

# Intercultural Twilight Zone

Connecting Japan with the World



Advertisements



 **Bitcoin is Dead - This Will Make Investors Rich in 2018**

[Report this ad](#)

## The Hunter and the Fisherman Part II: A Zen Master's Guide to Problem Solving

***This article is the 2nd in a two-part series.  
It'll make a lot more sense if you read [this](#) first.***

*"Watch it the way you watch a line when fishing and before long, as sure as you live, you'll get a little nibble, a little fact asking in a timid, humble way if you're interested in it. That's the way the world keeps on happening. Be interested in it."*

*Robert Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

The first thing my old Japanese Zen-Master boss would have done had we found *any* defect is drag us all out to the factory where the problem occurred, and together we would quietly "clear our minds." Then as a group we'd stare at that damn molding press until the cows came home. Then when Zen-Master boss got tired of staring, he'd assign a junior disciple—probably me—to continue the line-side Zen meditation (with notebook in hand). He would instruct me to stare at the molding press until it "spoke to me".

Did you ever imagine problem-solving could be so exciting?

And while I was waiting for the machine to speak to me, with my mind cleared of intellectual clutter and unfounded assumptions, I would adhere to the implicit rule not to even think about offering an opinion on the

solution; for how can one hope to find an answer, Grasshopper, without first defining what the question is? And since everything and everyone in the organization are connected, how could one sufficiently define the question or “current situation” without consulting with affected departments?

In the Japanese mind it’s all about process: follow the right process—focus on the process of thoroughly defining the question—and the right answer will naturally reveal itself. The modern secular Japanese businessman is oblivious that his process-oriented behavior is a legacy of Japan’s Buddhist tradition.

### **Don’t Shoot the Fish!**

*“During the process that precedes the decision, no mention is made of what the answer might be. This is done so that people will not be forced to take sides; once they have taken sides, a decision would be a victory for one side and a defeat for the other. Thus the whole process is focused on finding out what the decision is really about, not what the decision should be. Its result is a meeting of the minds that there is (or is not) a need for a change in behavior...All this takes a long time, of course, The Westerner dealing with the Japanese is thoroughly frustrated during the process. He does not understand what is going on. He has the feeling that he is being given the runaround.”*

Peter Drucker

Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices

When Americans are faced with problems to solve we don’t go fishing—we get our guns and start shootin’! *Hey look over there, that must be the problem—BAM! Oops...that wasn’t it...How about over there? BAM! Nope, that wasn’t it either...*

And we keep shooting until we get the result we desire. Sometimes we even get lucky and “fix” the problem without knowing why. *Nobody touch the machine, it’s working!*

No surprise that the risk-averse, process-oriented Japanese don’t put a lot of stock in luck. Nor do they understand why anyone would use a gun to catch a fish.

And no surprise either that American employees’ trigger-happy approach of taking action without consulting with others would upset Japanese teammates. In Japanese society such behavior is so blatantly disrespectful to the collective interests of the group that it leaves no ambiguity to even *fake* harmony (at least on the surface), a bare minimum condition for smooth Japanese team dynamics. Individually initiated trial-and-error behavior would also result in a tremendous loss of face for the perpetrator, a situation that would only worsen as errors mounted.

Such an approach is way too risky for Japanese conservative sensibilities. It’s so much safer to “go fishing” instead, which means gathering reams of data to minimize risk, then enlisting others to accept collective responsibility for your cause so you’re not on your own. In the very worst case of abject failure, you can take comfort in the knowledge that you’re not alone: everyone goes down with the ship together.

### **The Art of Nemawashi or “Digging Around the Roots”**

When Japanese leaders set out to introduce change into their organizations—whether it be a single decision or a series of decisions directed at solving a problem—they meet informally with numerous people in the organization to ask for help in defining the problem. Indeed many of these meetings happen one-on-one, sometimes outside the organization at social functions. This is the Japanese way of laying the groundwork for change, a process they call “*nemawashi*”.

