

Content Development by a Cross-Industry Organization

By Yoda Tatsumi

Cool and Hot, Japanese Content

Miyazaki Hayao, the film director of *Spirited Away*, will receive the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 62nd Venice International Film Festival in August this year. Not only his animated films, but Japanese anime and *manga* in general are rated very highly in both Europe and the United States. Their popularity far exceeds the definition of a temporary boom.

Japanese-made TV programs are shown for a total of 1,326 hours a year in Germany. Calculated in terms of 30-minute animated programs, this equates to 53 programs each week. Similarly, Belgium averages 47 programs a week, Italy 40, Britain 22, and Portugal and Poland, 21 each.¹ *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Pokémon* rank in the top five in North America. Following the popularity of Japanese manga for young boys (*Shonen-manga*), manga for young girls (*Shojo-*

manga) are now taking off. There is also a great deal of interest in such Japanese movies as *Nobody Knows* and *Twilight Samurai*. There have also remakes of *Shall We Dance?*, *The Juon* and *Godzilla*.

In Asia, the concerts of Japanese artists are always packed. Over three days of concerts in South Korea, Amuro Namie attracted a total of 25,000 fans. The global acceptance of Japanese content is generating a “cool” image for Japan. “Soft Power,” as advocated by Joseph Nye, is playing a large part in improving Japan’s image among the countries affected by World War II in Asia. The development of the entertainment content industry helps the whole society to blossom.

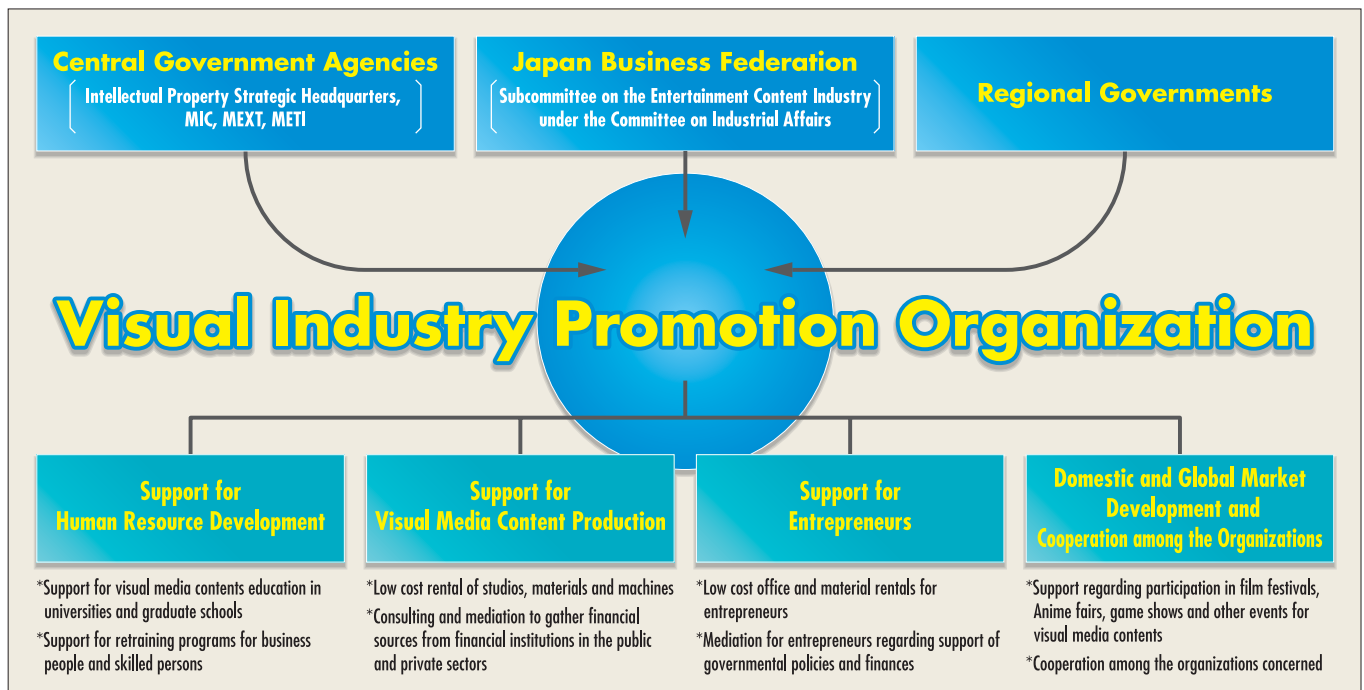
However, it will not be easy for Japan to maintain its current position of superiority. South Korea is riding the wave of its own boom in Japan, other Asian nations are working hard to catch up, and much of Japan’s best talent is head-

ing overseas. In reaction to this sense of impending crisis, in August 2003, the industry established the Subcommittee on the Entertainment Content Industry under the Committee on Industrial Affairs of Nippon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation).

