

Japan Diary

Executive Women in Japan

People are usually surprised when they learn that the president of a company distributing exclusive French cosmetics in Japan is a woman. Reiko Lyster established Elle International K.K. five years ago and made it profitable within three years. Today, her sales figures are healthy—and without the help of her husband, or other male advisers. She is one of very few Japanese women executives.

In Japan, women are expected to stay at home and look after their husbands, children, and perhaps their own or their husband's parents. Not only Japanese men expect this, but most women accept it as their role in life.

But modern Japanese housewives are better educated and have more free time on their hands than ever before. A growing number are working outside the home—as many as 51%, according to a 1982 survey by the Prime Minister's Office. Most, however, are doing part-time work that could not be described as a career. "Women are over-educated to stay at home, but they are under-educated to find interesting jobs," says Mariko Fujiwara, author of a report entitled *Japanese Women in Turmoil*, soon to be released by the Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living. "Women are not educated to work. They are expected to learn to do 'nice things'—play the piano, for instance—to prepare themselves for marriage."

A long haul to the top

Employers are reluctant to hire women for career positions, not only because they believe that a woman's place is in the home, but also for practical reasons. Most women are at least 22 years old when they graduate from a university, and if they follow the usual pattern, they will work for only two or three years before getting married and retiring. Companies are not prepared to invest time and money in their employees for such a short period of returns, especially in Japan, where lifetime employment is still the rule. Employers prefer women straight out of high school or junior college to university graduates because the former will work longer before leaving, although they are less qualified. Female university graduates often must convince potential employers that they are serious about their career and are committed to working beyond their marriage or first child, before being considered for employment.



But finding a job does not mean an end to a woman's career difficulties. On the contrary, if she is ambitious, it marks only the beginning of a long and difficult climb to the top. Once employed, men and women are treated very differently as a rule. Women are often given secretarial duties and asked to serve tea to their male colleagues. Ms. Lyster observes: "There is a favorite expression in the Japanese business community, *ocha kumi* (pouring tea), that's often thought of as the role of the working woman. Of course, we do it in our office, too. Someone has to pour the tea, and it's nicer that a woman does it."

While their male counterparts are being trained for management positions, young women may have to wait four or five years until their superiors are convinced that they are not about to leave. An important aspect of management training is acquiring experience in different departments or branches, but women are rarely transferred to other localities because of their family commitments. And they often miss the experience of working in different sections, usually because they have decided to specialize to make themselves indispensable. Some women claim further that they are purposely denied the chance to gain broad experience because men do not want to compete with women.

Women also face more intangible disadvantages. Many business propositions and ideas are discussed after working hours in a social context. But Japanese men, as a rule, tend to enjoy their own company in social gatherings outside of the office, so women often miss out. While men also have the opportunity to keep in touch with old schoolfriends who may have succeeded and become useful contacts, most career women's schoolfriends are likely to be housewives. There is no old boys' network for women.

Choices for executive women

Women are most successful in the fashion and cosmetics industries, but there are other, less obvious fields in which women have begun to advance into management, especially middle management. Many women are now employed in the computer and high-technology fields, because the rapidly growing demand for staff has forced employers to hire only the best candidates, regardless of their gender. Women may still be at a disadvantage in these fields because their

night-time working hours are restricted by law, but some women believe they are better suited for computer work than men. And they are more often prepared to specialize than men.

Government agencies tend to be more egalitarian employers than most private companies. Once they have passed the civil service entrance exam, women find that the procedures for promotion are better defined in government offices than in private enterprises.

Once they have actually reached the top, most women are eventually accepted by their male colleagues—but men may need time to get used to having women among them. The first woman news anchor on Japanese television, Yoshiko Sakurai, recalls that when she first took a position at Nippon Television: "Everyone in the station hated me. The men in the Announcer's Department felt I was taking away their job, and those on the studio floor were unused to working with women. It took about a year to get over that stage."

Whatever their field, the secret of all successful Japanese career women is single-mindedness. In most cases, they must be better than the men doing the same jobs. "It also helps if they are attractive and agreeable," remarks Ms. Fujiwara.

