

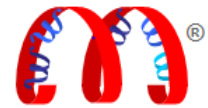
## **Mastering the Chessboard of International Business: An Executive's Approach on Leadership and Strategy**

The world of business leadership is known for its demanding nature, requiring individuals to possess resilience, adaptability, and a remarkable ability to turn challenges into opportunities. This case study provides a comprehensive analysis of Dr. Marukawa's diverse leadership journey, a distinguished executive operating within multinational and multicultural business environments. Holding key positions as CEO & Representative MD at JX Metals Circular Solutions Europe, Vice Chairman & Representative MD at TANIOBIS GmbH, and Board Member at Alloyed, Oxford, Dr. Marukawa has navigated varied strategic landscapes. His life story is a testament to the transformational power of experience, education, and resilience in shaping a strategic thinking leader. As the managing director of a Japanese corporation, his early years in the United Kingdom were foundational in developing his strategic acumen and visionary leadership style.

The methodology applied here encompasses interview-based data collection and thematic analysis. A comprehensive, fully recorded interview with Dr. Marukawa was conducted in Tokyo in 2023 and later transcribed. Subsequently, the text was coded to identify recurring themes related to his life and leadership journey. These themes were then categorized for a more coherent interpretation of the data. Essentially, this methodology combines in-depth personal interviewing with rigorous thematic analysis, a process further strengthened by Dr. Marukawa's active involvement and his validation of the outcomes.

Dr. Marukawa's formative years in the UK presented him with a set of unique challenges: he had to navigate cultural differences and language barriers in an unfamiliar environment. Sister Anthony, his headmistress, who mentored Dr. Marukawa navigate the complexities of British society as a foreigner taught him the value of focusing on controllable aspects of life and embracing the world's complexities beyond a simple black-and-white paradigm. As a result, his inherent mathematical aptitude served as a guiding light during these testing times, helping him gain recognition among his peers. This underscores the importance of identifying and harnessing individual strengths in leadership and strategic thinking. These early lessons formed the cornerstone of Dr. Marukawa's pragmatic and adaptable approach to leadership, where he focuses on maximizing his range of influence while respecting the multifaceted nature of business and society.

Equally influencing were Dr. Marukawa's university years which introduced him to the teachings of Professor Hada, an expert in German literature and World War II history. The profound story of Father Kolbe's self-sacrifice at Auschwitz, as told by Professor Hada, prompted Dr. Marukawa to



contemplate his own capacity for courage and selflessness. The story left a significant impact, nurturing his development into a leader who constantly reflects on values such as empathy and altruism while focusing on strategic smart moves as a business leader at the same time. The key figures in Dr. Marukawa's life, such as Sister Anthony and Professor Hada, serve as reminders of the crucial role of mentorship and coaching in leadership development (Haug, 2020; Osnes, 2016). Their influence fostered his growth and shaped him into a multifaceted leader, combining courage, adaptability, humility, and strategic thinking.

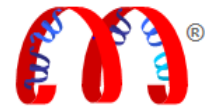
Dr. Marukawa's commitment to personal growth and lifelong learning, as evidenced by his decision to pursue an MBA while working at Mitsubishi, underscores his understanding of the importance of adaptability and continual learning in strategic decision-making. Notably, during his tenure at the former H.C. Starck, now TANIJOBIS, his resilience in navigating complex transitions was highlighted, along with his emphasis on employee welfare and active integration of the works council. This is in line with his reflections on observing different leadership styles during challenging exit scenarios. He recognized the critical role of balanced leaders who are less egoistic, genuinely concerned about their employees, and prioritize the company's well-being over their own career advancement and financial rewards.

Dr. Marukawa's business strategy is centered on five main areas: increasing sales, reducing costs, ensuring compliance, promoting safety, and developing the people. He believes that strategic decisions and actions should be firmly aligned with these key areas to ensure organizational success. His observations on leadership styles further underpin this strategy, with a particular focus on leaders who emphasize the strategic and entrepreneurial thinking of their teams and the broader organization. This intertwining of strategic thinking and visionary leadership forms the basis of Dr. Marukawa's approach to leading in the business landscape.

