Toi Labs

United States

Digital Health, Preventative care

Tokyo Expansion: 2025

Vik Kashyap

Founder and Chief Executive Officer

Business in Tokyo

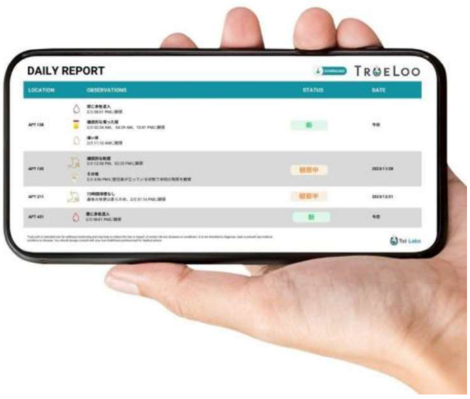
- Toi Labs is a U.S. health-tech company that developed TrueLoo, an AI-enabled toilet seat that turns any toilet into a non-invasive health monitoring device. Designed to support the health and dignity of seniors, the technology is backed by leading bathroom brands and the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH).
- Our expansion into Japan was a strategic decision driven by a powerful convergence of factors and expanding into Japan has long been a strategic target on our roadmap, reflecting a long-term vision for this market. Japan has long been a target market on their roadmap, a vision validated by a strategic investment from a major Japanese bathroom brand.
- The nation's significant aging population creates a clear need for senior care innovation, while its world-leading adoption of advanced toilet technology ensures a receptive consumer base. Finally, the government's strong focus on preventive healthcare perfectly aligns with Toi Labs' mission, making Japan an ideal market for growth.

Challenges & Success Factors

- Toi Labs faced major challenges entering Japan, including difficulty acquiring initial customers who demanded local case studies and navigating complex administrative procedures.
- To address these challenges, our key internal action was the founder's deep personal involvement. By leading the setup directly instead of delegating, he ensured agile and context-aware decision-making. Leading the setup directly rather than delegating ensured that decision-making remained agile and fully informed by the local context.
- In parallel, the Free Consulting Service by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government provided valuable external support. The program acted as an essential bridge to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, simplifying communication and compliance. It also created vital networking opportunities by inviting Toi Labs to exclusive events, which led to valuable connections with potential business partners.

Messages to New Joiners

- For companies considering expansion to Tokyo, success hinges on mindset shifts.
- You must develop a genuine understanding of Japanese culture and business practices. Japan operates differently, and acknowledging this is fundamental.
- Finally, and most importantly, be patient. The "move fast and break things" startup mentality is ineffective here. Success in Japan is a long journey that requires you to accept market realities and be prepared for a marathon, not a sprint, as it takes time for things to come together.



TrueLoo, offered by Toi Labs, is an AI-powered toilet seat that optically scans your stool and urine for concerning changes.

Open Cosmos

OPEN COSMOS

United Kingdom

Aerospace Engineering

Tokyo Expansion: 2025

Rafel Jorda Siquier
Chief Executive Officer

Business in Tokyo

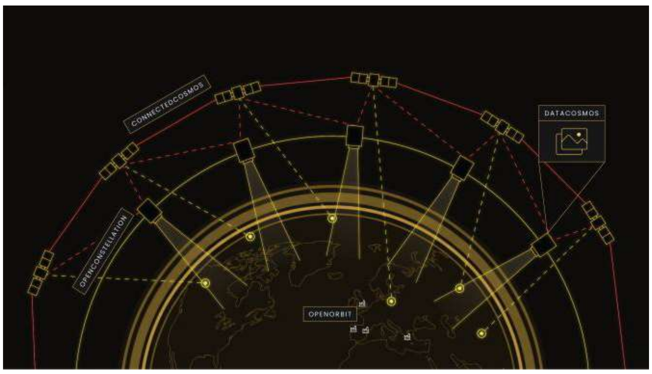
- Open Cosmos is a UK space venture solving global challenges through small satellite missions and data. With nearly a decade of experience, we provide end-to-end services, from satellite design and manufacturing to launch and operations, across fields such as telecommunications, earth observation, and science.
- With a decade of delivering satellite missions across Europe, Open Cosmos wanted to explore new expansions. Following a visit from the Panasonic Group to Open Cosmos's UK HQ, it was clear Tokyo – as Asia's most advanced technology hub and the epitome of Japan's deep expertise and manufacturing maturity – would be the natural choice for a new regional headquarters.
- Open Cosmos has now established a Japanese subsidiary, is exploring a future satellite production line in Japan, and launched a landmark partnership with the Panasonic Group. Under this partnership, its QUIVER collaboration was recently selected as one of just 23 proposals to receive funding from the UK Space Agency's International Bilateral Fund (IBF).

