

## INTERVIEW



## ゲスト紹介

## Thomas J. Nevins

1950年、ニューヨーク州生まれ。コーネル大学に在学中、日本独特の会社経営方法に関心を持ち、1970年、初来日。日本の労働関係の研究を続けている。1978年、労使関係コンサルタント会社設立。昨年、『対米進出企業の労務管理のすべて』を著す。

## Why Japanese Management Always Wins?

[あらすじ]

アメリカの経営者が、『将軍』を見て感激したという話はよく聞く。なにしろ、雇い主のためにハラキリまでするという「黙約」が日本経営の強みであろうと、日本が再評価されはじめたというのであるから、くすぐったい気もする。会社のためなら何でもやるという異常な忠誠心が引き起こした一連のスクandal事件、それにより露呈された腐敗の構造は、日本固有のゲマインシャフト(共同社会)の在り方に問題があるのでは、という反省ムードが一部に高まっていたからである。だが、昨今の欧米企業の日本経営システムに対する関心は異常に高い。日本の企業のしくみを学ぶため、欧米諸国から視察団やセミナー受講者が続々と送りこまれ始めているのである。そのような今日、タイミングよく『対米進出企業の労務管理のすべて』という興味深い本が日本貿易振興会(ジェトロ)から刊行された。その著者は、10年来の私の旧友であるトーマス・J・ネビンス氏であった。彼自身は、出たところ勝負のインタビューの方がよくのるというのでほとんど打ち合わせもせずスタジオで合流した。私は、大ざっぱに次のようなアウトラインだけは立てておいた。

1. 日本の労務・経営制度の強さ
2. 日本の経営の意思決定プロセスの利点
3. これら日本の経営制度が海外でどの程度機能するのか

もちろん、日本企業システム礼賛だけでは話が進まないで、あえてジャーナリスティックに devil's advocate の役を演じた。繰り返すまでもなく、ゲストに反論しているわけではない。私はあくまでインタビュアーであるという立場を崩していない。

## [Highlights]

In America, you have an outside representative, someone who does not work in that company, who is a member of the, say, the head office staff, or the local regional staff of the union office is involved in the collective bargaining negotiation.

日本の企業組合(enterprise union)では、アメリカのように外部の全国規模の労組団体(international union)からの outside representative が団体交渉に割り込んでくるわけではないので、まとまりやすいと言う。日本企業の労使の協調ぶりは、欧米企業の経営者からみると垂涎的だそう。言わなくともお互いにお家の事情がよくわかっているから双方歩み寄ることになる。

Now, further more, in Japanese companies, since you have no international union, you don't have union-imposed seniority system, for example, so that it becomes quite easy to adapt technological changes in Japanese companies.

日本の場合、組合が決めた seniority system を採用する必要がないので、テクノロジーの変化にも対応しやすい。アメリカでは技術革新の一環としてロボットを使うとなると解雇に結びつきやすいので、technological change に対応することは困難である。日本ではいくらロボット台数が増えても会社という家族の一員のようになり、それがために人間をママコ扱いすることはない。ロボットにも「モモエちゃん」というように女性の名まえをつけて、音楽を聞かせながら仕事をさせているというユーモラスな会社がある。さすが人情味のある経営だと欧米視察団は驚く。だがネヴィンス氏は、それは組合組織の相違からくる definite advantage であるとみる。

*Nevins*: Because they've unionized many companies, so they try to find you a job in another company through their union hiring hall. So this can mean sometimes that a worker's loyalty, or his allegiance, is stronger for his union, rather than for his company. Whereas in Japan, if you lose your job...

*Matsumoto*: You're nothing. You're finished.

*Nevins*: You're nothing, you're finished. You lose your position in the union, so you're completely on your own. And this may be

one reason why Japanese workers, their first loyalty is to their company.

