

Startups in Japan

Potential future market transformers to keep an eye on

Emi Maeda

Contributing writer

Startups, whose key objectives revolve around innovation and market disruption, have the potential to drive economic growth and generate significant numbers of jobs. The Japanese government's Startup Development Five-Year Plan, formulated at the end of 2022, aims to increase the amount invested in startups tenfold by fiscal 2027.

Previously, economy- and innovation-related ministries have been the primary government bodies responsible for supporting startups. However, this new plan marked a significant shift toward a whole-of-government approach to fostering startups. Now all ministries and agencies are actively engaging in startup support initiatives.

To gain insight into the background and prospects of this groundbreaking initiative, The Japan Times spoke with Sayaka Tomihara, director of the Startup Promotion Office in METI's Innovation and Environment Bureau. Tomihara, who stands at the forefront of startup support, shared her perspectives on this transformative measure.

In the U.S., tech giants like Google, Amazon, Facebook (Meta), Apple and Microsoft — once startups themselves, and now collectively known as GAFAM — have grown to enormous size and continue to drive significant economic growth. Tomihara emphasized: "It's crucial for Japan to foster companies that can significantly reshape our economic landscape, similar to what we've seen with tech like GAFAM. This is why we at METI, and the government as a whole, are committed to nurturing such innovative startups."

Recognizing this potential, the government's plan aims to foster innovative companies in both scale and impact. This comprehensive initiative is designed to catalyze Japan's economic growth through a comprehensive approach that focuses on three key areas: building human resources and networks for creating startups, strengthening funding for startups and diversifying exit strategies, and promoting open innovation.

The number of startups in Japan has experienced remarkable growth, surging from 16,000 in 2021 to 25,000 today. This has been accompanied by a rising interest in entrepreneurship. Many new graduates now view startups as attractive career options, considering them on par with opportunities at large, established companies. This shift in perception extends beyond young professionals, as the number of workers over 40 joining startups has increased more than sevenfold since 2015.

Alongside the rapid proliferation of startups, university-launched ventures are also emerging at an unprecedented rate. This isn't limited to universities in Tokyo; institutions in local areas are contributing equally to the trend, significantly broadening the startup ecosystem's foundations.

Reflecting on this situation, Tomihara outlined the next phase of development: "Moving forward, our challenge will be to nurture startups with significant scale and prominence. We



Then-State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Kazuchika Iwata visits the exhibition of Japanese startups at the Viva Technology trade show with Luxembourg Prince Guillaume in May. METI, JETRO

aim to foster large-scale startups that become household names and serve as aspirational models for many aspiring entrepreneurs. The challenges that Japan faces, such as an aging population and labor shortages, are poised to become significant global issues in the near future. Startups that emerge with ambitious visions to address these social challenges have the potential to not only solve these problems but also to fundamentally transform the economic structure itself."

To achieve this, a robust and comprehensive support system is essential. Tomihara said its cornerstone lies in cultivating a global startup ecosystem. Foreign investors highly value Japan's human capital and technological prowess, she said. "However, our challenge lies in effectively connecting these assets to the global ecosystem. To address this, we're launching initiatives that immerse Japanese entrepreneurs in overseas programs, strengthening their global networks. We're placing particular emphasis on these efforts."

One initiative that has garnered significant attention is the J-StarX program, an evolution of the Kakehashi Project launched nine years ago. Tomihara said: "The Kakehashi Project was initiated during former Prime Minister [Shinzo] Abe's first visit to Silicon Valley as Japan's leader. Its primary goal was to nurture talent that could bridge Japan and the United States. We began modestly, sending a small cohort of about 20 entrepreneurs. Now we've dramatically scaled up our efforts. The J-StarX program aims to send 1,000 entrepreneurs abroad by fiscal year 2027 — an enormous increase from our initial numbers. We've also expanded our program's reach beyond Silicon Valley.

"Our goal is to forge deeper connections with diverse innovation hubs, each offering unique strengths. These include tech centers in Europe such as France and the United Kingdom, Asian hubs like Singapore and Indonesia, and additional U.S. hot spots like Boston and San Diego."

