

**“Make sure you pay your staff properly.”**

Ogawa started out as an engineer and joined Matsushita Electric Industrial mid-career at the age of 35. After a decade at the Home Appliance Research Laboratory he was appointed head of microwave ovens in 1963, then aged 45.

“We made a prototype microwave oven and took it to Junji Esaka, who was director of the Home Appliance Sector (and a managing director of the company), and the founder, and they liked it. ‘This is pretty good,’ they said. ‘This will develop into a business unit in its own right one day.’ ‘We can’t include it in any of the existing divisions because the technology is so unprecedented—we’ve got to set up a new division.’

“Then they asked me: ‘Are you the one who knows all about this, Ogawa? Right, then you’re in charge. As of today, you’re a business executive.’ And that’s how I came to be head of microwave ovens.”

Ogawa was told it was up to him to make and sell the products. Business owners, he heard, learn from their clients and make the products they want. Once you’ve sold something to clients, there will always be feedback about this problem and that issue, and those form the basis of your research activities. Keep repeating that and the gadgets you make in the research lab will become marketable as products. Once the customers start attaching a value to your products that’s higher than the cost of manufacturing, there’s your profit. And make sure you pay your staff properly.

“That struck me as weird, because I assumed the company would pay my staff. But it wasn’t long before I learned the hard way that wage payments are the most important aspect of management—not to mention the very starting point for Autonomous Responsible Management.”



The founder inspecting microwave oven plant with division director, Mr. Ogawa (1976)