

Cincinnati Enquirer Sunday March 2, 2008 Look Who's Talking  
Nobuko Tsujimaki, Intern at Wordsworth Communications

In a town awash with public relations, marketing and branding expertise, Nobuko Tsujimaki is not your typical public relations intern.

With 11 years of experience in the field working for Japanese consumer products giant Kao Corp., she left her job there in 2005 to accompany her husband, Gou, when he was transferred here to work with the American subsidiary, Kao Brands, the former Andrew Jergens Co.

After spending two years at home raising a 5-year-old son, Ryo, and having a now 1-year-old daughter, Mihiro, Tsujimaki took her position at Wordsworth Communications downtown last summer to continue in her field in the U.S. While some of her work in the states is similar to her old job in Tokyo - she overhauled Wordsworth's Web site last fall, having previously presided over the investor relations section of Kao's site - Tsujimaki constantly notices differences in the U.S. business culture.

She says the most striking difference in the U.S. is a decided informality: She describes an uneasy meeting (for her) when a firm vice president stood through the session because everyone else had already been seated. She describes how in Japan business cards are carefully dispensed at the beginning of a meeting with both hands as if offering a gift.

Even posing for a picture, she notes that a casual American pose of arms crossed across the chest signifies anger in Japan. "Teachers do that to scold children."

HOW IS THIS field different in the U.S. compared with back in Japan?

American people speak very freely - they don't consume any time. They're very good at saying their goals outright. In Japan, we take more time to discuss very detailed things. We have very long meetings to discuss details.

YOU CLOSELY OBSERVED work life in Japan as the editor of Kao's in-house magazine. How is working for a smaller agency in the U.S. different from a large corporation?

(At Wordsworth) most workers are female and the agency is very flexible for working mothers. I've been surprised when one of my colleagues took their daughters into the office for half a day (because there was a problem with day care). I can work from home. I have two small kids and sometimes they have a fever. At my old company, we have rules that are less flexible.

WHAT ARE SOME other work life differences?

Americans have (cubicle dividers). In Japan, rent is very expensive, especially in Tokyo. Japanese office workers are stationed at islands of six to eight at a table. Here I can concentrate on the job.

Alexander Coolidge