To young women seeking a career, Ms. Lyster offers the following advice: "Decide which is more important—to be a happily married wife and mother or to be a successful career woman. If you decide your career is more important, you have to be prepared to sacrifice your personal life. You can't have both."

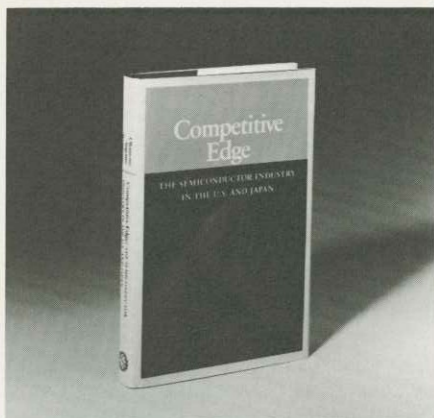
(Doune Porter, Japan correspondent for Voice of America)

Bookshelf

Competitive Edge: The Semiconductor Industry in the U.S. and Japan

Edited by Daniel Okimoto, Takuo Sugano, and Franklin Weinstein
Stanford University Press
1984, California
275 pages; \$27.50

In recent years, the United States and Japan have become embroiled in various kinds of economic friction centered on such industries as steel, automobiles, and consumer electronics. Today, one of the major sources of friction is increasingly heated competition in semiconductor



devices. Highly-integrated, multi-functional devices incorporating the latest technologies, semiconductors are key components in the development of not only computers but also the entire electronics industry. The competition between the United States and Japan in semiconductors thus has an impact going well beyond immediate economic or trade positions. Semiconductors are critical to both nations' technological futures.

A number of reports and articles have appeared on the subject of the "semiconductor war" between the United States and Japan, but most of them—by taking partisan stances and offering biased apologies and criticisms—have only exacerbated the misunderstandings and friction surrounding this issue.

Competitive Edge avoids this pitfall. As the preface says: "This book is the product of a collaborative effort to assess the dynamics of the intensifying competition between the U.S. and Japan in the semiconductor industry." This book is based on studies undertaken by a binational working group of economists, electrical engineers, political scientists, sociologists, and various experts in the semiconductor industry. This group held meetings in California, Tokyo, and other places and conducted interviews with a wide variety of people to produce a study of both breadth and depth.

The result, with chapters written by both Japanese and American members of the working group, is a study replete with in-depth and impartial comparative analysis of the political, economic, and technological factors affecting the two countries' semiconductor industries. It is a valuable addition to the literature and a good place for any reader to start.

Chapter 1 contains a helpful introduction to the United States-Japan semiconductor competition and to the analysis presented in later chapters. The second chapter fills us in on how the Japanese and American semiconductor industries have developed and touches upon their structural underpinnings as well as the professional-training situation and other background factors. In comparing the

two nations' approaches to semiconductor research and development, the authors point out that American R&D is chiefly concerned with basic research and military applications while Japanese R&D is principally focused on consumer-product applications and cost effectiveness.

Chapter 3, entitled "Technological Resources," looks at American and Japanese levels of technology in the development of VLSIs and high-density RAM chips and explains production-processes and product-quality considerations. The authors argue that the United States leads in fields such as microprocessor design and software development, while Japan generally excels in production technology. Their subsequent analysis and predictions concerning the so-called "software gap" between the United States and Japan deserves special attention.

Chapter 4 takes up the industrial policy issue and explains how most of Japan's key industries have developed with government assistance, chiefly from the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), and how this industrial promotion has been widely perceived in the United States as a source of "unfair" Japanese competition. Both countries' governmental policies supporting the growth of the semiconductor industry are scrutinized and their effectiveness evaluated in considerable detail, and it is concluded that the Japanese government's support for the semiconductor industry has been only one of many factors—and not even the most important at that—supporting the Japanese industry's development. Other factors, such as the drive to catch up with the American semiconductor industry and intense competition among Japanese semiconductor makers, have been even more important for the Japanese industry. However, the Japanese industry has now largely caught up with America and, with no one to emulate, there is considerable debate within Japan over what policies to follow in this new situation.