The J-StarX program is already yielding tangible results, with Heralbony Inc. serving as a prime example. Based in Morioka, Iwate Prefecture, Heralbony is an impact startup that has developed an intellectual property business centered around the works of artists with intellectual disabilities. Its participation in the program proved to be a pivotal moment in



Sayaka Tomihara, director of the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry's Startup Promotion Office Yuiko Taiyo

its international expansion.

In May 2024, Heralbony achieved a milestone by being selected as a finalist for the prestigious LVMH Innovation Award. The global competition recognizing groundbreaking startups is organized by the luxury giant LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, a French multinational holding company representing 75 leading luxury brands. Heralbony's accomplishment underscores the program's effectiveness in propelling Japanese startups onto the world stage.

One of Heralbony's operational bases is Station F, a renowned startup hub in Paris. Originally a train station, the building has been transformed into one of Europe's largest startup centers, housing numerous innovative ventures, many backed by global giants such as Google and LVMH. Station F has established itself as a vibrant nexus of global innovation, embodying the spirit of entrepreneurship and technological advancement.

The J-StarX program also plays a crucial role in positioning the entire Japanese startup ecosystem on a global scale. Of particular importance are its focus on facilitating Japanese entrepreneurs' entry into the "inner circle" of global business, establishing an international reputation for Japan as a source of entrepreneurs with innovative ideas and seeking to build trust between the startup ecosystems in Japan and elsewhere. The ultimate goal is to foster strong, mutually beneficial relationships between Japan's startup ecosystem and those of other nations.

The government has established a startup support center, the Japan Innovation Campus, in Silicon Valley, widely recognized as the world's most developed startup ecosystem. This center aims to serve as a crucial node connecting Japan's startup ecosystem with those in the U.S. and other countries. It aims to facilitate seamless connections and knowledge

transfer across these innovative hubs, further catalyzing the growth of Japanese startups on the global stage.

Tomihara elucidated the facility's role: "The Japan Innovation Campus is an essential hub for Japanese startups with global ambitions. It's a convergence point where these innovative companies can unite, sharing knowledge and resources among themselves and with the system. It's a place where they can collaborate on marketing and branding strategies that showcase Japan's technological prowess and innovative spirit on the world stage."

Another initiative aims to provide Japanese startups with professional and practical assistance when entering international markets. At its core is the Global Acceleration Hub program. To date, Global Acceleration Hubs have been established in 30 countries worldwide. They leverage the extensive international network of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO).

Other focuses are attracting global investors and entrepreneurs, and nurturing deep tech. The Cabinet Secretariat leads the Global Startup Campus Initiative, a flagship base to be constructed in the heart of Tokyo to attract leading researchers from around the world and generate global deep-tech startups. METI also offers "startup visas," inviting foreign entrepreneurs to enter and stay in Japan for up to two years even before founding their business. The public-private funds Japan Investment Corp. and SME Support Japan invest in global venture capital funds that contribute to the development of the startup ecosystem in Japan, investing in Japanese startups and supporting their global expansion.

Reflecting on the future, Tomihara observed: "The startup landscape in Japan is undergoing a dramatic transformation, driven by a convergence of factors including government initiatives, shifting workforce mindsets and the evolving interest of large corporations. Global investors are accelerating business in Japan. Our hope is that this momentum will be sustained, generating more success stories that will elevate Japan's startup ecosystem to new heights."

The transition to the new phase hinges on continued government support, active involvement of the private sector and, most importantly, the perseverance and ingenuity of the entrepreneurs themselves. The stage is now set for Japan to emerge as a significant player in the international startup arena. Global expectations are mounting for the potential impact of Japanese innovations on future technological advancement.

METI invites entrepreneurs and investors to join it at the first Global Startup Expo at Osaka's Expo 2025 on Sept. 17 and 18.



