There are rules to coming up with ideas

TECHNIQUES
OF
IMAGINATION

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Introduction

With so few natural resources at hand, the only way for the Japanese to challenge world standards is with ideas. Ideas are all we have to rely on to solve the problems in this world.

Having said that, we don't see or hear about the structure, techniques, or methods for creating ideas. Perhaps there is no way to systematize this, but in Japan there is almost no concept for relaying or learning to create ideas. While I recognize the enormity of the project, this is why I have decided to take it on. I accept it as a challenge to see how far I can take an expertise that is dependent on individuality and turn it in into common knowledge.

This book is not particularly directed at people who work for advertising agencies or at those aiming to join the advertising industry, because the process of thinking practically about something or creating something new is obviously not limited to the advertising industry. This book is for anyone who is attempting to create new products and services, and for any who already have products and services and are wondering

how to attractively keep them alive. On a larger scale, it is for people who are looking for a change in their current business situation, looking to change things for improvement, and for students who are looking for jobs that allow them to create new things. Hopefully, this will be something that many of those in a broad range of occupations and generations will pick up and read. Hopefully, it will be beneficial.

First, let's look at the present.
The world is brimming with new activity.

In the future, this age will probably be looked back on as a time when the world was remarkably active.

Every advanced nation is facing an economic crisis, with the unavoidable question: "What is advancement?" Rapid economic development is forcing emerging economies to deal with political and social compromise. In other regions, the people are promoting democratization without political leadership. This may sound good, but it means that they must choose self-led transition, without an answer to the question: "So, what do we do now?"

Transition to new nation building

Transition to new interstate cooperation

Transition to new energy

Transition to new urban development

Transition to new community development

Transition to a new social system

Transition to new roles of corporations

Transition to a new role of education

This is happening worldwide, all at once. Ever since the nuclear accident, energy is being debated all over the world, expanding to all sorts of debates regarding industrial structure. For one, the debates have revealed that the energy problem itself affects industrial structure. More importantly, people are no longer sure that science can control nature – an idea that has dominated capitalism since the Industrial Revolution.

In other words…

The whole world has noticed that all systems eventually deteriorate.

Now that the existing framework is going nowhere, the entire world is in search of something new. In order to make that new framework, we need some sort of action to create change by directly facing the situation without being afraid of controversy or regretting the effort.

When society changes its values, the economy changes. This creates changes in companies, the engines of our economy. Accordingly, the people who make up the companies change their views toward work and action. When the economy was good, emulating the formula for historical victories was a shortcut. Emulation is not necessarily a bad thing. It has been an effective methodology. However, times have changed and we are now continually faced with a diversity of problems that need to be solved. Completing a routine or simply passing something on to the next process has its own meaning. However, this action alone no longer completes a job.

The whole world changed its outlook on work and activities.
Their purpose became creation.

Use your own mind and come up with new ways. Don't take what someone else made, but find your own answer. Don't pass it off for the time being, but imagine what's best for you and make it real. It's all about using our own wisdom and ideas as weapons so that we can go on fighting this battle.

Lately, new types of businesses, new job descriptions, and new professionals have come to light. These are simply results or phenomena of the new age. Definitions of the words work and action have changed. They have both come to mean creating something new.

It's all about coming up with an idea and moving ahead while making it a reality. Of course that is a huge task, but there has never been a time like now when so many opportunities have opened up in the entire world. You can bring about so much change with an idea that is not tainted with something that already exists. Not only can you make a clear change, but you will find it fun and fulfilling to create something from zero rather than having to protect an old framework.

Let us move on, with ideas.

To begin with, things don't go well in the world today by doing things in ways to which we have become accustomed. The only way for those of us, who are going to be living in the future, is to generate new methods and create a new economy. We have no choice but to move on over the constraints, walls, and boundaries of the past – with ideas. Doing so will give momentum to our society and create the dynamics to move on to the future. Only by moving on will we be able to see things that we weren't able to notice before. Let's go as far as we can.

In this book, I define idea as:

The power to resolve problems and to keep society on the

move.

I create advertisements on a daily basis. I also create magazines and television programs. I produce movies, theme parks, buildings, shops, artists, music, events, exhibitions, products, projects, and companies. I make institutions that improve the community. I am involved in an extremely wide range of planning, and that is because there are a multitude of problems in the various areas.

How can we get people to visit the zoo when they don't come anymore?

What does this movie need in order to be loved?

How do we attract people to an area that young people are moving out of?

How do we revive a sport that has lost its appeal?

How do we regain the popularity of an artist that people are forgetting?

How do we direct people's attention to a certain country?

All kinds of things come my way every day. While solving these problems, I create situations where the outcome

is not temporary. That doesn't mean that I force them ahead aggressively. I try to create conditions for people to have a change of heart and a change of action.

Each and every person has a history – a story

To say you're going to move the world is actually quite presumptuous. The world is really an illusion; it is a succession and accumulation of each person's precious time. And each and every person is overflowing with information and events, memories and experiences, feelings and emotions. Therefore, if you want to create something that will influence people, you need to create something that will somehow become part of their history and story. In order to do that, you need a deep perception and understanding of people and a basic sense of awe towards life. Once you do, the process of creating ideas becomes an act where you can clearly think through questions like, "What will make everyone join hands together?" or, "Can

we move together into a new future?" More specifically, it is an act of using practicality and passion to come up with an answer on how to make the world a better place while hoping the solution will benefit someone.

In that sense, I would first like to deny any self-righteous conscience that often comes with the word idea. Any nuance that suggests that "I just thought of something good!" or "Look at me, aren't I great?" limits the possibilities that ideas really have.

Every year I have the opportunity to meet many students. Most of the examples I get from those who claim to be good at coming up with ideas are not solutions to anything. They have no effect. They're only trying to make themselves look good, or at best, presentable. This has to be changed.

A selfish idea cannot be called an idea.
It is wrong to think that something will happen by suggesting whatever comes to mind.

Someone suggests something off the top of his head.

Then he thinks he made a difference. "Oh, good. Now all sorts of things are going to change, starting tomorrow." Does this really happen? Wouldn't it be frightening if there were people who actually thought like that?

I've relayed this region's characteristics, so people are bound to love it.

I've relayed the selling factors of this product, so it's bound to sell.

I wrote a good song, so people are bound to talk about it.

I produced this event, so everyone is bound to participate.

Everyone is bound to share this through SNS.

This is completely wrong. People are not machines. Just by throwing something at them does not mean that you are communicating an idea. If you think you are, you have lost the basic understanding and dignity for human beings and, in a larger sense, the intelligence you need in order to live.

Sadly, often those who claim to be good at coming up with ideas go overboard with things that look like presentations. Then they gloat about them. What makes or breaks a

presentation is its content. People have to want to hear what you have to say. Along with presentation methods and presentation experts, there is another thing that is easily misunderstood.

Will changing the system make people change?
Will creating a framework make people move?

When discussing changes in society I often hear people say, "How about changing the system like this?" or "We should make a new system like this." Lately I hear, "If you make some sort of framework, people will participate and the world will move." People have this simple notion that it's common sense. But if, for example, a system is established by moving a whole lot of money or a certain framework is forcibly built, it will likely not last for very long. The reason is that although there might be some sort of enforcement, it cannot encourage intention or motivation to make people think positively about it. When that happens, people will eventually drift away.

Without laying the dynamics, the stage will remain empty.
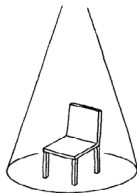
Recently, I often hear this: "People will participate and this will become a popular topic through SNS." Sure enough, with the development of technology, there are plenty of settings. However, unless people feel that they want to participate, it is the same as the saying, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced." (Matthew 11:17) The stage will never be filled with people. People live each day with different feelings. Similar to my earlier point about the danger of thinking you have communicated something, there is nothing scarier than believing that this should attract people. There are many people who think that companies and people can be connected through a flat relationship, but in most cases this is not true. There are big gaps between the infrastructure and actual activity, and the failure to notice that, or pretending not to notice, is the same as believing that mechanisms and systems can move people. For people to actively participate in something

is a fantastic phenomenon. It can never happen by raising a problem superficially and providing a superficial solution. You must create the dynamics to move that many people, and in order to do that, a significant value needs to be established and a huge sentiment has to be designed.

So…
How do we change the way people feel so that their behavior will also change?

How do we create a great value that is different from what we had?

How can we make it sustainable?

In other words…
How do we come up with ideas?

Techniques of imagination. Let's begin.

The process of coming up with ideas

In the introduction, I defined idea as "the power to resolve problems and to keep society on the move." To do that, first let's establish a goal.

Introduce a concept that did not exist before.
Then change the rules.

To begin with, how does one develop an idea? The process is difficult to understand. People ask me: "What is it that you do?" Well, I create advertising campaigns. I also make plans for product development and the media. I start up all kinds of projects. If I tried to explain every one of them, it could be confusing. The simple answer is:

"I create change."

I change something that already exists and make that change big enough so that people will notice. Suggesting a difference to an existing value, a general value, or a value that has

lost its appeal can completely change the competitive environment and market in which that value was originally set. I can solve problems that way, and can create activity in which people are involved.

If you want to make change:

(1) Find out what the issue is.

   ↓

(2) Define the real enemy and the real ally.

   ↓

(3) Find the axis of value to be introduced.

   ↓

(4) Understand how what you created is going to be communicated to the world and what it will look like.

In this book I will discuss the techniques necessary for each of these steps as I lead you through the process of developing ideas.

(1) What is the issue to begin with?

→ Techniques of understanding

     When something isn't going the way you want it to, in many cases you have lost sight of the essence of matter. Perhaps you have not yet found the essence that people in this day and age need. The first step, therefore, is to find the essence of the issue.

     To begin with, what is the issue? Why does it exist? It could have disappeared through history, so why did it continue to exist? There must be a reason. Which part of human feelings and what part of human activity did it target? If there is a problem, what is the essence of that problem? These are the things that need to be dug up. I will discuss the "techniques of understanding" that are involved.

(2) Define the real enemy and the real ally.

→ Techniques of discovering
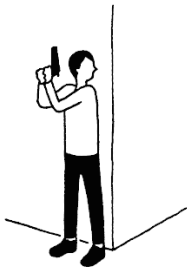
Next, we need to find the real enemy and the real ally. Is the real enemy a company or a group with which you are in competition? Having an opponent right in front of you actually involves a fairly simple battle. However, most of the time, I doubt this is the case. The competition is not at all who you think it might be. It might be invisible. You can't battle an enemy you can't see. Perhaps you have misjudged the ally. Someone who you thought was on your side might be armed with something you never imagined. They might have an exceptional quality. On the other hand, they could be really helpful in creating a wonderful world. This step is to explore these things that I see as the buds of value.

Here, you need the eyes and ears necessary to feel out

where value lies. I will discuss the "techniques of discovering" including the basic acts of observing and perceiving that are necessary in creating ideas.

(3) What is the axis of value to be introduced?
→ Techniques of converting

Based on steps one and two, the third step will involve making conversions through a new axis of value in the competitive environment and market – the most important aspect when creating change.

What do we do with existing values? At what state should existing values be, to provide the greatest opportunities? What is conversion in the first place? How do we convert?

With this in mind, I will discuss the necessary "techniques of conversion."

(4) How is what you created going to be communicated to the world and what is it going to look like?

→ Techniques of actualizing

Finally, I will invite you to think about methods of establishing and radicating a clear axis of competition as something that is meaningful to people. Establishments (companies, foundations, associations – whatever they may be) conduct their activities logically, but the average consumer does not behave that way. An individual's motivation can only be triggered when confronted by a moving story. So, how do we move people? How do we create and exhibit a vision that makes someone want to share it with someone else? What do we need to do, for people to interpret this as something that is necessary for society? This means finding answers about how to live in the present and how to live in the future.

This is what I will discuss in the last chapter, "techniques of

actualizing."

Ideas are interesting. You can go straight from step one to step four without following them in order and still be successful. Step two alone might be enough to make a plan. I don't intend to tell you that you must follow the entire process. I've used the word steps but that doesn't mean that you should follow each one like in a flowchart. In fact, it's quite the opposite. Rather than the ideology that makes people prone to think that following steps is the way to get by, it would be better to perceive this as a base for you to really deepen and stretch your imagination.

When you can't find a breakthrough, your imagination isn't growing, and you find yourself limited to something superficial, being aware of these steps can possibly help to put a shape to an idea as something that has meaning. Knowing these ways to broaden or deepen something that you already have can greatly increase your choices. When you need a cue for an idea, if you get stuck in the middle, or when you're at a loss for that final touch – whatever the situation is, I hope you find that these steps work for you.

Chapter 1

Techniques of understanding

This chapter will discuss the techniques involved in understanding what the issue is to begin with and exploring it more deeply.

I. Understanding the objective – the what technique

**Something that simply comes to mind
is not the same as an idea.**

Where does an idea come from? Is it like magic, where something is created from nothing, or something that suddenly falls out of the air one day? Is it something that accidently appears after repeatedly deliberating things that come to mind?

None of the above. Just as worrying is not the same as thinking, something that comes to mind is not the same as an idea. The difference between worrying and thinking is whether or not you make a target and grasp it structurally. Thinking leads to progress and gives direction to an existence, but worrying does neither.

It is wrong to suggest that you are in a slump when it comes to creating ideas. It shows a misunderstanding of the mechanisms involved in creating ideas.

However, this is often the case with people who are working with what comes to mind. There is a decisive difference between what comes to mind and an idea. An idea is something that finds a solution to a problem. After establishing what the problem is, you create the criteria to judge the solution. Creating an idea involves a process and criteria.

For an idea to be created, there is a necessity.

Being involved in communication, I play my hand with

ideas when dealing with clients. What is needed is an idea that moves a person's heart when it is at a standstill, creating interest where there was no interest, and encouraging activity where there was no activity. All of this begins with finding out what the theme and the issue are.

To begin with, what is the issue?

When you are faced with an issue, start by asking what it actually is. It is surprising how often we do not see things clearly. We can be misled by common sense. Sometimes a conception mold has been created because of an industry practice or culture that prevents us from adequately being able to confront the target. When things are not going well, it is often because the essence has been lost or it has not been found yet. If you cannot properly confront your target, there is no way you can begin searching for a solution.

Try to unravel the issue from its origin.

Dictionary-like definitions and history might suggest the exact opposite of what an idea is. However, going back

to look at the definition or history has greater meaning than flaunting general theory that has been through a number of hands. By unraveling history, you will find that it actually did not take very long to create a number of events. What now seem common actually used to be quite fragile. Values can change in a short period of time. Keep this in mind when you think about the event that you are targeting and excavate the true meaning of its essence. In other words, respect the targeted event.

In the end, the person who created the idea must be the biggest fan of that targeted event, so the first step is to approach it with the greatest respect. Carefully excavate the footprints of its existence. This action will not only function as a process, but it will nurture readiness and disposition and play a great role in creating the idea.

