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Article B

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by Alison Maitland

Nissan Motor's sales executives in Japan used to take cars to customers' homes for viewing, often late in the evening. Now the showrooms and salespeople operate more regular working hours.

The change of approach might sound like a decline in personal service. In fact, it is signed to be the opposite. Cars are no longer just 'boys' toys', even in conservative Japan. Nissan's research shows that women make a third of car purchases, and women and men jointly make another third. Female customers overwhelmingly would like there to be more women in the sales teams, but the late hours made the job unappealing to women in a country where there is still often a stark choice between work and family.

These findings prompted Carlos Ghosn, Chief Executive of Nissan and Renault, to adopt a strategy to hire and promote more

women into the leadership ranks.

Since 2004, Nissan's 'Women in the Driver's Seat' initiative has more than doubled recruitment of female engineering graduates to 17 per cent this year and recruitment of female salespeople has jumped from 15 per cent to 34 per cent.

The number of women managers at Nissan, while still tiny, has risen from 2 per cent to 5 per cent. 'In an ideal situation, we should mirror the market we serve – 50 per cent – but there is a long way to go,' says Miyuki Takahashi, General Manager of the Diversity Development Office that runs the initiative to woo female employees and customers.

At a conference organised by Catalyst, which researches and campaigns for the advancement of women in business, Nissan was one of this year's two award winners, not least for having hit its initial target of women making up 5 per cent of

its managers in an industry in which the average is just 0.6 per cent.

Nissan says that getting more women engineers into the company, in which 80 per cent of employees are engineers, is important to its success. 'Males are attracted by big pictures of cars and specifications about performance,' says Ms Takahashi, who was previously Marketing Director in Japan. 'We found most mothers were attracted by pictures of a family having a great time with the car.'

To prioritise female customers, three years ago Nissan launched the Serena people carrier, which was designed by and for women. Last year, it won the top-selling spot in Japan. Ms Takahashi says, 'I am convinced that this hit is closely related to women's advancement in Nissan in terms of marketing and sales.'

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Human Resources Manager

You are the Human Resources Manager for the Dolphin Department Store. Before you start using the Omnia Employment Agency, you need the following information. Call the agency, identify yourself, state the purpose of the call and get the necessary information.

Ask about:

- introductory fees (If so, how much?)
- the hourly wage for temporary workers
- minimum period to hire a temporary worker (If so, what is it?)
- how much to pay if a temporary worker does overtime or weekend work
- work permits (Who arranges them?)
- travel expenses of temporary workers (Who pays them?)
- when to pay for temporary workers.