

Approaching the Age of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)



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The American economy is back on the upswing and the European market, spurred on by the integration of EC member nations, has also become more active. Our business is facing an era of "mega-competition." In the automobile industry, huge mergers of major automobile makers, exceeding our expectations, are hastening both within and outside Japan. The pace with which mergers and tie-ups are taking place is also accelerating among automobile parts makers in Japan, United States, and Europe. Technical tie-ups are prominent particularly in the development and production of those electronic, environment-related, and safety devices that will become the requisite core components of the next generation of automobiles. Amid these circumstances, some automobile makers are working on boosting their competitiveness on a global scale by fusing Western research and development capabilities with Japanese manufacturing technologies.

We can probably say that the 21st century will be one in which the ability to come up with new ideas and concepts will count for much. For us, what is of key importance now is to find ways of developing this ability while maintaining our highly advanced hardware manufacturing technologies. We need to switch from placing emphasis on "how to manufacture products" to concentrating more on "how to come up with ideas." In other words, as society becomes more information-oriented, we need to formulate business policies and strategies without misunderstanding what "becoming more information-oriented" actually means, and find ways of building up the areas we are strong in, especially in our core business.

With the approaching age of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), we have already completed the draft of a new business plan that places emphasis on the following three categories:

1. More advanced navigation and multimedia systems
2. Safe-driving assistance
3. Control of commercial-vehicle operation

In each category, we plan to systemize our conventional products, such as audio-visual equipment, engine and air-bag control devices, sensors, and data communication equipment, in business fields in which we have long experience. There are not a few areas where technological development is a key issue. These areas include, for example, navigation technology, digital broadcast receiver, and millimeter-wave radar. However, only those technologies and products that we can differentiate from those of our competitors will be able to survive in the global market. We will be able to avail ourselves of good business opportunities only if we focus our energies on achieving technological breakthroughs. To this end, we need to think about "what kind of convenience (i.e., software) we can offer our customers" and "how to design the hardware to offer it."

If we continue our work laying stress on hardware based on our existing business, we will likely find ourselves losing sight of its focus, as a shift begins to take place in its key aspects. The ability to design hardware is nothing more than the ability to be creative, to come up with ideas. Each employee should understand this and, regardless of how conventional their work environment may be, should focus their energies on coming up with original ideas to give new kinds of convenience to our customers. Your ability to come up good ideas and concepts will depend largely on your ability to envision society in the twenty-first century.



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