



News

Hakuhodo acquires leading strategic corporate communications agency Ashton Consulting

Tokyo January 14, 2015---Hakuhodo Inc. (Hakuhodo) announced today that it has completed the acquisition of 65% of the issued shares of leading strategic corporate communications agency Ashton Consulting Ltd. (Ashton). As a consolidated subsidiary of Hakuhodo, Ashton will continue to operate as an independent firm, while collaborating closely with Hakuhodo to serve the communications needs of Japanese and global clients.

Ashton was established in 2000 by John Sunley, CEO, as a corporate communications agency focused on providing international strategic corporate communications advice and execution, mainly in Japan. Dan Underwood, Managing Director, joined as an equity partner in 2002. Since its founding Ashton has grown to become one of Japan's leading strategic corporate communications firms, providing media relations, investor relations and other communications services to leading Japanese and global companies. Ashton is ranked as Japan's No.1 M&A corporate communications firm* and is a leader in Japan-related crisis communications.

The Hakuhodo Group aims to become a leading global advertising and marketing services group as described in its 2014–18 Medium-Term Business Plan. One element of this plan is to help our clients enhance their corporate value by strengthening our group's specialist marketing and communications services. By welcoming Ashton to our Group we will significantly strengthen our ability to provide solutions to Japanese and overseas clients in the areas of strategic corporate communications, M&A communications and crisis communications.

In a joint statement John Sunley and Dan Underwood said “Hakuhodo is an ideal partner for the next stage of Ashton's development, and we are very pleased to become part of the Hakuhodo Group. We look forward to leading the further development of Ashton's business with Japanese and global clients and to extending and deepening our relationships with our PR firm partners in the US, Europe and Asia.”

The Hakuhodo Group will continue to strengthen its specialist marketing and communications network and utilize its accumulated experience to serve clients in Japan and worldwide.

*2013/4 League Table of Japan-related M&A PR Advisors by Mergermarket



About Hakuodo

Founded in 1895, Hakuodo Inc. is an integrated advertising and communication agency headquartered in Japan. It is the core agency of Hakuodo DY Group, the world's seventh largest agency company according to *Advertising Age's* "Agency Report 2014." Hakuodo has offices in 17 countries and regions, and over 3,000 employees working in Japan and over 2,500 overseas. www.hakuodo.jp

About Ashton Consulting

Ashton Consulting was founded in 2000 as a corporate communications agency focused on providing Japanese and overseas clients with first-class corporate communications advice and execution mainly in the areas of media relations, investor relations and internal communications. The firm has grown to become Japan's No. 1 M&A PR advisor and a leader in crisis communications. www.ashton.jp

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