



Keio Business School

Echigo-Tsumari Art Field: solving regional issues through art

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Introduction

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In the mountainous area of Niigata Prefecture in the northeast of Japan is an art festival, like no other in the world, called Echigo Tsumari Art Triennale. The main festival itself is held once every three years, with some artworks being displayed throughout the year and related events being held in other seasons and years. But the main attraction is the Art Triennale itself, and in 2018, it was held for the seventh time since its inception in 2000. Visitors from around Japan and the world came to see art installations displayed not just in museums, but spread out across rice fields, paddocks, empty warehouses, abandoned schools and roadsides. The festival “site” is the town of Tokamachi itself and its surrounding areas, covering a vast area that is almost the size of the city of Tokyo. Banners promoting the festival line the intertwining roads that run through the mountains, and local shops and restaurants put up posters, while the locals themselves volunteer to be guides and receptionists at the event, which is held over a 50-day period throughout the summer.

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Shin was in his second year at business school, and as he drove back from another visit to the festival over the summer break, he pondered what the festival meant to the art world and to society as a whole and what lessons it taught about management in general. The hot spring baths, the delicious food and the amazing artwork that were part of the excursion were certainly all fun, but he felt strongly that there were some valuable lessons to be discovered from the festival.

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Japan’s regional issues

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It’s a well-known fact that Japan developed into one of the biggest economic powers of the world after World War II, and during this phase, the workforce shifted from mainly agricultural to industrial and financial, as the nation also become one of the most populated in the world.

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This case was produced by Keio University Graduate School of Business Administration Associate Professor Hikaru Yamamoto and Shimpei Fukuzumi (M40) of the Master’s Course in the same graduate school. This case study was developed solely as the basis for class discussion and there is no intention to portray the management situation in a positive or negative light.

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