



# New Startup Rent-Meee Lets Foreigners in Japan Transform Their Hobby into a Business



**Tokyo, Japan:** Rent-Meee is a new service that promises to revitalize Japan's ailing private lesson business. Rent-Meee is an online platform that lets teachers (called 'Rent-Meees') sell their skills to learners (called 'Renters'). Skills can be anything from baking to pet discipline - the idea is that language learning is a happy byproduct of a meaningful experience like practicing a hobby. Rent-Meee launches its BETA this month.

According to CEO Chihiro Tanno, Rent-Meee is not only a lifeline for Japanese people who have sat through uninspiring English lessons in the past, it can also help foreigners develop a profitable side-business even if they don't speak Japanese.

Rent-Meee developer Carl Albright knows how frustrating it can be to break out of the 'English teacher' box in Japan. The affable New Yorker, who is known to turn heads strolling down the Ginza while sporting an L-size yukata and afro comb, is a passionate Japanophile and computer nerd who grew up with Japan-related hobbies and moved here at the earliest opportunity.

Albright firmly believes that everyone has a marketable skill: "People might not think that they do, because their talent is not something like accounting that you find in online freelancing networks. There's also a sense that dog-walking and baby-sitting aren't real skills since 'anyone' can do them, although they can definitely be hard and require a specific skill set as well."



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It was during Albright's stint as a web developer with ENT, a Tsukiji-based marketing agency founded by Tanno, that the pair noticed they were having a lot of success with events that offered some sort of learning experience like sushi-making. They made a bold decision to pivot the entire business into a service that would be based around experiential learning.

Hence the idea for Rent-Meee, which can be traced back to ENT's core mission of promoting 'fateful encounters' ('go-en' in Japanese). Tanno explains: "For foreigners in Japan who don't speak Japanese, their community is the English-speaker community. Japanese people don't know how to meet international people except at English school, and some are hesitant to talk with foreigners. Both sets of people want to connect, but how?"

The founders hope that Rent-Meee will provide an alternative to Japan's traditional 'eikaiwa' (English conversation) schools, which rely heavily on textbooks and are notorious for exploitative business practices. Rent-Meee gives teachers full autonomy, and learning takes place around hobbies and meaningful exchange. According to Tanno: "People like joyous things. When people are engaged in a hobby, it creates a better atmosphere. The ideal is for both parties to have a great time."

### About Rent-Meee:

Rent-Meee ( [www.rent-meee.com](http://www.rent-meee.com) ) is a freelancer marketplace due to launch on March, 2017. Initially for users in the Tokyo area, the service will later be expanded to other cities and countries. Unlike other freelancer platforms where services are rendered online, Rent-Meee is exclusively for teachers ('Rent-Meees') who can teach their skills to learners ('Renters') in person.



### About ENT:

ENT ( [www.go-ent.net](http://www.go-ent.net) ) is an international marketing agency in Tokyo. Originally located in Tsukiji, the company relocated to Shinjuku in November 2016. The name ENT (pronounced 'En-to') refers to 'fateful encounters', called 'GO-EN' in Japanese. ENT provides a network where others can easily also make the same kind of fateful encounters across, cultural and language barriers.



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