

# The Japan Times forum



Indian interns Shubham Jain and Yash Ubale programming as their Fujifilm Software Co. colleagues look on. FUJIFILM SOFTWARE CO.



Intern Himanshu Tolani reporting his work progress to Tonichi Printing Co. colleagues. TONICHI PRINTING CO.

## Internship benefits students, businesses

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As far as my contribution is concerned to the Japanese company, right now I'm quite focused on working on the internet project I'm working on and giving it my best. In the end I hope to give the best product I can to Tonichi Printing.

**Moderator: Thank you. Next, let's hear from Mr. Shubham Jain.**

**Jain:** On the first question about my general thoughts on working overseas, I would like to point to the fact that Mr. Iwamoto stated that the students that come to IIT and especially the people who are graduating from computer science are among the top students in India. They are from the top institutes in the country and are highly skilled.

Apart from the best knowledge, we also need overall development, which is really required in the current scenario such as basic company manners and how to communicate with people around the globe; these skills are really important when it comes to being a good IT professional. We don't really find this type of communication system in startups or small companies in India, whereas I did find this type of communication here, so it's really good for me.

As far as working in a Japanese company, I would like to point out that in India, I'm really lethargic and I'm a procrastinator kind of person. So when I'm in Japan, the first few days were a little too tiring for me. Working from around nine to six in the evening was difficult for me. But at the end of the day, we need to be disciplined in our lives. We need this kind of discipline. I totally think that the amount of work that the Japanese people do is incomparable to other people. Japanese people, they are workaholics; they like to do work.

As I previously mentioned that Japanese people work a lot, but they are not really flexible regarding their work and they prefer doing work on a daily basis on a fixed schedule. Working to a schedule is a very good thing that I learned from the people here. Being too flexible can distract us sometimes. Being flexible is a good, as well as a bad, thing. For me it comes across as a bad thing because when I am procrastinating, I am unable to finish my work on time, so working on a daily basis works really well for me. So discipline, which was kind of lacking in me, is a really good thing that I learned here.

I'm adding one other thing to the above point. I would also like to note, as Mr. Iwamoto rightly said, the specification and design

requirements are really not so important in India if you work in a small company. If you are working in a big company in India, the design and specification documents are equally important like Japan. But if you are working in any company in Japan, they outline a proper schedule. I've learned WBS (work breakdown structure) schedules, where each aspect of the work is broken down into different tasks, creating smaller tasks to be completed in order. Regarding the design and specification documents, they are really important in developing a software. So I've rightly inculcated the knowledge of design and specification documents I learned at Fujifilm Software.

The immediate challenge that I'm facing in Japan is the communication barrier. We don't really know Japanese and learning it in a few days isn't very easy. The point is, that whenever we start something, we obviously face some difficulties. But after that, we don't really need the language to communicate, we can just communicate through actions and are able to understand what other people are saying. I would like to say that the language barrier is very big and if we were to join these companies as full-time workers, then we need to learn Japanese.

Also, I'm a vegetarian and it's really difficult for me to get food because finding good vegetarian food in Japan isn't easy. So language and food are the two areas I'm having difficulties in.

Mr. Machida told me once that the recruitment process in Japanese companies takes a really long time. It would be good if Japanese companies can reduce the amount of time to recruit people. Maybe the Japanese are accustomed to this kind of environment in which the recruitment process takes a long time, but hiring from a global market, it is likely that the applicants won't really wait around to get recruited. So if the recruitment process can be shortened a little, it could be helpful for the Japanese companies to hire more and more individuals from abroad.

Apart from my technical knowledge that I have from software engineering and the design process, maybe I can contribute in terms of diversity. Having a company where there is only one kind of people can lead to a very monotonous scenario. So when we went into Fujifilm Software, there was a little change in the atmosphere, which was kind of refreshing for the people working there, as well as for the two of us. We are getting to learn a new culture and they are getting to learn our culture. So we are developing not only in our IT skills, but other valuable skills as well. So it helps in that respect.

Secondly, I would like to point out that Indians are really good at speaking English. So, if you are working in a multinational company like Fujifilm, we are not only working in Japan; we have work all over the globe and this is the place where we can fill in if the company requires that. So this can be our contribution to a Japanese company apart from our IT knowledge.

