



Institute for Japanese Studies Lecture Series:

Innovation and Experience in Workforce Development by Small-to-Medium Size Firms in Modern Manufacturing—A Case Study of New Reverse Logistics

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Yoshihiro Sasaki with Ai Collins and Nim Chen, Funai Service Corporation



This IJS Lecture consists of two parts. Hajime Miyazaki will deliver an introductory survey of modern manufacturing and the interface of U.S.-Japan management and human resource practices from an economic and historic perspective. Yoshihiro Sasaki will show how his firm, based in Groveport, Ohio, implements new concepts and techniques as the new horizon opens in the GAFA world. The origin of US dominance in the modern world economy dates back to the revolutionary manufacturing technology and engineering innovations pioneered by seminal global US corporations such as Ford Motor Co., U.S. Steele, AT&T and IBM. Toyota Motor Co. and other emerging Japanese corporations in the 1970s then startled the industrial world with just-in-time supply chains, lean production techniques, and human resource management, all of which combined the economies of scale and scope. Now, already in the thick of the post information revolution, we have come to do business in the new world as fast and diverse as that spanned not only by GAFA but by numerous de novo firms. The challenge to modern manufacturing is to transform its mentality and modus operandi to the brave world of new automation, robotics, AI and IoT. An interesting and important aspect of Japanese production systems has been the role, share and contribution of small-to-medium size firms in the organization of markets and industries. Many small and medium size Japanese firms have invested overseas, and Ohio has been a prime site of their FDIs in the U.S. The Japanese transplants, not only large firms but also many small-to-medium size firms, have done well in their human resource and supply chain management in the U.S. In the face of the radical shift from the analog regime to digital regime, how can small to-medium size firms orchestrate their human resources and knowledge capital not only to survive but to grow successfully in ever changing marketplaces? Yoshihiro Sasaki presents how his firm, Funai Service Corporation, does it in the line of business known as “reverse logistics”. He and his associates, Ai Collins and Nim Chen, will illustrate how a small, seemingly local, firm can reach larger regional, national and global markets by developing a workforce capable of implementing new techniques and of innovating new ideas.

Hajime Miyazaki is Director of the Institute for Japanese Studies since 2015. He has an A.B. in economics and mathematics, and a Ph.D. in economics, from U. California at Berkeley. He was Assistant Professor at Stanford U. before he joined OSU as Associate Professor in 1984. Since 1988 he is Professor of Economics at OSU. He specializes in applied microeconomic theory and has published in leading academic journals such as *American Economic Review*, *J. of Political Economy* and *Quarterly J. of Economics*. He was Editor, Co-Editor and Associate Editor for *International Economic Review* (1990-1999). He has taught microeconomics to generations of students and also teaches a course in comparative analysis of firms and markets. **Yoshihiro Sasaki** is President and CEO of Funai Service Corporation (FSC). He has a B.S. in civil engineering from Waseda U., and M.S. in structural engineering from Stanford U. Before FSC he was a business consultant and also a civil engineer at Kashima Corp. He joined FSC as CFO in 2008 and became CEO in 2011. He was named Vice President and Assistant to the President of Funai Corp., New Jersey, in 2017. **Ai Collins** is Director of Human Resources/Accounting of Funai Service Corporation (FSC). She has a B.S. in accounting from U. Rhode Island. She joined FSC in 2007, and since 2015 she is in charge of human resources, legal and accounting functions at FSC. **Nim Chen** is Director of Return Center at Funai Service Corporation (FSC). She has a B.A. in Chinese literature and language from Pusan National U. She also completed a logistics program under the sponsorship of the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality. With 7 years of experience in logistics industry she came to Ohio and joined FSC in 2012. Since 2016 she has managed FSC's Ohio operations from California by means of robotics, AI and IoT systems. Prior to FSC, she worked for Hellmann Worldwide Logistics in Pusan. She is fluent in English, Japanese, Chinese and Korean.

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