The fifth chapter is devoted to explaining the structure of the Japanese semiconductor industry, with particular attention to the financial structure. One major structural difference between the two countries' semiconductor industries is that while the American industry is characterized by polarization between semiconductor device manufacturers and systems manufacturers such as IBM, Japanese systems manufacturers are more vertically integrated and produce the lion's share of their own semiconductor devices. Another important difference lies in the way in which semiconductor companies find financial backing in Japan and America, an aspect well explained in a very interesting section of the chapter.

The final chapter draws conclusions

based on the material presented in earlier chapters, and as in the earlier chapters, the tone throughout is one of fairness and factuality—in stark contrast to most other publications on this subject. The book is thoroughly impressive for its careful research and wealth of data.

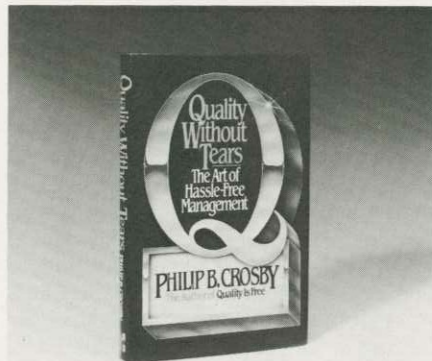
Unlike the rivalry in steel or automobiles, semiconductor competition is a race which is itself speeding progress in technological innovation. As *Competitive Edge* points out, all of us today are benefiting from this dynamic rivalry in the fast-growing semiconductor market.

Takeshi Iwasaki
Science commentator

Quality Without Tears

—The Art of Hassle-Free Management—

By Philip B. Crosby
Published by McGraw-Hill Book Company
1984, New York
205 pages; \$23.95



One of my friends recently remarked that, from his perspective at the top of the corporate management structure, the TQC (Total Quality Control) approach left something to be desired. Although he was not sure exactly what it was that was lacking, I suspect it was TQC's shortcomings as a management tool that bothered him.

TQC promotes management centered on quality. But just what do we mean by quality? In TQC, quality has two basic meanings: the quality of goods and services and the quality of work.

Work quality is first and foremost, since it translates directly into the quality of goods and services and the degree of customer satisfaction. But what makes for quality? There are generally no firm measurements. On the whole, TQC judges quality in vague terms such as how "good" a process or product seems to be. TQC lacks a precise method for defining quality.

As a result, the TQC approach improves quality with what is basically a trial-and-error method applied to things that do not feel quite right. It is a method

that relies on having people speak up. Beginning with the feeling that something is wrong, TQC tries to identify the problems and quantify them using statistical methods to give them as clear a definition as possible. Focusing on specific shop-floor conditions, QC circles made up of shop-floor workers use management-by-objective methods to raise problem-consciousness and provide bottom-up input regarding problems and needs related to their own work.

The manager's role is to promote quality improvement by encouraging workers to set goals and by clearing away obstacles to attaining these goals. He tries to prevent the organizational rigidity that would result from having objectives forced upon workers. However, many top managers feel this bottom-up approach requires too much patience on their part. Managerial dissatisfaction is TQC's second shortfall.

This is where *Quality Without Tears* (Japanese translation title *QM Kakumei*, published by Japan Management Association, 1984) comes in. Author Philip B. Crosby is a proponent of quality management, which is, like TQC, centered on quality, but which does not share TQC's shortfalls of imprecise definition and impatient managers. Crosby defines quality quite clearly as "conformance to requirements." Management sets these

requirements to give customers exactly what they want and enforces them in the spirit of doing things right the first time. If this is done, quality is no longer an intangible or unmeasurable entity. It can be measured in terms of the price of conformance vs. the price of nonconformance to standards. Crosby offers a streamlined procedure for calculating the price of nonconformance: it is the cost of "everything that would not have to be done if everything were done right the first time."