Activities of the Subcommittee on the Entertainment Content Industry

People from all areas of the content industry, such as movies, broadcasting, music, games, photography and animation,² came together to create the Keidanren Subcommittee on the Entertainment Content Industry to look beyond the framework of their own particular genres. By the end of February 2005, they had met 19 times and held approximately 40 smaller working group sessions.

In November 2003, shortly after its inception, the subcommittee formulated



Notes : 1) Data supplied by Kubo Masakazu. Observatoire Européen de l'audiovisuel (European Audiovisual Observatory) compiled these figures from Essential Television Statistics. The conversion into 30-minute slots of animated programs over 50 weeks of the year was the idea of JETRO Paris.

2) 53 companies as of February, 2005.

a proposal entitled, “Toward the Development of the Entertainment Content Industry,” seeking the promulgation of a basic act on the industry’s development, and outlining specific issues for the industry. The subcommittee considered these topics in working group sessions and then in March 2004 announced its position in a proposal entitled, “Toward the Amendment of the Strategic Program for Intellectual Property.”

Accepting the first of these two proposals, the Liberal Democratic Party formed a Content Diet Member League in November 2003, with Amari Akira as president. This league played a central role in the promulgation of the Law Concerning the Promotion of the Creation, Protection and Exploitation of Content. The Law is a landmark piece of legislation in that it defines the meaning of “content,” and includes a content-oriented clause that reflects the spirit of the Bayh-Dole Act, stipulating that the rights to content commissioned by the government can be reserved for its producers.

At the same time, in keeping with the latter proposal, the government’s Intellectual Property Strategic Headquarters created the “Intellectual Property Strategic Program 2004.” The Subcommittee on the Entertainment Content Industry followed-up on the suggestions from the business community that are included in the program, put forward a proposal in March 2005 regarding areas that require further strengthening, and will consolidate these suggestions in the form of the “Intellectual Property Strategic Program 2005.”

Three of the measures included in this Program are explained below.

Establishment of a Visual Industry Promotion Organization

First is the establishment of the Visual Industry Promotion Organization (VIPO). The advanced industrialized nations of the world have organizations to strategically promote their film indus-

tries. For example, the United States has the American Film Institute (AFI), Britain has the Film Council, and South Korea has the Korean Film Council (KOFIC).

Japan’s equivalent of these foreign organizations is the VIPO, a non-profit organization with representatives from the movie, broadcasting, animation, games and music industries. In order to develop the visual industry in general, it provides support for the following: (1) the development of human resources in cooperation with educational institutions; (2) content production; (3) entrepreneurship; and (4) development of the domestic and global markets. In FY 2005, the VIPO liaises between the business sector and universities on projects funded by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI).

Expansion of the Tokyo International Film Festival and the Establishment of a Visual Media Content Market

Second is the inclusion of international visual media content-related events such as the Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF) and the Tokyo Game Show among the top events on the world scene. An entertainment market featuring comics, animation, games and film has been arranged at the TIFF, and this offers a great opportunity to display the quality of Japanese visual media content to the world. For example, at the Tokyo International Entertainment Market 2004 last October, which was held in conjunction with the TIFF, a TV station from Sapporo arranged an exhibit at the South Korean content market, BroadCast WorldWide (BCWW) 2004. There are many examples of positive reviews from Korean agencies that are generating business for producers of Japanese visual media content. This is yet another example of how high-quality visual media content from various regions in Japan is being welcomed overseas.

Standard Mark for Content Export

Third is the effort being made to counter the pirating and counterfeiting of Japanese content for export. Widespread pirating of Japanese DVDs, videos, CDs, games and toys is not only causing concern but also makes Japanese companies hold back from exporting goods to regions such as East Asia.

In an effort to counter this situation, the Content Overseas Distribution Association (CODA), an organization representing the companies in the content industry and the Anti-Counterfeiting Association (ACA), has established a “Content Japan” mark. Goods such as software that do not bear this mark can easily be proven to be copyright violations, and if the mark is falsified, it will be possible to fine forgers for trademark infringement. With efforts against trademark infringement being centralized through the CODA, violations against numerous copyright holders can be exposed in one fell swoop, and this strategy should become even more effective when coordinated with such bodies as the Motion Picture Association or the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry. The CODA will also be able to accumulate information and know-how regarding pirating and compensation for infringements.

Conclusion

In the Intellectual Property Strategic Program, the three years from 2004 are cited as a period for concerted reform of the content business. The halfway point is almost upon us, but there are still many issues to address, such as the upkeep of archived contents or the development of live entertainment. The Subcommittee on the Entertainment Content Industry is committed to finding solutions for the various problems as they arise. **JS**

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