**Moderator: Thank you. Mr. Yash Ubale, please.**

**Ubale:** Before telling you my point of view about working overseas, I would like to briefly describe the present scenario in India.

There are many engineering colleges in India and as Mr. Iwamoto mentioned, nearly 1.5 million students apply for the JEE (Joint Entrance Examination) advanced exam. Out of those 1.5 million students, roughly 10,000 students are selected for the prestigious IIT.

There are generally five different types of students. First, there are those who opt for placement in an Indian company; while others choose an overseas company; and the third type applies for civil services exams to become bureaucrats. The fourth type wishes to continue on to higher studies and the fifth type are those who plan to start a small business venture.

The first two types constitute roughly 70 percent of total graduates. The number of students who seek jobs far outweighs the number of jobs available. So, in my opinion there are many students in India who would like to work overseas.

I am quite flexible and open to the idea of working for a Japanese company. Japan is the first foreign country that I have visited. It has been a great experience for me so far. Japan is a great nation with pleasant weather, widely acknowledged history and fast growing and adaptive technology. People are very generous, helpful and children at heart, in a good way, especially to foreigners. Speaking of work culture, Japanese people are known to be very hard working, which is true without a doubt. Indian work culture should adapt to such a quick and intense work culture, keeping the spirit of their youth alive.

Personally speaking, the work culture in Fujifilm Software is far better than what I expected. There is a colleague of mine, Mr. Iwashita, and I must say that he is a very funny guy. I am not really used to the idea of working from nine to five. By the end of the day, around three or four, it becomes very tiring for me. He is the one who

encourages me, cheers me up and keeps motivating me by saying that this is my challenge and I must accomplish it.

During lunchtime at my company, all of my colleagues teach me Japanese. Being born and raised in a multilingual country I am learning Japanese quite fast. They even make me draw a map of Japan and show me the places that I must visit. I even taught Hindi to everyone and with no hesitation, a few of my colleagues changed their nameplates from Japanese to Hindi. I am thankful for the friendly atmosphere and at the same time relieved to have such cheerful people around me.

I would love to work for a Japanese company, and of course with Fujifilm Software.

The main challenge that I faced working as an intern in Fujifilm Software was the language barrier. Thanks to Google Translate and my pantomime skills I was able to overcome it. Apart from the language barrier, I didn't face any problems. My colleagues helped me in every personal or professional problem I faced.

Considering the improvement of the IT sector in Japan, I would like to add to the point that Himanshu mentioned before. The thing about the IT sector in India is that when you actually work for any IT start-up or even a multinational IT company, you can see a foosball table, table tennis table, Playstation, Xbox, chess sets and more, allowing people to enjoy playing in their down time. This is something I would like to see in Japan as well.

The project that I am working on is related to machine learning and deep learning. I am doing my best to achieve even a little improvement. As far as my contribution to Japanese companies is concerned, I would be honored if in the future Fujifilm Software uses the work I did as a reference for their task.

Considering individual contributions, it's not quite recognizable, but if you see long-term contributions I think I can contribute a lot to Fujifilm Software.

**Moderator: Thank you so much for your valuable feedback.**

**Lastly, Mr. Hiroshi Hirabayashi, the president of the Japan-India Association, I'd like to ask for your opinions on this program after listening to what was discussed today.**

**Hirabayashi:** For Japan to survive, to continue to prosper in the years to come, we have to make the best use of foreign talent. Japanese companies are trying to globalize, make investments overseas or welcome foreign workers into Japan. However, in spite of the need and urgency for that, the efforts of

Japanese corporations are still insufficient. So from the discussions above, many Japanese companies will learn valuable lessons.

For the continuing success of the programs, the two sides have to make further efforts, both in India and Japan. Let me say first of all, we have to make many efforts in Japan, especially Japanese corporations. In my view, except for a number of truly global-minded companies, Japanese corporations have been pretty inward looking in spite of their official intentions and declarations that they want to globalize themselves. Although they increase their operations abroad, the mindset of Japanese management, generally speaking, is still inward looking. And the attitude of Japanese employees is also inward looking. The mentality of Japanese management and employees still has to catch up to international standards.

