you will have a

very happy time at New Year!

Another thing that I am very pleased about is our company newsletter, the Innovator, which continued to be successfully published in 2024. The main editorial focus in our Japanese-language internal newsletter, published four times a year, is on internal systems and the outlook for the company's future. With the Innovator, our English-language newsletter, the reason for disseminating the newsletter is to provide information about our overseas business operations and to stimulate the interest of people in other countries who might want to apply for employment with HEXEL Works. Once you have read the Innovator, do please let us know what you think about it!

I will be taking on the position of President & CEO in 2024. In 2022, HEXEL Works came under new ownership, and we began to accelerate our efforts to realize growth. One of our key strengths which we need to maintain going forward is our belief in "Ever-Evolving DNA," which means not being satisfied with the status quo, and always thinking carefully before acting. At the same time, to achieve growth, it is important to foster an

ethos that strives for change, rather than failing to take action due to fear of failure. This philosophy has made a vital contribution to the forging of our corporate culture. To further strengthen this attitude in the future, I will be striving to realize corporate management that is focused on satisfying both customers and employees. To this end, my single biggest mission is to hand over the running of the company to the next generation as smoothly as possible. I look forward to working together with you all in the future!

Swing the Bat!

**Takayuki Sakamoto**  
President & CEO



Strengthening ties with the partners that we collaborate with in the Philippines



Takayuki Sakamoto  
President & CEO





## Introduction

In 2023, two students from Mapúa University in the Philippines received provisional job offers from HEXEL to become regular employees. We asked Mr. Takayuki Sakamoto, the responsible manager, about the reasons for expanding the scope of recruitment to include not only University of the Philippines but also Mapúa University. We also asked the students who received the job offers some questions (of a type that we have never asked before) about the change in environment, including what their family's reaction was to them wanting to work in Japan, and what they hope to do in the Philippines. Do please take the time to have a read through!

## Recent Activities of Global Recruitment (GR)

When we first started recruiting in the Philippines, we began by feeling our way, and building up a network of contacts. Recruiting systems in the Philippines are different from those in Japan, so initially it was quite challenging. Fortunately, we got to know a professor at University of the Philippines, and so our recruitment efforts in the Philippines started with a focus on the University.



**Takayuki Sakamoto**  
President & CEO

Thinking that it would be better to have more than one option for recruitment, I began exploring to find out what other possibilities were open to us. Having heard from several Filipino friends that Mapúa University had a good reputation for electrical engineering, I began to do some research, and found that, as an industrial university, Mapúa University had built up a very solid foundation in the area of electrical engineering. I first got in touch with Mapúa University in FY2023, and currently two students from the university who have been given provisional job offers are studying Japanese.



Top: Reporting on recent developments with PJ Link team members / Bottom: Attending a party with team members from Chartreuse Prime Recruitment Specialists, Inc.

FEATURE

# 1 Next Star of HEXEL Works

**Q** What do you feel the main differences are between Filipino culture and Japanese culture?

**Harold** As I delve into Japanese and Filipino cultures, I notice distinct differences. Filipinos cherish close family ties, warmth, and communal gatherings, while Japanese culture values discipline, order, and respect for hierarchy. Silence symbolizes respect in Japan, with etiquette holding great significance. Japan boasts deep-rooted traditions, while the Philippines embraces a mix of indigenous and colonial influences. These cultural disparities have broadened my worldview, offering unique insights into the beauty of both cultures.

**Q** What do you aim to do while in the Philippines?

**Harold** During my time in the Philippines, I am focusing on making the most of my opportunity to prepare myself by dedicating ample time to learning the necessary skills and knowledge needed. However, I also want to prioritize spending quality time with my family as



this will be my first extended period away from them. This is especially meaningful to me because during my college years, there were no vacations, leaving little time for family bonding.

**Q** What are you hoping to do in Japan?

**Harold** In addition to my desire to work in Japan, I am also determined to pursue a graduate degree in the country. It would be a great accomplishment

for me to obtain a license as well if circumstances allow. Moreover, I hold a strong hope of eventually relocating my family to Japan. Combining both professional and personal aspirations.

**Q** What aspects of learning Japanese do you find difficult?

**Sidro** Learning Japanese is a challenge for me as someone who can only use Romaji characters. Firstly, the writing system is very different as



**Harold**  
Gose de Jesus



**Sidro**  
Michael B. dela Cruz

Japanese writing consists of three (3) writing characters: Kanji, Hiragana, and Katakana. Second, the grammar I am used to is different from the Japanese grammar being taught right now, thus giving me a bit of a challenge in learning the language. Third is the pitch intonation of the words pronounced in Japanese. Each word's long, short, and jump sounds are very important as the meaning may be misunderstood if not properly pronounced. Lastly, the difference in culture and context understanding often hinders effective communication despite understanding the word spoken. Despite all these difficulties, learning Japanese is very rewarding and satisfying.