For some background, the word *nemawashi* is a gardening term that roughly translates to, “digging around the roots”. The actual *nemawashi* process happens when a Japanese gardener undertakes the delicate task of transplanting a tree or plant from one part of the garden to another. If the gardener simply rips out the plant and buries it in a new location, it dies of shock. To avoid this he instead “digs around the roots”, keeping the surrounding soil loosened up for the appropriate period of time. It’s the gardener’s way of giving the plant a

“heads-up” that change is coming.

Similarly when change becomes necessary in the workplace, *nemawashi* is analogous to pre-selling a decision or initiative through consultations with affected departments. And the act of *moving* the tree to its new location in the garden would be analogous to implementing any given decision in the workplace. *Nemawashi* is a useful analogy to describe how Japanese take time upfront to lay the groundwork, so quick and effective implementation is possible.

It makes sense that harmony-loving Japanese would avoid making decisions at public meetings since the risk for contentious debate and loss of face is so high. Hence, one important function of the meeting in a Japanese company is to formally announce a decision that’s already been made. Unfortunately many Americans don’t understand this. Thinking they actually have a say in the matter, they show up for meetings raring to debate, only to get their feelings hurt when, at the end of the meeting, their skillful rhetoric is all but ignored. *The decision was already made!*

Nothing is more demoralizing than offering input with good intentions, only to have it disregarded.

On the flipside, lack of *nemawashi*—of inter-departmental communication and cooperation in American workplaces—is a pet peeve of Japanese managers assigned to U.S. subsidiaries. Forgetting that they themselves are guilty of taking action without consulting with American counterparts (an issue we cover extensively in our “reflection sessions”), Japanese managers wonder how anyone could, in good conscience, make a decision without consulting with affected departments. The risk of “going it alone” is too high in a Japanese organization. And cross-functional cooperation simply doesn’t happen without communication anyway. It’s difficult to implement anything in Japanese organizations without first securing buy-in from key associates in all affected departments.

### **Meanwhile Back At the Hydraulic Press: Slow Draw, Fast Bullet**

*“The Japanese...need to spend absolutely no time on selling a decision. Everyone has been pre-sold. Also, their process makes it clear where in the organization a certain answer to a question will be welcomed and where it will be resisted. Therefore, there is plenty of time to work on persuading the dissenters or on making small concessions to them which will win them over without destroying the integrity of the decision...Every Westerner who has done business with the Japanese has learned that the apparent inertia of the negotiating stage, with its endless delays and endless discussion of the same points, is followed by a speed of action that leaves him hanging on the ropes.”*

*Peter Drucker*

Management: Tasks, Responsibilities Practices

So while I’m hypothetically fishing for facts about the short-shot problem next to a hydraulic press, Zen-Master boss is (hypothetically) chatting with living, breathing people in departments throughout the organization, to obtain information that might provide insights on what might have caused the short-shot phenomenon. Helpful resources might include molding technicians, machine operators, maintenance personnel, toolmakers, raw material suppliers, and quality-control technicians.

Zen-Master boss would also be pouring over whatever data was available, while sending people out to collect vital data that didn’t yet exist.

In digging for the root cause, a lot of time would be spent not only talking to people, but also monitoring the machine and its digital readouts. Monitoring would be done using instrumentation tied directly into the press, as well as external measurement equipment to verify proper functioning of the press’s internal controls. Variation from cycle to cycle would also be monitored and recorded. Every part coming off the press would be inspected. And when more short-shots appeared, data would be collected and mined for possible correlations with variations detected in the process parameter readouts, specific cavities, or other tendencies. No one would stop collecting and “staring” at the data until the root cause was identified and verified. Only after reaching consensus on problem definition would anyone even think about taking corrective action.

## Why Conduct *Nemawashi* in the First Place?

Why go through such drastic social contortions over a mere quality defect? And why bother talking to everyone and their brother to define the problem when you've got "experts" on staff to do it for you?

It helps to understand that most employees in most Japanese organizations are trained as generalists. So compared to corporate America, for example, Japanese companies have relatively few specialists on staff. But even if they were staffed to the *hilt* with specialists, our example above demonstrates the danger of relying on "expert" advice. Hence, the most logical reason to do *nemawashi* is best summed up in the sentiment, "one of us is not as smart as all of us".