Find the entrance that captures the essence.

People often say the entire plan should be explained on one page, and even specify the format: "One A3 page for Company X." In some places this has almost become part of

the company culture. Of course it is important to be brief, but the danger is when prioritizing the one-page boundary creates a tendency for inadequate communication, typical when the method becomes the purpose. The opening phrases of such documents are often very weak. When you think that you have to explain everything on one page, it is natural to think that you must not get stuck at the beginning. The entrance to the idea gets pushed aside and you end up with a perfunctory description.

In other words, all you have is a preceding paragraph, which is absolutely unnecessary. It has nothing to do with the idea. Its only purpose is to set the table. That is why it is called a preceding paragraph. No matter what kind of entrance you have, it needs to function as a seedling for an idea to grow. That is why it has to be an entrance that nobody has thought of. It is attractive because it leads to content that nobody has seen before. It is very rare to see attractive content when everything has been redundantly squeezed onto one page.

Doubt everything about the issue.
That will become the foundation of your idea.

Say the assignment is an idea to resurrect a rundown hot springs resort two hours from Tokyo. In order to create a superb idea, do not jump right into the solution. Create a strong foundation that will bear rich fruit.

What does it mean to be two hours from Tokyo?

What do those two hours mean?

What does it mean to make it a day trip?

What does it mean to go by car?

What does it mean to go by train?

What makes a place rundown?

Is it really that way?

Who sees it as being rundown?

Is that a problem?

What is a hot spring?

What do hot springs mean to people?

In all truth, who wants it resurrected?

In all truth, should it be resurrected?

Is this theme something that is going to be appreciated?

Is it worth facing the subject?

These are the kinds of questions that must be worked out carefully. Asking these questions might make you an incredibly bothersome person. I actually do this with every project, so the people around me probably think that I am a real pain in the neck. Sometimes, when I do this overseas, people look at me as if to say, "What is wrong with this person?" If you do this in a meeting, people might get anxious about when your idea will start to take form. Still, probe as far as you can go and do not forget to doubt the issue. This is a necessary step in order to come up with a rich idea.

The more you dig into the issue, the larger your idea will become.

If you take an assignment and look only at the surface, your idea will become superficial. It will only be a general theory based on a common understanding – shallow, with nothing new about it. It will not solve anything and will not be worth taking the trouble to send out into the world. If you cannot dig deep at this stage, your idea will not grow.

Working with the hot springs theme with just a health

concept will not produce anything new. Starting there could only subdivide health and grasp it as such, ending in a very small-scaled proposition. Beauty would be much the same. Suggesting relaxation or stress relief would take you into déjà vu territory that might even take away from the appeal that was there to begin with. Superficial suggestions that cannot even be considered ideas could have a negative impact.

On the other hand, as you are pondering over what it means to be a rundown place, you will probably generate a positive understanding. Then for the first time, you will have the opportunity to think about the kind of being rundown that people living in Tokyo are looking for. Being rundown means that the place once flourished and that someone has a wonderful memory of it. Finding who that is and what of kind of a memory it was can lead you to an idea.

As you excavate, you will start to see what the problem is. This is very important in order to create an idea. It involves addressing individual techniques.

II. Understanding the cause – the why technique

Every idea is based on a cause.

The source of an idea is actually lingering in the issue. More specifically, it is hiding in the cause of that issue. So, obviously, your idea will change depending on how you grasp the cause.

Say your assignment is to put a stop to the declining number of people who send New Year greeting cards. This is a big theme. It is easy to think that people are using email instead, but that alone does not solve the issue. If awareness and actions have drifted away, it is necessary to re-introduce a new form based on some kind of recognition. To do that, you need to acquire different viewpoints and establish the cause that others have not noticed by exploring from a variety of angles.

For example, the cause could be in the fact that winter does not feel like a special season anymore, or that greetings do not mean as much as they used to. The value of sending hand-written messages might not be what it used to be. There are many ways to look at the cause.

Your strategy for finding a solution will be different with each viewpoint. If the cause is in the lack of sensing the season, your strategy might involve doing something in the fruit or vegetable section at a supermarket to make people more aware of winter, or thinking of a way to get people to write New Year greeting cards on the day of winter solstice. If you understand the cause to be the fading meaning of sending greetings, you could attach a different role by linking it with a community event and having it used as an invitation, or by having people share their experiences like a reporter. These could be solutions. If the value of sending handwritten messages has gone down, the solution might involve attaching a flower or hand towel to the card, or sending it with chocolate or some other food. The range of solutions is very broad.

Establishing the cause is the root of everything.

Therefore, be especially creative in the way you read into the issue and how you excavate the cause.

Just as there are various viewpoints for establishing the cause of a single theme such as New Year greeting cards, there are issues of all different varieties lingering in each theme. That is why it is important to maintain the stance of exploring. Maybe there is another more important cause hiding beneath the surface that has been overlooked.

In fact, when you are at your limit of coming up with ideas, it is often because you have not searched enough for the cause. If your grasp of the cause is diverse and flowing with creativity, your thinking process to create an idea should be very smooth. When you can see the cause, the solution will naturally come to light.

A good establishment of cause will produce a good answer. However, in many cases, people only search briefly for the cause and jump directly to finding a solution. Their

imagination gets stuck and they panic because they cannot come up with an idea. But that is inevitable because their establishment of cause is too common. They get stuck because they do not search deeply enough.

Imagine a training session where you must come up with as many suggestions as possible on a certain topic. Naturally, this would not simply require the number of suggestions, but volume creates quality in many cases. Let us take a look at the varieties.

When someone tells you to come up with as many suggestions as you can, it feels like a huge project. But if you can establish the cause of the subject by breaking it up into multiple sections, all you need is a few solutions for each section. If you try to churn out a whole lot from the beginning, you are going to have trouble; but if you have a number of interesting causes, it can be quite easy. It is important to probe over and over again, asking "Why?"

To begin with, the problem is not small.
When something looks solvable, don't trivialize it or look

only at the surface.

Here's an interesting example.

A while ago, one of the wards in Tokyo was having a problem with rising burglaries of empty houses. So what should be done to prevent the problem? Make posters to promote anti-crime awareness like you often see across town? Are those really effective?

I don't trust those things. By those things, I mean anti-crime posters, the disposition that allows them, and the mechanism that condones them. To begin with, in today's environment people will not want to listen, so whatever you say is useless. The poster could have a picture of a popular celebrity or a clever copy, but people are not going to show interest, and just seeing a poster will not likely change public behavior.

So, what needs to be done? Let's look at the cause from a number of angles.

First of all, why do more burglaries occur here? Is it because people are somehow careless? That would be the same in any ward.

Why is the burglary rate rising only here? Perhaps the ward is vulnerable because there are a lot of high-income households. But there are many other places like that. Maybe people do not associate much with their neighbors so nobody would notice a stranger. Unless it is a small town, however, it would not be very realistic to establish this as a cause.

We need to further examine the cause from yet another angle. Look across the entire community. There is bound to be a number of discoveries. As you observe very carefully, you might notice that the residents lack interest in their surroundings and do not have a watchful eye. A burglar could see that as an opportunity to take advantage of.

Once you notice this cause, the solution comes naturally. All that is needed is to prepare something to get people interested in and to notice. That particular ward chose to plant flowers as a solution. The residents started noticing the

flowers, at times watering and taking care of them. Then they became concerned about their growth. Have they budded? Have the flowers bloomed? In time the community had more "eyes," and as a result, burglaries in that ward decreased.

It is not at all easy to change people's awareness and actions. It is outrageous to think so. Perhaps the only thing you can really do is set the environment so that people naturally change, instead of forcing them to change, as told in Aesop's "The North Wind and the Sun." In the long run, that method is the shortcut to natural change.

People take off their coats because their body temperatures rise when the sun shines on them.
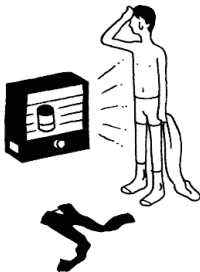
As in Aesop's fable, the traveler does not take off his coat because the north wind blows. It seems obvious, but this

means that it is most important to set up a causal relation-ship that functions effectively. Although it may not look like an immediate solution, if the link functions, it will reach the solution.

Meanwhile, forcing a solution might go in the complete opposite direction and we do not want that to happen. We need to savor the cause, excavate whatever is lurking deep inside, and organize the relationship. Only then will an idea be cre-ated that can influence people's actions.

The cause established in the former example – the res-idents might be lacking the attitude or awareness of showing interest in their surroundings – has now gone beyond the break-in problem to become an issue that has to do with the nature of the whole community. It is quite possible that the burglaries were only part of the outcome. This is exactly what I meant by the difficulty of jumping right into the search of a solution. When the problem lies deep within, you will not find a fundamental cure by examining only the surface.

Here is another example. This is about a zoo in New

York. A charming advertisement spread throughout the streets of New York, when shapes of all kinds of animals were cut out of white paper and pasted to walls displaying various forms of street art, giving life to beautiful animals. This kind of idea does not just happen. This was due to a superb establishment of cause.

The theme was to attract people to the zoo that nobody was going to. The first question was, ''Why?'' Perhaps another zoo took away all of the customers. That would have been a simple reason, easy to understand. However, it is not likely that a zoo has an obvious competitor nearby.

Did another form of entertainment take visitors away? If so, what took them away? Think about the regional characteristics of New York. When you look around the city, there are art galleries everywhere, filled with more visitors than art galleries in Tokyo. People treasure their time together with art.

That brings us to the cause. Perhaps the art-loving New Yorkers have not noticed the great art created by Earth, called animals. Once you get this far, the solution is simple. Show the

animals as art, in places around the city that can be seen by the people. The solution to paste cutout pieces of paper as street art came from that establishment of cause.

Both the solution to plant flowers and the solution that took advantage of street art had an impact on the people and left clear results. What the two have in common is the superb viewpoint that established the cause.

When people try to resolve something, they tend to switch over to an issue that they think they can resolve. But that does not lead to a solution. What is the problem? What is the cause behind that problem? You have to reach in to find the real focus of that problem, as a device to generate all ideas. With every problem, an essential part of what caused that problem is visible on the surface, but that is only the tip of the iceberg. If you think you have solved everything from that point, you have not really solved anything.

The finger was already on the trigger.

There is a scene that you often see on TV or read in mystery books: problems piled up, and the finger was already on the trigger. From there it only took a cue to pull the trigger. Examining only what happened the moment the trigger was pulled does not reveal the cause or the solution.

This sort of situation has caused a great number of misunderstandings. One sees only the moment the trigger was pulled. Another knows all of the problems leading to that. Even when two people see the same result, it is extremely difficult to fill the gap between them. One will ask, "Why did you pull the trigger? It couldn't have been that bad." But the other has experienced situations time and again that could have caused the trigger to be pulled. When it all piled up, the result

was that the trigger was pulled, not in anger over the last incident, but more through a feeling of giving up on everything that happened until then.

Scenes like this that have existed through human history are no different from problem solving. In order to find a solution, it is necessary to ask about all the things that piled up before the trigger was pulled and to have an eye to investigate.

Chapter 2

Techniques of discovering

This chapter will discuss the techniques involved in discovering the seedling of an idea.

I. The techniques of observation and perception

Train your eyes and your ears to observe and perceive.

This may seem to have nothing to do with creating ideas, but observation and perception, often simply referred to as insight in the marketing world, are actually techniques. What kind of techniques they are, however, is hardly ever talked about. Since both of them are common concepts, it is difficult to see them as special techniques.

Why do we observe and perceive? Simply speaking, we do it to discover the source of an idea. Everything has a reason.

Deep within lies a history of human emotions, awareness, and action – or desire. For that reason precisely, people who want to create something must respect, look hard and listen carefully to what it all means.

I once heard a story about Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, the world's most prominent educational institute for the fashion industry. When future fashion designers show their designs to their professor, they are persistently asked, "What did you discover in this world, and what inspired you to create this design?" If they cannot answer this question, they are ridiculed with the question, "Are you a genius?" and the professor never even looks at the design. Even in an industry where people seem to be natural artists creating things from their inner sense pay close attention to observation and perception of the world.

Let's say you are planning to open a restaurant. You will probably start by researching similar establishments that have a successful business. Meanwhile, everyone with the same plan is bound to be checking out the same success stories. Copying and simply following what others have been doing will not put

you ahead of them. Besides, someone in the same industry will probably do something similar, based on research. You need to do something different and be successful at it. There must be a reason for a business to be successful. You have to find that reason with your own unique viewpoint, then take the essence and make it into another form, which is not an imitation. If you can do that, you have a chance of competing in the industry.

Standing bars are popular now. Whatever the style -- Japanese, Spanish, or otherwise – they are all filled with customers. They thrive in competitive areas such as in front of train stations. Since you are planning a restaurant, you will probably make a point of going to these to find out why they are so popular. There are many conditions that make them popular, including location, size, and pricing. Of course these are all vital, and you need to obtain as much information as possible. These conditions alone, however, are not why people take action. The essence of service is that there are differences even within the same conditions that help some places survive, while others go under. This is a fact of life. If there are bars in similar locations with similar prices and somehow the standing bars are more crowded, there is a reason why people

prefer to go to standing bars. Let's think about what the root of that preference is. If we can unravel that, it might work as an advantage to the new restaurant plan.

Focus on what makes a standing bar so special. Naturally, the customers are standing. There is a counter. In most cases, the doors and windows are open. Let's observe more carefully.

There are no seats. There is a counter. The door is open. From these three key points, what can you tell about what people are here for? Always remember that there is an inherent reason for everything – for every detail, including the three key points. The design is based on a particular reason that attracts people.

How does not having any seating attract people? Not having any seats means that the relationship between the people are not fixed by their positions. People can stand facing each other, or side-by-side. They can stand diagonally, or in a circle. As time goes by, they can even change positions. This use of space is closely related to the fact that the location is in front of the station. At a standing bar, a businessman can

be relieved of his position within the organization and return to being an individual. He can make new connections. If you listen carefully, you might hear a relaxed conversation taking form.

Meanwhile, in a particular type of pub, people often carrying on conversations that sound much like a continuation of something discussed in the office. This is more likely if they sit at a square table facing each other like in a meeting. Something as basic as the positioning of the people can have great impact – if the positions don't change, neither will the feelings or the conversation. When people run out of common conversation topics, they resort to the only thing that ties them together, which is work. This kind of shoptalk means complaining, but complaining has been treasured because it keeps people together. It's easier to talk negatively than positively, and shoptalk is something everyone can participate in. This is what creates that sort of strange air in a pub. On the other hand, this type of conversation is difficult in a standing bar because the structure of the space there controls the quality of conversation.