アメリカでは、もし職を失っても union hiring hall があって、他社での仕事をあっせんしてくれる。だから、労働者の忠誠心は会社に対してと言うよりも組合に対してより強くなる。だが、日本の場合 lose a job すれば、You're nothing (おしまい) となる。企業という identity を失った浪人はみじめである。日本のサラリーマン社会ではまともな仕事 (a decent job) についているのは、まともな会社 (a decent company) に働いているということの意味することが多い。

私が商社を辞めて「一人になる」と言ったとき、驚いた上司が「ゼロから始めるのだぞ、よく考えたか」と、じゅんじゅんとさとされたことをよく覚えている。7~8年働いても、会社を辞めるときはゼロ? 私はこのことばをじっとかみしめ、背水の陣を敷く思いで会社を去った。頼るのは自分のみという「独行道」を選んだのは、終身雇用制・年功序列の日本企業を辞めたときであった。だから You're nothing. You're finished. と実感をこめて言ったとき、トムもそのことばを繰り返してくれた。だが氏の結論は、their first loyalty is to their company という日本企業優先説に変わっていた。日本での「一匹狼」の定義は、be loyal to your job first, be loyal to your group second であると信じている。この番組で、私の NHK でのインタビューは最後になるが、今後とも自分の英語とインタビューの腕をみがきながら、渡世の旅を続けていきたいと思う。

But I think the answer is that the Japanese know that they can't get an equally high-paying job elsewhere, so that they make the most of this one opportunity.

アメリカ人の目から見れば、日本企業の従業員は少しくらい怠けても、怠惰が理由でクビになることはないというしくみが、よほど不可解なのであろう。トムの次のような発言を聞くと、かなり彼のところにも外資系マネジャーから苦情が殺到しているんだなあと思ってしまう。I think と言っているから彼の意見である。

They're very satisfied, so that they are interested in their company's interest, and the chances of them doing something detri-

mental to their company, or undermining the company's image with the public I think are greatly reduced.

すべてを開けっ広げるといふ性善説(?)に立った日本の経営では、内部告発 (whistle blowing) に弱いのではないかという疑問に対しても、彼のガードは固く、日本企業の全員参加型経営の方がベターだと説く。

Well, I think that if an individual in a Japanese company is the sacrificial lamb for a corporation, I feel very, I sympathize with such an individual, but I think that that's quite a rare case.

私は最近読んだ「朝日新聞」の記事(1月5日付)を思い出した。最近の企業裁判で、最終弁論を行った弁護士は法廷で次のように言った。「事件を起こした人たちは、私利私欲でやったのではない。すべて会社のためであり、職務熱心さが事件を起こしたと言える。社内では、悪声を放つ人はいないばかりか、同情を集めている。」つまり、「会社のためなら何でも」という盲目的な忠誠心は、マイナスにも働くのではないかという質問であったが、私の質問は歯切れが悪く(論理も英語もまらずい)長くなってしまった。だから、そんなケースは稀であると言うことで肩すかしをくらったような感じである。

It's a very enriched career which you have. Often in America, let's say a man who's in the marketing function will be in marketing, say, all his life, even if he's not really that, he doesn't like the area.

ゼネラリストを育成するという日本経営方針は、job enrichment だという発想である。だが、中途採用の人には、その人がよほどの専門的技術を身につけていなければ、かなりハンディがあるということになる。

So that he takes initiative; he feels more confident, and in that sense I think that you have more overall management input, more dynamism in a Japanese company than you do in many, many American companies.

稟議制度は、下からの意見を吸い上げるので、社員に参加意識を植えつけることになる。士気が高まる。これが日本企業のダイナミズムだと言う。だが、トップで決まって、後稟議という形式的なものもあるのでは、と devil's advocate を演じたが、それは形式ではなく、従業員に参加しているのだという

ゼスチャーにもなるので、重要なプロセスだという説に立つ。氏はやはりプロというか日本企業の意思決定のしくみをよくもそこまで調べたものだ。

It obviously...to answer that question I think it would be a hundred per cent accurate to say it doesn't work as well. It's a matter of degree. But I think it will work, and I think some of the points made today to an extent will work in the United States.