As for the question of managerial impatience, Crosby starts with his Zero Defects method for defect prevention. Such prevention is effective in direct proportion to the degree of efforts made to ensure complete satisfaction. Poor quality costs money, and poor quality will result if things are not done correctly from the beginning. The standards for meeting customer needs must be set and followed. Everyone must do his work correctly from start to finish. Post-facto measures to correct defects are to be replaced by defect prevention. Quality is built-in, and doing things right from the beginning must become the norm.

It is up to management to determine exactly what is to be done, how it is to be done, and who is to do it. If work is organized and executed properly, the organization will naturally function well.

Furthermore, Crosby argues that management is mistaken to assume that most mistakes originate among lower-ranked employees and/or in manufacturing shops. More at fault are the technicians, computer workers, marketing people, and the managers—including those at the top. Crosby lists 14 steps to quality improvement, and the first step is management's explicit commitment to raising quality. Quality starts with top management, and in that sense quality is a top-down process.

In philosophical terms, the difference between Japanese TQC and Crosby's quality management is that TQC relies on inductive reasoning while quality management is basically deductive. TQC's inductive approach in which problems are defined based on particular facts and statistics from the shop floor is perhaps the approach best suited to Japanese patterns of behavior, but Crosby's deductive approach in which a quality control framework devised by management is applied and enforced throughout the organization is better suited to the American context.

Given the intrinsic need for companies to be founded on rationalism, however, I would not be surprised to find Crosby's ideas spreading to Japan before long.

Masataka Mats'ura
Chairman,

Tokyo Toyo-pet Motor Sales Co., Ltd.

Taste of Tokyo

Queen Alice

In October 1984, the Japan Economic Foundation, to which I belong, and the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies jointly sponsored a seminar on Japan-U.S. economic problems at the Aspen Institute's Wye Plantation on the outskirts of Washington, D.C.

The autumn leaves were turning, and the flocks of Canadian geese and water fowl flying over the Wye River and Chesapeake Bay were spectacular to say the least.

The fresh taste of Chesapeake Bay oysters was marvelous, but even more unforgettable was the crab, also a product of the Bay, flavored with spices, boiled and eaten by breaking the shell with the fingers. When I heard that during the season this delicacy is well within reach of ordinary pockets, I could not help but envy the local residents.

The day I had this marvelous crab, it was my good fortune to share my table with Charles Stevens, legal adviser to

Coudert Brothers in Hong Kong who participated in the seminar. The conversation turned to our respective good eating experiences in Tokyo, and Stevens mentioned a restaurant by the name of Queen Alice. As soon as I returned to Tokyo, I looked it up. I was not disappointed.

Named after Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Queen Alice has a fairyland atmosphere both inside and out. It is particularly enchanting in the evening.

Though claiming to offer French cooking, the menu could better be described as the currently popular *Nouvelle Cuisine*, in which the materials and traditions of French cooking are skillfully blended with the techniques of Japanese cuisine. The taste was so exquisite that I regretted not having come before. I can guarantee that it is top class.



Queen Alice does not have a standard menu, but offers a set menu cooked with the best ingredients available each day. In a way, it is like eating in the first-class section of an airliner. There is a choice of two hors d'œuvres and two main dishes. The charge is very reasonable at ¥3,000 for lunch and ¥7,000 for dinner.

The dinner menu consists of three hors d'œuvres, fish, delicious jasmine tea sherbet to refresh the mouth, meat, dessert and coffee.

It is a restaurant guaranteed to leave you as happy as its name would suggest.

Reservations, which are necessary, can be made by calling 405-9039. Closed on Mondays.

The following dinner menu was served on November 2, 1984, for ¥7,000 (\$29).

Huîtres Bouillons
ou
Cocquilles St. Jacques au caviar
Terrine de homard
Pot-au-feu de foie gras
Saumon au basilic
Sorbet thé au jasmin
Mignon de bœuf au jus
Grands desserts
Café

(Yoshimichi Hori, editor-in-chief)