Let's observe the counter. A bar always has a counter,

which is used as a device for people to become intimate. The reason why this device functions also has to do with people's positions. A counter creates a relationship where people are facing the same direction. To battle different opinions, you must confront your opponent so it would be best to sit across from each other. However, when you are in agreement, or when there is some sort of sympathy generated, there is no need for confrontation. By facing the same direction, you can have a peaceful conversation. People do not sit at the counter in a standing bar, but they can get food or lean against the counter while they position themselves, and these actions intertwined can create an intimate air.

Now take a close look at the open door and windows. Why are they open in a standing bar? Even if the place is crowded, you can usually still get in a standing bar because there are no tables and seating. In fact, a crowd creates a liveliness that directly adds to a positive atmosphere. One reason for keeping the door and windows open is to advertise the ambience.

Another factor is that the open environment likely has a psychological effect. Having the door open connects to the

outdoors so that there is no clear boundary between "in" and "out." This means that if you arrive late, there is no hesitation in going in. It also makes it easier to excuse yourself and leave early.

When invited to go out, many people hesitate to make a firm commitment of accepting or declining. It's not that they can't go, but they wonder. More than often you hear people use the response, "I'll go if I can." The standing bar is perfect for such situations. With the emergence of mobile phones, arranging a meeting time and place is not necessary any more. When people go out drinking, they don't bother to wait for the whole party to be there. A standing bar is the typical example of such non-committal situations. You can come and go as you please. If you don't find the party interesting, you can leave without feeling guilty. Erasing the boundaries creates a value that allows people to participate more easily and casually.

Those are my three interpretations of a standing bar. It sets people free from the organization and lets them become individuals. Facing the same direction encourages sympathy. Because the threshold is low, people can go in casually. When you can see these objectives through the features of a standing

bar – there are no seats, there is a counter, and the door and windows are always open – at last you can go on to develop a new plan.

Derive a human universality that can evolve into a separate plan.

 There will likely be demands for more spaces where people can be freed from their connections to organizations. People will still have to decide whether to say yes or no to an invitation. What can be done to satisfy those needs? Observation and perception help you to draw out the essence and arrive at human awareness and action. When you start to see the concept, you can finally apply that to something else.

  Here is a story about women's magazines. A few years

ago, women's magazines that were geared toward younger readers suddenly stopped growing. The industry was concerned. Why was this happening? Were women's magazines taking business from each other? Was it because of growing competition from magazines of other genres? The assumed reasons varied, but concentrating only on magazines did not lead to an answer. Some said that it was because of mobile phones. However, although mobile phones are a big trend all over the world, this does not provide an explanation to the sudden drop in sales.

In the example of the standing bar, I pointed out that there is a reason for everything. And as long as there is, the problem can be solved. Here too, observe and perceive what people do. Women's magazines cost 700 to 800 yen. If money was no longer spent on women's magazines, the money was obviously spent elsewhere. Young women used to spend 700 to 800 yen on magazines to obtain information on what was popular. It is hard to believe that the desire suddenly went away, so we should assume that something else took the place of fulfilling this desire.

So the next thought is – where else would they get their information, if not from magazines? Their behavior suggests that they are spending a lot of time going to shops. A few years ago, a new behavior emerged when "fast fashion" became a big trend. It became easier to visit shops, and this gave rise to an intermediate action that was neither buy nor not buy. Merchandise in these fast fashion stores are replaced every two weeks or so, motivating young women to frequent them, where they could now see the latest trends. Their source of information on what is "in" went from the magazines to the storefront. So where did that 700 to 800 yen go? At fast fashion stores, that amount of money could by a T-shirt or an accessory. Instead of paying for a magazine, young women would go to a shop to pick up the latest fashion trends and purchase an item while they were there. This behavior created confusion about the value of women's magazines.

After the fast fashion boom settled, magazines started including small items with brand names engraved as presents, which brought back readership. What does that mean? The counter value changed from information to commodity. Readers who began to get their information from shops started

feeling that it was too expensive to pay 700 to 800 yen for a magazine only to get information. Because of this challenge toward value, the publishers had no choice but to add commodity to information. This was a result of watching the purchasers' behavior and awareness.

Everything has a reason.

The two examples are on the premise that everything has a reason. Let's review the points.

The first point is that behind everything, there are emotions, awareness and behavior. You will find nothing that can be applied elsewhere if you only look at the surface, so you have to fully use all five senses, including conversation and expression. They say that god lives in tiny places because people react sensitively to small things and change their

feelings and actions accordingly. You have to look hard and listen carefully in order to be able to read into that. From there, you need to find the norm of people's emotions and actions.

The second point is that desires that looked like they had disappeared are hiding somewhere or have been replaced by something else. People's desires and their actions based on these desires don't change that quickly or easily. When you are looking for that replacement, it is not enough to look just at a point. You need to take time and carefully observe the environment in which the people live. Then you will be able to see clearly that something has changed.

Put form to strangeness. Strangeness is the awkward power.

The feeling of strangeness is a vital cue that leads to discovery.

When you drink beer at home, one 500ml can is often enough. But if you go to a pub, you can drink many mugs of beer. If you drink three mugs, you are drinking nearly two

liters. Perhaps there are people who drink that much beer at home, but most people don't. The truth is that people drink more at a pub. To think that this is strange is also a technique. The base of discovery is the feeling of strangeness. Without that feeling, you will not reach discovery.

In this case, the question is, "Why do people drink so much beer in a pub?" If you can see that people drink beer using conversations to nibble on, and that the power of beer brings people together to generate discussion, then that is a big discovery.

The feeling of strangeness is built on the awareness and actions of people. When people do something out of the norm, it feels strange. If you don't set that as your base and look only at the marketing data, you probably won't get to discovery. When you feel a limit to quantitative data, you might ask questions like, "What is beer?" or "If there was no beer, what would you drink?" or even, "Imagine beer as a person?" This is postmodern investigation. Getting these answers will only get you the same results, because you are only lining up what you already know. You are missing the plan to find a feeling of

strangeness.

The feeling of strangeness is the awkward power that is not normally there. When you feel it, don't let it pass you by. Focus and define it. It will give you a strong seedling for an idea. When summer comes, maybe there is a song that you really want to hear, or the cup noodles you eat at the beach taste especially good. These things happen because there is something in your memory that stimulates your emotions. Finding what that is leads to discovery, and based on the discovery you expand your imagination to develop an idea.

Experience things yourself and find the awkward.

In Germany, a taxi driver will go 150km/h over the speed limit on the autobahn. But it's not scary. Actually, the faster you go, the safer it feels. Experiencing that lets you know for the first time that certain cars travel more smoothly when they go faster.

It is difficult to come up with an idea based on something someone once said, or how several people responded in a

certain way. Unless it goes through your body once, you don't know if there is a feeling of strangeness there. You have to experience it yourself. When you get an assignment, go there and get experience. Compare it with your prior experiences and see what is different. Look for the awkward.

To give you an extreme argument, I don't think the work-life balance exists in the idea profession. You are thinking 24 hours a day. Whether you are asleep or awake, or eating a meal, somewhere in your head you are thinking about work. It is because you have this awareness of problems that you are able to notice the awkward.

II. The technique of creating a distance

An idea needs distance.

Students and young employees sometimes ask me how to generate ideas. I tell them, "Do all different types of jobs at once." They ask if there any books I read in order to generate ideas, and my answer is, "Any book that has nothing to do with work."

When making a communication plan for a fashion brand, if you only think about fashion or only read about fashion, you will not have a breakthrough. While you are planning something for fashion, also plan something for city construction, motor vehicles, beer, food, and mobile phones as well. That would make the fashion plan broader and bring about a breakthrough.

I once did a concept design for a certain compact car. The plan was to sell it in Paris and Milan. The same type of car was already marketed around the world, so I was initially against adding yet another one. I couldn't see what feature or characteristic that car had, that none of the others did. Still, if they were going to release it anyway, what would the attraction be? I thought about what it would be like if it became popular. I envisioned the way it would be driven through the streets of

Paris or Milan, parked in a square in front of the shops, and so on. Small cars could make up the city itself – they could be part of the city construction. So I decided to create a concept design with the help of an architect.

As a result, the car was a hit. If I had focused only on the car, there would probably not have been a breakthrough. I wouldn't have gone into a different area like architecture, which enabled me to move on to the thought that it was part of the city design. Broadening the idea of what makes an attractive city landscape led to the emergence of a brand new approach.

That is the distance that an idea needs.

Let me introduce another example. There was a pillow that became popular in Australia. It's a regular pillow with only one difference – it has a date printed on it. Pillows are nests for bacteria so they should have a best before date. This idea came about by applying the rules of the food industry to the bedding industry, which is something that is commonly done. Design is probably the key discussion, but the distance

here is too close and there is too much familiarity. You could also try to apply sports apparatus rules to bedding. The key discussion would be the movement of your backbone while sleeping. It sounds like a new approach, but it is imaginable and it will not generate a surprise.

Creative Director Takuma Takasaki from my company, Dentsu, says in his book "Techniques of Expression" that people are surprised before they laugh. He says that in order to stir people's emotions, you need to surprise them. I absolutely agree. This also applies to product and marketing strategy.

When you surprise people, they notice the value. In my opinion, the value of something without surprise or discovery is likely to be ignored. It may as well have no value. Introducing something from a completely different category makes people surprised because of the distance. It is important to think about products from all different categories at the same time. That is why it is important to read something that has nothing to do with work.

III. Technique of scaling the viewpoint

Change your scale of view in order to create distance.
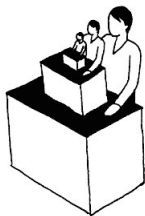
Say the theme is to think about a new car. First you see just one car, and you think it over and over again. You look at all the different parts and you probably still won't come up with an idea. Now zoom out and look at it from a distance. You'll see the parking lot and the buildings nearby. Then you start thinking about what house that car would suit, the family that will drive the car, and when and how the car will be used. Zoom out a little more, and you see the town. What is the town like and through which route will the car be driven? Are the streets narrow or wide? You can imagine which stores to visit and who to meet. Or what kind of restaurant to go to, what kind of clothes to buy, whose exhibition or concert to go to in the car. Perhaps the car will be used to go to school or to the

hospital. Zoom out even more and see the region and the society. Where is it positioned in society? What kind of a society will the car help to make? What role will the car play in the community? If you zoom out further, you will reach a point where you think about what the car means to the country, what it means to Japan.

Compared to the beginning when you were only looking at the car itself, you now are able to look at it from a great many ways. You obtained the opportunity to think about the house and the family; food; fashion; paintings and music; education and medicine; the community and the city; the country; and much more. You have thought about different categories that have nothing to do with cars.

In the video Powers of Ten by Charles Eames, the famous architect and furniture designer, the camera filming a person lying on the grass moves higher and higher. You see the park, then the town, then the city, then the country, then Earth, until finally you reach space. Then the camera comes back down and goes inside the person, and you see cells and DNA. That is my image of changing the scale of your viewpoint.

Move your viewpoint higher and higher and think about its relationship with what you can see at each level. Then move closer and closer and think about the relationship with what is there. Of course there are some things you can't biologically see, so try looking at it through the past, present and future. When you look at something on an axis of time, you think about its existence. By having multiple viewpoints, you will be able to see it in a totally new perspective.

An idea is the diversity of how you look at things.
**The more ways you look at something, the better.**

People who are able to come up with ideas are people who have diverse viewpoints. When you generate an idea that is rich in discoveries, you consider the relationship with other things completely differently. Of course there are other methods that I haven't described here, but it is best not to recklessly think of just everything you can. That will only generate confusion and lead to panic. Panic gets in the way of an idea's depth and broadness, and is unlikely to lead you to a better idea. Being able to switch your perspective at a certain pace

will broaden your viewpoint much more smoothly. Try this method when you think you might be confused or coming to a limit.

To be flowing with ideas and to be able to look at things diversely means that you have that many happy experiences and that many ways of enjoying things. Training to bring about ideas can help you enjoy life in general.

IV. Finding enemies

Actually, enemies are everywhere.
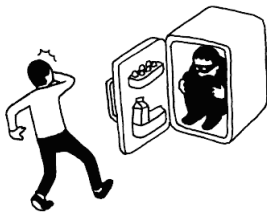
Once you have mastered the basic idea of observation and perception, go back to the flow of the plan.

First you need to understand what your enemies and allies are. In the marketing framework, the closest to this is

threat and opportunity. At a glance, this may look like the SWOT analysis, but in fact, it's not even close. People are forever governed by words. For example, when they hear the word threat, they think about problems that already exist. But is the real enemy that easy to identify? The same goes for the word opportunity – the word is associated with a list of information that has all these good points.

The scary thing about this framework is that people are caught up in that word frame. The act of thinking is honorable because of its broadness and depth. And the act of finding the answer should not be theoretical, but practical. However, if you get caught up in the framework, you end up satisfied only with the theoretical aspect of the words threat or opportunity.

Where is the real enemy? One of the reasons a plan gets stuck is because people do not take the enemy seriously enough. In the backdrop is the lack of understanding people. Needless to say, people do not live only in one market. However, planners sometimes get careless and think that people do live in a certain market.

What planners need to be conscious of is that people are all living in a time called their own life. That means that planners are fighting to take bits and pieces of people's time and space from their lives. This isn't necessarily the market discussed in business manuals.

How would you answer the question, "What is the enemy of e-books?" Is it other existing e-book devices, tablet PCs, or smartphones? These are ordinary enemy concepts, but only an understanding from the spec viewpoint.

What happens when you look at it from the role it plays? You might think of printed books and magazines as enemies. What about the space aspect? Inside a train, email and SNS are also enemies. Psychologically, the latest smartphones and tablet PCs might be the enemy because new cutting-edge models are constantly being released and the e-book is not the most up-to-date. Another psychological enemy is using a device with a single function over multi-functions. Look at it culturally. People don't read as much as they used to, so here again, you have an enemy.

What is the enemy of a robotic vacuum cleaner?

Move your thinking process along like you just did and try identifying the enemy. Other existing vacuum cleaners or a vacuum cleaner with added value and a competitive price? These relate to the spec aspect. Now look at it from the role aspect. You have an enemy called the housecleaning service. Psychologically, there may be a feeling of reluctance that they will not want to do the cleaning any more, and this could make young women feel guilty to admit that they use a robovac. On the cultural level, if housecleaning is considered a duty, it would be considered very wrong to escape one's duty.

Changing your angle from the spec-oriented enemy will help you discover other enemies that you should be looking at. With these two examples, if you only looked at it from the spec aspect, you wouldn't have been able to see the enemy from the other angles. Discovering these enemies can bring about an important social mission – in the case of e-books, the mission became motivating Japanese people to start reading books again. With the robovac, a pet-like nickname was given, creating a cute image of having a pet in the house. That

overcame the psychological enemy. It became entertaining to see how much the pet could accomplish that day, and the mission became to free the Japanese from their cultural sense of duty to do housecleaning.

The way of grasping the enemy changes the grade of a product or service.