An important function of *nemawashi* in Japanese society is maintaining harmony—or at least surface harmony—through the refined Japanese art of confrontation avoidance. While Americans are comfortable aggressively debating in a public setting (the pursuit of truth via the dialectic—compliments of the ancient Greek philosophers), this is exactly what the harmony-loving Japanese want to avoid. *Nemawashi* is the perfect mechanism to avoid public confrontation and discord.

Another key function of *nemawashi* is that it allows a broad range of employees, even low-ranking associates, to contribute to determining what change, if any, is required in the organization, and how to implement. The beauty of this system in a collectivist culture is that since employee fingerprints are all over the impending change, responsibility can be divvied up among team members in safe doses. This means that when the team succeeds, each member gets a little piece of the glory. Conversely when the team fails, each member accepts a piece of responsibility. Blame is a bit easier to swallow when it's diluted by collective responsibility.

Of course Western culture doesn't work this way. Our management systems are based on a military model designed to respond quickly and efficiently in times of emergency, the perfect organizational structure for fighting a war. And since we're all a bunch of rugged individualists anyway, we give everyone individual job descriptions and (in theory) hold them fully accountable to their narrowly defined commitments. Such a system makes *nemawashi* style negotiation unnecessary. In the ideal American organization, each employee knows exactly what to do. But in the event a course of action isn't clear-cut, American managers tend to debate more than negotiate.

Since the American organizational structure puts authority at the top of the hierarchy where directives can be quickly issued top-down, it's a viable system for responding to emergencies, a cultural strength that, in my opinion, came to the fore in the aftermath of 9-11.

The truth is both Japanese and American approaches have their place—it really depends on the situation. Before we go there, let's first debunk a few popular myths about Japanese decision-making.

## Are Japanese Organizations Really "Bottom-Up"?

*The Japanese organization is infinitely more autocratic than anything that can be found in the West, outside of the military. The deference accorded the superior, beginning with the language used toward him, goes far beyond the most deferential of Western traditions. And yet authority from the top down is always matched by responsibility from the bottom up.*

Peter Drucker

Management: Tasks, Responsibilities Practices

Thanks to its Confucian tradition, modern Japanese society is still "ranked" in a structured hierarchy. But as rank conscious as the Japanese are, it's ironic that Japanese organizations tend to be more participative and "amoeba-like" than American companies—think small village, collectivist mentality.

And while most management experts would characterize Japanese decision-making as "bottom-up", the reality isn't so simple. In Japan's best companies you can take it to the bank that policies are dictated top-down. Guided by these general policies, senior and middle managers then quantify operational goals, which in turn are

“deployed” to the lower levels of the organization. The “bottom-up” part happens when lower ranking employees propose concrete actions designed to achieve the goals of the organization deployed from above. The business term for this process is *policy deployment*.

In a collectivist culture like Japan’s, it makes sense that decision-making would require so much investment in time and employee interaction. Conversely, in the individualistic-technocrat-top-down culture of corporate America, it also makes sense that American leaders, unconstrained by cultural protocol to muster support across the organization, would be quick to issue directives to subordinates who, in turn, would initiate action.

### **The Myth of Consensus Decision Making**

*It is not true that the Japanese make decisions by consensus. This would clearly result in the wrong decisions. Above all, it would inevitably lead to compromise. If there is one thing that is typical of Japanese decisions, it is that they are not compromises. The typical Japanese decision is a radical departure—the system is so complex and cumbersome that small decisions cannot be taken.*

Peter Drucker

Management: Tasks, Responsibilities Practices

An American CEO who knew nothing about Japanese management once said to me, “Japanese consensus decision-making is a crock of shit.”

I smiled.

To bolster his uninformed opinion, he added, “most employees would rather be led than make decisions—and it’s impossible to get every team member to agree on a single course of action anyway—so why waste your time?”

I nodded. There was truth in what he said.

But the CEO’s remarks betrayed a common misconception in America of what “Japanese consensus decision-making” really means. Consensus doesn’t mean “democratic”. For in true Total-Quality organizations decisions are based on what’s deemed “good”, not on what’s popular. (Although I once witnessed a staff of American teachers in an educational institution take votes on a course of action, under the banner of practicing “Total Quality Management”.) Trust me—the Hondas and Toyotas of the world don’t have the time or inclination to run their organizations democratically. They’d be out of business if they did.

