



Johnson & Johnson K.K., Medical Company

Engagement started: 2008

In this Q&A, Zen Ohashi talks with David Powell, President of Johnson & Johnson K.K. Medical Company about his experience with Sugoi Kaigi.

OHASHI How did you find us?

POWELL I got many references and interviewed many people, but after talking to you, I decided you were the best person to help achieve my desired outcome.

OHASHI That first meeting was supposed to be an hour, but you came 50 minutes late. Do you remember what happened in the 10 minutes we had left?

POWELL I was late? I don't remember that. [Laughter] What I remember was that you took out your brown paper forms and you started asking me questions like "What is your intended outcome?" and "What do you want to achieve?" You focused me on the intention.

OHASHI What were you looking for?

POWELL I was looking for someone who could help me understand the real and honest feelings of my management team—what the Japanese call hon-ne—and then enable us to create focused initiatives based on our collective desire to improve the company. I was the first foreign president at our Japan-based medical device company in over 20 years, and some people in my management team suspected that I cared more about our parent company's interests than their interests. During my first board meeting, I told the team that, no, we are running this company, nobody else, and that we will decide what we want to accomplish. That required a fundamental change for them. In my experience, to create change you have to participate, and it's difficult to participate while facilitating.

OHASHI What happened at the first team meeting in Karuizawa?



POWELL I remember that you facilitated so that I could actively engage as a team member. We came out with a prioritized list of things we wanted to achieve, and six major initiatives to make those happen. We called it the Karuizawa Protocol. A lot of it was about getting new products to market faster. Over the next couple of months, you led follow-up meetings where you made sure we were making progress on all six initiatives.



OHASHI As a result, what has improved?

POWELL In each of the three years since the Karuizawa meeting, our rate of new product introductions has increased faster than in the past.

OHASHI In your career you've worked with many companies that help teams identify key action items and execute. How would you categorize the work of Sugoi Kaigi?

POWELL Your firm focuses on achieving a desired outcome by adopting a very efficient process. Of course, there was some frustration among my team with your process.



OHASHI I remember that in one session you said, "Zen, nobody likes you."

POWELL Actually, I think one of our board members likes you [Laughter]. But you did a great job, and I wouldn't change what you do at all. Many of the people, at least on my team, had little experience with your methods and process. So trying to make radical changes in things like how people talk to each other—like the idea that you have to make proposals when you talk—is going to be hard for them. I would use you as a facilitator with a team in the U.S. if I was there, or Europe or China.

OHASHI So I should take your comment about nobody liking me as a compliment?

POWELL Yes!



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