

[Pdf free] Accidental Office Lady: An American Woman in Corporate Japan

Accidental Office Lady: An American Woman in Corporate Japan

Laura Kriska

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"Laura Kriska's lively and invaluable story underlines the simple truth that making the world better starts with a fundamental respect for the way other people live."
-Greg Mortenson, author of *Three Cups of Tea* and *Stones Into Schools*

The ACCIDENTAL OFFICE LADY

An AMERICAN WOMAN in CORPORATE JAPAN

With a new foreword by the author



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Laura Kriska : Accidental Office Lady: An American Woman in Corporate Japan before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Accidental Office Lady: An American Woman in Corporate Japan:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Insider's look....By Michael Valdivielso Laura Kriska gives us an insider's look at corporate Japan, with the sexism, the corporate culture, the problems in dealing with Non-Japanese workers and business partners. There is not much to tell - she did a very good job, with lots of humor and wit, as well

as insight, to describe her two years working for Honda Motor Company. From uniforms, to working along side Office Ladies and Factory Workers, to helping the Japanese deal with problems that, frankly, they didn't want to deal with. I wish she had a few more books out there - it was hard to put this one down! 0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Enjoyable, but there might be a discrepancy ... By Marty McFly I really enjoyed this book, and found it to be an interesting, useful, and above all, blessedly unsentimental (no sakura or lyrical descriptions of mountains, trees, or destruction thereof) book. However, since Kriska mentions that she joined up with Honda for a career, not a job, I wonder why her bio on the back cover describes her as a writer living in NYC ... 0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. not a bad read, once you get past the editing errors By A Customer Given Ms. Kriska's lifelong exposure to Japanese culture, I was surprised at her irritation by many aspects of that very culture. As a gaijin female, she expected to change things at Honda overnight? The book itself is entertaining once you get past the snotty subtext and the errors in reference to American culture (she claims to have been a fan of the "Little Hosue on the Prairie" series as a child, yet the author's name is misspelled in this book).

A young woman with a new degree in Japanese studies and plenty of youthful idealism and can-do spirit accepts a job as the first American trainee at Honda's headquarters in Tokyo. Her image of Japanese corporate life is dramatically challenged on her first day at work when she is issued a blue polyester uniform; a uniform worn only by women! From menial beginnings serving tea to executives and cleaning the boss's desk, to a stint in public relations, to developing training classes for Japanese associates going to America, Laura Kriska recounts her struggle to adapt to; and ultimately thrive in; the culture of a traditional Japanese company. Shortly before her departure, she travels full circle by introducing a successful campaign to make women's uniforms optional. Now with a new foreword by the author, *The Accidental Office Lady* is a vivid and valuable firsthand account not only of corporate Japan and the gender inequality that persists within it, but of an outsider's successful attempt to work within cultural boundaries to affect organizational change.

.com The Japan we see most often is an image of a country teetering on the edge of depression, an economic system that's too hamstrung by its own cultural traditions to fully participate in the global economy. The endless train of trade delegations to and from Tokyo seem to attest to the cultural gap that exists between Japan and the rest of the world-- but that's where the explanation usually stops. We're rarely privy as to the nature of the gap itself. That's why Laura Kriska's book, *The Accidental Office Lady*, is so valuable. The book is a firsthand account of Kriska's two years in Japan working as a trainee for the Honda Motor Company. As a trainee, she takes on a variety of tasks, from serving tea and taking the coats of senior executives to working in one of Honda's auto factories. Along the way she confronts the rigidity of business life in Japan: "I felt the corporate walls forcing me into a mold as though I were trapped inside a Fisher-Price playhouse, in which each piece of furniture fit perfectly into its assigned space and had a single hole for a peg-shaped doll. I didn't want to be that doll, and the more threatened I felt, the more I wanted to resist." Kriska not only successfully resists, but finds that she's able to fit into the corporate world of Honda. Anyone contemplating the nuances of Japanese life--especially from a woman's perspective--will find this an insightful and entertaining read. -- Harry C. Edwards From Publishers Weekly First jobs straight out of college are never what one expects. With new degree in hand, Kriska accepted what sounded like a plum assignment as the first American woman trainee at Honda Motor Company's headquarters in Tokyo. Perhaps not surprisingly, her idealistic expectations of fulfilling work, engaging colleagues and authority to make contributions are chilled by standoffish co-workers who view her with confused suspicion and a day-to-day drudgery that starts with donning an ugly polyester uniform that is worn only by the women. Though as a "trainee" she is not on the lowest rung of the corporate ladder (and never holds the title "Office Lady"), this uniform symbolizes for her the very different levels of power that men and women hold at Honda's headquarters. It's not accidental that her occidental background leads to more than the usual trauma of being the newest kid on the block. As Kriska matures and gains the language and cultural skills necessary to begin to understand her work environment, she convinces her Japanese mentor that the work she can do best will take her into the nitty gritty of a company factory in Sayama. Although the precise time of her experiences is unclear, a wealth of details, recaptured from journal notes, make this an entertaining cross-cultural memoir: "I looked at the small entryway that had been filled with a pile of shoes and saw that all eleven pairs had been reorganized in pairs and reversed so that the toes pointed toward the door." Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. *The Accidental Office Lady* is Kriska's account of her two years at Honda, from her initial job as a secretary, or "office lady," in Tokyo through her more satisfying work at the Honda factory in Sayama, two hours northeast. Although the book is another in the plentiful rite-of-passage genre set in Japan (young American attempts to discover country and self), it is a good one -- funny and insightful about the Japanese nanny state. Kriska comes off as a determined, irreverent and very human American trying to grow up professionally in a foreign country that doesn't want her to[...] Kriska is at her best when she compiles little details to describe a nation of anxious conformists. Honda secretaries must completely clear their desks at night, and at no time do they dare display family pictures. Later, when Kriska is working in the Honda public relations department, she amusingly captures Japan's culture of over-employment by describing a man she calls "Mr.

Dan," who works with her for weeks solely on the name tags for a Honda promotion event. Soon she is one of three Honda employees readying the chairs and charts in a conference room -- preparations that consume an entire day. "At least one hour was spent discussing how and where to hang four framed posters of the four generations of the Accord," she writes, "and another hour trying to figure out a way to display the model year on the posters." The main problem with her book is the fuzzy time frame. The events seem recent, but readers don't learn until page 206, when Kriska describes Honda's corporate reaction to Emperor Hirohito's death, that it is January 1989. Japan has changed drastically in the decade since, tumbling from what was the world's fastest-rising economy through a seven-year recession into the financial crisis of today. Clearly Kriska was after timelessness -- and corporate culture in Japan changes at glacial speed -- but her book would have been more informative if readers could have seen Honda in the context of a booming era, when it was considered the most innovative carmaker in the world[...] -- Elisabeth Bumiller, The New York Times Book