

ANALYSIS OF A SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR USING VISUALIZATION TOOLS – CASE OF THE POKEMON CREATOR –

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the profile of an entrepreneur: Mr. Satoshi Tajiri who created “Pokémon” in order to know why he could successfully started his own company. Pokémon caused the global booming from the end of 1990 to the beginning of 2000s. The games, animations, toys and trading cards of Pokémon have been sold in the world. Moreover, the hit of PokémonGo in 2016 impressed wide range of people the name of Pokémon. After reviewing the books and articles regarding Tajiri, the reason why he successfully became an entrepreneur is discussed using visualization tools such as Matrix Resume, Decision Tree and Cause and Effect Diagram. As a result, three factors are identified. Moreover, Japan's KOSEN: National Institute of Technology may have indirectly contributed to his successful introduction of Pokémon.

1. INTRODUCTION

In spite of long term economic stagnation, Japan's subculture including Pokémon has been recognized well and received good reputation. Because of tactical U.S. marketing by Nintendo America and their partners, Pokémon was introduced into more than 50 countries and the accumulated sales as of August, 2003 hit \$15 billion U.S. ^[1] Currently, Pokémon is capturing the attention from U.S., European and Japanese users again. A new game: PokémonGo which is played on smart phone was launched globally in summer and it is played not only by the people who used to enjoy the game but also children and senior people who don't know the original Pokémon.

At the end of 2016, PokémonGo's fever has been cool down, though 600 million downloads were made all over the world as of November. Nintendo's stock value doubled in eight days after the release of it and “Pokenomics” became the social phenomena ^[2]. PokémonGo was elected as one of the top 10 popular words by commercial site in 2016 and the attention toward AR: Augmented Reality has been increased.

Since the first release of PokémonGo on July 21 2016 in Japan, its downloads were boosted and various warnings were released by schools, public spaces, the Ministry of

Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), etc. in Japan. PokémonGo is produced by Niantec, a subsidiary of Google and Pokémon Company that was funded by Nintendo Co., Ltd., Creatures Inc., and GAME FREAK Inc. that is headed by a game creator and an entrepreneur: Mr. Satoshi Tajiri.

2. PROFILE OF AN ENTREPRENEUR WHO CREATED POKEMON

2.1 Matrix Resume of Mr. Satoshi Tajiri

The authors have been analyzing the profiles and the episodes of entrepreneurs using Matrix Resume which categorizes their careers in terms of common key words or description ^[3]. For example, Figure 1 shows the matrix resume of Mr. Satoshi Tajiri. His personal history can be break into 6 rows and the each can be corresponded to the following 6 categories. They are:

1. Education & Study
2. Game Creation
3. Writing Articles
4. Corporate Management
5. Extend the Business
6. New Horizon

He was born and grew up in suburbs of Tokyo, where natural environments such as ponds and forests were remained. He enjoyed collecting insects and fishing when he was an elementary school student. However, the city was rapidly changing to residential area by embedding the ponds and cutting trees of forests. When he was a junior high school student, he met “Invader Game” that was popular arcade game in 1970s. He became a joystick junkie and confessed he spent 12 hours a day by doing video game when he was a junior high school student ^[4].

When he was 15 year old, he joined the National Institute of Technology, so called “KOSEN” in Japan, instead of going to high school. Tajiri published magazine named “Game Freak” when he was a KOSEN student. After graduating from KOSEN, Tajiri did not join a company nor moved into the 3rd year of the University. Instead, he developed games and wrote the articles about games. His friends whom he got to know through his own game magazine supported his game

0~12	13~15	16~20	21~29	30~32	33~
Enjoyed insect-collection at Western Tokyo. Gained writing custom at elementary school. Good at soldering and making radio.	Encountered "Invader Game" and frequently visit game center. Being game junkie, studying at junior high and cram school (juku).	Studied Electronic Engineering at Tokyo KOSEN. Got to know Ken Sugimori, etc. through Tajiri' magazine: Game Freak.	Aquainted with planners and designers of large game makers such as NAMCO, SEGA, NINTENDO, SONY, etc.	Negotiated with the staff of SONY and NINTENDO. Consider to introduce communication to game.	Restrained public appearance because of TV incidents that caused Visual Hyper Sensitivity Disorder.
	Interested in Game Creation. Started to apply for game creation contest.	Won the Prize of 100,000 yen at "SEGAGame Idea Contest". Handed half of it to his parents.	Released software such as "Quinty", "Jerry boy" and "Yoshi", etc. for Family Computer.	Released "Pocket Monster Red-Green" after six year planning.	Released "Pocket Monster Ruby-Sapphire"
		Started to write articles on his own game magazine: "Game Freak".	Published a book titled "Catch me at the pack land".	Published "New Game Design".	Jointly published "Satoshi Tajiri a man who create Pokemon".
			Became the President of GAME FREAK inc. and showed leadership during the employees' strikes.	Planned animation of Pokémon. Responded to TV accidents of viewers by dazzling lights on screen .	Actively promote Pokémon's globalization
				"Pocket Monster" achieved more than million unit sales in Japan.	Pokémon' animation movie, game, goods, etc. became a global hit.
					Pokémon gets the attention because of "PokémonGo" by Niantec.

