

THE 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

TIME 100/AI



BACK INTO THE
SPOTLIGHT

As the global AI race accelerates,
Japan’s tech firms are thriving.

When SoftBank launched the 2016 purchase of chip-maker ARM, the largest-ever overseas acquisition by a Japanese company, president Masayoshi Son declared that “We are facing the biggest paradigm shift in the history of mankind.” Renewed optimism in the AI and tech space was much needed for Japan’s economy, after decades of stagnation during the “lost decades” when real GDP grew by just 0.9% annually, and the working-age population had already fallen by more than 10 million from its peak in 1995.

A decade later, this optimism has only grown. While Japan continues to grapple with a weakening yen and a rapidly shrinking population, its technology sector is flourishing. Headlines often focus on Silicon Valley or Shenzhen in the race to build large language models, however, Japan has carved out a different advantage: providing the technologies and infrastructure that make the AI era possible. Japan produces nearly 40% of the world’s industrial robots, and plans to deploy 10 million AI-equipped robots by 2040 as part of a broader push into physical AI, led by state-backed firm Noetra. To see how this transformation is unfolding, we spoke with various Japanese leaders to learn about AI’s impact on their industries.

Hidegori Nakazawa is the founder and president of Getworks, a company pioneering a containerized approach to data center construction. Having worked in the industry since the early days of internet infrastructure, he sees AI as a major catalyst for demand.

What have been some of the biggest milestones for Japan’s tech sector over the past 30 years?
“While the general public accesses AI services through the cloud, researchers developing large language models

and generative AI increasingly require on-premises GPU servers. Demand for domestic GPU infrastructure is growing significantly,” he said.

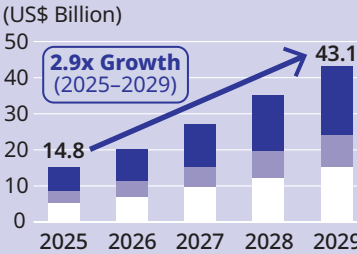
Takaaki Utsunomiya is the president of precision fastener-maker Utsunomiya Rashi. Its products are critical components in industries ranging from electric vehicles to aerospace and defense.

How do you view AI as a potential growth driver?
“Many of our potential customers are involved in areas such as data centers and semiconductor production equipment. Our aim is to build relationships and grow together with this ecosystem,” he said.

Takuji Yamamoto is the president of Shinwa Controls, whose cooling technologies are central to AI data center construction. An 8-GPU server generates enough heat for a small apartment, making advanced thermal management essential.

What are some of your key growth drivers for the future?
“AI data centers have become important growth areas. Efficient heat management is critical in these facilities, and our expertise allows us to provide solutions where traditional heat management companies were not involved,” he said.

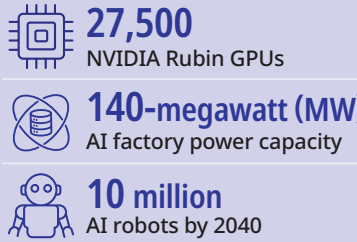
AI SPENDING FORECAST



Note: Figures are approximate and converted at US\$1 = ¥160.

PHYSICAL AI INITIATIVE

Japan is accelerating its physical AI ambitions through next-generation AI infrastructure and robotics.



Sources: IDC Japan, Japan AI Systems & Services Forecast (2025-2029); Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI); Cabinet Secretariat



Takaaki Utsunomiya
President
Utsunomiya Rashi Co., Ltd.

Small Parts With a Huge Impact

Precision fasteners are key to modern engineering. For example, a typical automobile is held together by almost 5,000 bolts, clips and rivets, while electric vehicles rely on an assortment of high-performance fasteners designed for lightweight construction and demanding environments. Utsunomiya Rashi (URK) knows this well. With over 200,000 standardized fasteners, URK is well positioned to serve clients across the electronics and automotive sectors, particularly for complex projects. “We do whatever is necessary to support our customers and meet their requirements. That is the foundation of lasting relationships,” said president Takaaki Utsunomiya.

