

The Tokyo One-Stop Business Establishment Center is a one-stop consultation service center that helps its users complete the necessary procedures for establishing a company.

Many non-Japanese people show up for a consultation. Today we talked with an entrepreneur from overseas, Mr. Charles Harris.



Relay interview

A passion for cars

I first came to Japan in 2001 as a member of the US Armed Forces. Not knowing much about Japan, I originally planned to stay for just a year, but three months later I extended my overseas tour. After a series of military tour extensions that totaled 6 years and continuous night classes at a local university, I was able to complete my associate's degree which helped me to get accepted in 2007 into Temple University's B.B.A Business Management program in Tokyo. In 2010 post graduation from Temple University and Japanese language school I started working as a U.S. military contractor and then after accepted another position as U.S. Government facilities manager. While working with the government, I liked facilities management because it was engineering related and seemed to be a very stable career, but I knew something was missing which was my love for Japan and passion for cars.

The story goes, way back in 2002 I bought my first car in Japan and worked on it night and day. Since then car restoration, modification, and tuning has always been a hobby that I love and spend so much time day dreaming about. To be honest I've probably spent way too much time working on cars, but consequently I know a great deal about the Japanese car sales market, as well as the ins and outs of vehicle engineering, technologies and supply & logistics. My company handles anything that encompasses used or new vehicle sales and related parts. Since I'm just starting, I do not like to talk a lot about all the intricacies of my business, but from a business stand point it's more of a buy and sell in opposing markets type of finance game than a passion. Never the less I love what I do.

I learned about TOSBEC after visiting the Business Development Center TOKYO (BDCT)

I was searching the internet for entrepreneurship programs and came across the BDCT program that provides Entrepreneur VISA application support to aspiring entrepreneurs who live outside of Japan. After paying a visit to the BDCT office, I encountered TOSBEC as they and the BDCT share an office space. Both programs have been great. Anyone who wishes to register a business in Japan would be making a big mistake if they bypass TOSBEC as they have representatives who will guide you through every step of starting a new business and the related business registration processes. I am very grateful and lucky to have found this program.

My hat goes off to TOSBEC as all staff members have been kind, helpful, and everything turned out well. Special thanks to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government as well for making the Entrepreneur Visa possible.



Profile

Tokyo CS+L, CEO

Charles Harris

U.S. National Charles Harris has lived in Japan for almost 15 years. He first arrived to Japan via the Island of Okinawa as a member of the US armed forces then moved to Yokosuka and finally on to Tokyo to enroll as a university student. Upon graduation, he began working as a facility manager with the US government and moved back to the U.S. for several years. After resignation from his U.S. Government role, Charles received help and support from the Tokyo One-Stop Business Establishment Center (TOSBEC) during the summer of 2018 to start his own vehicle and auto parts sales company and has now started business operations.

TOSBEC offered free consultation, and it was very helpful

My process began when I submitted all entrepreneur program application paperwork to the BDCT who then forwarded it to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. Applying for the entrepreneur visa was not exactly easy for me. The application is about 10 pages long and must be filled out in Japanese only. The documents must include a resume, your statement of purpose for business in Japanese, as well as a financial (the financial report is not so bad if you are familiar with Excel). I do have a basic understanding of Japanese, but support from BDCT was very helpful for submission of the documents to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.




The advantage of using both BDCT and TOSBEC is that consultations are totally free. Most people usually spend thousands of U.S. dollars just for visa advice alone. Furthermore, one might pay a company additional fees to help with business registration paperwork. Of course, paying a consultant to do everything may be less stressful. But, if you choose to do the paperwork yourself, you can take your completed documents to TOSBEC and they will edit your mistakes and send it off for you at no charge. Not only has the staff at TOSBEC been very helpful to me, they were also very polite, courteous, and happy to help which was beyond the level of service that I had hoped to receive.

Efficient service, and all in English

Most of the assistance TOSBEC provided to me occurred on the same day that I scheduled the appointment. Several times I had to visit different sections of TOSBEC and generally, each session was kept under an hour. In addition to VISA paperwork, TOSBEC also helped me with national and local tax registration, as well as finalizing my articles of incorporation. Altogether it took about five hours at TOSBEC to complete the necessary paperwork.

Everyone at TOSBEC is knowledgeable and they are experts at what they do. They also have a direct line to key government offices – they know exactly who to call and with whom to speak. There are other offices available around Tokyo that provide support for starting a business, but their services will all be in Japanese. Here, I can use English any time with one of their fulltime interpreters, so this made the process much smoother and less confusing. For anyone registering a business, I will say that professional consultants are very helpful, but I recommend you go directly to TOSBEC and register the business yourself because it's totally free.



My key tips about starting a business in Japan

Never quit your day job unless you are going into something you are really passionate about. Also, before you even think about starting a business in Japan, study Japanese for a minimum of a year.

My Japanese is still developing, but if I had not spoken any Japanese, this process of starting a business would not have been possible.