Figure 1 Mr. Satoshi Tajiri's Matrix Resume

creation from device engineering to character design. For example, Ken Sugimori who is well known for his Pokémon design is one of them.

Since family computers had been introduced to the market in 1980s, game companies such as Namco, Nintendo, Sega, Sony, etc. competed fiercely. Tajiri contacted many people of the game industry. The people such as Shigeru Miyamoto: a creator of Super Mario and Gunpei Yokoi of Nintendo gave the big influence on Tajiri. It took six years until the extraordinary booming of Pokémon, though Tajiri continuously produced the game products such as "Quinty", "Jerry boy", "Yoshi", etc. under his strong leadership.

When he was early 30s, he started to think to integrate the communication function into the game machines. He was surrounded by good advisors of Sony, Nintendo, etc. who want to increase the users of family computers or portable game machines. Tajiri was successfully equipped these features, accepting those professionals.

Pokémon's hit made Tajiri's life changed significantly. The Pokémon incident named "Pokémon Shock" that affected child TV viewers' eyesight by frequent illumination happened in 1997. That made him annoyed, but Pokémon boom continued after year 2000^[5]. Tajiri has been the president of Game Freak since 1989 and currently more than 100 employees are working.

Among major six period of Tajiri's personal history, it is evident that his childhood experience at the suburbs gave the big influence on the creation of Pokémon. However,

his KOSEN period from age 16 to 20 may be the most important period in order to establish the company. He met lifelong friends who became members of his company.

2.2 Decision Tree Analysis of Tajiri's Matrix Resume

The Decision Tree is used in business planning in order to develop strategies by presuming various cases. It consists of "Action" which is done by the person and "Event" which cannot be controlled by the person. The Decision Tree is usually made before the decision in business, but it may be useful to know how the successful entrepreneur decides during critical period and to assume the key success factors to be the president.

Figure 2 shows Tajiri's Decision Tree based upon his Matrix Resume. Until he became the president, Tajiri made many decision in terms of study, game creation, and writing articles. Among these decisions, some critical events happened such as winning the small prize (100,000 yen) in game creation or getting to know his business partners. To make his future colleague and subordinates by publishing a game magazine is also notable event, because they played the important role when Tajiri became the president.

The decision of getting into KOSEN: National Institute of Technology is also critical because it enabled Tajiri to pursue the different high school days from the same generation. If he went to an ordinary high school, he had to spend a lot of energy to prepare for the entrance examination of "good universities". Moreover, even he

	0~12	13~15	16~20	21~29	30~32	33~
(1. Education & Study)	Surrounded by natural resources Not surrounded	Visit Game Center Enjoy Sports, etc.	Enter Technical College (KOSEN) Go to High School University? No	Get to know planners Not get Work for a Large Company? No	Negotiate with staff of SONY, etc. Not negotiate with other companies	TV incident No incident May not start his own company
(2. Game Creation)		Apply for Game Creation Contest Not apply	Get 100,000 yen and hand it to parents Abandon the Game	Release software such as "Quinty" Withdraw from the market	Release software Withdraw from the market	Pokémon series
(3. Writing Articles)			Publish "Game Freak magazine" Not Publish	Get to know future business partners Not get to know		
(4. Corporate Management)				Become the President Not become	Planned animation of Pokémon Not plan	Actively promote global Pokémon Not promote
(5. Extend the Business)		<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Note) ■ : Action ○ : Event ---- : Did - - - : Did Not Do</p> </div>			Pokémon game achieve 1 M. Sales No achievement	
(6. New horizon)						Get the Attention by PokémonGo Not get

Figure 2 Decision Tree Analysis of Tajiri's Matrix Resume

entered the good university, there must be a pressure to enter a large company from his parents since Tajiri's grade at junior high school is high enough to increase the parents' expectation.

2.3 Cause and Effect Diagram for Matrix Resume

In order to know why Tajiri could become the president, Cause and Effect Diagram is used and analyzed the success factors of Tajiri as it is shown in Future 3. There are three major reasons for his success.