Japanese universities also have to improve themselves much more to increase lectures and conferences in English and other foreign languages. They have to facilitate foreign students getting degrees, especially Ph.D.s.

Between Japan and India, business exchanges are increasingly on the rise. As of October, we counted a total of 1,505 Japanese companies in India. They operate in more than 4,400 facilities such as factories, offices and others in India. However, compared to the potential and the need of Japanese firms to engage in the ever-developing Indian market, their actual presence in India is much less compared to their presence in Southeast Asia, let alone in China. Much must be done.

The increasing number of Japanese corporations are anxious to do business in, and with, India not only for exporting to the Indian market and manufacturing in India, but also for exporting their products to other markets using India as a launch pad. So the possibilities of Japanese businesses to work with Indian companies and Indian IT engineering talent are great and are in fact on the rise.

Still more aggressive efforts need to be undertaken by the Japanese government. Easing entry visas, especially for highly skilled talent, must be a priority. The administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is very conscious of that. There is excellent chemistry between Abe and Prime Minister Narendra Modi not only on politico-security matters, but also economic cooperation and business exchanges. And Modi's campaign for promoting "Make in India" and "Skill India" is highly appreciated by the Abe administration and Japanese business community. Now we are living in an excellent environment for promoting Indian IT engineer internships and their real engagement in Japanese companies.

In my experience of 15 years with India as ambassador to India and as president of the

Japan-India Association, I have the impression that Indian people in general and IT engineers in particular, tend to look to English-speaking countries, which pose fewer linguistic barriers. But Indians are expected to look beyond and broadly so that their horizons will be enlarging much more.

Japan is a different culture from Indian culture, having different business practices, and yet we share the same spirituality coming from Hinduism and Buddhism. Buddhism is the offspring of ancient Brahmanism, predecessor to the Hinduism of today. To a certain degree, both share identical philosophies and religious beliefs. They are like brothers. So Indians may find Japan as a potentially very natural partner.

So both in Japan and in India, the people's mindsets have to change. The policies of the governments have to improve. For that, on both sides, we have to work together. And the potential of Japanese corporations to absorb Indian IT engineers is beyond imagination.

I think many Japanese global-oriented companies are already inviting many Indian IT engineers. They are operating in various Indian cities not only in Delhi and Mumbai, but Pune, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai. They do whatever they think is necessary without disclosing it publicly. So compared to our impressions, our companies' engagements with IIT are already developed.

Additionally, the Japanese government and Japan International Cooperation Agency are now helping IIT Hyderabad to better develop its campus and facilities.

One of the Japanese student members of the Japan-India Association selected IIT Kharagpur. He is a very brilliant student from the Kansai area. I hope that he will succeed in graduating from Kharagpur. That will encourage other excellent Japanese students to look at IIT and India.

In my view, not only is it very important to both nations that more IIT students come to Japan, but also that more Japanese students go to India to explore avenues there.

In conclusion, I would say that if we promote cooperation of this sort of exchange program between Japanese corporations and IIT engineers, both Indians and Japanese will be benefiting enormously. The sum of the Japanese efforts and Indian efforts will be surpassing the simple sum of the two figures.

**Moderator: Thank you very much for your remarks. We now clearly understand the significance of bringing in foreign IT talent to Japanese companies.**

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**Takashi Kitazume** is the chief editorial writer of The Japan Times. He joined The Japan Times in 1986 after graduating from the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. As a reporter, he has covered various fields, including politics and the economy. After serving as domestic news, foreign news editor and managing editor, he moved to his current position in 2013.

## PIITs addresses IT shortfall

Project Indian Institutes of Technology, or PIITs, is an internship program started by staffing agency Webstaff Co. in March 2016.

The service connects students from the highly acclaimed Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) and Japanese firms interested in hiring international talent, enabling the former to gain working experience at the latter for two months during their summer break.

According to Webstaff, four Japanese firms took six IIT students last year, while seven firms received 11 students this year. Two Japanese companies hired four students from IIT after the 2016 internship.

For further information, see <http://piits.jp/ad/>.