The Japan Innovation Campus in Palo Alto, California METI, JETRO

Heralbony takes the art of those with intellectual disabilities global

Maiko Muraoka
Contributing writer

Heralbony is an art agency that specializes in licensing artworks produced by artists with intellectual disabilities for a variety of purposes, including commercial products, advertisements and events.

The company was established in 2018 by Takaya and Fumito Matsuda, twin brothers who have an older brother with an intellectual disability. Megumi Kobayashi, the chief growth officer at Heraldbony Europe, said the idea for it originated from their observations of the lives of people with disabilities and their diverse talents, one of which is artistic excellence.



Megumi Kobayashi speaks at an event. Marie Flament

Despite the lack of precedent in licensing the works of unknown artists, the company's commitment to the quality of design and materials, coupled with the overwhelming energy and extraordinary color expression in the works, gradually gained recognition. This led to various collaborations with companies, including some well-known brands in Japan.

The company recently started operations in Paris, marking a significant step in its global market expansion strategy, which was inspired by an earlier visit to Paris organized by the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO).

"In the birthplace of art brut, a form of artwork created by self-taught artists including those with disabilities, we met with renowned gallerist Christian Berst, specializing in art brut. He encouraged us to expand our operations internationally, noting that he had never seen anyone attempt what we were achieving in Japan," Kobayashi said. There have been many occasions to connect with potential partners, investors and clients in France thanks to JETRO's introduction.

Furthermore, the company was selected as one of 10 companies to participate in the government-led J-Startup Program in 2023 and was invited to Station F in Paris, the world's largest startup campus, as part of the



Heralbony products

program. "During the two weeks we were there, we met with various companies and investors while participating in a training program provided by one of the top business schools worldwide," Kobayashi said. One of the companies Heraldbony established contact with was LVMH, the world's leading luxury goods group, which organizes the annual LVMH Innovation Award to support startups. Heraldbony became the first Japanese company to be selected as one of the finalists and award winners.

As part of the support package for the award winners, Kobayashi is now based in Paris, where she is promoting the company's business in Europe. "We have already



JAL's amenity kit by Heraldbony

entered into partnership agreements with facilities for persons with disabilities in several countries, which will facilitate our connection with artists. Our goal is to establish a global network of artists and showcase their work to a global audience," she said.



HERALBONY

Zeals' social chat commerce platform: Engaging conversation plus AI

Maiko Muraoka
Contributing writer

Zeals is a company that provides a social chat commerce solution that leverages a combination of artificial intelligence and conversation-design skills on various social media channels like Instagram, Messenger and Line.

Established in 2014, it now has offices in Tokyo and San Francisco and over 300 employees. Various companies in Japan, including Toyota, Shiseido and Dyson, are using its solution.

While the use of AI in dealing with customers is spreading, what makes Zeals unique is its comprehensive approach to conversation design, with a focus on the smallest details.

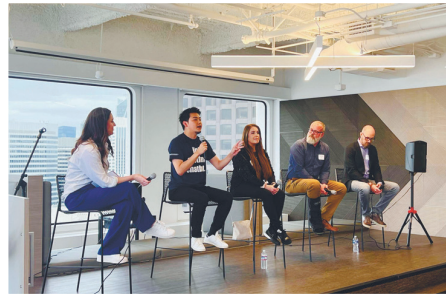


CEO Masahiro Shimizu (left) attends a session at the Modern Retail Summit. ZEALS

CEO Masahiro Shimizu explained that the company has expert conversation designers who enhance customer engagement by creating an *omotenashi* (hospitality) experience tailored to each customer while aligning with the brand identity of the client company. This is why Zeals' platform is used for sales activities, as opposed to the typical question-and-answer formats employed in the customer support of many companies.

He emphasized the importance of understanding a customer's preferences and concerns to recommend the most suitable item during a sales interaction. It is only through an engaging and satisfying conversation that a customer comes to consider purchasing a recommended item. This is where Zeals' chat commerce solution comes in.