日本の労務管理経営方式が、欧米諸国では日本のようには巧くいかないという事は疑う余地もない。とくに as well にアクセントが置かれている。ときどきゲストのリズムに注意を払い、どこを強調しているか注意する必要がある。だが彼は it will work と強気である。

*Nevins*: Well, I think the Japanese are fairly good at getting rid of those, though. It's very, very subtle. It's called maybe the "Bad Apple Division" in an American company, or...

*Matsumoto*: Bad Apple Division, never heard of that.

*Nevins*: Bad Apple Division, right, right. It's like when you put them up, you know, *madogiwazoku*, up along the window, right, right?

*Matsumoto*: I see. We have the system called "Jump before I push you."

このあたりは、お互いに本音がでてきてのっている。窓際族対策という人事管理でもとりわけドロドロした部分を語り合っただけに、よほどリズムがなければ、bad apple division というような企業の恥部のような話題には触れてくれないだろう。

私も4年間、NHK 英語会話 III の番組でインタビューを続けてきてこれが最後となった。1年くらい前から、ようやくインタビューのツボがわかり、のり出したときに、再びわらじをはかなければならないのは、いささか残念であるが、いずれどこかでお会いできることを念じつつペンを置きたい。

#### [Words & Phrases]

**spreading yourself too thin**: 少し手を広げすぎている。

**I'm getting the picture**: だんだんはっきりしてきた。

**Justification is the name of the game**: なんと言っても、自己正当化が肝心だ、というようなニュアンス。

**make a little sales pitch**: 少し(口で)宣伝する。

**Do it right**: そつなくやれ。(へまをするな、ということ)

**an upper-body union, an international union**: 全国的な規模の労働組合団体をさす。労働者であれば所属することができる。職別組合。(例 VAW)

**put them out to pasture**: メインの仕事から外し、ブラブラさせる。体のいい左遷。

**was committed to never laying off workers or firing workers**: 労働者をレイオフしたり、クビにしないことを建て前としている。

**union hiring hall**: (組合雇用本部) 失業者の職業あっせんをする労働組合事務所。

**closed labor market between companies**: 企業相互間の閉鎖された労働市場。(会社を簡単に変えるチャンスがないこと)

**mid-career hiring**: 中途採用。

**fringe benefit**: (住宅・健康保険・病気休暇などの) 特別給与。

**once-in-a-lifetime-opportunity**: 一生一度の機会。

**frame of mind**: 心境。

**corporate whistle-blower**: 企業の内部告発(者)。

**get away with some kind of a corporate murder**: 何らかの企業犯罪が発覚されずにすむ。

**distinguish himself**: 成功する、功をなす。

**be on the promotional track**: 出世コースにのっている。

**keep them scurrying**: あくせく走り回らせる。

**buy up**: 買収する。(buy into は経営参加)

**bubbling up of**: ~があわ立ちあふれる。(提案が下からもち出されること)

**he's in on it**: 彼はそれに参加している。

**They're totally behind the decision**: 意思決定を完全に支持している。

**sharp subordinate**: 斬れる部下。

**the he's-after my job complex**: 彼が私の仕事をねらっているという不安感。

**impart all his secrets**: 自分の秘密をすべて教える。

**bad apple division**: 腐ったリンゴの部署とは、平たく言えば窓際族のこと。

**jump before I push you**: クビにするのではなく、自分が自主的に辞めたことにさせる。

**tap them on the shoulder**: 肩たたき勇退。

(松本道弘 記)



### Why Japanese Management Always Wins?

guest:

Thomas J. Nevins

interviewer:

Michihiro Matsumoto

*Matsumoto*: Well, nice of you to come to this studio, Tom.

*Nevins*: It's really nice being here, Mr. Matsumoto.

*Matsumoto*: I understand your professional identity is labor consultant, or labor relations consultant.

*Nevins*: Right, either one will do.

*Matsumoto*: But what are you doing exactly? It sounds mysterious.

