



Larry Crowe/Daily Bulletin

Marie Hayashi Reichelt, an Upland instructor of Japanese language and culture, conducts class at TRW Technar.

EDUCATION

Upland company tells Americans how to do deal with Japanese

By J.L. Sullivan
Daily Bulletin

IRWINDALE — It took a bit of post-Cold War kismet to bring Marie Hayashi Reichelt together with her 12 students at TRW Technar in Irwindale.

Expecting a pink slip from an aerospace firm, Reichelt combined her professional and personal experience to switch from an industry battered by cutbacks in defense spending to a field growing in light of the new economic priorities of life after the Soviet threat.

Reichelt, a native-born Japanese and naturalized U.S. citizen, owns Affirmative Business Practices. The Upland company offers educational services to firms looking for business overseas. The company specializes in a curriculum mixing basic lessons on Japanese language and culture.

The dozen TRW Technar employees currently attending weekly

classes seem anxious to put the lessons to use, as the company tries to expand its market share for air-bag sensors in Japan.

Call them foot soldiers in the trade war.

"We just won an award for excellence from Toyota," said Raul Zayas, a Pomona resident and mechanical designer at TRW Technar. "We'll be doing a lot of business with them."

As the push to compete with Japanese firms gains momentum, the TRW Technar workers enrolled in Reichelt's class are getting tips on how to work with counterparts from the island nation.

Laura Kemp Sanchez, a mechanical draftsman from Chino, said the lessons are an integral part of the trade competition.

"I don't think it's something that's just nice to know," Kemp Sanchez said. "I think it's something that we'll have to know."

Now two lessons into a six-week

class, Kemp Sanchez and her colleagues know some basic Japanese phrases and rudimentary social etiquette. Seemingly simple table manners, if botched, can quickly end an overseas business meeting — or deal, students have learned.

The glimpse of Japan that Reichelt gives TRW Technar employees each Thursday night shows a society of class-conscious employees in which managers and subordinates do not address each other directly and women are often treated more as ornaments than key players in business deals.

Japanese business executives have made news in recent weeks for belittling the dedication and educational levels of American workers. But those criticisms wouldn't hold up against the group at TRW Technar.

Kemp Sanchez and her colleagues are quick to give visitors a verbal rundown of the company's achieve-

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ments and production processes with obvious pride, and seem to relish the idea of competing for contracts in Japan.

"We've been selling sensors (in Japan) for awhile," Kemp Sanchez said. "But naturally we want more of their business."

That's where Reichelt comes in, drawing on her unique perspective to offer explanations of sometimes-complicated Asian customs.

Reichelt's mother was born in Vancouver, Canada, and moved to Japan as an adolescent