

Sharp's Efforts to Build a One-of-a-Kind Business

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Since its inception as a metalworking shop in 1912, Sharp Corporation has commercialized original products, from the "Ever-Sharp" mechanical pencils from which the company name was derived, to the first Japanese-made radios and televisions as well as the world's first transistor calculators. These products have contributed to the improvement of people's lives and the advancement of society as a whole.

In order for an electronics manufacturer to develop and move forward, it is vital to continue providing customers with unique and creative products. The dream of Sharp's founder, Tokuji Hayakawa, was to "Make products that other companies want to imitate." This tradition of craftsmanship is still being carried on by Sharp today. Sharp's origin and its production of one-of-a-kind products and devices form the foundation of Sharp's business activities.

Sharp develops innovative devices and commercializes creative products utilizing those devices. When devices are actually put to work in products, Sharp clarifies new target functions for those devices and then improves them accordingly. Sharp calls such a process "spiral strategy."

No matter how cutting-edge such devices are, the amount of time and effort that must be spent on their development is tremendous. Sharp has been working diligently for 34 years to develop liquid crystal displays (LCDs) and 44 years to develop solar cells. And it has only been during the past 10 years or so that these flagship products have begun to contribute to business performance by surmounting the numerous problems involved in their commercialization.

A TV with a large-screen LCD is one product that utilizes a cutting-edge device. In order to widely disseminate LCD TVs, cathode ray tube (CRT) TVs—a Goliath of a competitor—must be defeated. To this end, in 1998, I declared that all TVs to be sold in Japan shall be LCD TVs. Since the TV is the king of consumer electronics, I determined that Sharp should, by all means, become the number one manufacturer of TVs. Although in the beginning not everyone was in agreement, all employees pulled together to successfully commercialize LCD TVs.

Sharp's AQUOS LCD TVs currently hold the largest share in the domestic market, and Sharp is actively selling them around the world.

Sharp small- and medium-sized LCDs can be found on mobile phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and portable game consoles, gaining a good reputation for high performance and high definition. In particular, mobile phones with functions for receiving terrestrial digital broadcasting (ISDB-T: a Japanese digital TV standard) have been selling well after the launch of ISDB-T. Sales of mobile phones with the LCD brand "AQUOS keitai" are on the rise. In the first half of fiscal 2006, Sharp's mobile phones held the number one share in the domestic market.

After years of depending on fossil fuels for energy, modern society is now facing the problem of global warming brought on by an increase in carbon dioxide. Solar energy is limitless energy. It is estimated that the amount of solar energy that reaches the Earth every hour is equivalent to the total annual energy consumption of the entire world. Solar energy (photovoltaic) generation, which involves directly converting solar rays to electricity, has become the focus of attention not only as an energy source but also as a means of preserving the environment. For the sixth consecutive year, Sharp is the world's largest manufacturer of solar cells, key devices for solar energy generation. In this way, Sharp contributes to the world of today and tomorrow in terms of both energy and the environment.

Circumstances surrounding the electronics industry have been changing at an astonishing speed, as exemplified by developments in information infrastructures and rapid advances in technological innovations. Harsher competition has been brought about as companies around the world work furiously to capture new markets. While keeping to its business creed of "Sincerity and Creativity," Sharp will take the lead over other companies by creating new products and providing services suitable for the new era. Sharp is aiming to become a one-of-a-kind company that creates 21st century lifestyles through electronics technology.