Looking only at the spec-based enemy will not get you far. It is quite obvious which moves people, something that embodies a social mission or one that is merely competing with existing devices or equipment. If you only attempt to clear threats mentioned in the SWOT analysis, you will never make it beyond the context of competing with other devices or equipment.

People who see only small enemies are considered small or insignificant themselves. People who deal with large enemies are viewed upon as being a person of significant caliber.

The obstacles created by this framework may be the reason why it is difficult for Japanese products to escape being

just one of many existing devices or equipment competing on the market, or to be stuck in the on-going competition of making miniscule differences or changes to the product.

New products and new services are not originally planned with such a narrow view. Somewhere, the intention and direction get lost, and in the end the awareness is lost. Perhaps the people who should be generating the ideas have gone around to the side that is tying them down.

V. Finding allies

People who generate ideas are your biggest fans.

Now look for the ally. Here, the ally is the opposite of the enemy described earlier. The ally is the good part. Think about how to find the good in things.

This is often overlooked, but it is the most vital point in generating an idea. In order to create an idea, you have to become the target's biggest supporter and biggest fan.

However, here too, there is the framework trap. If you try to fulfill only what the SWOT analysis calls strength and opportunity, you will end up only with a list of good points that everyone agrees with. As a result, you can only have a spec-based view and will miss the good points from other aspects, making you think that the target is not really that good, or that the spec isn't good enough so you rush to make it better. Then you will develop an attitude with the illusion that the target is not what it's supposed to be, but you could improve it if you could only raise the specs. This is not a good approach.

A fan should always praise the target at its highest and give it an overrating. Find everything good to say about it, and more, and afterwards use your calm judgment and question if it was really okay to praise it that much.

This is another obstacle in the framework mentioned earlier – looking at the target calmly and objectively, or even

too coolly, failing to go through the process of finding the good about it passionately.

Overrating the target as much as you can and bringing out its potentials to their fullest from all different angles is actually very hard work. If you don't have a strong feeling and love for the target, your pursuit will be weak. People who come up with ideas are not analysts or commentators; they should be a diehard fan and bring out all of the good parts thoroughly.

Of course, objectivity is important; but in order to bring out the good in something you must be subjective.

For example, let's take the idea I discussed in the first chapter, about saving a rundown spa resort.

It is rundown, so obviously there are various bad points about it. It is far from the city center. It seems outdated. It doesn't have anything to attract people. But as its biggest fan, the attitude you should have is: "There are many issues, but this spa resort has a potential to change the world."

This rundown, quiet community could be the world's best place for people to retire. Or it could be the world's best place for expecting mothers to spend their time relaxing. The surrounding untouched nature could be a wonderful place where children who grew up in the sterile environment of the city can recharge their power to live.

With such a broad approach, all kinds of ideas will start to emerge. If you don't go that far, if you only think within the framework of strengths and opportunities, ideas will not expand. To plan something means the planner must love the target to death and spread the goodness about it to the world with determination.

I have worked with a lot of local municipalities across Japan. Many of these assignments involved reviving the community, with the main task of making those places enticing to tourists. However, most of the time, in the midst of discussions, someone would point out that there are no tourist attractions, there isn't an amusement park or a famous person's house of birth or a memorial monument, or there is nothing

particularly characteristic.

When the discussion goes there, you should never believe in a person or a suggestion that says, "So let's build something new." There are too many should-not-have facilities that were built that way. Of course, not all of them are should-not-haves if you look at them objectively as facilities, but if you make something that does not suit the feeling of the community, it is not going to be used. That is why suggestions to build something new should be turned down.

I once planned and organized a music event as a means to revive a rural town. It attracted a considerable number of people and, being young as I was, I was satisfied with the fact that I created an event there and lots of people came and had fun. However, it did not last long. As if that event was a temporary state of mind, it eventually ceased to exist. Creating something that isn't part of the DNA of that community will not last long. If it isn't rooted in the local area, the local people will find it difficult to love and understand. And if it's not embraced from within, it cannot be a drawing force that attracts people from the outside.

When I did a job for a certain apparel company, I made a bossy suggestion that the brand had to be a certain way. At the time, I thought that it was the correct suggestion based on verification. The client's response was: "This is a very attractive, nice proposal. However, this is not our brand. If our shop staff cannot embody the concept, it will not work." Again, I was reminded that pursuing something that is not in the DNA will not generate an effect.

People on the planning side sometimes only think about what happens at the time of that event. However, companies go on. Communities carry on. The lives of the people who live there go on. It is obvious, but that is precisely why it is imperative to pursue something that can be accumulated as a legacy, something that can live on without being a psychological burden.

**Don't look for something that is not here.
Shed a light on what already exists.**
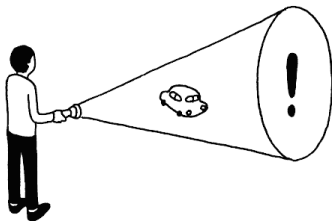
So what needs to be done? If you want to attract tourists, you need something that the local people agree with, something that is in unison with what they are proud of. And that is what will ultimately lead to hospitality. It has to be something that the local people think is good. The fact that they have lived there for a long time means there must be a good reason.

The answer is in the people who live there.

What people living in a rural area consider precious could be something seemingly ordinary like carrying eggs in the sunrise, or having a chat while walking on dark country roads. It might be nothing but daily routine, but still, it is something they consider precious. These ordinary events in

daily life are what draws people. That is where the light needs to be shed.

The reason why certain local towns are becoming popular recently is because more people are seeing things this way. Clearly communicating what the local people find precious will create a unique value that can only be found there. Spending the same daily routine with the local people provides a special experience for visitors. Such hands-on tours are emerging now, and they also contribute to rejuvenating rural areas.

Anything can be an element to attract people. We should carefully discover these things and shed light on them in an appropriate way.

A suggestion to build something new is nothing but a denial of the circumstance in which the target presently exists, and it also denies the past. Therefore, it will never become something that will have any impact on people's future. You must pay the greatest respects to the target and as its biggest fan, continue to search for the good in it with an open heart. A

mayor once said to me that his town is not attractive because it is full of small alleys. I told him that these alleys are part of Japanese culture and they make it fun to stroll around and discover little things, and I suggested promoting the town as "Japan's most fun place to stroll." If a town has many hills, number each one and call them "Health Hills." Create a storyline that suggests climbing a certain number of them is good for your health. If an area gets a lot of rain, you can get the whole town involved in thinking about how it is an ideal place for reading.

Disadvantages actually have the power to attract.

A well-known architect once said to me that he looks for places that have bad conditions. He said that it is difficult to build something attractive on a perfectly square lot of land. Land that is full of disadvantages is actually "has character." He said that he feels challenged to come up with ideas on how to take advantage of the disadvantages, and eventually he could create something good.

I completely agree with this idea. Having a disadvantage

means that it has great potential and a unique character that becomes an advantage if you look at it from a different point of view. However, in the aforementioned SWOT analysis framework, advantages and disadvantages are listed on complete opposite sides. Being rundown is only considered a weakness and is not listed under strengths. But there is an attraction to being rundown too, and that is where the planning should start. The SWOT analysis, however, provides no room to find the potential that a disadvantage could have.

Going off the topic, taking advantage of disadvantages also works for people. You can see a person as being lazy or easy-going – it depends on the circumstances or, more specifically, how you look at it. If you only look at a characteristic as being bad, you will not be able to notice the real attractions. If someone says there are no attractive people around, it is because that person does not have the ability to find the good things in people. If a person has the ability, then that person will feel surrounded by attractive people, even under the same circumstances, and life becomes richer.

In this section, I used local municipalities and

architecture as examples, but the same things apply to goods and services as well. The answer lies within the target. The challenge is how much of an eye do you have to make it as positive as it can be? So if you are going to plan something, think about how you can become the biggest fan of the target and overrate it to the fullest, and how you are going to shed light on that target so you can lift it up as something that will change the world.

Chapter 3

Techniques of conversion

This chapter will discuss the techniques that illustrate the axis of new values.

I. Converting the issue – agenda setting

Take charge.

    Chapters 1 and 2 discussed how to find the seedlings of an idea. Chapter 3 and 4 will be about how to give form to an idea.

    Agenda setting is a term used in American politics. If you are a party member or a candidate discussing issues, agenda setting is a method that makes the debate most

beneficial for you. If you find that your theory is losing clarity during a debate, you can use this method to divert the discussion to a field about which you are more knowledgeable.

Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi was extremely good at this, as we saw when he coined the phrase postal election. The world of politics is filled with complicated problems. In foreign affairs, education, welfare, and medical issues, for example, politicians tell voters how they intend to tackle problems based on their views. Candidates seek the public's response and in turn the public decides who to support. There are so many things that we as voters must consider.

However, not all voters are knowledgeable about politics. Not all of the detailed information in every field is available. Sensing that a clear criterion would make it easier to choose a candidate, Mr. Koizumi created the phrase postal election.

Of course, elections are not that easy. There are many issues. However, he was very clever at establishing a point of focus, bringing attention to a certain axis. In time, the phrase penetrated throughout the country and set the mood for voters to make their choices based on the single theme of postal reform. As a result, Mr. Koizumi created a situation that was

advantageous to him and he won by a landslide.

The more complicated the situation is, the more effective agenda setting becomes.

Usually, a simple phrase like postal election would only make people say, "What is he saying? It doesn't work that way." Suggesting something that people are not asking for often has no meaning. But this time, that wasn't the case.

The more complicated a situation is and the more confused people are, a clearer criterion is required and works effectively. In that sense, Mr. Koizumi created a win-win relationship with the voters. Coining the phrase was indeed very clever, but if he observed and understood that the people were confused and needed a clear direction, he was exceptionally good in strategizing.

This methodology is not limited to the world of politics. In any world today, the lack of a clear criterion is due to the over-abundance of information and interests. This method is effective in sending out something meaningful to the world and communicating its value to the people.

A perfect example is the beer industry. When the entire beer industry was leaning too far towards the subjective value, depth and flavor, and the consumers became confused, they introduced another criterion – freshness. It was easy for consumers to choose a beer based on how well its freshness was controlled, rather than trying to base their decision on intricate flavors that had become difficult to tell apart. The fact that freshness is a word used for the food industry and was not originally a concept in the beer industry also showed an excellent example of creating distance as discussed in Chapter 2.

Another example is in the automobile industry. There were so many values that were difficult to understand unless you were interested in information such as flexibility or maneuverability. Adding safety features as a selection criteria made choosing a car a whole lot easier.

You must determine what decision criteria should be presented in order to move people, but first you need to ascertain the existing competition axis. If the axis is still effective, you will likely find yourself in a head-on battle to differentiate what you have from others. If the axis is unclear, the method explained above would be effective.

The axis of competition is determined by your perspective on people.

The axis is not clear when, as mentioned in the two earlier examples, the competition becomes fierce and moves into an expert area. Thinking only about the competition will cause you to neglect the general public, which is something you must sincerely come to terms with. You need to regain the perspective of an average person.

When a senior colleague of mine made a presentation to a bank, he asked the bankers to listen to him not as bankers, but as fathers and husbands – as individual human beings. Because the bank was caught up in competing over details, it became difficult for the average person to understand the services offered. The bankers needed to go back and rethink things by looking at the situation through the average person's eyes. This applies to everybody. If you get too wrapped up in your work, you start thinking that your business is moving the whole world, but that is an illusion. No matter how fierce you have to compete to increase your market share, you will lose sight of what is important if you only look at your competition.

Not everyone in the world knows your business well, is

interested, or is even paying attention. That is precisely why it is important to admit that what you are presenting has reached a point where it is no longer comprehensible to the average person, and to re-create a competition axis, or a selection axis for the consumer, that is simple and easy to understand.

This selection axis becomes the new criterion after differences have been eliminated, and here you need the sympathy of the people. This means that if you say, "Let's talk about this today," people will follow you. Before Mr. Koizumi came up with the phrase postal election, he told the public that he would "smash the LDP" and "rebuild Japan." So people associated and accepted his postal reform proposal as a symbol of rebuilding this country that had come to a standstill.

In the course of agenda setting, we must be careful that we don't end up just singing our own praises. That will not encourage a change in the point in question. Look through the average person's eyes and perceive their view on life, and find what people are seeking as the symbol of the new age. That could be your selection axis.

II. Converting values

**When a new age comes,
the significance of existence changes.**
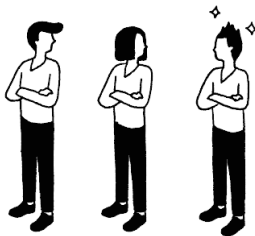
When times change, the values of people who live in those times change. When people's values change, the meaning of existence of goods people demand changes. We all know very well that trends change all the time. For something to continue being popular, the significance of its existence must change with the times. Still, something that once went well is remembered for its success. Changing the meaning of an existence means denying it. While it is very difficult, it is a necessary process in order to capture the hearts of the people.

Take the example of Japanese zoos.

In Chapter 1 I discussed the revitalization of the zoo in

New York. Today, zoos all over the world are struggling to find how to revitalize, and zoos in Japan are no exception. People do not visit anymore because television and DVDs offer excellent coverage and quality content that are lowering the value of direct interaction with animals at zoos. This is a serious problem.

If a zoo is a place just to look at animals, it cannot compete against TV shows and DVDs. The challenge for zoos today is to move away from just being a showcase.

Some zoos have succeeded in attracting people. So what have they done?

When an animal in a zoo gets sick or injured, it is taken away and replaced by a sign that says, "This animal is sick," or "This animal is injured." Everyone must have experienced disappointment when you go to the zoo and your favorite animal is not there. This is symbolic of how animals are regarded only as something to "look at" so they always have to be 100% healthy.

However, it is natural for animals to get sick or injured. They heal with the help of their family and friends and go on living. Then they get sick or hurt again and in the end become weak and die. That is the law of nature.

Successful zoos accepted this law of nature and realized that zoos should provide an educational opportunity for people to see animals growing old or sick and to learn about death. Rather than maintaining iconic perfection, the zoos decided to show everything about life without disturbing the law of nature to the best of their ability. The staged show house was transformed into a documentary site.

The age of nuclear families has made this even more valuable. In the past, it was common for families to have elderly members, such as grandparents, living together under the same roof. Children learned about people growing old and weak, about helping each other, and they learned to respect life as they saw the elderly live out a full and happy life to the end. This opportunity is now declining at an overwhelming rate.

Compared to the age when information was not readily available, the significance of having a zoo is obviously different now. Dwelling on how it was in the past will not help zoos overcome recession. Focusing on the present will bring about change and transform zoos as an attractive destination. The zoos that successfully transformed themselves also became a symbol of the new age, which is imperative to make the transition.

Art museums that are recently successful have also adopted changes. With the progress in information communication and the accessibility of art though various media, the past existence of art museums that depended on exhibits alone is not enough. Many museums are now offering hands-on experience, and many are also organizing more workshops. What should be noted is that these museums are designed to be complete only with the actual presence of the people there.

