

## **StarTech.com sets up operations in Japan**

### **Hard-to-find computer and AV products are now easy to find in Japan with Canadian tech company StarTech.com's entry into the Japanese market**

'Hard-to-find made easy': this is the slogan of a company based in London, Ontario called StarTech.com which last year started direct business in the Japanese market after signing a major distribution agreement and setting up their office in Tokyo. "We are very excited about opportunities in the Japanese market and look forward to much success with our distribution partner, SYNEX Infotec," said Paul Seed, StarTech.com CEO and co-founder.



Problem solved

StarTech.com Ltd. is a global manufacturer of hard-to-find computer and AV products that connect and enhance business technology. With a large portfolio of over 3,000 products and an efficient distribution network, StarTech.com can get cables, connectors, extenders, splitters, switches, adapters, racks and docking stations to IT professionals through their network of over 30,000 resellers worldwide.

StarTech.com was founded in 1985 in London, Ontario. Since then, it has grown into a global company with 385 employees and operations in 15 countries, including distribution centres in the US, Canada and the UK. ISO 9001 certified, it is also one of only a dozen companies worldwide certified to make Apple- and Intel-compatible products. StarTech.com has won numerous company awards including being named 12<sup>th</sup> on Canada's 2015 list of Best Small & Medium Employers, being named 4 years in a row to Deloitte's list of Canada's Best Managed Companies, and number 308 in Profit Magazine's list of Canada's Fastest Growing Companies.

In addition to their 30,000 resellers, StarTech.com sells through big players such as Amazon and other industry websites targeted at IT professionals. "Our key advantage over other companies that sell computer cables or AV products is that StarTech.com makes it easy for IT professionals around the globe to find, get and use the hard-to-find connectivity parts they need to enable their solutions. From the latest technology to legacy products — and all the parts that bridge old and new — StarTech.com helps you find the parts you need," explained Mr. Seed.



StarTech.com sales and distribution operations worldwide

In 2013, StarTech.com decided that the next market to tackle would be Japan and, like every market they have entered, they had to learn about the specific conditions in that market and adapt accordingly.

Finding the right partner is often one of the key factors for foreign companies to be successful in the Japanese market. In mid-2014, StarTech.com signed an agreement with SYNEX Infotec to be their distribution partner in Japan. StarTech.com products are now available to SYNEX Infotec's customers through their warehouse in Tokyo so products can easily be shipped to clients on demand.

In May 2014, StarTech.com established their subsidiary in Japan, StarTech.com Japan K.K. To lead this new office, they have hired Country Manager, Mr. Nobuhisa (Nick) Endo.

StarTech.com also had to understand the various regulatory and market-entry requirements in Japan related to certification of certain electrical items and in terms of packaging and labelling. Their products each have unique compliance obligations, such as PSE (Product Safety Electrical Appliance and Material) and RoHS (Restriction of Hazardous Substances), as well as needing to provide Japanese packaging and ensuring translation of technical and product information is clear and relevant to Japanese IT professionals. Despite those challenges, StarTech.com already has close to 500 of its products fully approved for the Japanese market, with more being added each quarter. "Certifying StarTech.com products for Japan is now built into our product launch process, so new products will be available in Japan at the same time they launch in our other markets," explained Ellard Teeple, Chief Technology Officer at StarTech.com.



In terms of sales and marketing, Japanese StarTech.com products are available through Amazon Japan and Rakuten, Japan's top e-commerce website. The company has translated their marketing material into Japanese and continue to localize their marketing and sales strategy to best suit the needs of IT professionals in Japan.

Entering a new market will always present certain difficulties to a foreign company. "Leveraging trusted advice, like the assistance we received from JETRO, aided us in our understanding the complexities of the Japanese market, said Mr. Seed. "With 2015 being our first full year in Japan, we are looking forward to learning from our Japanese customers how to best add value to their business. If we do that, we will be successful in Japan."

JETRO was pleased to be able to provide support to StarTech.com when needed, including providing expert information from our advisors on PSE safety marks and other packaging requirements as well as general information on Japanese business practices, cultural norms, and hiring practices. Throughout the process of setting up in Japan, JETRO has been available to validate or provide advice on many aspects of the business and has continued to provide support as StarTech.com looks to ramp up sales. "StarTech.com's attention to detail and its careful and well thought out strategy for entering the Japanese market is a model that many Canadian companies could well do to follow. We look forward to their continued success in Japan," said Kazuo Nakamura, Executive Director, JETRO Toronto.

JETRO Canada, January 2015

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Establishment: 2014

Business: Manufacturing and sales of computer and AV products.

Parent Company: StarTech.com Ltd.