

Guiding the Way
to Successful Business
through Inbound Marketing

Global Business Hub Tokyo

INTERVIEW



General Manager, HubSpot Japan Inc.

Yuri Akahira

After graduating from the University of Oregon, Yuri Akahira participated in the founding of Meltwater's Japan branch and subsequently managed the Japan office as the representative director of Meltwater Japan. She was appointed general manager of HubSpot Japan in July 2016. She personally takes an active part in various activities supporting diversity for women in the Japanese workplace.

The fast-growing US company HubSpot Inc., which proposed the concept of inbound marketing to replace conventional marketing, opened an office in Global Business Hub Tokyo in July 2016 in order to tap the Japanese market. It is HubSpot's first office in a non-English-speaking country.

"To put it simply," explains Yuri Akahira, general manager of HubSpot Japan, "inbound marketing is an online method supporting the flow from attracting prospective customers to turning them into actual buyers. In conventional offline marketing, which involves gathering customers through advertising, even though a huge amount of investment is made, the effects cannot be visualized and data cannot be obtained. In contrast, with inbound marketing, it is possible to analyze the data of prospective customers who visit a company's site, grasp problems, and plan and supply contents in order to solve them. It is an extremely effective method of marketing that spans a long time."

HubSpot's target is small and medium-sized

businesses that do not possess enormous brand power or advertising resources. With the development of online networks, we are living now in an age when, if the appropriate contents are supplied, such businesses can beat even large corporations with huge advertising budgets. Rather than a one-way approach from the company, firms begin by arousing interest in themselves through various contents using the Internet, such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and search engine optimization (SEO). The aim is to invigorate sales by effectively combining sales and marketing. For this purpose, HubSpot provides all-in-one software.

At present about 20,000 companies around the world have introduced HubSpot software, but full-fledged penetration into the Japanese market is just starting.

"HubSpot took notice of Japan," Akahira says, "because it has a stable economy and many strong small and medium-sized enterprises, and it opened the Japan office in order to provide effective support to Japanese clients and partner

companies. The aim is to change the concept of marketing in Japan to inbound marketing. If we are successful in this educational task, then I think our software will sell naturally."

HubSpot chose Global Business Hub Tokyo as the location for its office because the Marunouchi area is a business center with many foreign startups, making it easier to build networks there. In addition, the office environment suited HubSpot's corporate culture. "We liked it because there is plenty of office space and an atmosphere enabling us to work in a friendly and relaxed manner," Akahira says. "Otemachi had a stiff image as a financial district, but here you don't feel out of place even working in a T-shirt and jeans. The location is good, and there is an event space, which is good because we are planning events for clients and partner companies. This office respects HubSpot's culture, which places importance on HEART [Humble, Effective, Adaptable, Remarkable, Transparent]. I think it will be effective in recruiting people too."

TRANSFORM

No Personal Growth by Staying in Comfort Zone

Speaking of change, the opening of HubSpot's Japan office is nothing less than a transformation in itself, because we are aiming to completely overturn the concept of marketing in Japan and introduce inbound marketing. It's a very exciting challenge. Personally, I like the expression "getting out of a comfort zone"---in other words, you can't achieve personal growth by staying put. I am not a returnee. I went to study at university abroad deliberately in order to make myself grow in a difficult environment. I believe that the present opportunity came around because I continued to seek change.



HubSpot

HubSpot was founded in 2006 by Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah, who, very simply, wondered why it was that although people's lives, work, shopping, and the way they were deciding to make purchases were undergoing a sea change, corporate marketing activities were not adapting at all. They proceeded to establish the vision of inbound marketing, and now more than 19,000 companies in over 90 countries use HubSpot's software, services, and support. In Japan, services have been supplied through a sales agent since 2012, but in July 2016 the Japan office was opened in order to strengthen business in this country.