The museums present two types of artwork. One is the type of work that becomes complete with the involvement of people, whether they are there to look or to participate. The other depends on season, time, or weather. This type allows the viewer to notice a value that can only be appreciated in the time or environment that it is seen, and helps people notice everyday beauty.

There was a time when art experiences referred to event-oriented presentations like action painting. But today it means being inspired by understanding the significance of being in front of a piece of work, and this is what attracts the people. This too, is a change in the meaning of existence in accordance with the times.

III. Converting action

In order to change action, shift its purpose.

The zoos and art museums were examples of how to change the meaning of existence to suit the current times and how to transform the target into a new existence.

Meanwhile, in some cases it is necessary to change people's actions. If the significance of an action has reached its limits or is no longer up to date, we need to think again about what makes an action significant today and create a situation that will increase that action.

For example, take the act of donating. How can we change this so that more people will participate and more money can be moved, leading to a bigger social movement? This is becoming a big topic of discussion lately. *Noblesse oblige* is a French phrase that literally means *nobility obliges*. As the phrase suggests, in some countries, it is part of the culture for people with larger assets to donate money. However,

all over the world people are not always willing to donate and the solution is still under development. The act of donating still has limitations. People are animals whose behavior is based on fulfilling their desires, and there is a limit to acting purely out of the goodness of one's heart. That is probably the bottom line. So how can this be changed?

Converting action means creating a different desire.

If there is a limit to goodwill, the purpose which is to express goodwill needs to be changed. Change the purpose to satisfying your own desire. What kind of desire would be appropriate? In Chapter 2 I talked about creating distance. If you think about a desire that is far from the noble spirit of goodwill, a desire that is in a way very crass, you might find the answer.

This is something that happened in Hollywood several years ago. Celebrities killed their presence on the Internet. They stopped updating their Twitter and Facebook accounts. People who always looked forward to their postings would have to put up money for those celebrities to be resurrected and write posts on the SNS again. The value of donation was

switched to fulfilling the desire for gossip in what the celebrities had to write. This is an extremely pragmatic and crass desire. The original spirit associated with the act of donating just doesn't exist. But sometimes it is necessary to be rational and forget about those people with a noble spirit. When the target is shifted to the majority of people without that spirit, it makes sense to appeal to the desire that is far removed from that noble spirit.   As a result, a large sum of money was collected.

The motive of the action changed, so perhaps it became something that could not be called a donation. However, the fund-raiser was successful without depending on goods, and since the driving force was the celebrities who endorsed it, we should accept the value shift. In fact, this could become a big global movement.

Another recent social issue is raising the electoral voting rate. Young people have been drifting away from politics for a long time. In Japan, people are always easy to give up on politics, so putting an end to the declining voting rate is not an easy task. But since this is a serious issue that could lead to a national crisis, let's think about how to change the act of

voting. To make a change, first we must admit that there is a limit to participating in politics, and then we must decide what to do. Earlier I said that in order to change an action, you need to change its purpose and find a different desire. Let's proceed under that premise.

The polling station is usually a place that is easy for the residents in the community to access, such as an elementary school. People can reach the venue easily on foot. What if we focused on the value of that venue to create a different desire?

One idea is to make it a venue for an elementary school reunion. You hardly ever see the people you knew from elementary school, but Facebook has instigated many school reunions. A polling station in the neighborhood would be an easy place for elementary school alumni to gather. Instead of just writing a name on a piece of paper and then leaving the polling station, it would be more appealing if you could have fun afterwards. We all look forward to reunions but once they happen, they're not always fun because you don't have the same interests anymore. When you've spent a completely different time for so long, that can't be helped. So what do people do? Like I mentioned with the pub, when people don't have much in common, they try to connect by complaining. They

will likely have conversations about all kinds of topics. Then something would tie into that day's elections and lead the discussion to politics. The entrance could be something to look forward to, with politics being the exit as a result. If you turn the act of voting into a reunion, it might work out.

If you position people's desires at the base – such as the desire to get together with other people, to play in the elementary school playground, or to change the way to spend your day off – the very meaning of the action shifts and voting could turn voting into a fun experience. Verbally declaring to make a change will not change people's behavior. You must change the purpose, and in order to do that, you have to establish a different desire. The further away the desire is from the original action, the more power it has to change a fixed action, even if you could be criticized for changing the original intention and significance. In fact, it could help produce ideas that may be considered unrealistic, as in the example above. All the examples I presented intentionally illustrate extreme ways of thinking in order to examine how ideas can be expanded. But when the significance of eliciting a change of action is far greater than not acting out of noble reasons or intentions, it

should be considered as a way to broaden your thoughts and ideas.

IV. Converting presence

When you let something go, something new is born.

In business, we have what is called the period of structural conversion. There are lots of examples such as when business structures or systems are fatigued, or when there is a problem in the cycle of products or services. Among them, the most difficult case is when one's presence is slowly fading away. It is not that the intentions of the company are not properly communicated to the public nor that there is a misunderstanding between the company and the consumers. Its presence just doesn't leave any impression in people's minds. The problem lies not with the supplier but with the consumers who offset demand.

A change in the public's awareness causes the foundation

beneath to crumble and sink.

The most frightening thing for a company is to sink slowly without clearly seeing the problem. This of course is an issue that requires an integral solution, beginning with the company's value of existence, the business structure, and the composition of products and services. But the company also must avoid becoming so overwhelmed by the incredible work-load that it cannot move even a step. In a situation like this, take a different viewpoint by changing the presence and you may see what actions need to be taken. In the earlier examples of donating and voting, the desire that was not increasing was replaced with a totally different one. Here, I will talk about approaches that can shed light on fading desires and make them tangible again.

This is about a European band that just released a new album. They did not release a CD, but instead released the music scores.

It was a brilliant idea. The music industry is in a big transition stage. Packaged media does not sell anymore, CD sales have declined drastically, and sales from downloads have not reached the expected level. People go to online video sites

to check any music that gets their attention. The music industry feels they can no longer rely on selling music to make a profit and has shifted their focus on sales from live event tickets and merchandising. It was on the news a few years ago that half of Madonna's sales were from live events, but now the share is much greater and will likely become her main source of income. Releasing new music has become a means to promote live events, which is the complete opposite from the past. This is the environment that produced the idea of releasing the music score instead of a CD.

When a popular band releases score sheets instead of a CD, people try playing the music because they wonder what it sounds like. Some people might upload it to YouTube. As more uploads appear, naturally there will be people who play well and everyone will be able to hear a decent version of the music. In a while, they will want to know how the real thing sounds, and they will go to the band's concert to find out. This is a very effective way to generate expectations for a live event.

Still more, people will discover that even if someone can perform well, they are never going to be as good as the

actual musicians. They will understand what it means to be an artist, and what makes them different from someone who just plays well. As a result, this will raise the status of artists.

In a situation where the style of sales and the structure of business had to be changed, this idea demonstrated how it could be done without force but by moving naturally alongside people's desires. The changing times always come with a demand for businesses to transform. In making that transition, you don't want to lose the support and sympathy of the people. To do that, it is effective to take the initiative and make a daring switch – in other words, creating a situation where something feels missing and linking it to a new action.

If something is missing, and that is an extension of what people support, it creates a desire. When that happens, the situation in which something is missing will make people realize once again the true value of whatever that was. Even if the presence is fading and the existence of the business itself seems difficult, try thinking about it this way:

What if movie theaters disappeared from your life?
What if bowling alleys disappeared from your life?

What if tailors disappeared from your life?

When something disappears, people realize exactly how important it was to them and become aware of its existence again. And when it is presented in a modern way but with the same values intact, people will consciously develop a sense of love or attachment to it.

V. Converting the role

Converting the role means to search for a way to coexist without frontal confrontation.
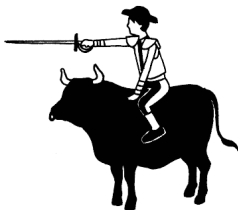
Say a certain business exists and another business that has the power to blow it away appears. As a result, there are times when the existing business has no choice but to change its role. Imagine a situation where a local shopping street is faced with the opening of a large commercial facility backed

by huge capital in a nearby location. This is a matter of life and death for the small businesses, as demonstrated by "shutter streets" turning up all over the country. The power of scale benefit is difficult to compete against. So what can be done to survive?

Let's think about reviving the local electrical appliance store, which is naturally facing this same problem. When a large-scale electrical appliance department store opens nearby, there is no way a small local store can compete by continuing to do business as usual.

Review everything that can be done and abstract it.

In Chapter 2 I talked about excavating the ally and its advantages. I also talked about how disadvantages can be changed into allies to become beneficial. Let's begin there.

What are things that a small local electrical appliance store can do that a huge electrical appliance department store cannot?

For one, there is the network established with the local community. The small shop knows the history of the

community and understands local conditions. They can find out the interests and concerns of the local people and various events in their lives that are special occasions. They can even be part of those events. They know the history and family structure of each household. Some of the shop owners know people's hobbies and tastes. They can gain information on a daily basis, and learn the changes people are going through in their lives. They have the physical face-to-face contact and are welcomed into people's homes.

You can see that a small shop has many capabilities other than just selling products. Let's use abstraction to interpret this point.

[Neighbor Power] The power of subtly collecting important information by being close at hand and the power of being relied on when something happens
[Boundary Power] The power of having nearby business opportunities beyond the limited market of electrical appliances.

Let's see what possibilities there are if we use these two powers.

Neighbor power can be something like an intelligence agency that conducts ethnography, investigating the underlying values and desires from the daily behavior of consumers. By grasping the characteristics that are unique to the community in every aspect of the necessities of life, it can provide necessary information as a research agency to manufacturers when they develop new products or for sales development. In doing so, the business can tie up with the manufacturer and turn their role into something valuable that is not just sales. Big stores can make people feel anxious or intimidated because it is not possible for an average individual to know every bit of information about electrical appliances that continually change. Using the advantages of neighbor power, the small business owner can accompany a local resident to the electrical appliance department store as an agent to draw out the best deal. In this case, the amount the consumer saves could result in a service fee.

What happens when boundary power is used? The electrical appliance industry does more than just sell electrical products. They have already gone into industries that didn't exist before, creating a completely new competitive environment. It's a complicated environment, where automobile,

housing, and various other industries see the electrical appliance industry as both an ally and an enemy. If the small local electrical appliance store uses its boundary power, it can approach the edges that touch on electricity where boundaries are not clear-cut, selling things like EVs, solar panels, smart houses, and security services. This is a new sales capability in itself. If you think further, small stores could assist people to think about their use of electricity and re-evaluate their contract with the power company. This would broaden the role of a small shop to go beyond selling appliances and help keep track of the overall energy usage in a household.

When you draw out the capabilities and think flatly along the two powers abstracted, you can see that it is possible to change roles to provide services such as research, agent, new business, or energy management.

To change the role does not necessarily mean being forced to move into a new field. It is using the capabilities that already exist and changing the destination. Boundaries between industries are much fuzzier than they used to be. This can be said for any industry, not just electrical appliances. The industrial structure itself has been forced to change, so this is

the situation all around. There is absolutely no need for the destination of the capabilities to be confined to existing territories. Look at the world without being bound by the way things were or conventional customs, and focus on genuinely exerting your capabilities. That is precisely the act that will bring about change.

VI. Changing the layer of battle

Amidst a whole lot of competition, it is sometimes difficult stand out no matter how hard you try to differentiate yourself from others. An effective way to overcome this is switching over to another layer. There are many ways to do this, so let's look at some examples of different businesses.

(a) Go one notch higher

Here is an effective method to use when the competition is complicated and differentiation alone will not get you anywhere because the market is too close to another.

Take the education industry. The competition is fierce,

with cram schools becoming fractionalized and in a state of confusion. They offer individual classes that border on one-on-one instruction, correspondence courses, home tutoring, and so on. It doesn't make sense just to look individually at the different markets offering individual classes or correspondence courses. When you think you've found a way to offer differentiation and be successful in a given market, you might find a different cram school already competing there. On a different axis, you might run into other tutors. This type of confused market exists in many other areas, too. What were separate markets in the past have started to grow closer in distance and are now part of a mini-universe. So an attempt to differentiate actually causes assimilation with another market, which makes the situation very confusing.

It is not enough to simply change your axis of value. You need to change your place of battle. This is the method of moving up one notch. You need to get out of that mini-universe. If you offer individual classes, use the one-on-one mechanism and become the first place parents come for consultation. Parents often find it hard to decide whether to choose a cram school, a tutor, or a correspondence course for their children. In a confused market, it is natural for the customer

to be confused. Pointing out the small differences between the individual markets will not help them to decide. So be the first person they can consult. Turn it into a consultation about how to choose the best education method: a combination of cram school and correspondence course, or perhaps just home tutoring. By gaining their trust and starting a relationship, you cannot only provide education to the children, but also add value by discussing education with the parents.

This is the style of battle where you change the layer and move up a notch. By using this style you can gain your position as the first counselor and be able to relay the good aspects of one-on-one instruction. By moving up a notch you can avoid excessive competition and create a new business opportunity at the same time. If you use a positioning map to understand the competitive scene and consider your next move, you might not be able to escape the confusion. Move away from that and replace both the horizontal and vertical axis with something different.

 Debating about the axis is dangerous because the objectivity makes you base your structure on facts and takes you into a debate about the market or the business. That makes it even

more difficult to escape the confusion. The key to escape is to position yourself where you can see the debate from a completely different viewpoint – stand where you should be, stand closest to daily life, stand closest to desires. Then you can move a little bit away from the business and get closer to the people. In this case, you move from the education industry and get closer to the consulting business. By moving up one notch, you can create that distance.

(b) Make it a separate category
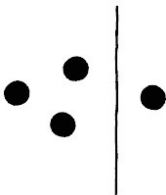
The second method to changing the layer of battle is making it look like a different category. Rather than something like the confused state of the industry previously discussed, this would be more effective when assimilation within a market is severe. When goods and services of a certain category are introduced, it is easy to see what makes them different. However, the more mature they become, the harder it

is for consumers to recognize those differences, even if it is crystal clear to the industry.

It is not uncommon that differences that are obvious to the industry are so minimal to the general public that they hardly notice. So if an average consumer can tell the difference, you need to at least create another variety or another category. How can that be done?

Take a look at Internet food shopping. The category is no longer new and all the companies now offer similar services. The differences are becoming hard to recognize. There is fresh produce delivered directly from farmers, and every company has an abundant selection of food supplies. The method of selecting and ordering are properly in place, and the interface is in order.

Say that Company A does their harvesting after they receive an order. But people are naturally trapped by words. If the description for Company A is simply Internet food sales, consumers perceive the company simply as one of many who are all listed under the same title, an online supermarket. It is difficult to see what makes them different. So we will make a new category with a different concept using different words to

help the consumer clearly create a different image and find a different place to be.