Challenges & Success Factors

- Upon entering the Tokyo market, we faced numerous obstacles. Open Cosmos arrived in Tokyo with no local connections in one of Asia's most relationship-driven markets. Procedural barriers, including even setting up a corporate bank account, compounded the challenge.
- In overcoming these obstacles, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Free Consulting Service provided the breakthrough, delivering trusted introductions to government bodies, local authorities and private companies that would otherwise have taken years to reach.
- This foundation of trust, built on an "introduction by TMG's support program," allowed us to gain credibility from the start and secure valuable opportunities to present our business.

Messages to New Joiners

- For international companies looking to expand into Japan, engage with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's support programs as early as possible. The Free Consulting Service doesn't just provide guidance; it brings connections and credibility.
- Even if you are still "on the fence" and uncertain about entering the Japanese market, you should take the first step and reach out to the program without hesitation.
- The network of companies formed through the program also acts as a valuable resource for practical insights and peer support from people on the same journey.



The ConnectedCosmos architecture provided by Open Cosmos

Edgenesis

United States

Industrial Edge Solutions

Tokyo Expansion: 2024

edgenesis

Yongli Chen
Chief Executive Officer

Business in Tokyo

- Edgenesis offers the "nervous system for physical AI," providing open-source middleware that connects intelligent AI models with physical devices like robots and sensors, simplifying hardware integration to accelerate physical AI solutions.
- We strategically chose to expand into Tokyo, driven by the significant market opportunity for automation fueled by Japan's declining labor force.
- Japan represents the ideal market; it is a high-potential, developed nation with a stable, regulated business environment that reduces risk, and it offers greater geographic and cultural proximity than Western alternatives..

Challenges & Success Factors

- Our primary challenges in entering the Tokyo market were navigating complex administrative procedures and adapting to the unique business culture. We faced a significant "dead loop" during company incorporation, where bureaucratic requirements created a challenging obstacle.
- This is where the support from Free Consulting Service provided by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government became a success factor. They assigned a dedicated consultant who provided invaluable, hands-on assistance. For instance, he personally visited government offices to resolve ambiguities, even securing a recorded confirmation that our shared office was a valid legal address.
- This direct support was crucial in breaking the administrative deadlock. While we also worked to adapt our promotional materials to local preferences by focusing on business outcomes, Tokyo's expert guidance through the setup phase was instrumental in our successful market entry.

Messages to New Joiners

- One important piece of advice to overseas companies considering expansion into Tokyo is to have "patience." The Japanese market tends to move at a comparatively slower pace than other markets, especially throughout the decision-making process. Business is heavily built on a foundation of trust between individuals, and it is therefore crucial to invest the sufficient time required to patiently cultivate those relationships.
- While highlighting advanced technical specifications in a presentation can be the most effective approach in some markets, in Japan, establishing a greater sense of security and reliability as a partner is often prioritized.
- Rather than rushing to secure immediate contracts, building a solid foundation of strong trust is the true key to achieving long-term success in Japan. Taking a steady approach to deepening these connections without haste will ultimately lead to the greatest business results.

Shifu

Shifu, offered by Edgenesis, is a Kubernetes-native industrial edge enabling complete IoT interoperability

Patsnap

Singapore

IP and R&D intelligence

Tokyo Expansion: 2021

Guan Dian

Co-founder and
APAC General Manager

Business in Tokyo

- Patsnap is a global company accelerating worldwide innovation with its AI-driven intelligence platform. Supporting the entire lifecycle from ideation to commercialization, we empower researchers and innovators to make critical decisions.
- The decision to expand into Tokyo was strategic, driven by Japan's position as the world's third-largest R&D market, offering significant opportunities in key sectors like automotive and chemicals. This confidence was reinforced by early success, as Patsnap had already secured approximately 100 Japanese customers before establishing a formal office, which demonstrated a clear market fit.
- The commitment was further solidified by the proactive advocacy of their first Japanese employee, making the expansion a well-validated and promising venture.

