

Decision-making process in Japan

From Western point of view, the decision-making process applied to Japanese companies seem indeed long and uncertain, especially which concerns communication and negotiations. In fact, the Japanese tend to make decision taking time based on the method called *ringi-sei*. This method follows the steps below: the draft is made at lower ranks of the hierarchy and is recorded in writing by the promoter among the colleagues of own one's working group; each employee belonged to the concerned group stamp his or her *hanko*, name stamp, on the paper regarding the draf for verification. After that all of the groups stamp their *hanko*, the paper is circulated again among the concerned employees for recheck and final consensus, and submitted to the upper rank which repeats the same process before reaching the top.

Every time the written and countersigned draft is submitted to an upper rank of the company structure, the responsible person of the concerned groups consult to see if the proposal can be really considered or not. They talk together only when the proposal is approved by the majority. If they consider that it is worthy carrying out the draft, all the employees talk again together to examine thoroughly possible problems and results.

In the end of this long (almost endless) process, only when all the concerned parties reach a consensus, they launch the project hoping that they do not encounter any problems or any needs of change during the negotiation with clients: in fact, in such a case they need to repeat the above-mentioned process, which takes double time to find a final solution. Those who manage communication with foreign clients (e.g. export manager) do not always have decision-making power: it is often the promoters who record ideas in writing before submitting to responsible persons. This long wait (pending process) is unbearably inefficient for Western clients. However, it is not easy for them to understand the concept of the Japanese system which focuses on convincing the employees that they are wholly parts of the company receiving their solidarity and absolute loyalty. This hierarchical system takes root in every organisational level of the Japanese society, based on the collectivism which differs basically from the Western standard based on the individualism.