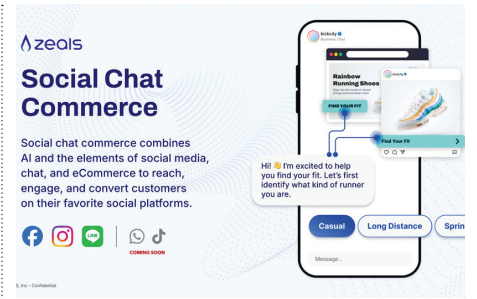
Shimizu established the company with the aim of revitalizing Japan, which was still recovering from the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. He sought to achieve this by launching a startup that would introduce new values to the global market and decided the United States would be the cornerstone for that endeavor. "There are few examples of Japanese tech startups succeeding in the United States. I thought someone needed to make a breakthrough and bring about



A talk session with Adobe and Microsoft. ZEALS

change," he said.

In expanding his business in the United States, he was inspired by advice from one of the few Japanese businesspeople with experience in launching a new business there. "He advised us to hire locals to create a team. He said it would be challenging due to differences in language, background, culture and communication styles, but once we overcame these challenges, our business would be much more scalable," Shimizu said. The company has more than 100 employees engaged in product technology, and over 90% of them are foreign nationals. The majority of the members at its San Francisco office are Americans. Shimizu expressed gratitude for the support provided



Zeals' social chat commerce platform. ZEALS

by JETRO in facilitating visa processes and for opportunities to participate in various business events. "I hope that JETRO will also serve as a conduit for sharing our experience with other aspiring entrepreneurs in Japan, creating pathways for them," he said.



JETRO is pivotal in driving Japan's startups to global success

The Japan External Trade Organization is playing a pivotal role in the international expansion of Japanese startups. By offering a robust suite of services — including mentoring, warm introductions to global stakeholders, acceleration programs and business development guidance — JETRO has established itself as a cornerstone of Japan's innovation ecosystem.

JETRO assists approximately 700 startups each year, providing them with the tools and connections needed to thrive in global markets. To date, over 2,000 companies have benefited from its programs, with more than 200 startups achieving remarkable milestones such as securing funding from international investors, forming partnerships with international corporations, increasing their annual recurring revenue (ARR) abroad or completing successful exits. JETRO has forged partnerships with over 50 leading global accelerators and venture capital firms, including Berkeley SkyDeck, StartX, Techstars, 500 Global and Alchemist. Through these collaborations, Japanese startups gain access to high-quality acceleration programs, classes, mentoring, introductions to investors and customers, and opportunities to showcase their innovations.

These partnerships not only prepare startups to compete globally but also open doors to

essential resources, networks and expertise. By facilitating such connections, JETRO helps Japanese entrepreneurs bridge the gap between their innovative ideas and the international markets that can help them thrive.

JETRO's mentoring programs are a key differentiator, offering guidance from serial entrepreneurs and industry experts. Startups utilize these programs to validate their product-market fit, acquire new users and position themselves as attractive investment opportunities for global venture capital (VC) and corporate venture capital (CVC) firms.

In addition, JETRO offers the unique Startup Scouting service, connecting over 200 international investors with Japanese startups that meet their specific criteria for stage, valuation, market, industry and technology focus. These meetings foster meaningful partnerships, driving both innovation and investment.

JETRO also spearheads efforts to showcase Japanese startups at renowned global conferences such as CES, TechCrunch Disrupt and Viva Technology. Programs like J-Startup, which highlights Japan's top 240 startups, provide international investors and corporate representatives with opportunities to connect directly with some of Japan's most promising startups.

For those interested in exploring Japan's innovation scene, these conferences serve as prime platforms to engage with cutting-edge technology and ambitious entrepreneurs.

JETRO's influence extends beyond supporting startups — it also facilitates the entry of international accelerators, VCs and CVCs into Japan. Organizations such as Techstars, Alchemist, Vertex and Eurazeo have established a presence in Japan, often with JETRO's backing. These collaborations are contributing to a growing global interest in Japanese startups, making Japan an increasingly attractive destination for innovation and investment.

