CASE STUDY:

Bridges to Japan Exhibit – Indiana State Fair
A *Silver Anvil Award of Excellence* Winner

Situation: International investment is critical to any state – especially during a difficult economy. Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels for the first time designated a large building at the 2010 Indiana State Fair to be a "Bridges to Japan" exhibit, in recognition of the fact that Indiana is a major center for Japanese investment. The Indiana State Fair draws nearly a million visitors annually. Our objectives for creating and promoting the Bridges to Japan exhibit included bringing more people to the Fair, increasing traffic in this particular exhibition building (previously 90,000), and to increase positive feelings about the Japanese presence in Indiana.

Program: The exhibit included a variety of Japanese food, including deep-fat-fried sushi (deep-fat-fried anything is an Indiana State Fair tradition), as well as a Japanese garden, a replica bridge, a Japanese house in which tea ceremonies were performed, displays, performances, Sumo wrestlers, Koto drummers, and high-tech Japanese robots.

Shank Public Relations Counselors arranged media relations, an innovative social media strategy, personal appearances, videos and numerous TV and radio interviews and videos. Participants in presentations, tea ceremonies and kimono-dressing ceremonies included the Governor, Lt. Governor and first lady of Indiana.

Results: We nearly tripled the goal of increasing traffic to that exhibit hall with approximately 250,000 visitors – or about 26% of total fair attendance – sampling foods, viewing exhibits and enjoying performances. Among exhibit visitors, positive feelings about the Japanese presence in Indiana increased 8% and knowledge of Japanese presence in Indiana increased 25.6%.