

Y.K.K.(Yoshida Kogyo K.K.)

Y. K. K. -- Yoshida Kogyo K. K. (meaning Yoshida Industries, Ltd.) -- was the biggest manufacturer of zippers in the world and it was also Japan's leading producers of aluminum sashes. Around 1960, Y. K. K. opened its first overseas plant and as of April 1974 its 27 overseas subsidiary plants turned out zippers in 22 countries employing more than 3,700 foreign employees and with some 140 Japanese on overseas assignment. Reflecting the management philosophy of Mr. Tadao Yoshida, founder and president of the company, management of Y. K. K. overseas subsidiaries, was quite unique, particularly in the field of personnel policies and practices.

Company Background

Y. K. K. 's main products were metal and plastic zippers and building materials such as aluminum sashes, and of its 1973 sales of about ¥100 billion, aluminum building materials accounted for ¥60 billion and zippers ¥40 billion. The company's zippers held more than 90 per cent of the domestic market, and combined with its exports and overseas production of ¥32 billion, they accounted for a quarter of world market. Exhibit 1 shows the company's sales growth since 1965.

Y. K. K. , based in Tokyo and with a total capital stock of ¥5.6 billion, had 5 plants in Japan and both of its two main plants -- Ikuji and Kurobe plants -- were located in Toyama Prefecture facing to the Japan Sea. It employed about 11,000 workers, 45 per cent of which were women.

The origin of Y. K. K. went back to "San-S Company" which was established by Mr. Tadao Yoshida in 1934 in Nihonbashi, Tokyo. After a zipper plant with some 100 workers during its peak years had been burnt down in an air raid, Mr. Yoshida established Yoshida Kogyo K. K. in 1945 in his native town Uozu in Toyama Prefecture, and started again to produce zippers. In 1950, Y. K. K. imported from the United States new machinery which automatically put zipper teeth on tapes. This investment enabled the company to hold an overwhelming position in the domestic market and since then the company paid unceasing interest in the development of its own technology.

In the late 1950s, Y. K. K. completed the construction of the large scale Ikuji Plant in Kurobe City, Toyama Prefecture, and starting with plant exports to India, undertook construction of its overseas plants. Up to the early 1960s, Y. K. K. 's overseas plants were only in the countries of Southeast Asia, Oceania and South America. Then in 1964, it started zipper production in advanced industrial countries with the opening of a plant in New York and one in the Netherlands. Currently the company had 11 plants in the United States and on the other side of the Atlantic it had plants in the Netherlands, Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, Spain and Belgium. The list of Y. K. K. 's overseas subsidiaries is shown in Exhibit 2.

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