**Q** How do your family feel about the idea of you working in Japan?

**Sidro** Knowing that the family's eldest son had the opportunity to work in Japan, my family felt mixed emotions of happiness and worry, pride and concern. At first, they were worried as their largest concern was the language



Meeting with the family members of applicants who have received a job offer

barrier but with the help of the company that provided a Japanese training class for the prospective employee, parents' concerns slowly vanished. Not just the language barrier, but the Japanese work culture and environment are different from the Philippines which makes the parents worried. However, the continuous effort of the company to ensure the prospective employee's safety, and well-being reassures the parents thus slowly letting go of the worries they are holding.

Posing cheerfully with Ms. Abe, one of the schools' teachers, in a photo to mark the start of the second term at the Japanese language school



**Q** What are you hoping to do in Japan?

**Sidro** Since high school, I wanted to work in Japan as I believe that compared to the Philippines' current technological advancement and work opportunities, Japan has better offers. Now that I have the opportunity to work in Japan, what I want did not change. Work is my priority once I get to Japan and exploring the country comes after.



# Introduction to Our Business Offices Kobe Branch



Video Link

## Kobe City Report

### Overview

For this report, I took a stroll around the area near the Kobe Branch. There is plenty to see for tourists in Kobe's streets, including historic buildings and theme-parks. There are also lots of restaurants that can be highly recommended. I have put together some suggestions for places to see or eat at that are located within 30 minutes' walk of the Kobe Branch, so do please have a read through!

### Introduction

In the past, the *Innovator* newsletter has included special reports focused on younger employees, but until now we have not examined the kinds of things that managers need to think about while performing their work. So for this edition of the newsletter, we interviewed Mr. Makoto Fukuda, Branch Manager of the Kobe Branch, in Hyogo Prefecture, to ask him what is expected of a Branch Manager, and what his strategy for the future is.



## INTERVIEW

**Makoto Fukuda**  
Kobe Branch Manager

**The Path to Becoming a Branch Manager**  
Kobe Branch: Construction Team...2 years  
Osaka Branch: Construction Team...1.5 years  
Sales Team...23 years  
Kobe Branch: Branch Manager...2 years

### Q What is expected of a Branch Manager?

I feel that the most important thing is to ensure that you communicate your thinking and strategies to every member of the branch team.

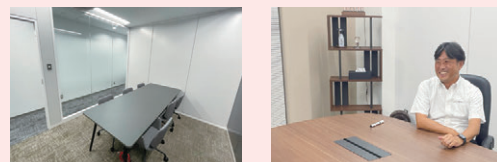
Of course, you also need to possess technical knowhow when you become a Construction Team Manager or Director, but I think it is particularly important for decision-making criteria relating to how the branch staff members work together as a team to be in conformity with the overall branch strategy. To this end, the role that the Branch Manager is expected

to play is to decide on the branch strategy and formulate guidelines for the branch staff to follow.

However, if you become too set in your own way of thinking and are not willing to listen to other people's views, then there is a risk that you will end up heading in the wrong direction. To reduce this risk, you need to listen to the views expressed by the people around you and adjust your own thinking accordingly, and to have as your decision-making criteria the question of whether what you do as a Branch Manager is good for the company as a whole. By doing this, you will be fulfilling your role as Branch Manager properly.

### Q What is the Kobe Branch's strategy for the future?

The Kobe Branch was the first unit in the company to start taking on high-rise condominium projects. I am not saying this just to emphasize that we have expertise in the high-rise condominium segment, but rather, because taking on



the most challenging projects became part of the Kobe Branch's identity, and was in accordance with our spirit of always challenging ourselves.

When our competitors engage in fierce price competition to secure easier projects, it is difficult for them to make a profit. By contrast, highly challenging projects offer the potential for making high profits. Risk management is vitally important, but nevertheless, I hope that we will not lose this spirit of challenging ourselves, and that we will continue to take on high-end projects.

A further point is that, because Osaka and Kobe form part of the same economic region, not many of our competitors have a branch office in Kobe. I think that we should be making effective use of this strength to proactively secure contracts in the Kobe area, so that, ideally, potential clients in this area will come to view HEXEL as their first choice.

"My aim is to ensure that HEXEL Works builds up a strong presence in Hyogo Prefecture!"

### Nankinmachi (Chinatown)



The best-known Chinatowns in Japan include not only those in Yokohama and Nagasaki but also the Nankinmachi area in Kobe. The Nankinmachi Chinatown offers both a historic ambience and delicious food. With everything from Chinese food favorites such as steamed dumplings and pork buns to shaved ice with fresh fruit, visitors can enjoy a wide range of taste sensations. Providing both the unique appeal of a historic Chinatown and the opportunity to enjoy delicious cuisine, Kobe's Nankinmachi is definitely worth visiting.