*Nevins*: Right. Perhaps the best way to explain it briefly would be to mention just some of the types of assignments which I've done in just the last week or so, basically solving various problems within the foreign companies here in Japan that are having a hard time understanding Japanese labor law and labor practice, and also handling companies, handling problems for Japanese companies that are investing in the United States, starting factories there. For ex-

ample, they can be simple problems, such as, an employer needs to transfer a worker. What does the Labor Standards Law require that he do for that worker? What sort of problems will he have? Or it could be a more complicated problem like—this year we can't pay the bonus to our employees. It's in our work rules but not in our collective bargaining....

*Matsumoto*: Sounds like it's a very nerve-wracking job.

*Nevins*: It is, it is, it's a very exciting job. Then we also deal in basically trying to improve productivity and quality from a human resource perspective.

*Matsumoto*: Looks like you are spreading yourself too thin, you know. What is the central area?

*Nevins*: I wouldn't say I'm spreading myself too thin because all the questions are very much inter-related, you see. It's not just....

*Matsumoto*: Even including human resource problems, too?

*Nevins*: Right, right, training and so on. I'm not involved in training so much, but human resource would basically involve more the idea of introducing workers and managers to companies, and we are involved in that—in other words, executive search. We're involved in that as well.

*Matsumoto*: I see.

*Nevins*: Not training programs as such, though.

*Matsumoto*: Yeah, yeah, I'm getting the picture. Thank you, Tom.

After graduation from college, I entered a Japanese trading company. Not knowing how to behave properly at the office, fresh out of college, I asked my boss. Here's what he said, "Let it be." The name of the game in Japan is *taigi meibun*, or some kind of a group spirit, and you're not supposed to work for yourself, and sacrifice yourself for the company. About ten years later I found myself in time of troubles at a foreign embassy in Tokyo. My boss said to me, speaking words of wisdom, "Don't let it be. You're not going to solve any problem unless you really try."

“Try what?” I asked. And he said, “Try to justify yourself.” Justification is the name of the game here. I’m still in the dark as to which system works better, but looking at the way it is internationally, it looks like Japanese management is winning. Why? Well, I—if there’s anyone who knows the answer why, it’s Thomas J. Nevins, my old friend and our guest for today. He’s a labor relations consultant and he’s currently managing director of Technics in Management Transfer, Inc. (TMT) in Tokyo, and also he’s a member of the Board of Governors of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan. And he has currently authored the very expensive book titled *The Complete Handbook of U.S. Personnel and Labor Relations’ Practices* for Japanese corporations. Tom, here’s a chance for you to make a little sales pitch, you know. Do it right.

*Nevins*: Right, actually this book is published by JETRO, so unfortunately, for every copy sold they’re making by far the most money. But basically what motivated me to write the book was just a feeling that a potentially large market for my company, as well as the opportunity for me to provide an important service to Japanese companies, would be the authoring of a book which would present for Japanese companies all the areas of American legislation which the Japanese are not familiar with, such as affirmative action, and how the EEOC work—the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, how the fair employment laws are operating in the United States, equal pay for equal work, for example, the problems that Japanese are not familiar with, as well as providing them with concrete examples of the types of company policy manuals which are used in the United States, and employee handbooks. So the book has been selling extremely well, and incidentally, this book appears in Japanese and in English. So the full text has been translated. I wrote it in English; it’s been translated into Japanese and they appear together. So I think it might be a very useful language-

learning tool as well. As a matter of fact, Professor Haruo Shimada from Keio University was in charge of the Japanese translation, so it is an extremely good translation, and I think it would be helpful for any businessman trying to learn both the technical terminology and the way American companies operate inside the company.

*Matsumoto*: You are sitting on the fence looking at both sides of the fence and I’m sure you are, most, in the most qualified position to discuss the differences in management systems. What are the strengths derived from Japanese labor unions and management system?

