

English Translation of Article on Tozai Group in Forbes Magazine (Japanese Edition – March 2003)

Andy Mankiewicz - President Tozai Group KK

Andy Mankiewicz first arrived in 1991 on the JET Program (Japan English Teaching), without knowing much of the Japanese language. After a year of teaching English, he started working in sales at Canon. At first, they didn't appreciate his wearing pinstripe shirts or when on a sales call and presented his business card, they would ask "are you really an employee of Canon?" and experienced the harshness of Japanese business. In the company dormitory, he soon fit in by playing mah-jong (Japanese poker) and drinking sake with his co-workers.

His next employment was that as an export promoter. Having learned consulting skills, he got together with his Swiss friend and started Tozai Group in 1996.

He soon learned at 27, that within a big establishment, you cannot do a big job yourself, that you need to create your own business instead. Being ambitious was not enough because you need a big investment, which he did not have at the time. However, he borrowed a desk at a friend's office in Kanda and started working. Even if "costs for the facilities didn't require money, compared to Europe, traveling costs added up" in Japan. (A well-known saying in any language). He ate at

Yoshinoya everyday for a while. But luck came his way in '98 when his frequented restaurant in the UK, Pizza Express, was looking to open in Japan and the need for a consultant came his way. He did some research on finding a partner to take on this venture and in the process became more interested as he learned more. He took on a big gamble by nominating himself to filling in this position.

It took him 6 months to prepare himself to opening the first Pizza Express. He did everything from designing, getting the necessary produce for the menu, and handling of all staff, in time for the operation. When the restaurant was to open, he had the training team from London come for assistance. He also sent 4 of his Japanese staff to London for training. This type of training system, he believes, is uncommon in other service industries in Japan.

He opened the first store in 1999, which brought in more than 200,000,000yen in revenue. He mentions that even without a tipping system, he is amazed at the loyalty of his staff who work there on a long term basis. Japanese employees are excellent team players and take pride in their work.

Using these tactics, he opened a London-based sandwich shop, Benugo, in Ebisu in December 2002 and will soon launch one in Akasaka and Shiodome. He will expand further than the food and beverage business and also works in the healthcare industry, particularly from Switzerland. He also

holds a seat as a board member/shareholder in an IT outsourcing company.

People say business is not booming in Japan any longer but he doesn't think so at all. If you take the chance and take that risk, there are many opportunities there. Don't just focus on going East but focus on going West as well. The secret to becoming a success in another country is to have a flexible way of thinking. Pride in the work you do is extremely important, as long as it doesn't verge on the side of stubbornness, which can be seen as a negative feeling in the west.

Personal Likes

Number of years in Japan

11

Status

Single

Hobby

Karate, Wine, Travels

Mentor

Leonardo da Vinci

Motto

Enjoy whatever you do

Most important criteria for business

Supportive staff

On the weekends

Doing market research in the city for retail business opportunities & reading the paper in an open cafe.

Average days on holiday

3 weeks per year, usually drinking wine in Tuscany or parasailing on the beach

Car

Don't require one living in the city but would like to buy a Range Rover

Likes and Dislikes of the Japanese

Don't see many differences in Japanese compared to Gaijins

Favourite foods

Fresh pasta, pizza (obviously!), sushi

Least favourite foods

Nothing in particular

Favourite drink

Barolo (Italian red wine), Laphroaig (malt scotch), Kubota sake

Smoke

An occasional cigar – Coheba & MonteCristo