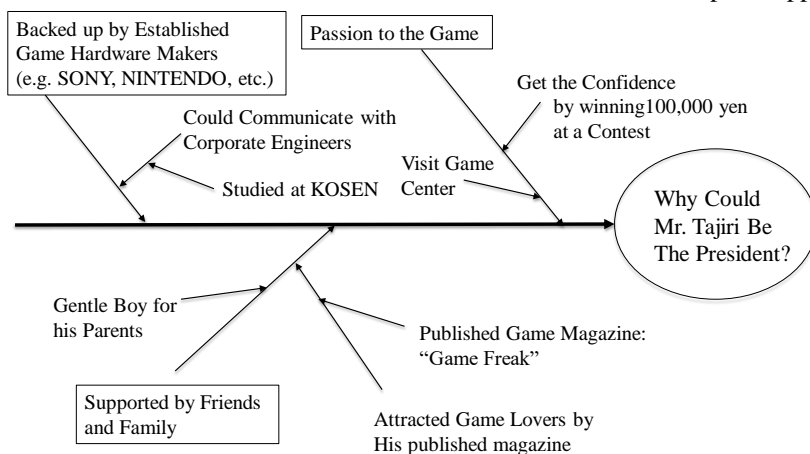


Figure 3 Cause and Effect Diagram based on Tajiri's Matrix Resume

They are: "Passion to the Game", "Backed up by Established Game Makers" and "Support from Friends and Family". Firstly, Tajiri continuously has his passion toward the game since he firstly met TV game. Although his interest shifted from playing to making games, his passion to the game has not been changed. Instead, it was accelerated later by winning the game contest when he was a KOSEN student.

Secondly, Tajiri's friends and the family supported him to start his own company. Tajiri's father said that his son was a gentle little boy. His friends who were readers of his magazine got together in Machida from all over Japan. Apparently, his game magazine was the useful tool to attract game designers and engineers toward Tajiri's home ground.

Finally, he was surrounded by good supporters of game makers such as SONY, NINTENDO, etc. Because game industry was young and the target users were also young, business people could not ignore young game creators, even though Japan was a seniority-based society, particularly in 1980s. To be a KOSEN student might be helpful for Tajiri, since the graduates tend to have good reputation as diligent and practical engineers from Japan's major companies.

3. KOSEN: JAPAN'S NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

3.1 Overview of KOSEN

Since KOSEN may give the influence on Tajiri's success, let us describe the KOSEN system briefly. KOSEN is a 5 years education system which is categorized as "advanced education" like universities rather than secondary schools in terms of the MEXT's educational system. KOSEN was started in 1962 when Japan needed practical technicians and engineers for its rapid industrialization. There are 51 national KOSEN in Japan and about 10,000 new students who are only 1% of the same age group in Japan join the KOSEN. Although KOSEN is equivalent to High School and Junior College combined, the curriculum is very different from the ordinary high schools, since it is more focused on engineering. Students learn engineering intensively rather than liberal arts.

Tajiri said that KOSEN provided free environment that enabled him to spend much time on game creation and writing the essays re how to conquer the games on his magazine named "Game Freak". It is evident that his passion toward game creation was synthesized and attracted his friends during the time of KOSEN. At the same time, being the KOSEN student may give the good inspiration on corporate people who work for SONY, etc. because many KOSEN graduate works for engineering related industry. In another word, a basic foundation of Pokémon may be formed during the period of KOSEN in some way.

3.2 KOSEN in the post-industrialized Society

In 1950s, David Riesmann classified historical development into three categories: pre-industrial, industrialized and post-industrialized society. According to Riesmann, people's social character is called "other directed" in the post-industrialized society. In this society, economic growth stops and the population is again stabilized due to few births and few deaths. People's behavior is controlled by other people or mass media [6]. In another word, people look for others whom they can be connected to live in the post-industrialized society. As a result, people hardly be separated from mobile phone or SNS since they want to be with others.

On the other hand, Lyotard defines post-modern society as "small but not to be isolated and exploring in the most complicated and movable relation structure". For example, portable equipment such as Walkman provides not only unique, portable and me-only music event, but also provides experience to mingle other personalities

including "me" [1]. According to Nakazawa, Pokémon has the characteristics of healing and portability. It imitates the real world, though it transcends the boundary of artificial reality. It may be helpful to heal the stress that brought from the nomad society which was brought after the industrialization [7].

Japan' KOSEN Graduates are supposed to correspond to rapid growing manufacturing industries by 1980s, however it has been changed to provide variety of human resources as it is shown in Tajiri's case. In a sense, KOSEN is not only the middle level technicians or engineers any more. Diversification is currently encouraged all over the world in order to compete in the global market. KOSEN may provide an important function such as diversification to support innovation.

4. Conclusion

Reviewing the entrepreneur's profile using Matrix Resume and other visualization tools for business, success factors of an entrepreneur who contributed to the stated-of-the-art games have been analyzed. It's not easy to know why the entrepreneurs are successful because human beings are complicated and have various aspects, particularly, in the case of the live president who is not talkative by himself. Using the published document and various business tools, Tajiri's three success factors to become the president are clarified. They are Tajiri's passion to the game, to be supported by friends and family and to be backed up by the large game makers. At the same time, KOSEN's potential contribution as a Japan's alternative higher education system is also indicated.

Acknowledgement

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