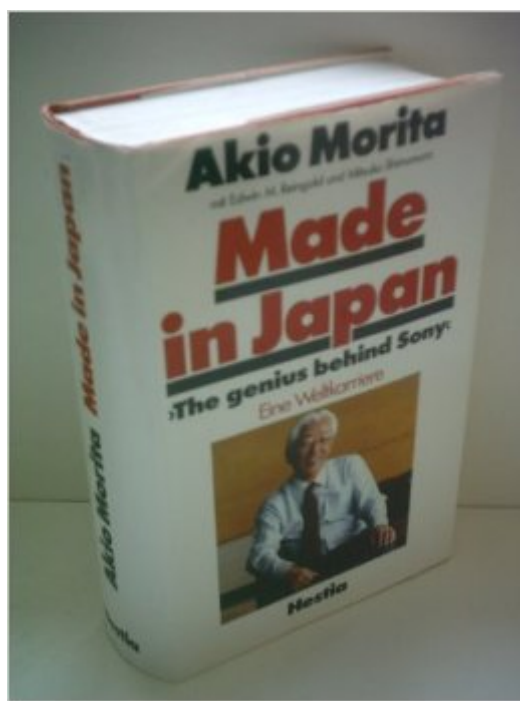


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Made In Japan: Akio Morita And Sony



Synopsis

Sony is one of the most powerful and respected multinational corporations in the world, and Akio Morita is its outspoken chairman. From his global perspective, Morita provides an informative and highly entertaining look at how Japanese business really works. TP: Plume. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

In today's global economy, this book is a must-read for anyone looking for an insight into Eastern management philosophy. Akio Morita needs no introduction. A legend in his lifetime, he founded Sony, one of the most powerful and respected multinational corporations in the world. This book is an autobiography of Akio Morita and it goes hand in hand with the story of growth and expansion of Sony as well as post World War II Japan. This is a story of young Japanese who dreamt of a great company and went on to establish one with his exceptional vision and intuitive ability. Many of us know the anecdote of how Sony's marketing team was not convinced of the viability of the idea of a device, which can play music when you play Golf and ignoring them Akio asked his Engineers to go ahead. Yes, we know that device by the name of Walkman. The book starts with the Post World War II Japan, wounded psychologically and physically by the one of the biggest tragedies mankind has ever faced. The problems of rehabilitation, unemployment and recession, then reconstruction, the weakening of 'Zaibatsu' (the family owned Conglomerates) and strengthening of democratic style of management in companies, which helped many more Japanese corporations to come up, is

explained beautifully. Akio talks of the Japanese society and culture. The conservative and strong family-oriented culture reminds of the common Asian heritage we share with Japanese Society. This is really appreciable that such society can grow so advanced scientifically and technologically that it has not only challenged the countries traditionally considered powerhouse of industrial revolution but also taken a lead in many industries.

Below are key excerpts from the book that I found particularly insightful:

- 1- "I have always believed that a trademark is the life of an enterprise and that it must be protected boldly. A trademark and a company name are not just clever gimmicks—they carry responsibility and guarantee the quality of the product. If someone tries to get a free ride on the reputation and the ability of another who has worked to build up public trust."
- 2- "In the beginning, when our track record for success was not established, our competitors would take a very cautious wait-and-see attitude while we marketed and developed a new product. In the early days, we would often have the market to ourselves for a year or more before the other companies would be convinced that the product would be a success. And we made a lot of money, having the market all to ourselves. But as we became more successful and our track record became clearer, the others waited a shorter and shorter time before jumping in. Now we barely get a three-month head start on some products before the others enter the market to compete with us with their own version of the product we innovated. It is flattering in a way, but it is expensive. We have to keep a premium on innovation."
- 3- "My point in digressing to tell this story is simple: I do not believe that any amount of market research could have told us that the Sony Walkman sensational hit that would spawn many imitators. And yet this small item has literally changed the music-listening habits of millions of people all around the world."

Ever since I have known about management or have been involved in any kind of management activities at work, my management style has been a footprint of the American way of managing things. One of the primary reasons for this is the fact that I have always worked with American clients. However, having said that I am a very emotional person at heart and I always put people before anything else, which is actually something that goes against the American way of managing things. This might be the striking reason why I enjoyed "Made in Japan" so much. Before reading "Made in Japan" I used to feel that I am a little out of place at times, when it comes to People management because I have always put my heart before my head. However it seems there is a management style which agrees to it and it is the Japanese way of managing. Akio Morita has in this book spoken at length about the distinctions between the American or the Western style of

management and the Japanese way of management. While in the western world "processes" play an absolute role and then people are aligned along these processes, in the Japanese world "people" play the central role and processes are aligned based on the kind of resources at hand. We might debate this at length, but it will not deny the fact that we have had more than a handful of successful companies from Japan. Before Akio, gets into the management distinctions, he narrates the evolution of SONY from the burned down departmental shop affected by the bombings of World War-2. The kind of hardships he and Masaru Ibuka had to go through to get the company in action is an example of the dedication that the Japanese people are known for.

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