The true meaning of Japanese “consensus decision-making” is getting everyone to agree on the *question* not the answer.

And yes, even with the consensus-minded, harmony-loving Japanese, you could never in a million years get a large group of them all to agree on the same answer to any problem. The appeal of consensus—when used in the Japanese sense of the word—is that all employees feel invested in solving the problem because their input in defining the question was duly considered. But no Japanese employee harbors the illusion that everyone will agree on the best course of action.

### **Logic Versus “Implementational Feasibility”**

Western culture exalts truth, logic and the dialectic, thanks again to the ancient Greeks.

And whether or not American employees realize it, the ghost of Socrates drives how they make decisions and solve problems in the workplace. If not, they wouldn’t gather in conference rooms to debate an issue before making decisions.

In contrast, on the other side of the cultural divide the ghost of Confucius continues to push his harmony agenda.

For clarification, understand it's not that the Japanese don't value the truth. The truth has its place in Japanese society as long as it doesn't run afoul of harmony. Just know that when truth and harmony collide, the truth often gets swept under the rug to maintain group harmony, or even help a team member save face.

Japanese decisions are not always logical as seen through Western eyes. But because Japanese spend so much time pre-selling change, implementation tends to be timely, thorough and effective.

In general, the Japanese are more concerned than Americans about appeasing cliques (remnants of their Feudal past) and departments throughout the organization—often sacrificing little pieces of truth and logic along the way, while giving up small concessions to garner support.

So why bother trying to make everyone happy? Because without companywide support or “consensus”, there is no cooperation; and without cooperation, you're hard pressed to get anything implemented with a Japanese team.

### **Positives of Japanese Decision Making**

There are some things I love about the Japanese approach. For one, I enjoy the process of consulting with others, as it broadens my perspective with each point of view I learn about. It also makes sense logically to ask affected parties for their points of view before taking action. Such an approach has two benefits: it gives you a much clearer picture of the problem, and invites enthusiastic cooperation across the organization.

What other good could possibly come of the Japanese approach? Well, it makes a lot of sense to reach consensus on the problem before discussing possible solutions. This guideline applies not only across cultures, but also within each respective culture.

What I *don't* love about the Japanese approach is that it takes so damn long. I'm living proof that a Westerner can master the Japanese approach to defining and reaching consensus on problems. But damn it's hard to resist the temptation to start “turning knobs”. We Americans almost can't help it!

The other big downside to Japanese decision-making is that small decisions just aren't worth the aggravation. When faced with small-scale decisions in a Japanese company, “renegade foreigners” like myself have been known to break from protocol, pull the trigger then beg for forgiveness later. *“Big John sat on the copy machine and broke it: I ordered a new one. Please forgive my reckless behavior honorable boss!”*

If you choose the beg-for-forgiveness technique be forewarned: pick your transgressions carefully, maintain strong personal relationships with Japanese coworkers, and learn to bow very deeply.

### **Are Americans Chopped Liver?**

Nah, the Japanese could learn a thing or two from Americans. To wit: sometimes you're faced with a no-brainer decision that needs to be made right now. The sprinkler head just broke and water is spouting everywhere—no time for consultations, consensus building and second-guessing yourself. *Just do it!*

Americans are known to do great things when given the freedom to wing it. If a faulty sprinkler head breaks in the plant—or a terrorist attack stuns New York—no one's better equipped culturally than an American team to quickly get things under control.

And yet as a culture we sometimes lack the finesse required to avoid the emergency in the first place. Yeah we can rightfully brag that we got the New York Stock Exchange up and running a week after 9-11. But we couldn't get out of the way of a category-5 hurricane with several days' notice either!

Both examples provide a telling snapshot of our national character. Is it possible that no one's better than Americans at responding efficiently and effectively to disasters and emergencies? All we need is strong leadership, a clear goal, and the motivation to get the job done.

But when it comes to planning for the prevention of the fire in the first place—or getting out of the way of a

monster hurricane—America, as a culture, has much room for improvement.