*Nevins*: OK. Basically when we talk about unions we have some fundamental differences. For example, in Japan the union is centered around the enterprise. So for example in collective bargaining, there is an absence of a representative from an upper-body union. In other words, a trade union, or as we say in the States, an international union. So this means that the parties to the collective bargaining process know the company’s unique problems and are very familiar with those problems, so that in a sense it’s possible for management and labor to come up with the ideal solution for that company. If in a given year high wages cannot be paid, you can get some understanding from the union members within that company, for example. So I think that this is a big difference. In America, you have an outside representative, someone who does not work in that company, who is a member of the, say, the head office staff, or the local regional staff of the union office is involved in the collective bargaining negotiation. Now furthermore, in Japanese companies, since you have no international union, you don’t have union-imposed seniority system, for example, so that it becomes quite easy to adapt technological changes in Japanese companies. In the United States, union-imposed seniority rules tend to hamper the ability of a company to change the production process. So just from the aspect of unions, there are, you know, some definite ad-

vantages, which the Japanese have.

*Matsumoto*: So you don't bother to hire robots. You don't hire robots anyway, but you don't get them to do the job you do, in the States.

*Nevins*: Right, right. Actually robots are being much more widely used now in Japanese industry, and perhaps one reason for that is because in an American company if a robot were used by the company it might mean that a worker would lose his job. So the workers have tended to oppose changes in the production function because it may result in them losing their job. In Japan the worker will not lose his job if a robot is installed, so that basically the union does not oppose it, so it's possible for management to retool factories.

*Matsumoto*: How do you go about solving the problem of transferring the people as a result of using robots, for example? A lot of people are going to lose their jobs, right? Are you going to put them out to pasture, or how do you go about solving this problem?

*Nevins*: Well, this is in the United States?

*Matsumoto*: In the United States.

*Nevins*: In the United States, I think it will depend on the company. For example a very fine company like IBM, which has never been unionized, by the way—there is no labor union there—perhaps one reason is that Watson, the head of IBM for years and years, was committed to never laying off workers or firing workers, so in that particular case, I would say by improving the production process, with investment in capital equipment, workers do not lose their jobs. In a unionized company or in another company, it is very possible that workers might be laid off. Now here's another difference between a Japanese union and an American union. In the United States because you have trade unions or industry-wide unions, in which many companies are members, there's a, something called a union hiring hall. So this means that if you lose your job with a company in the United States, if the union can do it—now very

often they can't—but they try to find you a job in another company. Because they've unionized many companies, so they try to find you a job in another company through their union hiring hall. So this can mean sometimes that a worker's loyalty, or his allegiance, is stronger for his union, rather than for his company. Whereas in Japan, if you lose your job...

*Matsumoto*: You're nothing. You're finished.

*Nevins*: You're nothing, you're finished. You lose your position in the union, so you're completely on your own. And this may be one reason why Japanese workers, their first loyalty is to their company.

*Matsumoto*: Are you saying that it's not because the Japanese workers are loyal to their companies, but because the system in Japan makes them loyal?

*Nevins*: Right, that's a very good point. Let me just amplify that, and say that basically in Japan, Japanese industry, Japanese business, it's a closed labor market between companies. So this means that especially in larger companies, not in medium and small-sized enterprises, but in larger firms, everyone enters the company together on April first. And they will work, you know, extremely hard, at April first. Since there's very little mid-career hiring, once a worker joins a large company he never has an opportunity to get a job in another large company, because basically the hiring is done only of new school graduates, so when someone graduates from school he's hired. And the fringe benefits and the pay in a large company is far superior to that in a smaller company, and since the worker cannot get an equally good job in another large company, there's a tendency for him to make the most of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. So when he joins the company, in Japan it's very difficult to discharge workers, unless you commit a crime, for example. So sometimes Americans ask, "Why do Japanese work so hard, because after all, even if they don't work, it's been proven in the courts that a lazy worker cannot be fired simply because he's

lazy. "But I think the answer is that the Japanese know that they can't get an equally high-paying job elsewhere, so that they make the most of this one opportunity.

