



**Name:** Taran Wilku

**Job title:** International Events Consultant

**Company and location:** GTA by Travelport

**Industry sector:** Events / Tourism

**Background:** (education)

2002 (April-July) **DOKKYO UNIVERSITY, Saitama Prefecture, Japan.**

MA in the Study of Contemporary Japanese Society (*Advanced Level Intensive Japanese course*)- *Awarded scholarship to spend 6 months at Japanese University (during JAPAN/KOREA World Cup 2002)*

2001-2002 **UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX**

MA - Contemporary Japanese Society (*Japanese Sociology, Government and Language*)

1996-1999 **MANCHESTER MET. UNIVERSITY**

LL.B, Law,

1989-1996 **BRADFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

A-Levels: Business Studies (A), Politics (B), Design Technology (B)

After graduating in 1999 I worked on the JET Programme as an ALT and Coordinator of International Relations until 2001. Upon returning to the UK I was motivated to keep up a good standard of the Japanese language and keen to further educate myself about Japanese, hence I chose to do an MA at Essex University entitled Contemporary Japanese Society. I was subsequently awarded a scholarship grant to study Japanese for 6 months as part of my course at Dokkyo University.

Upon completion of my MA and after achieving 2-kyuu I looked for work in the capital, where I have been based since 2003. I have since worked on several Japanese related projects including as a freelance TV presenter for Fuji and Tokyo TV; providing language assistance for television commercials and documentaries filmed in the UK, and in my current role as an Events consultant at GTA by Travelport.

### **1. What does your current job involve?**

My job involves planning, producing and delivering a range of events/meetings for International group visits to the UK and Europe (both governmental organisations and NGOs) in a myriad of fields from fashion, culture, film production, arts and music to professional B2B liaison, conferences and education related programmes.

My role involves a great deal of project management which means liaising on a daily basis with our international sales offices, including 4 in Japan (Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and Fukuoka) , suppliers and Press and PR agencies to ensure that we meet our client's expectations and event requirements. The majority of my work involves working on projects related to Japan in which I am responsible for offering creative event solutions to our client's needs

### **2. How much Japanese do you use in your job?**

I use Japanese almost on a daily basis as I work closely with the Japan coordination teams based in the UK and Europe as well as corresponding with colleagues in Japan via email or phone.

Moreover as my role also involves face-to-face networking and negotiation with both suppliers and clients, I often use Japanese when our clients arrive in the UK to help coordinate the event that we have put in place for them. Just as important as the linguistic side of my role is awareness and understanding of Japanese culture, such as professional hierarchy and business etiquette.

### **3. What has been the highlight of your Japanese career to date?**

The highlight of my career to date must be my 1-year stint as a TV Presenter for Fuji International Productions, for their British cultural, music and fashion weekly Program called 'UK Jack'. Alongside my co-presenter former Top of the Pops presenter Sarah Cawood, I introduced UK/World Album and video reviews for the music section of the Programme. The show was broadcast in Japan every Saturday night during 2004 to over six million viewers!!!

#### **4. How has past experience helped?**

Having lived, worked, and studied Japan and its language I have gained a lot of experience and knowledge of various aspects of Japanese society, and how it interacts with the world. I use this knowledge on a daily basis to remind myself how to overcome frustrating differences in our cultures and try to re-educate myself and my many Japanese colleagues about how we can work together to ensure we consistently manage to produce successful creative Anglo-Japanese events.

#### **5. What do you enjoy most about your job?**

I thoroughly enjoy working in an environment whereby I am able to bridge both the UK and Japanese cultures using my experience and knowledge of Japan, especially when our clients arrive to hold their event in the UK. I have especially enjoyed working on a number high profile Anglo-Japanese fashion show projects whereby my role was to research and find UK partners to collaborate with. These included charities such as UN World Food Programme ,models, make-up and hair stylists, and sponsors such as DAZED & CONFUSED, L;Oreal Professionel, Shu Uemura and GB Sasakawa Foundation to produce an event with an award winning Fashion college from Japan. The inspiration that the Japanese students and Teachers take back with them after such successful shows is a very rewarding part of my job.

#### **6. What advice would you give to students hoping to use Japanese in their careers?**

With no knowledge of Japanese prior to leaving for Japan in 1999, I can honestly say that the best way to learn is to live and breathe the language. You must immerse yourself in the culture as well as the language, without worrying too much about making mistakes. I would also encourage students who are hoping to use Japanese to further their careers to at least aim to attain level 2 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, which is a good representation of their reading and listening skills.

I am a little envious that students of Japanese have such a vast amount of easy to access resources available on the internet these days, so would recommend making the best use of them. However one should not over rely on this method only, learning how to write and remember hiragana, katakana and kanji can also be very rewarding especially a few years after you have completed your studies, it really is quite an impressive form of art!!! Embrace Japanese and its culture and you will love it!