### The Hunter-Fisherman Hybrid

Sometimes the American way is pure genius and sometimes it's idiotic. Ditto for the Japanese. Each approach has value in its own right depending on the skill and luck of the decision-maker. (Luck would naturally play a bigger role when the trial-and-error approach is employed.) But the ideal decision-maker has the wherewithal to employ the right tool for the needs of the situation; someone who won't try catching a fish with a gun—or killing a bear with a fishing pole.

It's not hard to imagine where one approach might have an advantage over the other. When it comes to *kaizen*—or “continuous improvement”—in a factory, it's tough to beat the Zen approach, for data collection, rigorous analysis, and plant-wide support are all critical conditions for effective root-cause analysis and implementation.

But if you're trying to program a robot, *nemawashi* and consensus-building don't make much sense. A dear old friend who used to program robots in our plant once told me that he loved his job because it was just him, the PLC and the robot—no boss getting in his way to muck things up. Punching in coordinates and seeing the robot move gave him a rush of “instant gratification”. His job process might best be described as a series of rapid-fire, trial-and-error decisions on the keyboard. Imagine if it were a team effort that required consultations before any button on the keyboard could be pushed? The work would never get done

The glaring weakness of Japanese decision-making is further magnified in the fast-moving high-tech industries. Japanese are cutting edge when it comes to developing hardware. But with the exception of the computer-gaming world, Japan is generally weak in the area of software development. You have to wonder if their clunky approach to decision-making is handicapping them. (The gaming-world phenomenon is a different story, perhaps a topic for a future post.)

But for most situations, the notion of combining the strengths of both cultures holds great promise. Imagine if you could combine the Japanese knack for defining the problem with the power of American creativity and intuitiveness. You'd have a thing of beauty!

Employing a hybrid approach is not such a crazy notion. While it's true that many Japanese-owned subsidiaries in the U.S. are struggling to harmonize their cultures, the *elite* Japanese companies in the U.S. are indeed evolving into hybrid organizations. In these companies Americans are chucking their quick-fix, trial-and-error mentality, and learning instead to focus on defining problems before taking action (just how *American* guru Deming taught the Japanese to do it). Meanwhile Japanese expats are opening their minds to the intuitiveness and creativity of American coworkers.

I can't think of a greater testament to the power and promise of cross-cultural collaboration.

There's indeed more to say on this topic, but I'm *pau* for now. Perhaps we'll pick it up again in a future post. Right now the sun is shining...looks like a nice day to go fishing...

Copyright © Tim Sullivan 2009

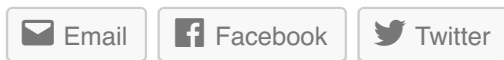


 **Bitcoin is Dead - This Will Make Investors Rich in 2018**

[Report this ad](#)

---

**Share this:**



Be the first to like this.

---

**Related**

[The Hunter and the Fisherman  
Part I: Glimpses of Culture  
Through Decision-Making](#)  
In "Decision-making"

[The Secret to Managing Your  
Japanese Boss](#)  
In "1-minute insight"

[Truth, Harmony, White Lies  
and Monkey Traps](#)  
In "management"

May 9, 2009

 **11** Replies

---

[« Previous](#)

[Next »](#)

## Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked \*

Comment



Name



Email



Website

Post Comment

☐ Notify me of new comments via email.



IslandNotes on May 12, 2009 at 10:54 pm

*"..the notion of combining the strengths of both cultures holds great promise."*

Conversely, I'd posit the idea that: identifying the weaknesses shared by both cultures also has great potential.

For instance, career insecurity most often contributes to the dearth of correct decisions in both types of organizations.

To be sure, I've been more involved in the education industry of Japan and America, so the 'injection molding' is much more.. convoluted, and the product is way less definite.

Come to think of it, the differences in schooling among the two cultures is key to maintaining these cultural ways. And the unifying weakness of current schooling would seem to be critical thinking (learning) being crushed by capital concerns (consumption of information and stuff).

As such, I don't see how to avoid noting the shared characteristics of centralized control overpowering community autonomy — with their respective differing views on appropriate levels of technology and energy.

Before I digress further, mahalo for your estimable insights and for indulging my 2 yens worth!