*Matsumoto*: You told me earlier that in Japan one of the characteristics of the Japanese management system is having a large room so that everyone can get in and sit and talk. Do you think this is one of the merits of the Japanese labor relations system?

*Nevins*: Right, I've always felt that it is, and I've also worked in the large room. I've been in Japan eight years, so I've worked in them in labor unions and in companies. And I feel the chief advantage is that there is instant communications within a large room, say having anywhere from twenty up to a hundred and fifty people. So at least for the sections surrounding, you know what is going on. And it's very easy for other managers from other sections, for example, to easily approach you. And it's easy for quite a young man to approach even a *bucho* or a department head by simply going up to his desk and just....

*Matsumoto*: Doesn't that create another problem because everyone knows everyone else's frame of mind? For example, you know, so everything is understood, through tacit understanding. Supposing there's a corporate whistle-blower, you know, leaks information of the company. There are always chances of someone trying to leak information, you know. It creates a lot of problems.

*Nevins*: Right. In the United States sometimes that's been in the news, I know, the corporate whistle blower. I would look at it in the other way. Certainly they know what is going on and they know the secrets, but because they know what is going on, they feel that they are participating in management. They're very satisfied, so that they are interested in their company's interest, and the chances of them doing something detrimental to their company, or undermining the company's image with the public I think are greatly reduced.

*Matsumoto*: So because of the sense of allegiance or the sense of belonging, sense of being together, so to speak.... But doesn't that—I think it works both ways, because if someone is overly, or should I say emotionally committed to his company, and he has to work very hard, but even at the expense of, well, some kind of principle, if, you want to put it that way, because "I did it for the sake of the company." This, you know, justifies his action. You can get away with some kind of a corporate murder even, you see. You might even go into jail, because "You did it for the good of the company. So how do you evaluate this system of emotional commitment in Japan, some kind of a samurai dedication?

*Nevins*: Well, I think that if an individual in a Japanese company is the sacrificial lamb for a corporation, I feel very, I sympathize with such an individual, but I think that that's quite a rare case. Now, basically it's difficult to distinguish in a Japanese company between work and play, for example. And if you see the company's success intricately related with your own success as a manager within that company and as a member of the society, because your pay and your prestige and your status is coming from that company, then I think that the company's success is perhaps the same as your own success, and by working hard you can show good results. And I think that Japanese managers feel a tremendous amount of satisfaction just from that, and from the recognition, which they get from their peers.

*Matsumoto*: But all the employees are supposed to be totally committed to company work. This means that they are not supposed to be specialists; they are not supposed to be specializing only in one area of interest, right?

*Nevins*: Right.

*Matsumoto*: But there'll be no need for, can I say, a specialist. All they want is generalist. How do you evaluate on this?

*Nevins*: OK, I think that essentially what we're talking about, being

a generalist rather than a specialist means that, by definition that you've taken on a number of responsibilities within the firm, and this is—in a sense, it's job enrichment. It's a very enriched career which you have. Often in America, let's say a man who's in the marketing function will be in marketing, say, all his life, even if he's not really that, he doesn't like the area. And sometimes you get into a particular management slot and you may not like your boss or the people you're dealing with or the area, and I think many Americans would welcome an opportunity to move into a different field. So that basically in terms of motivation and personal satisfaction, by definition the generalist being someone who's moved around to an awful lot of functions within a company, I think that that person basically ends up being a more satisfied employee, and he has an opportunity to take on new responsibilities, and if he's going about as far as he had in the marketing area, if he just doesn't like it, maybe they will switch him into personnel, or into a staff position, and he may have an opportunity to distinguish himself there.

*Matsumoto*: How can one, particularly in talking about the case in Japan, know whether or not the certain person is on the promotional track, because you've been moved around, so sometimes you lose a sense of direction, you know. Am I supposed to be on the right track, or something like that or *shusse kōsu*, or something like that.

*Nevins*: Right, that's an interesting question. I would say that one of the great strengths of Japanese management is what I call the "secret: to keep them scurrying".