Challenges & Success Factors

- Upon entering Japan, we faced significant challenges, including the difficulty of hiring skilled local talent and gaining direct access to large corporate clients. As a newcomer without an established track record, establishing trust within Japan's unique business community was a formidable task.
- One of the key factors in our success was the support from the Free Consulting Service provided by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, which served as a major breakthrough in overcoming these barriers. By providing valuable opportunities to participate in major events like SusHi Tech Tokyo, the program was instrumental in boosting Patsnap's brand credibility and visibility, assets vital for a new market entrant. This support perfectly complemented Patsnap's own core strategy of partnering with local resellers who possessed deep, long-standing customer relationships.
- The fact that we had the backing of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government became a vital "proof of trust" in our dealings with major Japanese corporations. This support resonated Patsnap's core strategy of partnering with local resellers who possessed deep, long-standing customer relationships, creating a powerful synergy that solidified our presence and led to a successful market entry.

Messages to New Joiners

- It's crucial to just immerse yourself and learn things firsthand on the ground. By creating opportunities to network with people at various events, you might meet influential individuals.
- In fact, even though Patsnap had not fully localized in terms of language, our technology was strong enough to attract interest from many Japanese companies. Therefore, it's a good idea to think strategically about how much to invest in localization.
- Lastly, while Japan is often perceived as a male-dominated society, I was impressed to find that, due to recent trends, being a woman in business was surprisingly well-accepted.

Patsnap Service Overview: Used by world-leading companies, financial institutions, and pharmaceutical firms to advance their AI projects.

SWAT Mobility

Singapore

AI Transportation Routing Technology

Tokyo Expansion: 2019

Masashi Suehiro

Japan Representative Director

Business in Tokyo

- SWAT Mobility is a Singapore-based AI Mobility company specializing in optimizing vehicle operations through unique dynamic routing algorithms. We aim to build sustainable transportation and logistics infrastructure by improving resource efficiency and reducing CO_2 emissions.
- Japan represents our first overseas subsidiary and a vital market supported by Japanese investors. We chose Tokyo because it serves as the central hub for major corporate headquarters, providing an ideal environment for building a business network. Furthermore, our expansion was driven by the conviction that our unique algorithm provides an essential solution to Japan's social issues, such as severe driver shortages and regional transit maintenance. Currently, Japan is our second-largest market by revenue, recording the highest growth rate globally.
- Our Tokyo office plays a central role in capturing domestic needs and leading the broader Asian market. Having been selected for the Tokyo Stock Exchange's Asia Startup Hub program, we are well-positioned for further business expansion.

Challenges & Success Factors

- The primary obstacle during our entry was the difficulty of acquiring customers and hiring talent due to limited brand recognition. In Japan, large corporations and municipalities prioritize domestic track records, making it difficult for a new foreign startup to gain trust.
- To overcome this, we leveraged introductions from our Japanese venture capital investor and connections with Japanese firms we had collaborated with overseas. Furthermore, market research reports from TMG's Free Consulting Service were instrumental in identifying market traits and target segments. Participating in the program's business matching events also provided opportunities to identify potential partners and early clients.
- Internally, the early appointment of a Japanese leader familiar with the local environment significantly contributed to smooth incorporation and the acceleration of our sales activities.

Messages to New Joiners

- Successful expansion to Tokyo hinges on strategic collaboration with trusted partners and investors, rather than relying solely on internal resources. Building a local network early is essential for generating opportunities, gaining credibility, and deepening market understanding.
- Simultaneously, leveraging public support from organization such as the Tokyo Metropolitan Government can lower entry barriers and accelerate the process. By effectively integrating internal strengths with these valuable external resources, companies can ensure a smoother and more efficient entry into the Japanese market.