Internet food sales is a distribution business. But if the harvesting is done after an order is received, it is not just any delivery business. It is a new form of business categorized as an ordering service because the harvesting is done after the order comes in, to ensure the delivery of produce that is fresh and delicious. This puts Company A into a separate category from the other Internet delivery services. Company A is a service provided through ordering, and the difference becomes apparent to the general public.

As demonstrated here, in order to make it a new category, you need to draw a clear line. The stronger that line is, the more the company will stand out and make the other companies all look the same. Other firms must be doing all sorts of things to show how different they are too, but without the bold line of a separate category, the difference is hard to see.

(c) Change the style

This method is useful when there is a time axis to the competition. It is not only about the direct competition between individual products or services. The products or services are continually updated and it becomes an all-out competition stretching over a long span of time. For a one-on-one competition, the above methods (a) or (b) may work, but when continuity is involved, you need to shift your focus on how to compete over an entire progression.

I was once involved in the product development for mobile phones. Every time a device changed, it needed development. Each time, I would think about what new product and features the world would accept. The planning process actually starts much earlier, so I had to imagine what sort of thing people would want in several years.

Back then, each time a new mobile phone was released, the focus of competition was the device itself. Each time an eye-catching spec would be featured: "Now the device comes with this feature," or "Now you can do this." When the market was developing, that was the right way to do it because each time, something completely different was introduced. A new model coming onto the market had impact. It was effective

in getting people to frequently replace their current mobile phones with a new model.

In time, however, the battle drastically changed. The make-up of phones changed. There was a transformation from stock to flow. The new flow involved the mobile phone to gradually evolve instead of being a finished product. It could be considered more like purchasing a big frame where the services within continues to change. Instead of buying a product, people would buy one process of the evolution of a mobile phone.

Under such circumstances, competing with an individual product was not enough to survive. Between products that were competing with points or with a line that represents a flow, it is obvious which will get ahead. When you consider the costs of development and marketing involved each time for a new product, there has to be a more efficient way to compete. This triggered the change from stock to flow.

Changing the make-up from stock to flow is not about which is better.

In the world of magazines, one method of putting together a magazine is to set a target based on certain criteria such as age group and create content that appeals to that

target, while another method is to grow with the readers and gradually change the level of content. The first method accepts the premise that current readers are going to drift away after a few years, but they can be replaced by new readers so efforts should be made to capture them. Meanwhile, in the latter method the readers will continue buying the magazine, so the content will be aligned with their personal changes and the changing times.

Whether to stay or to go on, all depends on the situation. It is not about which is more advantageous. In the competitive environment, it is all about deciding which would help you gain the upper hand in that given moment.

VII. Marketing in a place where there is no marketing

There actually are many places where there is no marketing.
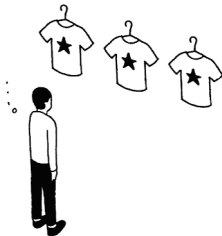
This is about a change that mainly has to do with product development. In the world of finance, there are sectors that have no marketing. For example, the markets for the elderly, the pregnant, or infants have always been considered special markets where this tendency is stronger. Because these markets have a distinctive quality, there are limited players and there may be an absence of a national brand. As a result, the choices are very limited for the consumer and people likely end up being forced to endure various obstacles such as high cost, a limited lineup, and unattractive designs, to name a few. Marketing is a mechanism where the consumer makes things move. If you look hard enough, you will find that the area with no marketing is quite large.

When developing a new product that is going to be introduced in a new market, you need to consider whether people there want a new company to come. However, this viewpoint is often overlooked, and companies are more inclined to move into the market for selfish reasons like "We can make a fortune in this market," or "We can leverage our strengths in this market." However, if the people don't want you, there is no reason to be there. This is how new proposals that come from "new project planning divisions" in many companies end up

being forced to withdraw from the market in an unusually short period of time. It was nothing more than an invasion.

Do the people there want you?

Is your move not considered an invasion?

Are you welcome?

Bringing marketing into a place where there is no marketing means whether or not you can become a presence that can provide people with the products and services they desire and have long been waiting for but were missing. Only when you can do that will your presence be welcomed and accepted, and not considered an invasion.

I once was involved in the product development of residential equipment for the elderly. It was for a national brand that was moving into a new market. At the time, products

aimed for the elderly were overpriced and the design was never good – typical for special markets. By attaching the word silver, you get the impression that it is different from the regular market. The entire industry was affected by that word.

If the equipment was for anyone with weakened muscles, it could be useful for the average person to use as well, especially when they were not feeling well. There was no need to look at it as a special market, so I started by redefining the elderly and helped to create products that had a good design and bright colors, while making sure not to comprise the specialized specifications. As a result, a single line of products grew to become a whole department. The reason it made so much progress was strictly because those products were something that the people in that particular market wanted. A change was made in a market where existing goods alone were not sufficiently beneficial.

Although there are much fewer markets today where there is no marketing, there are still some possibilities like bringing quality brands to the maternity market, or sports brands to the labor uniform market. In the former case, quality brands can change the value of maternity clothing and generate

a mood across the entire society to regard it as something very precious. In the latter suggestion, the change in value could make an enormous contribution to building self-esteem among manual laborers.

Bringing marketing into places where there is no marketing is very worthwhile, because not only does it generate a big business impact, but it can directly lead to making people happy, whether it has to do with functions, design, or self-esteem.

Chapter 4

Techniques of actualizing

This chapter will discuss the techniques involved in creating forms that the world will understand.

I. Knowing the concept

The concept is the reason it must exist.

There are many kinds of concepts – product concept, communication concept, PR concept, and so on. However, concepts are generally very hard to grasp so if it is too broad, it can become confusing. Here, I will focus on product concept because that is the most common and easiest to understand.

I am asked to participate in many different product development projects, and I have contributed to making

various products such as: tea, coffee, juice, beer, wine, pasta, noodles, salad dressing, cooking oil, dietary supplements, shampoo, cosmetics, mobile phones, televisions, music players, kitchens, unit baths, bicycles… you name it. But even with the variety of segments, the workflow is not that different. This is what it usually looks like.

Think about what part of the market to target.

↓

Come up with a concept.

↓

Identify the functions.

↓

Create the design.

↓

Name the product.

↓

Outline the method of sales.

↓

Develop the advertising communication plan.

Of these, concept is the most important because the

function, content, design, method of sales, and advertising expressions are all based on concept. The concept is the core part of product making.

There are many ways to describe a concept, whether it be the way of thinking, the approach, design, and so on. An Internet dictionary gives the definition, "A basic notion formed in the mind that is the foundation of thinking activity," which doesn't make sense.

A concept is "the reason that the product must exist." It is meaningless to make a product that nobody cares about or that will disappear from the market in no time. I want people to love the products that I make forever, so I continuously think about why that product really must exist.

When I'm working on product development, I some-times meet people who think, "It would be good if we can sell about this much," or "If the brand is about this big, that's okay." But not a single product will sell based on that kind of thinking. The act of buying something is none other than the buyer's self-expression. People choose a certain brand because they want to be enveloped in the world of that brand. People are not going to purchase a brand that only needs to "sell so much" or "be so big" because they cannot fulfill the

need for self-expression. Such products will quickly vanish from the market. Because there are so many products available on the market today, it is important to be particular about the reason a product must exist.

This can also be said for services, events, and communication as a whole. Think about why something must exist.

It also must be something that people will continue to support.

In the case of the empty house burglaries mentioned in Chapter 1, someone may have understood that there needed to be more people on watch, but they may not have been able to see further and come up with the idea of planting flowers. The more common and direct solution would be to add more surveillance cameras or patrol cars. As a thinking process, this is okay; but it should be followed by re-evaluating the criteria: Is a community full of surveillance cameras and patrol cars attractive? This is precisely what it means to consider whether or not it is something that people will continuously support. Some things that look good in a system may not capture people's hearts.

In this case of searching for a concrete measure to solve

the problem, it was necessary to think whether or not it would make the town an attractive place and not to stray from that. With that focus, when your idea broadened to people on watch, you would likely come up with the solution of planting flowers or encouraging people to have pets over increasing surveillance cameras and patrol cars. Since too many pets could pose another problem, you would finally settle with the flowers.

The trap of product development – new stylish soda.

During the course of working on product development, I'm often invited to do a workshop together. And when I do, I sometimes come across a proposed concept sheet with an expression like "new stylish soda." This actually is the first thing that needs to be corrected because it is not even a concept, although some people misunderstand and think that it is. In fact, some advertising planners do the same thing, and it is truly mind-boggling.

A concept is "the reason why something must exist." This is functionally a blueprint people use to work together and make something, so it must be effective and it must not have any elements that make it unstable.

If the interpretation of a concept were to have a 5-degree range, the spec down the line would be about 20 degrees off. Then the naming would make it about 30 degrees off, and the design again would be off. In the end, we end up with a product that nobody can figure out. This is why you can't simply use any wording you like in your concept. It must be as clear and precise as possible with carefully selected words. In terms of the technical aspect, I consciously try not to rely on adjectives. Adjectives cover such a broad area that it always becomes too vague. Basically, when you're trying to communicate your target, the only way to win is with carefully selected straightforward nouns, or verbs that clearly illustrate an action.

More specifically, it must have a spirit that the creators of the product identify with. When all of the project members are highly motivated, the product will have a clear appeal. You must consider whether the people delivering and selling the product embrace the spirit and want to sell it and whether consumers will also feel the same way.

Does it appeal to everyone involved?

What does "new stylish soda" mean anyway? The what is missing from the middle. It is not clear who will benefit and in what way, nor can you tell if it is something to drink in the morning or at night or what drink it is supposed to replace.

To overcome the fear of being rejected, people end up presenting concepts that are obscure and unrealistic. But concepts should be rejected. Just as steel starts to take form after it is hit over and over again, there needs to be a certain amount of rejection. At the same time, in order to become a concept that is realistic and has the power to entice people, there is no need to adhere to everyone who rejects it. It is important to remain adamant that it must exist in this world.

Does the concept contain words that express what's inside you?
Is the concept made from your passion?

If it sounds clever or if pretty words are lined up, then doubt it. What is important is whether it is powerful enough to

present to the world, even if it has some rough edges.

Say someone attempts to re-write the earlier concept. Finding that the benefits are unclear, a purpose is added to the concept, which may look like this:

 "Next generation soda to relieve stress"

A purpose was added. The word "stylish" was deleted for not being realistic. "New" was also hard to understand so the target image was added, making it "next generation." But what does this indicate? Notice the frighteningly vague phrase, "relieve stress." Each word has its own range of meanings. If this is going to be a blueprint, the concept must accurately express the meaning and intention of the words used.

Stress and relief have not been defined so it is not clear how it is different from the stress and relief as we know it. Because they are not defined, it cannot be considered an established concept.

Then we have "next generation," a phrase often used in proposals that may be helpful in getting the plan approved. But the next generation will never come. Anything that is called a "next generation such-and-such" is often portrayed in the

image of a future we saw in the past, which is quite different from what we have today. Similarly, there really is no one that fits the phrase "next generation" either.

Having a sense for words means that you are sensitive about the range defined by any given word. Creating a concept is an act of materializing how close you can express the true meaning of the word. You must never make the realm vague, fill up space with superficial words, or use words that have no clear purpose. Creating a concept is a process of sharpening your sense of vocabulary to its limits and attempting to consolidate all of your thoughts and feelings.

Once during a brainstorming session about a concept for green tea to be sold in a developing country, one young staff came up with this:

"Green Light Ahead"

Since the country had a larger tea market than expected, pursuing a difference based on the specific performance of green tea was proving to be a challenge. So he decided to make a difference using feelings. If he had written "healthy and

forward-thinking green tea," it would be difficult to under-stand, but it would also provide an opportunity to think about the meaning of the color green. In the midst of the expanding economy, if the product could gain an image of supporting the country's growth, it would make sense to sell it in that market. The phrase was still obscure and the words unpolished, but his thoughts and feelings were reflected. Then there was this:

"The Great Journey"

There was awareness in the country that green tea was more of a global thing than local, so he created this concept. As you know, the Great Journey was the 50,000-kilometer journey from Africa to Patagonia taken by man since human-kind was born 4 million years ago. It is the history of how humankind spread across the globe. Meanwhile, it took many months and years until green tea had reached the country from the Far East. The idea was to develop the product alongside that story.

He came up with a number of concepts like this. Maybe the level and direction or the necessary marketability were inconsistent, but it was a good effort. He didn't just negligently

come up with something like the "stylish drink with a new sensation," nor did he take a distant stance of a critic. Though unpolished, the words came from within and were filled with passion that expected some kind of a response when presented to the public. He captured the essence of the purpose or reason to sell that product.

If the product must exist now, it must be able to challenge something.

This means that a concept is a challenge.

If the purpose of coming up with ideas is to solve the problems of the world, there must be as many concepts as there are problems. Write them down on paper and see what you want to solve with your particular product, service, media, architecture, event, or advertisement. What do you want to save? If that product absolutely must exist in society, its purpose must be to tackle a serious problem that we face. In other words, it is a challenge to save the world. Let us see if we can clarify these challenges as concepts.

"Challenge to save the intelligence of the Japanese people"

"Challenge to improve the athletic capabilities of the Japanese people"

"Challenge to generate a new sense of morality among the Japanese people"

"Challenge to instill the survival power of Japanese children"

"Challenge to reestablish Japan's sense of family"

These are just a few examples. Not only are they all clear and stable, but they have the power to keep people motivated.

However, these concepts are not delivered to the world as they are. As mentioned in Chapter 2 about distance, in order for people to notice that these concepts are not matter of fact, there must be a certain sense of distance. To discuss these concepts most effectively, you need to create distance.

Challenge to save the intelligence of the Japanese people

→apparel and entertainment, which at a glance seem distant from intelligence.

Challenge to improve the athletic capabilities of the Japanese

people

   →books and cosmetics, which at a glance seem distant from physical exercise.

 Challenge to generate a new sense of morality among the Japanese people

   →luxury items, which at a glance seem distant from morality.

Challenge to instill the survival power of Japanese children

→toiletry, which at a glance seem distant from survival power.

 Challenge to reestablish Japan's sense of family

   →cosmetics, which at a glance seem distant from family.

   Focus your challenge on such things that are distant from your objective, and figuratively work out – visualize and clarify – what the challenge specifically is and what it will accomplish and how. That is the process of creating a concept. Inevitably, it entails a clear intent. As mentioned before, try not to rely on adjectives because just as they make expressions vague, they also do not help to accurately represent the real meaning of a concept.

All people are surprised before feeling any kind of emotion.

Whether sadness, happiness, or anger, all emotions happen after surprise. To change actions, we need to change emotions. In order to do that, we must illustrate surprise.

Indulge in the surprise of having to take on such a challenge. Go as far as you can, to take on the challenges of going beyond time and space, cultures and customs, common sense, making something out of nothing, retrieving what has been lost, and so on – things that nobody has been able to accomplish – with the power of techniques, and the power of goods and services. Extend yourself to the limit so people will look twice.