*Matsumoto*: What does that mean, "scurrying"?

*Nevins*: Scurrying, right, scurrying. Scurrying means that the workers in a Japanese company are always moving, and they're working very fast. They're breathlessly, you know, making efforts for the good of the company, and maybe they don't know where they're headed. But the interesting thing is that the management is very good at not providing status differentials to different members of the staff. So that everyone joins on April first. There's no such thing as an M.B.A. If someone gets an M.B.A., suddenly

in an American company, he comes right up at the top, and people younger (older) than that individual,—people older, younger, other people become demotivated. Whereas in Japan, the workers all think that they're going to be president of the company, or at least general manager, so for the most productive years of their life, until they're thirty-five or so, they work very, very hard. Now if they knew that this individual is on the elite course and he's scheduled to become, say, vice-president of the company, then the other, his co-workers would not compete with him.

*Matsumoto*: Nothing could be more demoralizing for the Japanese employees to see someone coming from somewhere else and getting a job way above their heads, so to speak, you know. So, because our system—correct me if I'm wrong—is based on the bottom-up formula, you see, rather than top-down method that you apply in the United States. How do you compare these two things, with respect to the decision-making process?

*Nevins*: OK, the way I see this, and I feel another great strength of Japanese management, is that in the United States there's too much of a tendency for people at the top to be involved in operational responsibilities in their company. In a Japanese company everyone, say, above *bucho* level is really looking at the outside world and they're dealing with customers or government organizations, and they're not involved in line responsibility the way the, say, the *kacho*, or the section chief is. So I think that this means that in an American company, many managers, mid-level managers, say, people of the *kacho* level, they tend not to take initiative, they tend to wait for some sort of directions to come from above, whereas in a Japanese company because of a *ringi*, and this bubbling up of proposals and so on, I think that a very young man, even twenty-five, twenty-six, out of college, begins to feel that he is a manager, and in a sense he is really participating in the corporate decision-making process. So that he takes initiative; he feels more confident, and in that sense I think that you have more overall management input, more dynamism in a Japanese company than you do in many, many American companies.



*Matsumoto*: But it sometimes happens that the decision is made at the top. The question is how are you going to implement the decision, you know, down to the bottom. And it calls for *nemawashi*, or some kind of behind-the-scenes negotiations. Doesn't this strike Americans as funny or strange or bizarre? Could you elaborate?

*Nevins*: In a Japanese company....?

*Matsumoto*: Yes, in a Japanese company.

*Nevins*: Even if, well, basically I'm not....

*Matsumoto*: Actually it would have to take the form of *ringi*, as you said a little while ago. But sometimes the decision is made, and sometimes you use *ato ringi*, you know, and if you're going to get it over with, you know, one way or the other, as a matter of formality.

*Nevins*: No, I think that it's very important, even if this decision is made at the top, in a Japanese company, Japanese top management is sophisticated enough to realize that a decision is worthless unless it's implemented, or executed. Now in an American company American managers make a decision but since lower management was not given a chance with the *nemawashi* to put their *hanko* on it, you know, and the *kairan* and so on, doesn't go around to them, since they're not involved in the decision they're not excited about implementing that decision. They don't contribute to the process, whereas in Japan as you say, even in the cases where the decision is made at the top, top management is smart enough to make the people below them think that they made the decision. Now, one reason—they make them think that they made the decision, so then they work very hard to implement the decision.

*Matsumoto*: Because everyone knows he's in on it.

*Nevins*: They're totally behind the decision. Now why can Japanese top management afford to, not to take the credit? The reason is that even if a Japanese manager has a very sharp subordinate, he is not afraid that that subordinate will take his job. In America

we say, "the he's-after-my-job complex." The boss can be very afraid of a very sharp subordinate, simply because in an American firm's management structure, it is possible for a younger worker to suddenly become your boss, whereas in Japan even if it is universally known in that section, or that department, that that young worker is sharper and smarter than his *kacho*, his section chief, say, it is impossible for that young worker to become the *kacho*, and the *kacho* knows that. So that section chief, probably if he's smart, will realize that he will be highly evaluated if he's given credit for training that young man, for imparting all his secrets, so that I think that there's a constant program of career development going on every day, day in and day out in a Japanese company, which may not go on in an American company.