### Yakitori (Grilled meat on a skewer)



We held a party for the Kobe Branch staff at the Kawa-an yakitori restaurant, which is located near the Kobe Branch offices. The chicken skin skewers are especially highly recommended; they are crisp on the outside but soft on the inside, with a delicious juicy texture. You can enjoy the yakitori either with tare (soy-based dipping sauce) or seasoned with salt; both ways are well worth trying.

This particular restaurant is very popular, and apparently it is difficult to get in without a reservation. If you are visiting Kobe and would like to eat here, I would strongly recommend booking in advance.

### Meriken Park



Meriken Park is situated approximately five minutes' walk from the Kobe Branch. It is a seaside park located next to the Port of Kobe, which was opened in 1987 to mark the 1,200th anniversary of the creation of the first harbor at Kobe. The name "Meriken" derives from the fact that the American consulate was formerly located on this site.

There are various photogenic artworks and historic monuments to see here. Be sure to take some photos when you visit.

### Kobe Harborland



Kobe Harborland is a shopping center located next to Meriken Park, from where visitors can enjoy Kobe's beautiful cityscape. There is a Ferris wheel, and a museum dedicated to Anpanman (a famous Japanese cartoon character). A floating restaurant is moored at Harborland, providing visitors with the special experience of having delicious food while enjoying the panoramic views of the Kobe cityscape and the Akashi-Kaikyo Bridge.





# Our Estimation Team

## in the Philippines

FEATURE

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HEXEL has the Estimation Team operating in the Philippines. We asked Mr. Rambe Rodriguez, who is working on that Team, about how he came to learn estimating task, and about the areas where he has had to make a particular effort, such as coordinating with responsible personnel in Japan. We also talked to Mr. Tatsuya Iida, the responsible manager in Japan, about the purpose and role of the Estimation Team in the Philippines, and about the outlook for the future.

### Q What training have you undergone when learning estimating task?

The very first thing they showed me was how to configure all the necessary platforms for us to communicate successfully.

They assigned me a specific task to work on for a week or two and instructed me to discuss my quantity takeoff during our weekly meeting or training. I find it difficult to decide what size and type of conduit to use since it was not specified on the load schedule. For the wires and cables, though the size was available, the type of wires was not specified either. I tried

doing it the way I used to do it here in the Philippines, using our standard conduits and cables for the specific type of installation. I presented my quantity takeoff to them to compare to what they had come up with. They have made their remarks and discussed parts of the takeoff that Mr. Syohei Hosoya and I did. I asked them about the items that I find difficult to decide or work on. They gave pointers and references to use. Our weekly discussions continued, and from there, I learned a lot from the team. It was indeed a fruitful discussion where everybody was open to all the ideas that we presented. They entertained my ideas in the same way that I was absorbing all the knowledge and ideas that they were imparting.

I think my biggest achievement is that I was able to do the task that they have given me without much supervision. I was able to help the team achieve our goals.

### Q When collaborating with Japanese personnel, what areas have you had to make a special effort in, and what things have you found challenging?

The most essential method or advice I learned from Iida-san and our Japan team is to provide an “Evidence Drawing” every time I completed a task. It’s a way for me to explain to them how I arrived with a certain quantity. This way, they can easily understand or double-check the work that I have done. As for my part, I can also check my work and give an accurate



quantity takeoff. For now, it does take me some time, but by constantly doing it, I will eventually be able to do it as quick and as efficient as possible.

Our meetings where I learn from Iida-san and Cesar-san are always something I look forward to. We would discuss about the work I have finished, and they would give me some suggestions on how to improve it. Talking to them is both informative and fun, and they are patient in answering my questions. It’s the same way when I ask questions to the other members of the team. The politeness of each member of the team is something I really appreciate.

### Q What are your goals for the future?

I treat every day as an opportunity to learn and share my learnings with others. I think with the experience and the people around me; I will gain more knowledge about my job and profession.

My goal is to learn and share more with Hexel Work Inc. to be a team player in achieving or completing projects for our company. Furthermore, my aspiration is to meet the team not just in the Philippines, but also the entire team in Japan.



**Rambe Rodriguez**  
Seconded to a company in the Philippines

## Taking on the challenge—The Estimation Team working together with personnel in the Philippines to support construction projects undertaken for the U.S. military

### 1 The Estimation Team’s purpose and role

To provide support for construction projects being undertaken for the U.S. military in the Tokyo metropolitan region, the Metropolitan Region U.S. Military Projects Estimation Team is currently undertaking its activities in collaboration with staff in the Philippines. Our main role is to compile quotations that need to be highly accurate, and clearly based on solid estimating task, so in drawing up quotations, we base them on accurate extraction of materials data from specifications and drawings, and we compile supporting material that explains how the estimating task was performed.

