

Past JETRO Client

BBK Worldwide On Track to Doubling Japan Revenue, Says Earthquake Did Not Hold Back Business

Osaka Office Serves as Asia Headquarters

August 2011 -- Based in Newton, Mass., BBK Worldwide is a patient recruitment firm that accelerates the clinical trial enrollment process for bringing new and improved medicines and medical treatments to the marketplace by helping sponsors of research -- primarily pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies and medical device companies -- recruit doctors and patients to participate in the research. Ms. Bonnie A. Brescia, co-founder of BBK Worldwide, spoke to us about the opportunities her company sought in Japan, her experience working with JETRO to set up the Japan office, and her outlook on the Japanese market post-earthquake.



Opportunities in Japan

BBK Worldwide sought the Japanese market for its size, location of customers, and opportunity in a market where the company saw it could add significant value. "Japan is a major market for pharmaceutical companies," said Ms. Brescia. "As a single country, it is the number two market, behind the United States....So for that reason alone, it is of critical importance to biopharmaceutical firms." In addition to market size, many of BBK Worldwide's customers are headquartered in Japan. "Many of our customers are Japanese pharmaceutical companies," said Ms. Brescia. "Historically, we have worked with their European or U.S. subsidiaries and affiliates. But in the main, study budgets are authorized by headquarters in Japan, so we felt it would be helpful to both our colleagues in Europe and the U.S., as well as to their supervisors and directors in Japan, if we had a direct presence in the country." Also, because it takes longer to get new medicines approved in Japan than in almost any other country in the world, said Ms. Brescia, BBK Worldwide saw ways in which it could help shorten that process. BBK Worldwide also saw opportunity to provide knowledge transfer in areas where it felt Japanese pharmaceutical companies and researchers had less experience "with the new methods for conducting feasibility studies, site selection, and patient recruitment," she said. Because of these reasons and others, BBK Worldwide established its Asia-Pacific headquarters in Japan.

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Using JETRO's Free Office Setup Services

In setting up the office, BBK Worldwide received the following free services from JETRO:

- Guidance on types of company registration: K.K., G.K., etc.
- Support setting up bank accounts
- Temporary office space
- Visa information
- Meeting arrangements with bio-related organizations in Osaka, national hospital organization and newspaper
- Introduction to an interpreter
- Assistance in completing paperwork for Osaka-area incentives for foreign companies

When asked about BBK Worldwide's experience working with JETRO, Ms. Brescia responded, "The help that we got from JETRO was mission critical. I don't think we could have done it without you, and we

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certainly could not have done it as quickly and as successfully." She described JETRO's role in the process as "a trusted and supportive guide on how to explore options and opportunities. JETRO helped us to manage the logistics of establishing an office on the financial front, as well as accounting, banking, legal and many other connections....I feel as if we got everything and more than we could possibly expect."

Benefits of Having a Local Office

Ms. Brescia described the following substantial benefits and outcomes of having a local office in Japan:

- **Improved relationships with customers:** "Whether those customers are based in the U.S. or Europe, or they often are being supervised here in Japan or their parent companies are in Japan, it really helps them to feel confident in saying, 'This is the group that I would like to work with, and they can meet with me at any time in Japan.'"
- **Better ability to establish alliances:** "An exceptional example is our alliance and partnership with CROee [a clinical research organization in Japan]. At the beginning of this year, we merged our two offices in Osaka and created some major economies of scale. And their U.S. office will be collocated with ours here in Massachusetts. Also through that relationship, we have established an alliance with a company in Korea that CROee is a partner in."
- **Ability to provide services directly:** "We can provide project management services directly to the colleagues in Japan. It's very difficult to be a project manager from the U.S. or Europe and do business with Japan."

- **Competitive advantage:** “[Operating in Japan] is something that none of our competitors do, or can do.”

- **Revenue:** “At the end of 2010, about four percent [of our global revenue came from Japanese companies], and we’re projecting eight percent for this year.”

Earthquake Did Not Hold Back Japan Business, Maintains Positive Outlook

When asked whether the recent earthquake has affected BBK Worldwide’s business in Japan, Ms. Brescia replied, “We anticipated that the earthquake and the nuclear power components around it might put many projects on hold. But that was not the case for the projects that were up and running -- none of our customers have pulled out of the market. I think the earthquake adds some operational challenges in certain areas, but Japan is still a very important marketplace from the perspective of the pharmaceutical industry.”

BBK Worldwide’s revenue from Japanese companies also has come from the subsidiaries of these companies in other countries, business that Ms. Brescia said her company was able to gain due to the Japan office. Moving forward, Ms. Brescia looks forward to supporting research studies managed out of Japan, whether they are Japan-only, for Pan-Asia, or global.

Japan Company Profile

Japan Company: BBK Worldwide - Osaka, G.K.
Established: January 2009
Employees: 1 full-time employee, 20-25 contractual employees from CROee
Business: Patient recruitment for clinical trials of new medicines and medical treatments
Locations: 6F MF Nishi-Umeda Building
5-1-26 Fukushima, Fukushima-ku
Osaka, 553-0003
Japan
URL: <http://www.bbkworldwide.com/>
Parent company: BBK Worldwide

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**Note: The opinions contained in this article are based on the experiences of the interviewee. They are not representative of all experiences in Japan or working with Japanese companies, and do not reflect the opinions of JETRO.*

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