

## Working with JETRO Translates to Success in Japan

San Francisco based translation services company uses market advisors while choosing type of office to set up.

Elanex is a translation company that uses a proprietary technology platform and set of algorithms to provide document translation. The software compares incoming documents to past work and is able to identify patterns and repeated paragraphs in order to automate that part of the process. Human translators and editors complete the work. Elanex's largest clients include financial services firms (because they often produce documents like equity research reports that contain repeated information from one month to the next), legal firms (where the software helps to identify small but crucial differences from document to document), and technology firms (whose structured data is ideally suited to the Elanex approach).

Right away Jonathan Kirk, CEO of Elanex, recognized significant opportunities to profit in Japan. "Japan," Mr. Kirk says, "is the largest single-language market for translation in the world. If you want to start out with a translation company that deals with English and one other language, Japanese is the best one. In addition, the structure of Japanese industry maps well to our market focus – the biggest Japanese firms have translation needs which our systems are ideally suited to address."

Elanex needed to enter the Japanese market, but needed advice and connections to ensure solid returns upon office set-up. In addition, Elanex needed to gain a more thorough understanding of the costs and benefits of different types of offices in Japan. As Elanex was relatively small at this point, they were looking for alternative to setting up a K.K., which is the most popular method of opening a Japan office. JETRO advisors met with Mr. Kirk to explain the

options available to the company, and provided him with the current regulatory information and advice on the distinctions of opening different types of offices. After meeting and discussions with the JETRO advisors, Mr. Kirk determined that the best approach for Elanex was not the one that many advisors recommend based on a superficial analysis. In May 2003 Elanex set up a branch office in the Roppongi Hills complex in downtown Tokyo.

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Since opening its branch office in Japan, Elanex has enjoyed great success and continues to build its network in Japan. "People love to talk about how doing business in Japan is different than anywhere else in the world. But they're missing the point," says Mr. Kirk. "The key thing is not learning the customs, it's finding out how you need to build relationships with Japanese people. JETRO is very good at creating forums for people to build relationships with each other and making introductions. You should never underestimate how important that is."

Elanex plans to grow its business in Japan further with an additional office in Osaka or by acquiring or merging with a local translation company in the near future.

Elanex Japan  
Level 6  
Roppongi OG Building  
1-3-4 Nishi Azabu  
Minato-ku, Tokyo  
106-0031  
(tel) 03.5772.6679  
(fax) 03.4496.4309  
[www.elanex.com](http://www.elanex.com)