



HOW GLOBAL EXPERIENCE BUILDS SKILLS—AND DRIVES INNOVATION

By Sara Brown, Communications Manager



Traveling to a foreign country is often described as a 'must-do' unforgettable experience. But what about living and working abroad – does it offer more than just memories? Can stepping outside familiar surroundings truly broaden perspectives or sharpen expertise in a field?

Hitachi Global Air Power believes the answer is a resounding yes – and opens the door to that very opportunity for many of its employees.

As a global company built on innovation with a culture of continuous improvement, offering broad developmental opportunities is a key step towards a strong workforce. Beyond deep personal growth and lasting connections, international training can sharpen technical skills, enhance collaboration, and translates into stronger business outcomes. It also helps develop solutions that reflect the needs of diverse markets, ensuring products are competitive, reliable, and forward-thinking.

International Training Program

As one of its many initiatives to enhance innovation and professional development, Hitachi Global Air Power has hosted international exchanges between its facilities in Japan and the U.S. for several years. This training program enables team members from both countries to work across borders and immerse themselves in new cultural and technical environments.

Participants from Japan and U.S. facilities relocate for six months to a year, working at factory or office locations such as Michigan City, Indiana; Chicago, Illinois; as well as Shizuoka Prefecture, Chiba Prefecture, and beyond in Japan.

“This program is a strategic investment—not only in our people, but in the innovation and quality we deliver to customers globally,” says Tom Poczekay, Vice President of Engineering. “It allows us to exchange best practices and stay competitive in a fast-changing market.”

The program initially launched for engineering departments, focusing on product and manufacturing process development for global customers. Today, the program has opened to marketing, finance, quality, continuous improvement, and manufacturing engineers, with potential for expansion to other departments to continue strengthening global capabilities across the organization.

To apply for the training program from the U.S. to Japan, the process starts with a call for entries to participating departments within the company. After applications are submitted, interviews are conducted to explore candidates’ goals for the program, preferred project areas, skill sets, and relevant background. Further conversations also help prepare eligible candidates to live abroad.

Acceptance into the program depends on several factors, such as the number of available spots at each training location, alignment between the employee’s goals and program offerings, and overall program capacity.

Enhancing technical expertise and much more

International experience is deeply transformative on a personal level. Even small things – like grocery shopping, using electrical appliances (goodbye recognizable icons), or understanding local gestures and body language – can feel unfamiliar in another country and require quick, adaptive learning. The challenges and successes that come with new situations, along with language and cultural differences, test and strengthen sought-after soft skills like flexibility, grit, adaptability, and resilience. These traits are difficult to teach, as they often must be learned through experience, but they offer a powerful edge in today’s global workforce.

Developing skills abroad brings clear professional advantages too, both for the individual and for the organization. As program participants immerse themselves in new facilities and cultures, they gain exposure to different customer expectations, new technical approaches, and business operations and practices. For example, engineers working abroad may face different tools or processes than they’re used to. Learning and adapting to these differences challenges them to think creatively, troubleshoot in new ways, and ultimately deepen their technical problem-solving abilities – skills that fuel innovation when applied across functions and projects.

This heightened awareness and knowledge exchange flows both ways, helping teams adopt best practices and improve product

quality. The results are expansive, with more globally-minded employees and a stronger competitive edge across markets.

What trainees are saying

The real impact of the training program is best understood through the voices of those who've lived it — and those living it now. Hitachi Global Air Power engineers from Japan now based in the U.S. describe their experience on the program as transformative, both professionally and personally.

Marking his first time in the U.S., current trainee Naohiro Ota says the most important benefit for him is meeting many local members face-to-face, helping bridge the distance between teams in Japan and the U.S. Koki Nakamura is another engineering trainee with a personal goal to improve his conversational English skills. He adds that gaining firsthand experience with North American customers allows him to “apply this knowledge to future product development” and build “the ability to relate to a variety of people.” Kento Goda is also training in the U.S. and sees the program as a chance to expand his perspective beyond his home factory, aiming to grow into an engineer capable of designing products for a truly global market. Many program participants are making the most of their off time too, traveling and exploring the U.S. while building stronger connections.

While current trainees continue learning and adapting, program alumni from the U.S. shared how their time in Japan continues to influence their careers.

Senior designer Christopher Sholtis joined the program with a desire to further his career and an affinity for Japanese culture. He valued the

opportunity to immerse himself in a different environment, sharing techniques while learning new processes. Beyond the technical exchange, senior designer Hadi Allameh reflected how building relationships and embracing cultural differences gave him “a profound understanding of the business” and a broader view of Hitachi's impact around the world. He now encourages others to apply to the program. Intermediate mechanical engineer Jonathan Heins described it as a “once in a lifetime experience” that deepened his understanding of Hitachi's global operations and strengthened his mindset around teamwork and responsibility. Upon returning, Jonathan was inspired to join the newly launched Japanese language classes provided by the company—continuing his learning journey.

Investing in people, building for the future

Companies grow when their people are empowered to grow as well. At Hitachi Global Air Power, investing in talent across various areas is a core pillar as the organization expands its global presence. This investment reflects the company's priority to meet customer needs around the world with greater expertise, agility, and care.

Through the international training program, both current trainees and alumni of the program have a chance to make a great impact, not only on the teams they join abroad, but also on their home teams when they return. Bridging geographical and cultural distances, this type of program helps strengthen collaboration, supports continuous improvement, and fosters innovation, taking product excellence to the next level.