



JAPANESE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

UNLOCK CULTURAL DIMENSIONS & CORPORATE DYNAMICS

02 UNLOCKING THE MYSTERY

THE "BLACK BOX" OF BUSINESS

JAPAN IS THE WORLD'S 3RD LARGEST ECONOMY AND A GLOBAL LEADER IN INNOVATION. YET, FOR MANY OUTSIDERS, IT FUNCTIONS LIKE A "BLACK BOX" - A CLOSED SYSTEM WITH INVISIBLE RULES.

TO SUCCEED, ONE MUST LOOK BEYOND SURFACE RITUALS LIKE BOWING AND UNDERSTAND THE HIDDEN CULTURAL VALUES: WA (HARMONY) AND SHINRAI (TRUST).





SHUDAN ISHIKI

JAPAN IS AN ISLAND NATION (SHIMAGUNI). HISTORICALLY, RICE FARMING REQUIRED INTENSE VILLAGE COOPERATION FOR SURVIVAL. THIS LEGACY SHAPES MODERN CORPORATE CULTURE: THE GROUP'S SURVIVAL ALWAYS TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER THE INDIVIDUAL. DIRECT CONFRONTATION IS TABOO BECAUSE IT THREATENS THE GROUP'S HARMONY.

THE GROUP COMES FIRST

04

DECISION MAKING: NEMAWASHI

DESCRIPTION

ORIGINALLY COMES FROM GARDENING AND MEANS PREPARING THE ROOTS BEFORE MOVING A TREE.
IN JAPANESE BUSINESS CULTURE, IT REFERS TO HAVING INFORMAL, PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WITH ALL KEY PEOPLE BEFORE ANY OFFICIAL MEETING TAKES PLACE.
THE GOAL IS TO BUILD AGREEMENT QUIETLY IN ADVANCE, SO WHEN THE FORMAL MEETING HAPPENS, EVERYONE IS ALREADY ALIGNED.
THIS MAKES THE OFFICIAL MEETING MORE OF A CONFIRMATION CEREMONY, WITH NO SURPRISES OR OPEN CONFLICTS.





05

BEHIND THE SCENES

MEANING OF SILENCE SPEAKS VOLUMES



KEY CULTURAL INTERPRETATIONS:

RESPECT – STAYING SILENT SHOWS YOU ARE LISTENING CAREFULLY AND RESPECTING THE OTHER PERSON.

HARMONY – SILENCE HELPS AVOID CONFLICT AND KEEPS THE ATMOSPHERE CALM.

THOUGHTFULNESS – SILENCE SIGNALS THAT YOU ARE THINKING DEEPLY BEFORE ANSWERING.

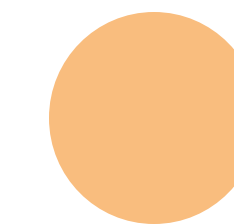
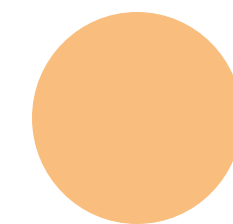
DISAGREEMENT WITHOUT CONFRONTATION – SILENCE CAN MEAN “I DON’T AGREE,” BUT SAID IN A POLITE, NON-DIRECT WAY.

EMOTIONAL CONTROL – NOT SPEAKING IMMEDIATELY SHOWS MATURITY AND SELF-DISCIPLINE.

HO-REN-SO

THE GOLDEN RULE

06



HOUKOKU

REPORT

**REPORT TO YOUR SUPERIOR FREQUENTLY.
INDEPENDENCE CAN LOOK LIKE HIDING
PROBLEMS. KEEP THE BOSS INFORMED.**

RENRAKU

CONTACT

**SHARE FACTS QUICKLY WITH COLLEAGUES
TO KEEP THE TEAM SYNCHRONIZED. NO
OPINIONS HERE, JUST DATA.**

SOUDAN

CONSULT

**REPORT TO YOUR SUPERIOR FREQUENTLY.
INDEPENDENCE CAN LOOK LIKE HIDING
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THE RINGI SYSTEM

- After the informal groundwork is completed, a formal proposal called a “ringishō” is created and sent up through the hierarchy.
- Each manager reviews the proposal and gives approval by stamping it with their personal seal, known as a “hanko.”
- Although the decision-making stage takes time, the implementation is extremely fast because everyone has already agreed during the nemawashi process.



