

Ruth Marie Jarman, the director of Jarman International



# An American Cheering On Japan's Globalization

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**TAMAKI KAWASAKI**

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*Using her decades of global marketing experience, Ruth Marie Jarman works with businesses to champion Japan's globalization. It's a venture that allows her to use all she's learned over thirty years living here to promote what makes Japan and the Japanese special.*

**B**ORN in North Carolina in the United States and raised in the state of Hawaii, Ruth Marie Jarman was a student at Tufts University in the U.S. when she decided to study abroad at Japan's Nanzan University in Aichi Prefecture. She learned Japanese and began working at a Japanese company in 1988, and has been living in Japan for thirty years.

Japan was right in the middle of its bubble economy at the time. "I was blessed to have busy yet powerful Japanese bosses and coworkers," Jarman says, "and I struggled desperately to keep up with them despite my Japanese not being very good yet." She worked in the general affairs department and became the first cheerleader captain of the company's American football club.

She eventually left to start her own small translation and interpreting operation. But when the

former CEO of her first company asked her to join a real estate firm he owned in 2000, Jarman seized the opportunity. That firm, with its vision of a rapidly internationalizing Japan, began creating furnished rental apartments for international employees coming to Japan to work.

For twelve years, Jarman handled the individual living environment and lifestyle requests of over three thousand international businesspeople that came to Japan every year. Now, as the director of Jarman International K.K., she uses the deep knowledge of Japanese culture and business she gained while searching all over Japan for services to accommodate these businesspeople to devise international sales strategies for Japanese businesses.

"Japan is internationalizing rapidly, with 2.4 million international residents living in Japan and



- 1 One of the rooms at a hotel Jarman collaborates with
- 2 Jarman often presents business seminars about the inbound market
- 3 A welcoming and elegant ambiance is important for business travelers

Location : HOTEL & RESIDENCE ROPPONGI  
Members Salon 1310

the number of visitors continuing to rise,” Jarman states. “The issue Japanese businesses face is how to turn these people into customers.”

She notes that the services and products Japanese businesses offer to international visitors often differ from the experience those visitors expect, so they lose potential customers.

“Outdoor baths in traditional Japanese inns are a good example,” Jarman explains. “They’re a wonderful example of Japanese hospitality, but for people coming from countries that do not have a communal bathing culture there is a psychological resistance to getting naked in front of others and bathing as a group—much less outdoors. Of those coming to Japan for the first time, many stay in business hotels, and their first bath experience is in a tiny plastic tub in a unit bathroom, and they’re very happy with it. It’s all about not trying to translate Japanese culture, but instead putting it in a format that’s easier for visitors to understand. We provide that help.”

Jarman’s company works with restaurants, hotels and leisure facilities that want to attract international guests, as well as train companies and other businesses that see a large influx of visitors from outside Japan on a daily basis.

“We’re seeing drastically improved customer numbers and morale in local staff, and we work to form a relationship of mutual trust with each business,” says Jarman, reflecting on the sense of fulfillment she gets from her work. “Japanese people are truly struggling with how to handle international visitors and need the perspective of someone from outside Japan, so I feel this is work worth doing.”

As someone who has raised children in Japan, Jarman feels there is still pressure placed on working mothers, but she has high praise for how Japanese business culture keeps promises and expresses gratitude.

“I’d like to create a new economy that includes non-Japanese people to encourage growth amid Japan’s wonderful societal common sense and morals,” she states. “One day I’d like to become a politician in the United States, live in both countries, and impart the goodness of Japanese morals to the United States.”

For the time being, though, Jarman continues to dream big, intent on helping Japan internationalize and show its best features to the rest of the world. **17**