Then, for the first time, people will become aware of the target, think, and take action.

II. Creating a vision

Imagine what happiness looks like and think about what it needs.

Consumer spending that periodically dropped after the Great East Japan Earthquake has gone back up considerably. However, there is a big change now in how people buy things. In the past, people bought something because it was a certain type of product. Now, even buying one item of food needs consideration about where it is from, who it is for, and why it is needed. People have now become more aware of such particulars. In the past, there was a time when the expression of value depended on condominiums, cars, and household appliances. Now that consumerism has restarted, people have become very careful about what they buy and they spend time examining their own buying behavior. They do not project their own style in certain limited purchases, but make their own decisions based on their own unique sense of value for

every single product.

In order to stand up to this kind of decision-making, the premise has gone beyond simply presenting the product specifications. In order to be chosen, it has become a prerequisite for products to communicate information such as the thought behind the company and its employees who made the product, and what they are demonstrating for the future. It is no exaggeration to say that companies can no longer survive by just continuing along the same line of business. Companies now must define their existence in society – for what purpose they exist.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, what is happening now is a turn toward a new political, economic, and cultural framework on a global level. That is precisely why companies are required to exhibit a positive vision for the future. Where is this world headed? Where is our society headed? How should we exist at this very moment as a human being? Perhaps what is being required of companies and its employees is the very act of providing practical answers to these questions. What people agree with and want are not things that simply come off of the production line or what the

company simply wants to sell, but the passion to make the world a better place and a new approach that is surprising and innovative.

I have been involved in the product development of mobile phones a number of times and I have written many scenarios of how those phones could change people's lives.

- Lifelong learning will become mainstream and people will start to manage their own past, present, and future.
- Family health and safety will be centrally managed.
- People will acquire multiple areas of expertise and apply a different part of themselves according to the purpose.
- The elderly will assume the role of watching over people's safety, making a more precise contribution to the community.

I came up with over 50 scenarios like this, but this exercise of writing a scenario about people's behavior helps identify what type of mobile phones are necessary. Some may call this backcasting, but that is an exaggeration. Looking to the future is a natural part of creating ideas, so it is only natural to

have a vision of how people might be living in the future.

To draw a vision of the future lifestyle, you must have an accurate understanding of existing problems. You need to recognize the problems the world faces today, such as energy, low birthrate and longevity, new international relations, and food issues, and develop a detailed understanding about them. Then think carefully about how to find solutions. There are many bifurcations during the thinking process. For instance, when you have a choice of accepting immigrants to solve the low birthrate and longevity issue, or when there is a change in people's awareness toward food issues, there is a great fork in the thinking process. The more branches you have, the broader your scenarios, or options, will expand. If you can imagine the lifestyle according to each and every scenario, you will start to see the type of goods and services that would be required.

It all boils down to imagining the happy lifestyles waiting beyond the various problems for all of the people who are going to live through the coming age. Imagine what happiness will look like. The clearer that image becomes, the clearer the picture of required goods and services will be, and eventually they will become something that must exist in the world.

III. Communicating

The truth moves people's hearts more than facts.

Let's discuss about specifically communicating to people. We have already seen that communicating and being communicated to are different. How are they different, and how can we overcome this difference?

There is one hint in a book written by psychologist Tokuji Shimoyama in which he says that heliocentric theory may scientifically be common sense, but as long as the sunrise and sunset are times that have deep meaning, the Ptolemaic theory is also correct. Of course, the heliocentric theory is correct. We all know that the sun doesn't actually rise nor set, but it is the earth that is rotating. That is just how it looks to people. What is important is what he says after "but." We develop different emotions and images relating to the rising

sun and our hearts are moved when we see it setting. There are sunset beaches all over the world that touch people's hearts day after day.

This means fact is different from the truth that appeals to our hearts. And sometimes truth holds more weight for us.

You can talk about facts or discuss general knowledge that everybody knows, but it won't move people's hearts. How well you can change these things to make hearts flutter is the secret to creating ideas that are moving.

Let's look at another example using a razor. It features a xx-millimeter blade that gives you "a close shave that you have never experienced before." This is not unusual, so how do you communicate this if you are in charge of the product, sales, or advertising? Are people really going to understand if you tell them a fact like the 2-millimeter blade is now a new-and-improved 1.5 millimeters? Never mind the consumers, there is even a limit to what will reach your dealers. Surely fact is unconditional and important because that is the only place where truth can come from. But where do you go from there?

Raise the abstraction level as high as you can and contemplate.
Let the facts be uplifted to truth.

Raise the abstraction level of the fact and you will reach the theory of essence, or what is means to human beings. In this case, it's all about what facial hair means to people. There are many ways to think about this. For example, throughout history and across the world, a beard in essence represents masculinity.

So to get a closer shave than you've ever experienced before actually means to shave off manhood as never before. This could mean that the theme of your message is changing sexuality. After dad has his morning shave and goes to cuddle the kids in bed, they might mistake him for mom. This kind of a TV commercial could be aired, and it actually has in the past, while carrying out various campaigns featuring the theme: "The moment Dad becomes Mom."

When you've come this far, it feels like you'll be able to generate something that moves the heart.

In fact, if you compare the two messages, "the moment

Dad becomes Mom" and "what used to be x millimeters is now the new-and-improved y millimeters," there is a huge difference in the impressions of the consumers.

   This could apply to anything. For example, think about these questions: What is a chocolate bar? What does it mean to humans? What significance does breaking a piece off of the bar have? What is the significance of tearing the silver wrapper? Come face-to-face with every aspect. A lady once told me how important the act of tearing the silver wrapper was. Whenever she felt stressed from housework or childrearing, she would reach out for a chocolate bar. Tearing the silver wrapping and breaking the bar was a cathartic reaction, like a smoker reaching for a cigarette.

   Examining the base of these feelings and knowing what part of that essence the product can respond to or change, and finding out what actions are replaced by eating chocolate, you'd be surprised to see a number of strong possibilities of how to actually touch a person's heart. The final part of this process is to set your own filter and find the one thing that will move a person's heart the most in today's world.

   The big problem right now is that this filter, which

should be used at the very end, exists as though it is some sort of methodology. This not only blocks the process of imagination, but it is something that you cannot deny. If you cannot deny it, your thinking process shuts down because there is no need to think about it anymore. But that is not what you need. You must raise the abstraction level as high as it will go so that you can touch the essence of humanity. This is what is required and what will make it smoother to come up with ideas.

In the Introduction, I mentioned that people are living beings that sympathize with stories that make them excited rather than justified logic. The ideas that we need are those that turn the facts in front of us into stories – or the truth at heart.

IV. Changing the narration

Is that a request, an agreement, or an order?
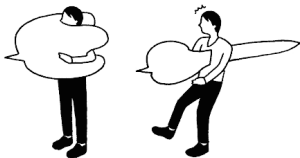
Even though the content is the same, by changing the

narrative a little, you can make a great difference to what you communicate. Something that could not be communicated could be communicated, or the content itself might even be interpreted as something totally different.

As long as ideas influence people and society in some way, they need to be communicated accurately and designed so that they make people think and move voluntarily. Unfortunately, too often people only think that they have communicated something. There are ways to improve that.

Imagine that you are in a room right now and you want someone to close the window because the wind is blowing in. What would you say to the person by the window? In his book, How to Do Things With Words, J. L. Austin explains the difference of interpretation between the speaker and the listener.

A. "Please close the window."

This is the most grammatically correct expression, but you would actually say this only when you are in a shop. This is how you would speak to someone of a distant relationship. You stipulate the action clearly and "request" it. With this rhetoric, in most cases there is no need to give a reason.

B. "Oh, I thought it was cold. The window is open."

With this expression, the problem is clear and you are requesting approval. With that approval, you will influence others and promote action.

C. "I'm cold."

You probably have a very close relationship. It's an expression of complaint. By making a claim to the other person, you are giving an order.

Your choice of words changes depending on whether your motive is to request, instigate action, or give an order. Your motive also changes with the person you're dealing with, so your rhetoric will also change depending on whom you are addressing. We do this in everyday life. We unconsciously use different rhetoric for different people. Doing this intentionally ensures that what we are saying is communicated.

President Obama's strategic rhetoric

Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are both known for changing their rhetoric depending on whom they are speaking

to. I'm sure many remember the dead heat surrounding the Democratic candidates in 2008. Since they are politicians, of course they talk politics. They talk to people in their own words about things regarding policies, pledges, and convictions.

Hillary Clinton's rhetoric was very clear – "I do this, this, and this." She was direct, organized, and clear in explaining what it was she intended to do. Obama's speech ultimately gained tremendous attention, but Clinton also had many fans because her speech was clear and to the point.

On the other hand, Obama had a completely different rhetoric. He did not talk about politics. He turned his speech into one about the people. He stayed away from speaking expertly about laws or the system. The core of his speech was configured around topics such as how Americans should be living now, or how America can change to benefit the world.

In that sense, it was an electoral battle of completely different rhetoric and probably was as heated as it was because they were choices of A or B on extreme ends.

For example, when the theme was labor, Clinton talked about reforming the labor law, people working X many hours, and so on; whereas Obama talked about wanting to be the first

president that factory workers would remember as they watch the sunset from the bus on their way home.

Where did this difference in rhetoric come from?

As opposed to Clinton's diverse support base, Obama's was weak and fragile. Clinton had the strong backing of rural conservatives, whereas Obama needed votes from the public who did not belong to any party nor had much of an interest in politics. For that reason, Obama chose not to talk about politics but about people. He intentionally chose that style of speech, which the media focused on as being compassionate and moving. His speechwriter also became the man of the hour, but the person who casted the speechwriter and strategically instructed that rhetoric should be the person to hail.

Is the other person interested in you?

If everyone is extremely interested in a particular product, the Hillary Clinton style – straight talk – is enough to communicate things well. However, if you want to strategically draw in people who are not interested, you need to use Obama's style. If you acknowledge that not everyone is interested in that particular item, do not start by saying, "the characteristics are this, this, and this," but choose the rhetoric that explains how "days like this will continue and your life will change this way."

An easy way to do this is by first changing who the subject is going to be. Nobody likes to hear people say, "I think this," and "I think that." It sounds pushy. Instead, change the style to solicit approval by saying, "Your life will start to become like this." Similar to the earlier comment, "Oh, I thought it was cold. The window is open," you consequently encourage that person to make a move.

If you like someone and continually tell that person how great you are, that person will probably not come to like you or pay attention to you because you are giving a negative impression of being one-sided. So you would naturally choose a way to talk to that person to give a good impression. Just like choosing the appropriate expression when you want someone

to close the window, we unconsciously think about the best rhetoric to use. The same can be applied when you are making your idea take shape.

The goal of an idea is not simply to relay something but to influence others. An idea must not end at "I'm sure they got it," but it must have the dynamics to clearly move people. Know your opponent and be sure to have the most effective rhetoric based on your relationship.

Changing the rhetoric and storytelling.

Another example of switching a political story to a human story is satire, as often seen in newspapers. Political stories are very confusing and difficult to understand. If these were all written in political jargon, the reach will be limited. Satire is one way of converting political dialogue into something that is more human. Based on accurate understanding and insight, it is converted into figure of speech. As this involves both simplifying something that is difficult and making it up as a form of entertainment, it actually requires a considerable amount of intelligence. However, when you think about the great number of people that would be influenced by an

accurately communicated message, it is a method worth considering. Japanese newspapers do not use this method, and likely will not in the future, but for example, you could write a story with the title, "The Cat, the Mouse, and Friends" to talk about Russia and the Baltic Nations, or one with the title, "The Wolf and the Three Kid Goats" to talk about the FRB and American financial institutions. The stiffer and more difficult the topic is to understand, the more effective this method becomes.

Storytelling is an extension of changing the rhetoric. It has been many years since the word storytelling started to appear in the world of business, but it is still fresh and powerful and it has been adopted as a common style when explaining business or operational strategies. Storytelling became a necessity when strategy started to be thought of as something that is accepted with ease by those who should share it, not as a pie in the sky.

It is an attempt to bring in an exciting story to the logical, cool, and unemotional world of strategy. It means denying ambiguities that hide behind jargon and being straightforward about what is really right and what needs to be done. It requires

incredible intelligence, but it is worth the try.

Earlier in this chapter I discussed about facts and the truth. Simply telling the facts is not always the best way to communicate. When you are communicating something, there is obviously someone you are communicating to. That someone is not only a physical being, but is also in a certain situation, mood, and condition, all at the same time. Keep this in mind as you choose the most meaningful rhetoric.

V. Getting timing on your side

If people already feel a certain way,
use that as your greatest tailwind.
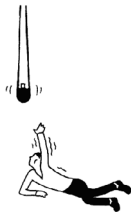
The emotions, awareness, and actions of people change by the moment. To make an impact on them, you need to fully understand what they are feeling, what they are aware of, and what actions they take. The ideal method of implementing an

idea is to stimulate people at the perfect moment.

The easiest way to judge your timing is by season or special occasions, or certain days on the calendar. First let's explore how to create an idea that targets these plans.

Think about Father's Day. Saying "let's praise Dad on Father's Day" is too normal and nothing new. Besides, people don't easily praise other people. They only pretend to. There is no sense in increasing the number of people who only pretend. Rather, in order to make it a strong idea that will naturally spread, as in the recent SNS culture, the message needs to make people think about what their father means to them. Try to present a trigger or a cue to make them think, and you will come up with something completely different from simply giving praise.

The step before making people think is to make people gasp. This will activate their emotions to make them think and take action, so start by making people gasp. When people think about what their father means to them, have them choose something that is most distant from the Dad they see every day. It could be a story about Papa Bush and George Bush. As

a father, how did he influence his son to become a president? Perhaps the story about how the Japanese noh actor, Kan-ami Kiyotsugu, influenced his son, Ze-ami, could give people an opportunity to reflect upon the existence of a father. This could also be a chance to think about the underlying factor that needs to be overcome for a son to surpass his father. Because we live in an age where the father and child are becoming more like friends, there is meaning to call upon this.

The same can be said for Respect-for-the-Aged Day. Instead of praising the senior citizens, think about what their existence means. There is bound to be some kind of wisdom of life that only they possess. An idea would be to publicize their wisdom and carry it on for generations to come. This will lead to a process of recognizing their unique intelligence and know-how without stereotyping the elderly, and devising different plans that give people opportunities to ask and learn from the elderly about winning, losing, and breaking even in life. Through this process you will realize how attractive these plans can be, even as an annual event, with much more meaning than the general attitude that is repeated year after year.

When interest grows, non-verbal communication arises.

Non-verbal communication is when things are communicated without using conversation or writing. Let's look at some examples of how this is done when timed carefully with clear intention.

This was something a professional South American soccer player did on Anti-Racism Day, when the entire country was reminded of racism. He wore different colored soccer shoes on each foot. One was white and the other was black.

