

NEWS RELEASE



April 24, 2025
Mizuho Bank, Ltd.
Kokopelli Inc.

Mizuho Bank and Kokopelli partner on international business matching for middle-market firms and SMEs

Mizuho Bank and Kokopelli conclude MoU for business matching platform Big Advance Global

Mizuho Bank, Ltd. (Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan; President & CEO: Masahiko Kato) and Kokopelli Inc. (Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan; CEO & Representative Director: Shigeru Kondo) have concluded a memorandum of understanding in regard to international business matching platform Big Advance Global, which will launch in June 2025.

Under this basic agreement, Mizuho Bank and Kokopelli will offer more extensive support to corporate clients in Japan looking to expand their business to other countries and regions. Alongside this, they will enhance Big Advance Global's international competitiveness by linking it to Mizuho Bank's global network.



Background to the basic agreement

In the past few years, with the ongoing decline in Japan's population and market size coupled with the effects of a weak yen, Japan has seen an increase in middle-market firms and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) interested in doing business in markets outside Japan. International business expansion is becoming an important growth strategy for companies aiming to expand sales and develop new marketing channels. Nevertheless, these middle-market firms and SMEs still face considerable hurdles to entering markets outside Japan, including those related to different languages and business practices, cultivation of local partners, and expertise in trade administration.

In light of the above issues and in order to assist Japan’s middle-market firms and SMEs in pursuing international business expansion, Kokopelli,¹ which already provides business matching services in Japan, has been pushing ahead with development of its Big Advance Global platform, the first ever Japan-based global platform specialized in international business matching.

- 1: Kokopelli’s mainstay Big Advance business support platform for SMEs in Japan provides business and digital transformation support through partnerships with regional financial institutions across Japan. The number of requests for introduction meetings made through the business matching function, the platform’s most-used function, is at around 200,000.²
- 2: As of March 31, 2025. The cumulative number of requests is after subtracting cancellations.

With Mizuho Bank and Kokopelli concluding a basic agreement for the Big Advance Global international business matching platform, Mizuho Bank will leverage its far-reaching business network in and outside Japan and its considerable expertise in supporting middle-market firms and SMEs to help a greater number of these companies look beyond their local regions and expand internationally.

About Big Advance Global

The international business matching platform Big Advance Global is a new service that will enable Japanese and non-Japanese companies to connect across national borders and language barriers and broaden their business horizons. It will not only offer business matching that enables middle-market firms and SMEs to add to their marketing channels and locate new suppliers, but also a foundation for these companies to innovate together and achieve sustained growth in the global market.