JETRO also introduces global investors to Japanese ecosystem players, fostering co-investment opportunities and supporting the establishment of programs that further embed international players into Japan's ecosystem.

JETRO's efforts are redefining the trajectory of Japanese startups, enabling them to thrive on a global stage while attracting international attention to Japan's burgeoning ecosystem. By bridging cultural, geographic and industrial divides, JETRO is driving the next wave of Japanese innovation and solidifying the country's role as a global leader in entrepreneurship and technology.

As Japan's startup ecosystem continues to



The Japan Pavilion at CES 2024. JETRO

grow in sophistication, JETRO's role as a catalyst for international collaboration and investment will remain essential. With its comprehensive programs and strategic partnerships, JETRO is empowering a new generation of Japanese entrepreneurs to leave an indelible mark on the world.



Japan External Trade Organization

Bioworks' plant-based PlaX is a recyclable drop-in replacement for polyester

Maiko Muraoka
Contributing writer

While the textile and apparel industry provides products that enhance people's lives with color and style, it also has a significant environmental impact. One Japanese startup is gaining recognition at home and abroad for its innovative solutions to this problem from the perspective of basic materials.

Bioworks is involved in the research and development of the environmentally friendly material PlaX, as well as the manufacture and sale of yarn using it. In a recent interview with The Japan Times, Representative Director and CEO Koji Sakamoto provided insights into the challenges currently facing the industry and outlined how Bioworks is addressing them.

Sakamoto noted that the fashion industry is widely regarded as the world's second-most-polluting industry. "There are three key reasons for this. Firstly, it is one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases globally. Secondly, the industry uses a considerable amount of water, equivalent to the amount used by approximately 5 million people on an annual basis. Thirdly, it is a significant contributor to the issue of microplastics," he said.

He added that about 70% of the fibers used in everyday fabric items, including clothing and bed linens, are synthetics. "Dust and lint from chemical synthetic fibers are carried into the ocean through sewage. It is estimated that approximately one-third of the microplastics present in the ocean originate from synthetic fibers."

Bioworks was founded with a focus on the research and development of materials, with sustainability in mind. However, textiles were not its initial product line.

In 2015, the company was established with technological expertise in the production of bioplastic products, including food and drink containers made from PlaX, a polylactic acid material with improved heat resistance and durability. PlaX is made from lactic acid produced by the fermentation of starch and sugar derived from plants such as sugarcane and corn. It is thus biodegradable. "The biodegradation process can be accelerated by maintaining a compost-like environment at high temperatures and humidity. Even if it is incinerated, the carbon dioxide released when it is burned can be offset by the carbon dioxide the plants absorbed while they grew," Sakamoto explained.

In 2020, looking for new ways to use PlaX, the company identified the potential for making fibers from it. "In 2021, we shifted our focus to manufacturing yarns, which resulted in the invention of PlaX fiber. We commenced mass production at the end of 2022, and PlaX has been used to manufacture apparel products since 2023," Sakamoto said.

The textile and apparel industry was swift to recognize the potential of this innovation. In 2024, about 40 brands opted to utilize



A laboratory for PlaX raw material development
BIOWORKS

PlaX. Roughly 30 of those, including the noted outdoor brand White Mountaineering and the British brand Margaret Howell, already offer products that contain PlaX. Bioworks has its own brand, called Bio, that offers towels and T-shirts made from PlaX.

"It is estimated that approximately 90% of chemical synthetic fibers, which represent about 60% of all fibers used for manufacturing daily items, is polyester. Despite its negative environmental impact, polyester is widely used for various products, including sports and outdoor items, due to its strength and quick-drying characteristics," Sakamoto said.

Until the introduction of PlaX by Bioworks, there were few options of environmentally friendly substitute for polyester because achieving similar features while also ensuring environmental sustainability was technically challenging.