His action was clear enough because it was a special day when awareness was raised. He clearly expressed that black and white were equal and that they have an intimate relationship where they need to cooperate with each other. The message was so explicit that no words were required. This is a good example of making use of the right timing.

Get the environment on your side.

As long as people go on living through recognition, they are greatly influenced by their surrounding environment. As we have seen, there are certain days when awareness is

high, but it's not limited to that. The time of day, the place, the weather, the situation – people think and act in accordance to their environment. It is a means or wisdom that is necessary for survival. So if you want to influence others, borrow the power of whatever it is they are already being influenced by. Some messages are easy to communicate in a park on a holiday. Others are best relayed in an office elevator in the early morning. There is a way to design the best time and space in which certain messages are most effectively communicated to the people you want to relay them to so that they retain the information. People who create ideas must get environment on their side by synchronizing perfectly with the situation in which people live and with the flow of social sentiment.

VI. Getting reality on your side

Create an incident that will make the world buzz.
If there is a journalistic aspect, it will grow even more.

When mobile novels were popular, a publisher once asked me why something like that was popular. By appearing as though it was being written daily on a mobile device, readers felt that it was non-fiction and that someone was experiencing that particular event at that very time. Of course it has been a long time since mobile novels were popular, but the value of fact over fiction has increased even more through social networking services.

Recent communication entails creating an incident and a momentum where people spread the news. They see something actually happen that surprises them, and then they can't stop the urge to tell somebody about it. Not only that, it has to be worth telling others about. Added to the basic personal desire to tell somebody about something, their social existence makes them think that it is their duty to tell others. There is also the desire to gain approval by completing the mission. The shocking aspect combined with the journalistic aspect becomes the driving force to make it even more widespread.

Let's take this wartime photo exhibition once held in New Zealand. What is the most important thing you need to

convey when you want people to know about a wartime photo exhibition? As mentioned in Chapter 1, first you must tell them why you are doing this. You want people to feel like they were there, transforming mementos into memories with an expectation for people to make a change in their everyday attitude and behavior. Is it possible to have the reality of someone who actually experienced it reflected in the advertisement? The organizers of the photo exhibition sent an invitation to former US President George Bush, who had experienced the Gulf War. Then they used his response to the invitation – a letter of refusal – and put it exactly as he wrote it in the poster.

A strong personal opinion about the wartime photo exhibition would function quite well on a poster. But could there be anything more powerful than a letter of refusal written by George Bush? The actual letter was a standard form of turning down an invitation, without emotion or any moving content. In fact, it was rather inhuman. However, the use of inhuman expressions shed light on man's destiny. And because it came from George Bush, its presence had become that much more noticeable.

This is the power of putting an incident in the center of focus rather than some elegant prose. Some beautifully

written words are not going to inspire people to tell others about it through SNS. When something shocking or surprising happens, people want to talk about it. So focus on creating a surprise.

People have a desire to explore the possibilities of this world.
The "dissemination through SNS" debate is really about whether or not it is in the center of focus.

If you create an incident that people are going to be surprised about, it must be something that society has never had to deal with before. It is a challenge and an experiment. Recently, experimental campaigns about space, raising voices for global issues, or campaigns that invite people in a community to share a common motivation to create something special, are spreading with great momentum through SNS and are seen by a great many people. This shows that people respect facts which are stranger than fiction. It is human desire to know the possibilities in this world. Looking at it the other way, if we hadn't reached that level, no matter how sophisticated the infrastructure, it would be difficult to expect people

to use it to spread the word and to expect the message to be communicated to others beyond.

VII. Not making it your job

**What is it that you want to throw
out to the world right now?**

Lastly, let's discuss the frame of mind that is more spiritual than technical theory. It is very important in generating ideas so it cannot be ignored. This is the technique of not making it your job.

To not make something your job is to not make it something that someone gives you to do. Don't do it because you are obligated to as part of an organization. I talked about how making a strong idea is challenging something new, and in order to do that, passion must be in the center. When it gets to that point, your mission is no longer simply about a product

that will sell for a company. It is a personal passion and conviction that makes you want to throw this out to a world full of problems for a good cause.

However, when a certain theme is thrown at you, there is a tendency to search for a direct solution or something similar. You don't get as far as wanting to throw something out on your own and you never get to the good deed. You end up with a weak idea. If it takes more than spiritualism to escape this, what do we do?

The biggest problem is not the lack of a personal passion or conviction. People do not notice what is there; it remains dormant in the deep corners of the soul. People don't know where to call it out or how to wake it up. There is a way to make people take notice.

Verbalize what you want to throw out into the world that you think might have the power to influence.

You don't need a theme that tells you to solve or create something. Just try to verbalize what you think would be powerful to put out right now or that would attract great response. It doesn't need to be a catch copy. Make a list of words that

you once heard someone say. It could be words from a movie, lyrics to a song, famous sayings from the past, or even something you read on the Internet – whatever comes to mind. After you get it all out of your system and write it on paper, take a fresh look at what you wrote. You should now be able to objectify it as something that is detached from yourself, and pass judgment objectively. These are words that can be sent out into the world. As you look at them, you start to notice what it is that you want to throw out to the world.

The words were initially selected based on a job-like objectivity about what you thought would be strong and would work in the world. What you actually see in front of you now is your passion or conviction that you unintentionally wanted to throw out into the world. Do this once every three months if you can. The world's sensitivity changes by the moment, so it would be good if you could keep that schedule. By doing so, when you are presented with a theme on the job, you won't be stuck with a mundane idea that simply fits the situation and occurrence. You will be aware of what it is you want to put out into the world, and this will lead to a powerful idea with your thoughts in the center, an idea with the energy to exceed.

Epilogue

More on technologies of detail

Dentsu conducts internship programs for students. As chairperson of one of the three courses, I set up the curriculum, prepare interviews, make test questions, and do the grading. I also prepare lectures and exercises, and I organize training camps. A lot of thought goes into implementation, to let students experience our job for a certain period. I cannot let them into our actual workplace because of all the classified information we handle, so the lectures and exercises provide training for planning projects.

For one week, students learn about planning through lectures, exercises, and reviews. They show an incredible speed of development, so after this, they are ready to prepare something like a plan. Here, I have listed a number of these supposed plans that they came up with after working on their assignments for one week.

[Theme]

    If you were to build a library in an underpopulated area in order to attract tourists, what type of library would you build?

    Explore the problems and benefits of being underpopulated. Discover the true essence of what it means to read books. Transform the library into something else. The students used the flow that I have discussed in this book.

[Student A's idea]

"Everyone's Bookshelf"

    A bookshelf directly expresses the owner's way of thinking. So instead of mechanically collecting books, collect other people's bookcases to make the library a place where lots of people's thought processes are gathered. Take an author for example. Instead of just displaying the books he has written, include an exhibit of the types of books he encountered that inspired him to write those books. In other words, faithfully recreate the author's bookcase so that the author's thinking process becomes an asset. Visitors can read people rather than simply reading books, making the library a place to store ways that people think.

[Student B's idea]

"Abandoned School Library"

Turn an abandoned elementary school into a library. Open a café that serves school lunches and recreate the values of the Showa Era. The library books will all be novels and stories from Showa. Suggest the best time and place to read each book; in the schoolyard in the morning, or in a classroom in the afternoon. This will become a library that offers not just books, but also the best environment to enjoy them in. A book-reading experience should not be only about a single book, but it should involve the total scene, including the time of day, how the sun is shining, and the season. A special feature could be a story-time tour at night. Create a non-daily routine by prioritizing the features of the story, for example by reading Urashima Taro, the Japanese legend about a fisherman and his turtle, at night by the sea.

[Student C's idea]

"A live-in library"

A big problem with libraries in underpopulated areas is management. This has to be resolved. A library is basically a place that attracts twisted people who want to be able

to concentrate on their studies but at the same time want to be seen by others – they crave involvement with others but they avoid it. Take advantage of this feature to create a live-in library, where visitors can participate in the management of the facility. The image would be of a backpackers' lodge in the 1960's that offers communal living, where everyone can be wrapped up in his or her own thoughts.

[Student D's idea]
"Love has history. LOVERARY"

There are people in underpopulated areas that do not wish to move away, because they have established a daily life of their own. If there are many elderly people, they have irreplaceable images of husband and wife that they spent time building together. That itself can be attractive content. Get stories on married couples in the region and publish these stories as books and exhibit them in the library. This will become a collection of people's lives filled with love. This is not a library, but a loverary. Since there is no better or worse in love, these books will be lined up on bookshelves along with Shakespeare. Indicate where the published couples live on a tourist map, so that people can visit them for advice on their

own love life. Turn this into a resource for tourism.

[Student E's idea]

"A library to solve the mysteries of Japan."

Transform one of the cars of a train into a moving library and run it every hour. In the moving library are books about the area's historical culture and novels based on local settings. After reading those books, people can get off at the relevant station to see or experience what they have just read. The local areas in Japan still have many unknown attractions. This will create a new style of travelling, where discovering attractions begins with a book.

[Student F's idea]

"A library to experience"

Nature is the source of every book. Create a place in nature where the entire world of a book can be experienced. When you come out of the tunnel, you find the world of a book in front of you. As you walk along, all around you are words from the book scattered here and there. You can actually read the story as you move along. The experience changes with the season and the time of day. This world just might be a book.

[Student G's idea]

"Memory compilation station"

Books are fragments of thoughts that exist in society and a library is an aggregation of thoughts compiled into society's album where various memories of individual thoughts become the content. This library will be a place where people can leave themselves behind. First, have each person buy a blank book. With that book in hand, they will head to three rooms. The first is the "room of the body" where the person will face their own body. The second is the "room of the mind" where the person will face their heart. The third is the "room of memories" where the person will face their history. Whatever is created in these rooms will be saved as memories of their own. Being an underpopulated area, this would be an appropriate place to store one's own memories. People's memories will be stored away for a certain period of time so they will want to visit again.

The exercise is only one week long, but students with absolutely no prior connection to planning came up with these ideas. As plans, these are only beginner level, but what we have here are students seriously facing issues about what

reading is and what a library is, as they attempt to use the essence to reconnect people.

Seeing this development in front of my very own eyes is bliss. That is why I make time in my very busy schedule to be involved in the internship program.

Thinking is a very practical act that takes you to an answer you will not get to by aimlessly worrying about something. At the beginning of this book, I said there is a path that needs to be followed. Even if a person knows nothing about this path, one short lecture could effect a change in the act of thinking.

Conclusion

In this age, companies provide little orientation. If the situation actually allowed for orientations, we wouldn't have to worry so much; but the problems around us are constantly intricately intertwined and have become so difficult to see. Among them are macro-type issues that affect the state of a nation, as well as those involving the business environment or structural aspects. It is impossible to know where to start unraveling.

The most dangerous approach is to trivialize the problem by looking only at the surface and trying to solve it superficially. This is often how problems are dealt with and precisely why the ideas created do not have realistic, effective solutions.

When Hisashi Inoue was once asked to explain the meaning of the word creativity, his answer was: "Making the difficult easy, making the easy deep, and making the deep interesting." This is precisely the essence of creativity.

It is important to start by making the difficult easy. Swiftly clarifying the location of the problem without avoiding the difficulty of understanding it makes the first step of problem-solving smooth. This sets your path from which you can use your head and come up with ideas. Then you can go on to making the easy, deeper. As you cut deeper and get as close to the essence as possible, discover what it really is and what exactly needs to be done. Then finally, you go on to making the deep interesting. Don't just make a list of the facts or assume that you've successfully communicated something. Present the truth and put together a story that assures communication.

Thinking randomly is extremely arduous. Without following the proper path, you will not reach your goal. I wrote this book to help the readers realize that the act of thinking is fun work that can be organized to produce something while projecting your own thoughts and not something that makes you feel like you are walking through the dark dealing with the hardships that come with it.

"Where do ideas come from?" This is a question that

many people ask me because everyone is in despair. But there is a proper path that must be followed first, with purpose and intention. Meanwhile, during the process of moving down that path, it is important to make a lot of stops along the way in order to develop your imagination from various viewpoints. Do not confine yourself to an existing framework. Ideas cannot be created easily with an existing framework or a flowchart. In fact, they are really dangerous because they can limit ideas and imagination. Making various imaginative stops along the way will deepen and broaden ideas.

In my interaction with students, I meet a lot of people who are very businessman-like, making a beeline for society. Because student life has simply become a period immediately before joining the workforce, students don't seem to have the room to do a lot of thinking anymore. They spend their time reading books necessary for employment exams. They collect the necessary information, and meet the necessary people. While this may be extremely efficient, it does not form a foundation on which to create good ideas. I wrote in chapter two that ideas involve distance. It is those things that are not naturally connected, have nothing to do with each other, and seem

useless that bring about a sense of distance and form ideas that attract people. Students must come into contact with things that are far away from what we know as the world of business. Even after graduating and starting a job, if you surround yourself in only the information that is right in front of you, you will lose the foundation that you need to create ideas.

One last word

During a meeting with people at an art gallery in the UK, there was talk about shifting the discussion to cover not only a certain piece of work itself, but also what the world was like when that work was created – social manners and customs, the culture, and things like that. The existing situation is what creates a piece of work. They wanted to approach the work from as far away as possible by discussing not how the painting was drawn, but why it was created, saying they wanted the bigger picture.

Bigger picture. I could really relate to that. Ever since then, I have made a point of being aware of the bigger picture by not trivialize things or thoughts, and not getting hung up

on only the information immediately available. Also, I do not trivialize my range of responsibility or what I can do.

A lifestyle rich in ideas comes with a great many openings for value and many ways to enjoy the world. Say that you wake up one day and find yourself alone on a deserted island. If you have deep, broad ways to enjoy the sea and the sky, you can lead that much more of a happy life. At least it would be far better than spending your days lamenting over life on a deserted island. Even if you did end up enjoying simple mundane pleasures, you would still curse the situation. People who know how to broaden their ideas have a life ahead of them that is completely different from that.

As the author, it would please me if those who read this book find it useful for work. It would make me even happier if this book were to lead to a lifestyle filled with fun.

Finally, from the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank my colleagues at Dentsu, my clients, my Higuchi Seminar students, students who took my Internship H Course, R-25 Editor-in-Chief Takashi Kakizaki for giving me the

About the Author

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Since joining Dentsu in 1994, Keiichi has worked as a strategic planner, communication designer, and creative director while developing integrated campaigns encompassing strategy, creative, and media for both mass and digital. A strong advocate of "seamless Creativity," he has exerted himself seamlessly on both advertising and non-advertising projects. He currently works on developing new products, new services, new business, and new content, moving beyond the boundaries of ad campaigns.

Keiichi's list of recognitions include Gold at Cannes Lions, Gold at London International, Gold at Adfest, Gold at Spikes, One Show, and the D&AD award, among others.

In addition to corporate work, he teaches at Musashino

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So, actually, what is… that?