### 2 Challenges experienced while participating in the Estimation Team in the Philippines

I have known Mr. Rambe for around a year. Initially, both of us faced the same problem in terms of not being familiar with estimating task for U.S. military projects, so when the Team was first getting off the ground, we definitely did not have an easy time of it. Making judgements regarding disparities and contradictions between specifications and drawings was particularly challenging. To overcome this problem, Mr. Rambe and I used online chat and videoconferencing to maintain close communication and share knowledge with one another. Through this system of collaboration, we were able to realize effective information-sharing, deepen our shared understanding of the work, and solve problems.

### 3 Outlook for the future

Going forward, I hope that we can implement proper management of the data derived from the knowhow accumulated by the Metropolitan Region U.S. Military Projects Estimation Team, and use it to support operations in the future. Currently, the work that Mr. Rambe is being asked to do mainly involves extracting the data needed for estimating task, but in the future, I hope that he will also be able to collaborate on submittal work (which is carried out on-site by the project manager, and which involves compiling the data needed to obtain materials approval from the U.S. military) and on compiling the various English-language documents needed at the time of completion, which would help to reduce the burden on on-site personnel.



**Tatsuya Iida**  
Construction Administrator  
Tokyo Third Branch



## Expectations for generative AI

Recently, there have been significant advances in technology that have been driven by artificial intelligence (AI), and I have been very impressed by these developments. There is significant potential for using AI in the estimating task aspect of construction work; for example, I think that AI could be used for determining the number of electrical outlets shown in drawings, or by using AI to read through specifications (which can run to 2,000 pages), any contradictions between the specifications and the drawings could be identified. Talented young people from the Philippines are active in a wide range of fields around the world. I have high hopes that information relating to this kind of technology can be extracted by HEXEL’s Filipino staff, and by staff based in the Philippines that we collaborate with.

**NEW Member**



Haruka Yamaguchi  
Chief, Overseas Talent  
Acquisition

Hello and very nice to meet you. My name is Haruka Yamaguchi. I joined the Global Management Department in June 2023 with a focus on acquiring

talented engineers from overseas markets and ensuring their smooth entry to Japan to be great contributors to the Company. In addition to this, I work collaborative with colleagues on various administrative matters including translation to ensure key communications in English.

Prior to HEXEL, I worked in General Affairs and Accounting in a government office in New York, USA. I have lived in various parts of the U.S. for nine years and have two daughters. I enjoy reading and traveling with my family throughout Japan. I look forward to getting to know my fellow HEXEL colleagues and contributing to the Company.

**NEW Member**



Koichiro Tachibana  
Sales Manager

My name is Koichiro Tachibana, and I have been assigned to the Global Management Department since October. I am responsible for HEXEL TECH Engineering's sales operations in Japan. Rather than electrical engineering materials, my job involves sales promotion for construction materials

and equipment materials. In my previous job, I spent 17 years selling civil engineering materials, and I hope to be able to leverage that experience to make a contribution to the department and to the company as a whole.

On a personal note, I enjoy watching soccer matches, and I am a passionate fan of Kashima Antlers in the Japanese professional football league (an important caveat: I am not a football hooligan!). My favorite experience is watching matches in the Kashima Soccer Stadium in Ibaraki Prefecture.

Having been recruited as a sales specialist, I will be doing my utmost to win the trust of clients, while paying close attention to sales figures and outcomes. I look forward to working with you in the future!



**Projects for the U.S. Military**

1. Camp Mctureous, Renovate Bechtel Elementary School, Okinawa, Japan
2. Yokota Air Base, Yokota 3-Bay –Hanger, Tokyo, Japan
3. Misawa Air Base, CONTRACT DRAWINGS PROJECT 1013751 (QKKA QKKA171042) REPAIR REPAIR DORM—B542, Aomori, Japan
4. Kadena Air Base, Kadena Munitions depot Reconstruction electrical equipment work, Okinawa, Japan
5. Yokota Air Base, Yokota Airfield Damage Repair Equipment Storage Facility (ADR), Tokyo, Japan

**Editorial Note**

This is Takao Nagae, the editor-in-charge of The Innovator. In this issue, we have a report on recipients of provisional job offers in Global Recruitment (GR), for the first time in four years. How have they been getting on? I feel that, by presenting the experience of people who have received job offers and the reactions of those around them, we can strengthen our appeal to young people who may be thinking about joining HEXEL Works. In the future, we will be disseminating information that should be of interest to readers in this target group. We hope you will enjoy reading it!