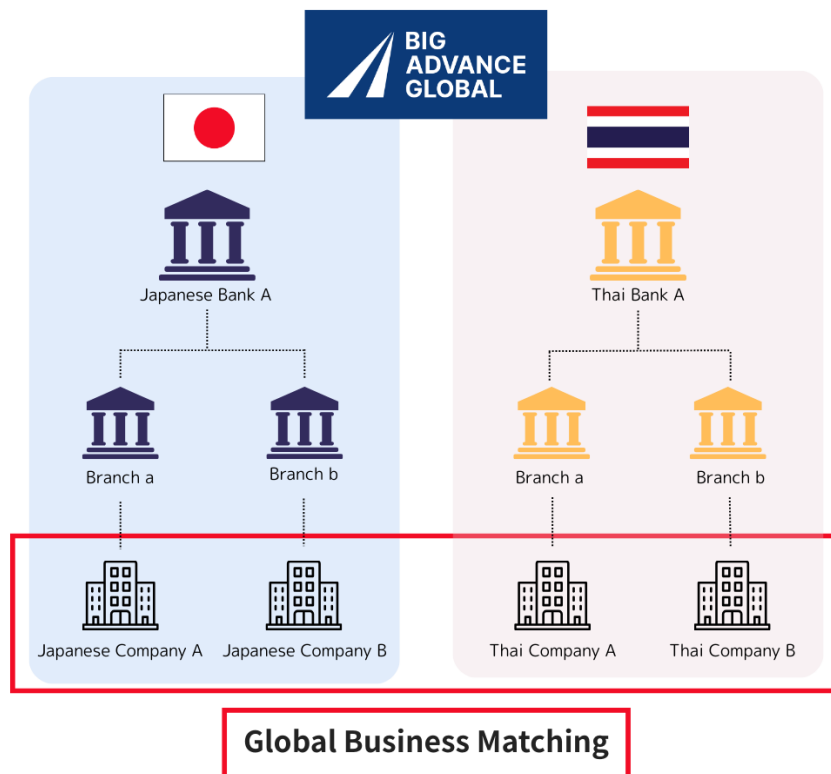
Main features of Big Advance Global

- Business matching between Japanese and non-Japanese companies
Similarly to the Big Advance platform already available in the Japanese market, Japanese companies can trade directly with non-Japanese companies that have an existing business relationship with a financial institution.

Services provided by Kokopelli:

- Seamless communication that overcomes language barriers
Companies can communicate with their business partners in their respective native languages, using a translation system that integrates original generative AI for minority language translation. The system includes chat with simultaneous translation and video calls with translated subtitles.

- Intermediary coordinators
Specialist coordinators take part in the process and facilitate smooth discussions.
- Expert support service for international transactions
Comprehensive support services make up for any knowledge shortfalls in a wide range of areas including international legal and regulatory affairs, trade administration, and international distribution.



Future plans

Beginning with the June 2025 launch of services for matching Japanese and Thai firms, Mizuho Bank and Kokopelli will make the most of their widespread business networks to further roll out Big Advance Global in the ASEAN region. They will also provide more sophisticated business matching services, such as automated recommendations of optimal partners, through AI technology.

As of March 31, 2024



Mizuho Bank APAC offices (excluding East Asia)

Comments from both companies

- Hirofumi Ota, General Manager of the Mizuho Bank Business Solution Department
Expansion of international marketing channels and business matching is an area where clients have ever greater expectations for what we can provide and where we too are strongly committed to supporting our clients. Big Advance Global is a new service that will allow us to assist middle-market firms and SMEs in Japan in reaching international markets, as well as cover middle-market firms and SMEs outside Japan, which we were previously unable to approach. These clear positives have led us to conclude the basic agreement with Kokopelli. As we continue to support our clients' business growth, we will also work to further reinforce our group-wide lineup of products and services that facilitate growth strategy and global strategy planning.
- Shigeru Kondo, CEO & Representative Director of Kokopelli
We are very happy to have concluded this basic agreement for Big Advance Global with Mizuho Bank. Up until now, we have been collaborating with regional financial institutions in Japan to provide business matching for Japan's middle-market firms and SMEs. This new initiative will take our field of business outside Japan and be a first step towards building new infrastructure for Japan's middle-market firms and SMEs to cross national borders. While many of them are interested in international markets, they have struggled with barriers such as differing languages and business practices and finding local partners. Mizuho Bank, with its far-reaching

global network and extensive track record of support for middle-market firms and SMEs, stands as one of Japan's leading financial institutions. Through our partnerships with Mizuho Bank and other financial institutions, we will take advantage of the power of technology to eliminate the barriers that have prevented Japan's local middle-market firms and SMEs from expanding their businesses around the world.



From left to right: Hirofumi Ota, General Manager, Business Solution Department, Mizuho Bank; Tomohiro Sakauchi, General Manager, Shibuya Corporate Banking Department, Mizuho Bank; and Shigeru Kondo, CEO & Representative Director, Kokopelli

Related press releases

Kokopelli announces local financial institution partners in Japan
(Japanese language only)

<https://www.kokopelli-inc.com/all/release/5499/>

Kokopelli concludes basic agreement with Thailand's Office of SMEs Promotion
(Japanese language only)

<https://www.kokopelli-inc.com/all/release/5257/>

About Mizuho Bank

Company name: Mizuho Bank, Ltd.
Address: Otemachi Tower, 1-5-5 Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
Representative: Masahiko Kato, President & CEO
Founded: July 1, 2013
Website: <https://www.mizuhogroup.com/bank>

About Kokopelli

Company name: Kokopelli Inc.
Address: Kioicho Building 11F, 3-12 Kioicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
Representative: Shigeru Kondo, CEO & Representative Director
Founded: June 2007
Principal business: Business platforms
Website: <https://www.kokopelli-inc.com>
Main service: Big Advance, a business support platform for SMEs
<https://bigadvance.jp>