



VIEWS & VISIONS

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“Glocalization” Sounds Scary, but Makes Sense

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Kazuhiro Somiya is the President of Hino Motors Manufacturing USA.

After serving Toyota for 37 years, Mr. Somiya transferred to Hino Motors Limited, in 2012, to become the company's Production Engineering Managing Officer.

At Toyota, Mr. Somiya started his career in 1975 in assembly production engineering. In 1987, he became Assembly Coordinator at Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky, and six years later he accepted the position of Vehicle Production Engineering, Deputy General Manager of Overseas Production at Toyota Motor Corporation.

In 2001, Mr. Somiya was named the New Project Office Vice President of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana. He became the Senior Vice President for Production Engineering at Toyota Motor Engineering and Manufacturing North America in 2006.

Mr. Somiya received his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering at the Nagoya Institute of Technology in Nagoya, Japan.

Glocalization: a mash-up of globalization and localization.

I thought I made the word up for this article, but when I Googled it, I learned it was first coined in the 1980s. I guess I cannot take credit for it, but it is a perfect description of Hino's presence in the United States.

Hino is a global company. It is Japan's largest commercial truck and over-the-road bus company, and it sells its products throughout the world. Initially, Hino served its overseas markets by exporting completely assembled trucks. However, it became evident that we could not meet customers' expectations with a “one-size-fits-all” export product – Hino had to localize production to adequately satisfy the unique demands of its different markets.

In a nutshell, this explains how Hino came to the United States.

How we ended up in West Virginia is a separate story. While it certainly did not hurt that our parent company, Toyota, had built an engine



manufacturing facility in Buffalo, West Virginia, credit the effort of state and local officials to convince Hino to establish a truck assembly facility in the mid-Ohio Valley.

Outreach from the state's office in Nagoya, Japan, prodding from then Governor Joe Manchin and Senator Jay Rockefeller, and strong marketing from Keith Burdette, then executive director of the Wood County Development Authority, were persuasive. But, frankly, Hino needed more than pledges of personal support and commitment of state and local incentives.



Hino WV Team Member installs rear wheels during final assembly process.



A 338 model rolling off the Hino West Virginia Assembly line. These heavy duty trucks are often used in a variety of applications, including pushing snow and spreading salt for the WV Department of Highways or for utility, beverage, dump and tank vehicles.



Opening an assembly plant in West Virginia also had to make good business sense: access to customers and suppliers; a skilled and stable workforce; and a fair and flexible regulatory environment.

Hino found all this, and more, in Williamstown, especially as it relates to dedicated workers. I'll defer to the words of others on this point.

"I have worked for Hino since day one," said Mechelle Wilson. "I did not know what to expect working for a Japanese company – it has been a great experience: I have learned skills and been taught advanced manufacturing processes I never imagined I would know; I work with genuinely nice and caring colleagues and management; and I take great pride when I see a Hino truck rolling down the highways of West Virginia."

Bill Meadows echoes Mechelle's sentiment. "What we do is really pretty cool. We get certain parts from Japan, and a bunch of parts from NAFTA countries and, following rigid assembly and safety procedures, we marry everything together into Class 6 and 7 medium duty trucks. Of course I am biased, but I'll tell you,

there is a lot of quality in that truck – both on the engineering side and in production."

Not only has the size of our workforce more than doubled from 80 in 2007 to more than 200 today, in the context of "glocalization," our efforts continue. Our sister company, Hino Motors Sales, Hino Japan Engineering and R&D, and our own purchasing and quality teams, are constantly investigating how to further improve service to U.S. marketplace demands. In this regard, there is a Japanese word for *continuous improvement* – "kaizen." It is fair to say that all Hino entities are committed to kaizen for our U.S. customer base.

But, beyond serving our customers and providing good jobs in West Virginia (and our other locations in the United States), Hino takes seriously its responsibility to be a good corporate citizen. Before joining Hino in 2012, I spent 37 years with Toyota, 15 in the United States. I think I understand good citizenship. But, again, I will defer to other Hino people on this point.

Steve Stalnaker, vice president and plant manager, quoted "Though I was not

with Hino when production started in 2007, I have heard stories and have seen the photographic evidence of how quickly the mid-Ohio Valley embraced Hino, especially the ex-pats (we call them 'dispatchees'), and just as quickly, the dispatchees fell in love with the local people and attractions here. And, the mutual respect and admiration has grown even greater since. Hino has supported education, environment, cultural exchanges, scholarships ... you name it. There is a strong fabric in the community and we are honored to be part of it."

As I read back on the comments of our folks in West Virginia, "glocalization" is not just about serving the local customers' needs, it is deeper than that – it is the localization of different global cultures. To quote Bill Meadows, that truly is "pretty cool." ▽