 Reply

AUTOMATTIC

**You don't need to go to an office to write code. Work with us!**

APPLY

WordPress, Facebook, A, GitHub, WooCommerce, LinkedIn, SoundCloud, YouTube

[Report this ad](#)



Andy on [May 15, 2009 at 11:31 am](#)

Hi Tim,

Thanks for this brilliant post. I truly enjoy it.

I'll think about it before giving you an answer.

Andy

[↩ Reply](#)

AUTOMATTIC

**We're hiring PHP developers anywhere in the world. Join us!**

APPLY

WordPress, Facebook, A, GitHub, WooCommerce, LinkedIn, SoundCloud, YouTube

[Report this ad](#)



Andy on [June 4, 2009 at 12:54 pm](#)

Hi Tim San,

I'm back after my 100km walk I've finished in 29h57mn40s. One of the toughest thing I've ever done.

Your post triggered a few thoughts during my walk (30 hours without sleep is a long time, trust me).

Let's go: Do you think the "go ahead" way of doing things in the western culture is due to a lack of listening and the value we give to People?

I was wondering quite intensively if the selfishness we were displaying was not due to our inner belief that people are bad therefore wrong. If you think about it, how many times can you hear things “I shouldn’t listen to him or her” or “Luckily, I haven’t listen to him or her”.

Is it part of our judeo-christian-greek heritage to assume that we, people, are bad and wrong ... and from layer after layer of experiences and dogmas, we go on an individualist streak and don’t give credit/listening to people...?

Another consideration is the Japanese model of consensus was able to live because there was a place for everyone (from the Meiji era’s to the salary man era). However, I’m wondering how will the model of consensus evolve under the collapse of the economy (close to 10 years now), how the freeters are changing the structured Japanese society or how the media are showing to the youngster that being rebellious is the norm (look at shonen’s mangas like GTO or Bleach) and Japan being more and more connected to a big single world?

Thanks for reading and I hope my questions make sense and relate to your post. If not deepest apologies as I’m still feeling mentally burnt after the walk.

Cheers,  
Andy

↩ Reply



IslandNotes on [June 4, 2009 at 5:37 pm](#)

Andy — Interesting take you have on this.

Perhaps even more interesting is your long walk. What motivates this? What route?

I too am very keen on walking. Alas, Hawaii is just not set up as well as Japan for good utilitarian walking.

..Er, Tim..sorry to detour the post..it couldn’t be helped.. aloha!

↩ Reply



punafish on [June 4, 2009 at 6:27 pm](#)

It might help to know that Andy lives in France, not Japan.

To further confuse matters, Andy is a “Chinese-Frenchman” who is into Japanese culture. He’s one of my few (only?) regular readers, a fellow hybrid and cross-cultural kindred spirit!

I went to Andy’s blog once. After reading for 10 minutes in total confusion it dawned on me it was all in French! (Or maybe Greek, wouldn’t have mattered.) No wonder it didn’t make sense! I’m very proud that my humble blog was able to shake out the only person in all of France who can speak English. Andy’s one international dude! 😊

Aesthetically Andy’s blog “looks really cool”, but unfortunately I can’t recommend it to anyone who doesn’t parler Francais, which is almost everyone in America 😬

Andy, check out Darren’s blog if you’ve got time—interesting point of view and great music...he even has a story about Japan buried somewhere in there...

↳ Reply

Advertisements

AUTOMATTIC aHR0cDovL3dwLm11L2N3LWI2NA==

[Report this ad](#)



Andy on [June 5, 2009 at 7:00 am](#)

Hello Tim and Darren,

What motivates me to do that walk was for a lady It didn't work out the way expected unfortunately but it gave me others things, which were unexpected like Friendship, Confidence (I had some already but this time it is massive), Leadership and other ladies think I'm cool now.

For the route, have a look by yourselves

[http://www.oxfam.org.uk/get\\_involved/fundraise/trailltrekker/index.html](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/get_involved/fundraise/trailltrekker/index.html)

I'm on the slideshow. ; )

To Tim: Do my questions make sense to you?

Cheers,  
Andy

↳ Reply



punafish on [June 5, 2009 at 8:27 am](#)

Now there's a good reason to walk long distances—the reason we do everything else—for the ladies!