*Matsumoto*: You're talking about the positive factors of the Japanese management system. Could you tell us a little bit about the negative factors, you know? For instance, does the system in Japan work in the United States as well?

*Nevins*: It obviously...to answer that question I think it would be a hundred per cent accurate to say it doesn't work as well. It's a matter of degree. But I think it will work, and I think some of the points made today to an extent will work in the United States. For example, encouraging people to work in a large room, or at least for upper managers to get out of their office once in a while and to talk with people and to know what's going on in the company would be extremely helpful.

*Matsumoto*: It has worked in England.

*Nevins*: And it's, oh, it's worked in the United States. I mean, basically some Japanese-managed companies in the United States have been very successful. For example, quality control. Japanese companies are concerned about the quality area, but Sony, for example, in their color TV plant in San Diego, has surpassed its worldwide record, for lack of a major defect on televisions, using American workers.

- Matsumoto*: Which is part of the labor-management system.
- Nevins*: Definitely. They're using American workers and I think that they've been able to do it through having efficient investment in plant and equipment and also just—it's management's responsibility to create that environment in which the worker, you know, wants to do a good job.
- Matsumoto*: Could you be more specific? What's so unique about the Japanese labor-management system? Did they provide carrots only, instead of sticks? In the United States?
- Nevins*: You might say that to some extent the stick doesn't come down as heavy. Basically because of this, well, you know, this *sekinin no shozai*, you know this area of responsibility here.
- Matsumoto*: It's kind of blurred.
- Nevins*: It's very blurred in Japan; it's not defined. That's another reason why someone, a manager, a young manager, might be willing to stick his neck out and take some initiative, because he won't get the rewards, because everyone has put his *hanko*, you know, his stamp on it. But he also will not get punished, right? So that might be an interesting observation.
- Matsumoto*: So you work hard and meet your quota; perhaps the chances are you'll be able to get prizes for that, and this increases what you might call inter-office competition, which in turns increases productivity. Am I correct? Is that what you're saying basically?
- Nevins*: And also just the—something as basic as a fundamental understanding, trust, on the part of the worker, that he will not be laid off.
- Matsumoto*: Ah, security.
- Nevins*: This is very important. If you think that the company will lay you off sometime in a year, in two years, you're not willing to commit your life and your heart and your spirit to that company, you see.

- Matsumoto*: But you can't get rid of these parasites. Some people are sitting by the window, you know.
- Nevins*: Well, I think the Japanese are fairly good at getting rid of those, though. It's very, very subtle. It's called maybe the "Bad Apple Division" in an American company, or...
- Matsumoto*: Bad Apple Division, never heard of that.
- Nevins*: Bad Apple Division, right, right. It's like when you put them up, you know, *madogiwazoku*, up along the window, right, right?
- Matsumoto*: I see. We have the system called "Jump before I push you."
- Nevins*: Right, right.
- Matsumoto*: You have the similar practice in the United States?
- Nevins*: I think I would say the old, when you tap them on the shoulder, right?
- Matsumoto*: I see. So actually the system in Japan does work in the United States to a certain extent, right?
- Nevins*: It has been working. Also, for example, Matsushita bought up the old Motorola color television plant and there have been great improvements there, in productivity and quality control, right. And I think it's important that American managers look closely at the Japanese system. And also, Japan, I think, as a fine friend of America, now also has a responsibility to pull or take America by the hand and to help us in some of these areas, right.
- Matsumoto*: OK, it looks like buying American is going to continue for some time.
- Nevins*: I hope you are right.
- Matsumoto*: Well, thank you very much, Tom. You've been a wonderful guest. Thank you very much.
- Nevins*: Thanks an awful lot. It was nice being here. Right.

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