

Winning on Quality: Japan's Curated Commerce Strategy

Japanet Holdings began as a single camera store in Nagasaki. With a model based on the three steps of “Discover, Polish and Communicate,” the company has redefined Japan’s approach to retail, travel, and sports, growing into one of the country’s most innovative consumer service groups.

Japanet’s roots were humble. It started in 1986, when founder Akira Takata opened a camera shop in Nagasaki. From this modest base, the company steadily expanded into radio shopping, TV shopping, catalog sales, and then online sales.

The subsequent business succession was an anomaly in Japan. In 2015, Akira Takata completely retired at age 65, taking neither a chairman nor an advisory role. He handed full authority over to his son, Akito, who was 35 at the time. Such a complete transfer of power is rare in Japan’s corporate culture, where founders often remain affiliated long after stepping down. “This was unparalleled, and I was deeply grateful for it. He trusted me,” Akito recounts.

At the time of the handover, Japanet’s annual sales were approximately 150 billion yen (about \$1.01 billion at current exchange rates). From this base, Akito expanded the business beyond the core products—home appliances, bedding, and household goods—that had been the focus of his father, to include cruise travel, food subscriptions, and water dispensers. He succinctly explains his philosophy: “In any field, if the quality is good, you can sell it with confidence.”

● “Careful Selection and Concentration” to Refine Offerings

While global e-commerce platforms like Amazon and Rakuten compete with sheer product volume, Japanet’s strategy is the near opposite: “Careful selection and concentration” (Gensen Shūchū). Japanet targets customers who want to make a good purchase but find it bothersome to research and compare products themselves. Leveraging the company’s strength in selection, it rigorously curates the optimal product in each category and sells it on a large scale. By buying in massive bulk—tens to hundreds of thousands of units—it gains price competitiveness and the ability to develop Japanet original models incorporating customer needs.

● “Doing Everything on Our Own” to Control Every Step

This selective strategy would be unconvincing without strong infrastructure to back it up. “We operate our own call centers and distribution centers, and we handle repairs and after-sales service entirely in-house. We do not outsource anything,” says Akito. In an industry where outsourcing is common for cost-cutting, Japanet operates everything internally, prioritizing direct contact with the customer. This approach ensures that real customer feedback—on product usage or repair requests—is collected directly by Japanet. This input then drives model changes, leading to the creation of highly marketable products and services.

This commitment to in-house operations extends to new ventures like the cruise business. Japanet charters the large cruise ship MSC Bellissima, operating 10-day cruises around Japan. Carrying about 4,000 guests per trip, it runs 11 cycles a year. These voyages on curated routes serve as real-time case studies for service improvement. “We learn something every time and implement Kaizen (continuous improvement) immediately for the next

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PRESIDENT &
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HOLDINGS

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● Selective Partnerships and US Venture Investment

While the company strictly adheres to its own model, it is not against international engagement. “To partner with Los Angeles Times readers, we need to expand our own customer base,” Akito emphasizes. However, he candidly admits that joint ventures have not been successful in the past, as they slow down decision-making and dilute quality control. “In that sense, we may not be the best partner,” he concedes.

Japanet is making selective investments. The company has already deployed around \$100 million, including capital commitments in U.S. venture capital, largely in Silicon Valley. Japanet’s strategy is to discover innovative companies whose products can be offered to Japanese consumers through Japanet’s distribution channels. If the fit is strong, they may consider an acquisition. “If a company’s product is a good fit for selling in Japan, we can support them,” Akito says.

This investment arm provides Japanet with exposure to global innovation while reinforcing the company’s core philosophy of bringing only products that meet its stringent standards of quality and trust to the market.

● Showcasing Japan’s World-Class Omotenashi

Beyond the corporate story lies a broader mission. Akito wants Japanet to contribute to the restoration of Japan’s status as a global investment and tourism destination. “I want people to know that Japan has a mindset for quality, service, food, and Omotenashi (wholehearted hospitality). It’s world-class,” he asserts.

The distinction he points out is critical: Japan’s competitive edge lies in emotional sincerity, in addition to logical efficiency. The service level is not just high; it’s delivered with heart.

For international business leaders considering Japan, the deep cultural embedding of service, hospitality, and quality, which guarantees trust and satisfaction, is a major draw.

● Looking to the Future: An Open Invitation

Japanet will celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2026. Akito’s leadership reflects both continuity and change. While the company still upholds the founder’s values of integrity and quality, under Akito’s command, it is operating more boldly, rapidly, and outwardly.

Japanet positions itself not as an e-commerce rival fixated on volume, but as a curator of the highest-class experiences, from home appliances to cruises and sports. Its constant focus is on quality, trust, and service. “Japanet’s business is not just logic; it’s passion. We are open-minded, and we value relationships,” says Akito.

For both foreign investors and tourists, the message is clear: Japanet provides an entryway to the best of Japan. With its curated products, high-satisfaction experiences, and a culture that prizes speed and integrity, the company is a business partner and a host rolled into one. “Please come to Japan. We will support you with all our efforts,” Akito concludes with a smile. ■

voyage,” Akito explains, referencing the Japanese practice of continuous improvement.

This business strategy also reinforces brand trust. By strictly selecting and refining products and services, and by internalizing everything from purchase to experience through its self-sufficient model, Japanet prevents quality degradation caused by external vendors and delivers high-quality service. As a result, the number of repeat customers who want to use Japanet again is growing.

● Sports and Regional Revitalization

The business policy of “Discover, Refine, and Deliver” also applies to Japanet’s sports and regional revitalization initiatives. In 2017, Japanet brought the local Nagasaki-based soccer club V-Varen Nagasaki into the group. Subsequently, unlike most Japanese teams whose stadiums are publicly owned, Japanet made the bold decision to privately construct Nagasaki Stadium City, a complex centered around a soccer stadium.

“In Japan, the business model of a private company owning both the sports team and the stadium did not exist. We are the pioneers,” Akito states. Nagasaki Stadium City includes a soccer stadium, an arena, a hotel, commercial facilities, and offices, realizing a new model for sports business.

Private-sector stadium operation is still uncommon in Japan. By making it profitable, the company aims to succeed in pri-

vate-sector-led regional revitalization in Nagasaki and contribute to the invigoration of Japan as a whole.

● Opening Japan to the World

Japanet has actively begun inviting tourists from abroad to experience both its cruise and sports services. An office has been established in the U.S. to drive this concept, and momentum is building. “This year, six groups of customers came to Japan. All of them have already booked for next year,” says Akito.

The repeat bookings attest to Japanet’s high customer satisfaction. For many foreign travelers, navigating Japan’s fragmented service environment can be difficult. Japanet acts as a reliable local partner, pre-selecting optimal tours, restaurants, and unique Japanese experiences. “If travelers, particularly from the U.S., are interested in Japanese culture and food, I want them to join a Japanet cruise, which has high customer satisfaction,” he says.

Japanet’s goal is not a global expansion focused on mass-market e-commerce. Akito states clearly that he has no intention of weakening Japanet’s business model by outsourcing call centers or logistics overseas. Instead, the focus remains domestic: bringing people to Japan and ensuring Japanet is responsible for taking proper care of them upon arrival. “If you trust us and book with us, we can show you the best cruise, the best trip, the best experience, and the best meals,” Akito affirms.

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