The idea that people are intrinsically “bad” is a fundamental assumption of Judeo-Christian thinking—it's called “original sin”. Hadn't thought of it in this context...Let me put it this way: if you value harmony and give the collective good priority over individual concerns, then the idea of “not listening to others” would likely be deemed selfish behavior, as you put it. On the other hand, if you value independence and individualism then “not listening to others” might be considered normal behavior in many cases, especially if you're a technocrat with clearly defined job responsibilities. I suppose trusting yourself over others would also be considered normal behavior in an individualistic culture. But I think individualism/individual job descriptions and technocrat culture have more of an impact on the Westerner's lack of consensus building prior to making decisions.

As for the younger generation in Japan, who knows what's going to happen. My younger son Ry (who now lives in Japan) says the younger Japanese are indeed rebelling but they have no “cause” to fight for—they are simply rejecting tradition without having anything to replace it. He's not very optimistic about Japan's future. There's a dearth of literature about the younger Japanese, but it's an interesting topic. Check out Ry's blog if the spirit moves you:

<http://experience5.wordpress.com/>

↳ Reply



Andy on [June 5, 2009 at 5:20 pm](#)

Thanks Tim.

One small correction: I live in England and used to live in France.

Cheers,  
Andy

[↩ Reply](#)



punafish on [June 5, 2009 at 5:33 pm](#)

Thanks for clearing that up, Andy. See how confused I am?

Btw, do you work for a Japanese company?

[↩ Reply](#)



Andy on [June 6, 2009 at 8:59 am](#)

Ha ha. You confused Sensei? You've got one of the clearest mind I know.

I used to work for a NGO, Oxfam. I'm interested on how to stop the waste (Muda) of any organizations and else. And as you can guess, there is a lot of waste around...

Andy

[↩ Reply](#)



Kerry Thompson on [February 28, 2012 at 1:52 pm](#)

Andy,

25 years in the auto industry trying to convince the Japanese half of the joint venture that Americans do have value. has been challenging. Also trying to convince the arrogant US OEMS that the Japanese OEMS and suppliers are not and will not just go away has been sometimes a futile career move. But as we see Japan has been a contender in the global auto industry and a constant passive/aggressive force systematically wearing down the competition like the drop of water on the on the rock. For years it runs off but gradually it forms a dimple then a bowl then a fissure then the rock is washed to the sea where the water reigns supreme. Asian analogies aside, Yes the right combination of American ingenuity and Japanese analysis can and will build a better mouse trap. The question is "Does the mouse need to be trapped? Is the world better with no mice or are mice part of the solution of a bigger issue?"

[↩ Reply](#)

AUTOMATTIC

You don't need to go to  
an office to write code.  
Work with us!

APPLY

WordPress, JavaScript, PHP, Python, WooCommerce, Linux, SQL, CSS

[Report this ad](#)

## Subscribe to us!

[Click here for email updates](#)

## Blog Stats

179,128 hits

## Recent Posts

[Who In Their Right Mind Moves to Paho?](#)

[Glimpses of Culture Through a Lava Flow: Bomb the Crater or Clean Your House?](#)

[Ramblings from the Wrong Side of a Lava Flow](#)

[Aloha in the Aftermath of Iselle](#)

[The "Cool Japan" They Don't Show You on TV](#)

## Recent Comments



Ruth on [Who In Their Right Mind Moves...](#)



Tim Sullivan on [The Secret to Managing Your Ja...](#)



Andy Lenni on [The Secret to Managing Your Ja...](#)



Tim Sullivan on [Who In Their Right Mind Moves...](#)



Jennifer on [Who In Their Right Mind Moves...](#)

## Blogroll

[Big Island Chronicle](#)

[Cultural Detective](#)

[Island Notes](#)

[Japandemic](#)

[Leslie Lang](#)

[Nikkei View](#)

---

## Pages

[About Me](#)

[Live Trailer: Tim in Action](#)

[ジャパン・インサイトとは？](#)

[ティム・サリバン紹介](#)

---

[View Full Site](#)

[Create a free website or blog at WordPress.com.](#)

