

WM2017 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 54: Doing Business in Japan

Co-Chairs: **Akira Ohno**, *IHI Corporation (Japan)*
James Golsen, *US Department of Commerce*

Panel Reporter: **Frazier Bronson**, *Mirion Technologies (Canberra)*

Panelists:

1. **Yohei Iwasaki**, *Vice-President, Veolia Nuclear Solutions (Japan)*
2. **Akira Ohno**, *IHI Corporation (Japan)*
3. **James Braun**, *President, AVANTech, Inc*
4. **Robert Bonner**, *Vice-President, AECOM (United Kingdom)*
5. **Colin Austin**, *Senior Vice-President, Energy Solutions*

This was an excellent session with an audience of about 50 very interested attendees.

The first speaker was **Yohei Iwasaki**, the Japan Country Manager for Veolia Nuclear solutions. He told us that successful companies have a common Global culture, but a different strategy in each country. Companies should maximize the learning process to figure out what works in each country.

The next speaker was the Co-Chair, **Ohno-san**. He had a very interesting slide about how various countries rate in Business Communications. On one extreme were Germany and the US with very verbal and very direct communications. On the other extreme is Japan with quite non-verbal communication and lots of “between the lines” meanings. He concluded that it was very important to do lots of spadework to build consensus before asking for any formal decision.

Colin Austin, Energy Solutions, had a very similar slide, where the US business practices were very individualistic and proactive, as compared to Japan where they are very group oriented and bureaucratic. He said that Japanese are very curious about new technology, but don’t easily accept it. He cautioned that quality is very important – deliver what you promise.

Robert Bonner, AECOM, emphasized that relationships are very important. Familiar and trusted companies are given preference. The decision process is very slow and bottom up. Be patient and responsive during the process.

James Braun, AVANTech, said that it is most important to try to Understand, rather than trying to be Understood. Verbal communications are often misunderstood – get important items in writing. Consistency and Conformity of your product is absolutely important. And while the word “no” doesn’t exist directly, it does exist in many very subtle forms if you are observant.

The common themes from all speakers were: Long term relationships are most important; a local presence in Japan is essential; be good listeners; be patient; be respectful; and deliver a quality product on time and as it is expected. And while those were comments from this meeting specifically for Japan, they seem like very good business principles for most everywhere.