

Engineers, Speak Your Dreams Out Loud!



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There is a quote saying, “anything you can imagine, you can make real”—words that have been embodied in no better way than in mobile communications, for indeed, mobile communications is the epoch of the history of innovation.

For example, when I joined NTT in 1985, there were no mobile terminals; what we had back then were only car phones. But I remember NTT’s company brochures during that time were already featuring futuristic images of compact folding mobile terminals; it was like seeing a dream into the future. It was not until six years later that the first folding mobile terminals were sold in Japan.

During the same time overseas, Apple released a promotion video that showed a person searching for information and communicating while talking to a character appearing like a personal assistant on the screen of a tabular display device. You all know how this concept has turned into reality today.

First, let me salute the front runners of mobile communications who turned their dreams into reality. They not only spoke their dreams out loud, but also were passionate in making their dreams a reality. And it was because they continued to have passion for their dreams, even if took them 10 to 20 years to see them come to fruition, that they were able to overcome many challenges and difficulties along the way. I

know it is not easy to remain passionate about something over a long period of time. And it must have been through some kind of divine intervention that they could be in an environment where they could devote themselves to something for a long period.

Is innovation then possible with just having a dream and a passion for it? The answer is no, because without the means to support innovation, i.e., the technology to drive innovation, it will remain only a dream.

IT products, primarily mobile phone terminals, are at a great advantage in terms of supporting technology. Modern mobile phones are made up of approximately a thousand different parts, but there have been remarkable developments particularly in technology of components such as in semiconductors. The increase in speed, the refinement of user interfaces, and the ability to layer and expand software have in one way or another benefited from the advancement of device technologies. Processors, memories, interfaces, sensors and other devices have gone through dramatic technological progress and are expected to continue to evolve.

For us here in Japan, in particular, we have to be grateful for these technologies that have been made possible by countless Japanese engineers who pursued their dreams with passion to come up with technological innovations in devices, materials and manufacturing processes.

Recently, however, there has been a shift in demand from conventional mobile phones to smartphones in markets around the world, wherein folding mobile phones with numeric keypads are being replaced by touch panel LCD devices.

Nevertheless, the smartphone in its current form still cannot be considered as the best communication tool for people. For example, is combining input and output devices into one device the best way for communication? Considering the progress of technology, 10 or 20 years from now, devices would have evolved into a completely different form. It is indeed very exciting to imagine what kind of mobile devices people in the future would be using.

A dream, a tenacious passion, and technological advancement—these are the essential elements that drive innovation. You don’t have to completely master your field of specialization to come up with innovations. What you need to do is to ask yourselves: what is the most pressing need of our time?