Successfully reintegrating into Japanese society after years of international exposure, Dr. Marukawa exemplifies adaptability and cultural sensitivity. His experiences underscore the core Japanese principles he values: the practice of respecting others, especially those in higher positions, and the concept of *Ikigai* - finding purpose and fulfillment in life and work.

Recognizing the need for diversity and inclusivity, Dr. Marukawa champions opportunities for women and promotes their advancement. His advocacy for ambition, mentorship, and personal development is exemplified in his participation in a German-Japan symposium in Tokyo, where he will contribute to a panel discussion on promoting the advancement of female engineers.

Viewing networking as a means of building genuine relationships, Dr. Marukawa values the creation of a positive legacy and fostering change. He also highlights the importance of engagement with arts, history, and literature, emphasizing these as critical components in fostering personal growth and a more comprehensive perspective.



### **Insights for the automotive industry:**

**Adaptability in a Changing Market:** To navigate the industry's rapid shift towards electric and autonomous vehicles, leaders must embrace change, stay informed about new technologies, and adapt their strategies proactively.

**Strategic Thought in Leadership:** Developing a strategic mindset is crucial for effectively navigating the complex challenges that the automotive industry encounters, including supply chain disruptions and environmental regulations.

**Leveraging Strengths:** By identifying and harnessing their companies' unique strengths in areas such as design, technology, or manufacturing, automotive leaders can gain a competitive edge in the industry.

**Intelligent Networking:** Building strong relationships within and beyond the industry is crucial, highlighting the significance of networking excellence. In the globally connected automotive world, success relies on forging alliances, partnerships, and fostering collaborative innovation.

**Cultural Diversity and Inclusivity:** Embracing cultural diversity and advocating for inclusivity is crucial for organizations' need to have a diverse workforce. By promoting diversity and creating an inclusive environment, companies can tap into a wider range of perspectives and ideas, fostering innovation and gaining a better understanding of a diverse consumer base.

**Embracing a Wider Perspective:** Acknowledging the significance of non-practical aspects like arts, history, and literature underscores the importance for leaders to adopt a broader perspective. This broader view facilitates improved innovative decision-making and empowers leaders to think creatively when tackling complex challenges.

**Purpose, Respect, and Fulfillment:** The principles of Ikigai and respect hold particular relevance in global industry. Leaders who discover purpose and fulfillment in their work while maintaining a high level of respect for others can cultivate a positive and productive work environment. This, in turn, enhances employee satisfaction and contributes to overall organizational performance.

In conclusion, Dr. Marukawa's leadership journey provides valuable insights for the international industry. Leaders are advised to consider prioritizing adaptability to changing market trends and understanding new technologies. Strategic thought is crucial when navigating challenges, while leveraging strengths can create a competitive edge. Emphasizing networking and embracing cultural diversity fosters innovation. Taking a wider perspective into consideration enhances decision-making processes. Leaders are encouraged to focus on purpose, respect, and inclusivity to cultivate a positive work environment. By integrating these insights, leaders may effectively navigate the changing market and drive success.



I sincerely thank Dr. Marukawa for sharing his valuable insights and time with Dr. Mona Haug for the workshop at Volkswagen AG, Wolfsburg.

Quellen:

Haug, M. (2020). *Exploring the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas through the concept of embedded gender images* (Doctoral dissertation).

Osnes, G. (Ed.). (2016). *Family Capitalism: Best practices in ownership and leadership*. Taylor & Francis.

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are intended for distribution purposes only and should not be used for publishing without prior permission. While the article can be shared and distributed, any form of publishing, including but not limited to print, online platforms, or commercial usage, requires explicit authorization from the author. For inquiries regarding publishing rights, please contact the authors directly.

DOWNLOAD: [www.monahaug.de](http://www.monahaug.de)