

PERSPECTIVE

Start smaller than you want to

Why trust between partners is built on small, boring commitments

The instinct is to start big, to show how serious you are. The partners that last do the opposite. A partner in Tokyo, Taipei or Shanghai has heard many large promises about India, and an Indian manufacturer has met suppliers who disappeared after the first order. Neither side is persuaded by scale. Both are persuaded by a small commitment, delivered exactly as promised, on the day it was promised.

1,434

Japanese companies operating in India

13,034

Japanese companies operating in China

The trust ladder

- **1. Visit.** Both sides see each other's plants, people and standards.
- **2. Sample.** A small, specific exchange, tested to an agreed standard.
- **3. Pilot order.** Real money and real delivery dates.
- **4. Repeat order.** The first delivery is kept, then the second.
- **5. Joint team.** Engineers and managers work in the same room, physical or virtual.
- **6. Co-investment.** Capital and equity, only now.

Trust works differently in each market

- **Japan.** Long cycles and consensus before commitment (nemawashi). Decisions are slow, then firm and enduring. A partner who skips steps loses credibility.
- **Taiwan.** Practical and quick to transact. Trust comes from demonstrated competence and responsiveness.
- **Mainland China.** Scale and speed. Trust comes from clear structure, IP protection and a record of fair dealing, so safeguards belong in the first conversation, not the last.

What breaks trust is rarely large

Missed dates on small things. Surprises on price or specification. Unclear authority on either side. Different answers to the same question from different people. None of these is fatal alone. Together they end partnerships quietly.

OUR ROLE

We are the people both sides can call. We work on the ground in India, Japan, Taiwan and Mainland China, carry each side's context to the other, and stay through the first deliveries, when trust is actually earned.

Trust is built in delivered commitments, not signed ones.

Figures: Japanese companies in India and in China, as used across The Guild Co. materials.