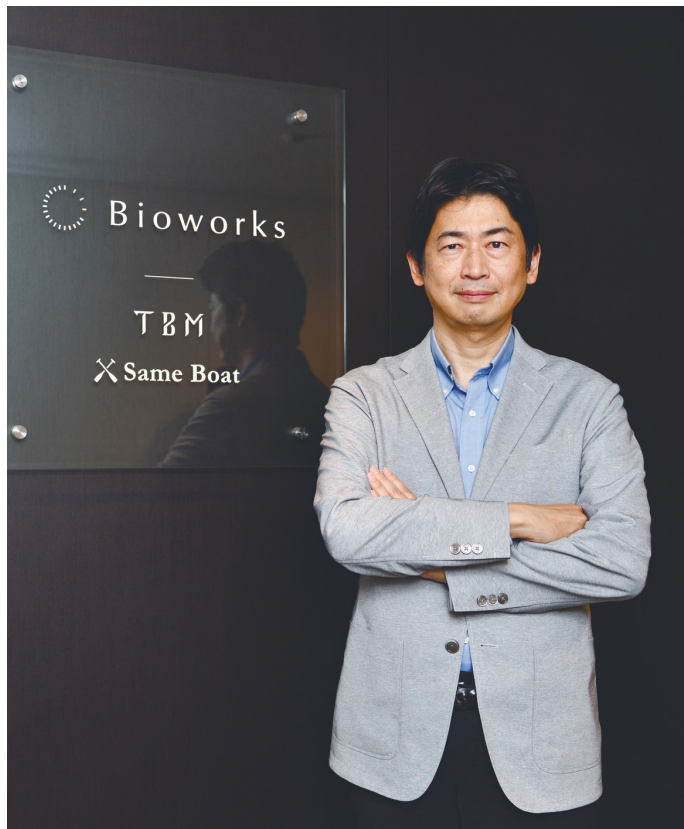
The manufacturing process for PlaX is also similar to that of polyester, and so it is possible to simply adjust settings at standard yarn factories, eliminating the need for new factories.

"We do not own any manufacturing facilities. We provide our material to existing polyester yarn manufacturers, collaborate with them to identify the optimal machine settings for the material, and conduct repeated testing until we achieve the desired results," Sakamoto explained.

The company is extending this collaboration overseas. "We already partner with a factory in Taiwan that produces PlaX yarns. We plan to expand our global reach by working with plants in Thailand and other locations worldwide," he said.

PlaX yarns can be sold to fabric makers, and the resulting fabric goes to sewing plants the usual way. Like polyester, PlaX can be easily blended with other materials, including cotton, wool and even cellulose, a relatively new, nature-based material. "We are committed to further experimenting with different blending ratios in order to pursue specific functions and textures for various purposes," Sakamoto said.

Sakamoto is confident that there is vast potential for diverse collaborations with



Bioworks Representative
Director and CEO Koji
Sakamoto COSFI

existing players thanks to the polyester-like versatility and ease of handling of PlaX, and because there is no need for new machines and facilities to make PlaX yarns and fabrics. The greater the use of this material, the greater the positive impact that the industry can collectively have on the environment.

Bioworks is seeking new opportunities to connect with fabric manufacturers and fashion brands on a global scale. To this end, it has been participating in the *Premiere Vision* in Paris, one of the largest and most prestigious exhibitions for fashion manufacturing worldwide, since July 2023. "A significant number of visitors from companies and factories looking for innovative, environmentally friendly materials were drawn to our booth. We have now established a pool of potential customers abroad and are continuing our efforts to enhance our collaborations with international brands. We will be able to see some items that use PlaX being sold in the global fashion market from next spring," Sakamoto said.

In response to growing concerns over the impact of microplastics on marine ecosystems, Bioworks is exploring the potential of utilizing PlaX in the manufacture of fishing nets, which are often identified as a significant source of ocean pollution. The idea originated with companies in the fishing industry that had heard about PlaX. "Our goal is to meet their requirements by enhancing the strength of PlaX fibers," Sakamoto said.

