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# Japanese blame 'pampered' MBAs for trend away from manufacturing

By Norihiko Shirouau  
■ Stanford Daily  
Stanford U.

Japanese business leaders suspect that the theoretical management style learned in U.S. management masters programs may not be particularly valuable and that their U.S. counterparts wrongly pamper employees who have earned MBAs.

These Japanese leaders are blaming American business schools for triggering and reinforcing a U.S. trend away from manufacturing. This trend, they say, will aggravate trade imbalances between the two countries by not creating enough consumer products to sell to Japan.

Sony Corp. Chairman Akio Morita is perhaps the most blunt critic. He blames American business schools for "the decline of the U.S. economy," saying that these schools have "deprived American manufacturers of international competitiveness."

Graduate School of Business officials at Stanford U. disagree. They said that singling out American business schools for the decline in international competitiveness by U.S. manufacturers is unfair.

Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Stanford's Business School Charles Bonini argues that business schools are aimed at teaching people how to work within the framework of today's business conditions.

"Business schools are somewhat market responsive," he says. "To some extent we produce products that the market wants. And to the extent American industry was not interested in people with manufacturing interests and skills, we responded to that."

At Honda Motor Co., MBA-holders are a rarity. Honda has traditionally been run by hands-on managers.

"Still, we do believe hands-on experience should form the core of managers' skills throughout their ranks," says former Honda Managing Director and head of North American operations Tetsuo Chino. Chino says Honda does not indulge in theory or speculations and does not "really see anything special about an MBA education."

Bonini, on the other hand, says that the business school tries to balance theory with practicality. "We do try to give people theoretical foundations. But the primary aim is to be practical and useful in the framework of today's business reality," he says.

Most Japanese manufacturers say they prefer managers with hands-on experience to run their operations.

Many Japanese leaders claim that MBA managers seem obsessed with quick results and personal achievement, while Japanese philosophy emphasizes long-term perspectives and teamwork.

Top manufacturing industry executives say doors are opened as wide, but not wider, for MBA-degree holders.

Chances are anyone coming into a Japanese company will be sent to a sales outlet or to an assembly plant. The twist to their assurance is that, unlike at many U.S. companies, an MBA degree doesn't put employees in the corporate fast lane.



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## Loft

Continued from page 19

be dismantled into eight to 10 sections shorter than five feet in length.

Hurry said the lofts will sell for about \$150 to \$200 each, and that they have applied for a patent.

Hurry said they will begin marketing them by raffling one off during spring semester registration.

He said a student who buys the loft as a freshman will still have it as a senior, and the lofts can be stored anywhere, even outside, while they're not in use.

Hurry said they have some good ideas to put to use in the future, including accessories like shelves, or colored lofts, or maybe even clear PVC pipe with neon lights running through it.