Another noteworthy attribute of PlaX is its exceptional antibacterial and anti-odor properties. Its antibacterial properties have been proven effective against some of the major bacteria that cause infections, including *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Moraxella* bacteria. "Test results demonstrate that a towel containing 20% PlaX exhibits a strong antibacterial effect, making it an appropriate material for use in underwear, baby clothes and bedding. We are currently selling select items," Sakamoto said.

Bioworks' commitment extends beyond the manufacture and sale of PlaX. The company is also concerned with the fate of the material after it has been used. "By collecting used items that contain PlaX, extracting it and turning it back into a material, we can minimize the use of raw materials such as sugarcane and corn," Sakamoto said. This is a critical way of thinking for conserving resources utilized in agricultural production, curbing agriculture-related carbon dioxide emissions and avoiding potential conflicts with food production.

He added that the chemical recycling method currently under development will facilitate high-quality recycling. "Although

we are still in the experimental phase, our goal is to establish a method that enables 100% recycling without the need to add any virgin materials, leveraging on the highly recyclable characteristic of polylactic acid," he said.

The company is also working to ensure that the entire production process, from raw materials to finished products, is fully traceable. "Our goal is to disclose all data and processes to maintain transparency by engaging all stakeholders, including raw material producers and fashion brands selling products containing PlaX," Sakamoto said.

This is a significant step to align with evolving consumer attitudes toward fashion, which extend beyond aesthetic and functional considerations to encompass the origins and production methods of the products they purchase.

To guarantee the credibility of the entire value chain, the company is committed to making various efforts, including reducing and monitoring greenhouse gas emissions, guaranteeing that no harmful substances are used and ensuring that work environments are safe and desirable throughout the value chain.

So far, a life-cycle assessment analysis has revealed that PlaX emits 41% less carbon dioxide during its manufacturing process than polyester and uses 90% less water than cotton. "Regarding the raw material, we are procuring polylactic acid from a plant in Thailand that belongs to Total Corbion, a joint venture between Total Energy, a major energy company in France, and Corbion, a Dutch company that is a leader in polylactic acid technologies," Sakamoto said. He noted that the plant has been certified by an international organization for its working environment, use of agricultural chemicals and other factors.

Bioworks looks set to become a leading innovator in the fashion industry, driving the transition toward greater sustainability and letting consumers enjoy more sustainable fashion experiences.



Sakamoto speaks at a panel discussion held at the Japan Pavilion of Viva Technology 2024. BIOWORKS



Tokyo University of Science's support ecosystem for startups

Carl Freire
Contributing writer

The Tokyo University of Science (TUS), Japan's largest private general university for science and technology, punches above its weight in the number of startups launched by faculty, researchers and students, argues President Masatoshi Ishikawa.

"As of 2023, TUS has provided support to 191 ventures. ... That number ranks seventh among all Japanese universities. However, if you change the metric to the number of ventures in proportion to the size of faculty and university budget, we rank at the top out of 10 universities," he said.

To foster this culture of entrepreneurship, TUS has created the Tokyo University of Science Innovation Driven Ecosystem (TUSIDE, pronounced "two-side"), whose aim is to "foster diverse collaborations and partnerships both within and outside the university." What sets it apart, Ishikawa said, is its flexible approach to providing support.

Matching support to goals

Behind the establishment of TUSIDE lay the realization that the approaches to research in science and technology had expanded, Ishikawa said.

"Traditionally, a researcher would define one or another specific problem. They would then dig and dig away in their research, looking for a solution to that problem," he said. However, in recent decades there has been a shift in some areas toward developing technologies and the like without a specific problem in mind and then turning to the outside world to see if there is a problem to which they may be applied.

"Google is a good example of this. Its founders did not set out to make a search



TUS President Masatoshi Ishikawa
TOKYO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE

engine — it began as a research project. But along the way, they realized that their project might also have the practical application of doing searches on the internet. I believe that this kind of approach to research is becoming more common," Ishikawa said.

"Researchers here need to find some way to get the word out to society about their work. 'I have developed something here. Is there anyone out there who can use this?' The answer might be 'Yes, I can use that' or it might be 'No, thank you,'" he added, but either way, TUS wants to help them get that answer about any broader interest in their idea.

TUSIDE is meant to facilitate that. It combines three entities: the Tokyo University of Science itself, which houses an organization for collaboration between academia and industry to ease the commercialization of research results; the Tokyo University of Science Investment Management Co. Ltd., which manages entrepreneurship support events and incubation facilities; and the Tokyo University of Science Innovation Capital Co.

Ltd., which handles investments in startups.

"The issue for our faculty and researchers is that they do not necessarily know about how to get the word out about their work. Moreover, they also have trouble deciding among the three possible paths they might pursue: create their own venture business, collaborate with or find a buyer for their technology, or simply write up the research results in the traditional manner," Ishikawa said. TUSIDE is intended to help them make those decisions.

Supporting certified startups

The ultimate objective behind TUSIDE is finding the best way to create something that society finds useful.

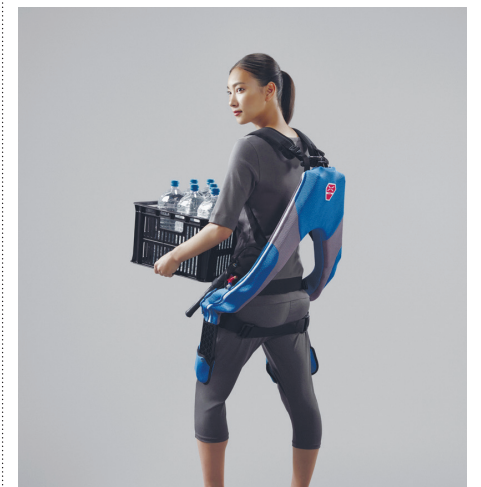
"A researcher might want to get funding to do joint research, but the potential partner company might not want to spend that much but would back a venture. We want our researchers to know that, through TUSIDE, we can help them in those negotiations to find the right balance," Ishikawa said. "We want to create a culture that helps them to recognize that they have these options, and to realize that they will have support with whichever choice they make."

That support, he noted, is mainly through loaning out facilities and licensing, but it also includes occasional investments. TUS has assisted nearly a dozen ventures, including a manufacturer of posture-support devices for the elderly and disabled, a venture developing sensors to measure the impact of earthquakes on structures, and a student-led venture that creates innovative solutions with medical and engineering technology.

The key to creating new value for society, Ishikawa said, is to actually make something new. "Companies generally do not want to invest in this, since this means creating some-

thing for which a market does not necessarily exist. This is why venture capital is necessary," he said. There is a lot of interesting and original work being done at Japanese universities, but outside investment to help turn it into something of social utility and value is lacking. The ecosystem created at TUS is meant to help close that gap.

He added: "If you don't take risks, you won't create anything original. Something original might cost a lot of money, and the judgment of the results might be poor — that's the risk. Japan is risk-averse, and I think it would be a good thing to support the creation of a culture that is willing to take risks."



A product called a "muscle suit" developed through INNOPHYS & COREHEALTH

東京理科大学
TOKYO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE



The Kagurazaka campus of the Tokyo University of Science TOKYO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE



The incubation studio Quantum Cross Point is open to registration and use by Tokyo University of Science affiliates and alumni, and outside individuals as well. TUSIDE



Are you a bilingual Japanese looking for a job where you can take advantage of your language skills? Are you a recruiter seeking a candidate to fill a specific position?

thejapan times Jobs

The Japan Times Jobs is a recruitment consultancy that specializes in matching skilled professionals with diverse industries and sectors that require English or other language skills.



Free job consultations available at:
jobs.japantimes.com

To companies seeking workers:

Our recruitment advisers, each specializing in specific industries and job types, will offer extensive support, reduce the costs and burden of the recruiting process and only introduce you to those candidates who best suit your needs and requirements.

The Japan Times Jobs offers its job consultation service in collaboration with Workport Inc.

Japan Virtual Campus

71
Universities

A new era of education

Universities and businesses leading together