TWO SIDES OF THE TRUTH

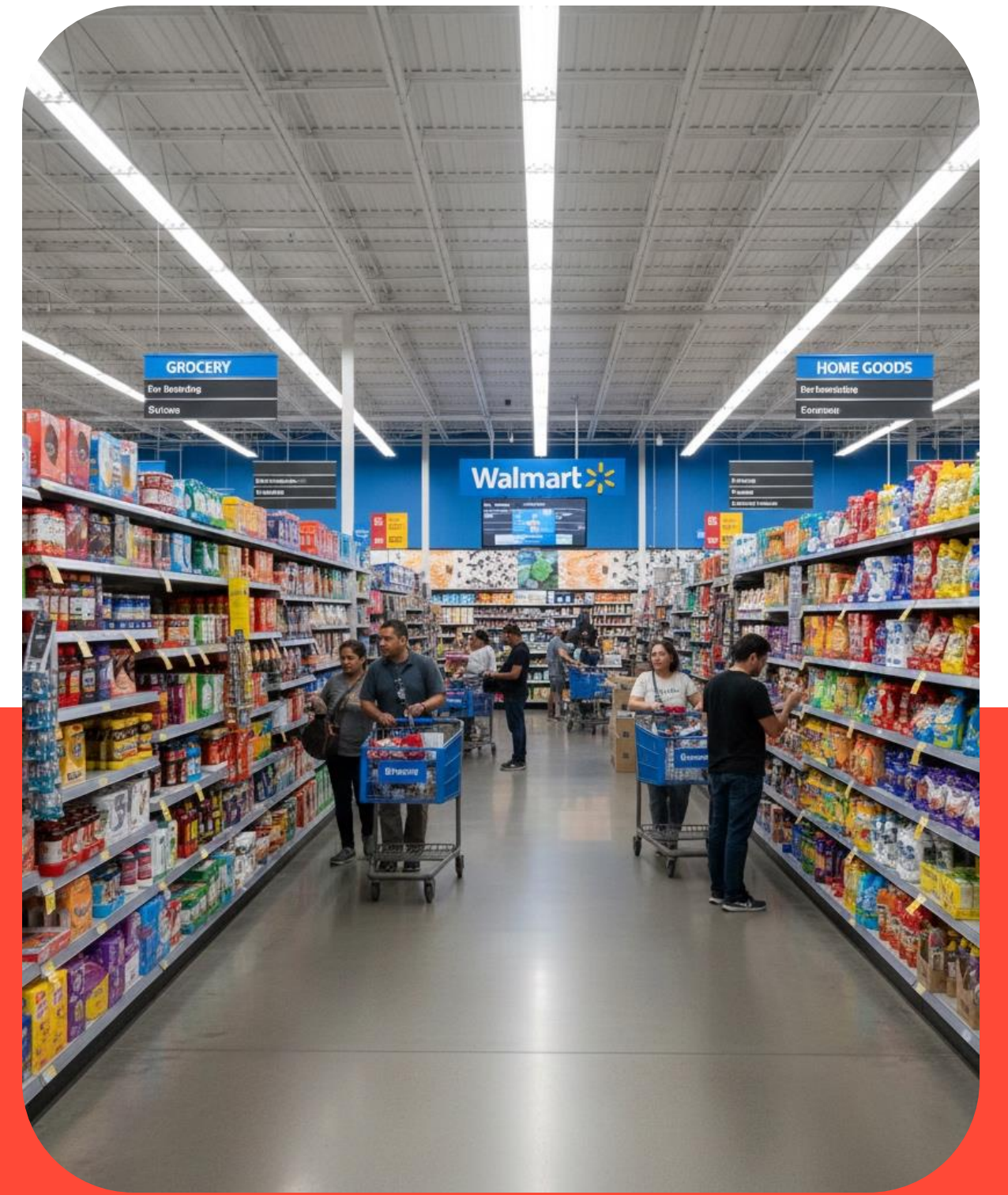
- Japanese culture makes a strong distinction BETWEEN PRIVATE FEELINGS AND PUBLIC BEHAVIOR TO PROTECT SOCIAL HARMONY.
- **"HONNE"** MEANS YOUR TRUE THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS, WHICH YOU SHARE ONLY IN PRIVATE OR WITH PEOPLE YOU TRUST.
- **"TATEMAE"** MEANS THE POLITE PUBLIC FACE YOU SHOW TO OTHERS TO AVOID CONFLICT OR EMBARRASSMENT.
- A POLITE **"YES"** IS OFTEN TATEMAE AND CAN ACTUALLY MEAN **"NO"** DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION.



SUCCESS VS FAILURE



- THE COMPANY'S STRATEGY FOCUSED ON RESPECT AND INTEGRATION.
- THEY CREATED CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS THAT HELPED BREAK DOWN SILOS AND IMPROVE COOPERATION.
- THEY USED FULL TRANSPARENCY TO EXPLAIN WHY CHANGE WAS NECESSARY FOR THE COMPANY'S SURVIVAL.
- THIS APPROACH ALLOWED EMPLOYEES TO ACCEPT THE CHANGES.



**THE MISTAKE: LOW PRICE FOCUS.
THEY IGNORED THE JAPANESE PERCEPTION
THAT "CHEAP"
EQUALS "BAD QUALITY." FURTHERMORE,
THEY TREATED
SUPPLIERS AGGRESSIVELY, BREAKING THE
LONG-TERM
RELATIONSHIPS (KANKEI) ESSENTIAL FOR
BUSINESS IN JAPAN.**

HOW TO SUCCEED

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BE PATIENT:

DON'T RUSH DISCUSSIONS. RESPECT SILENCE IN MEETINGS AND USE IT TO BUILD TRUST.

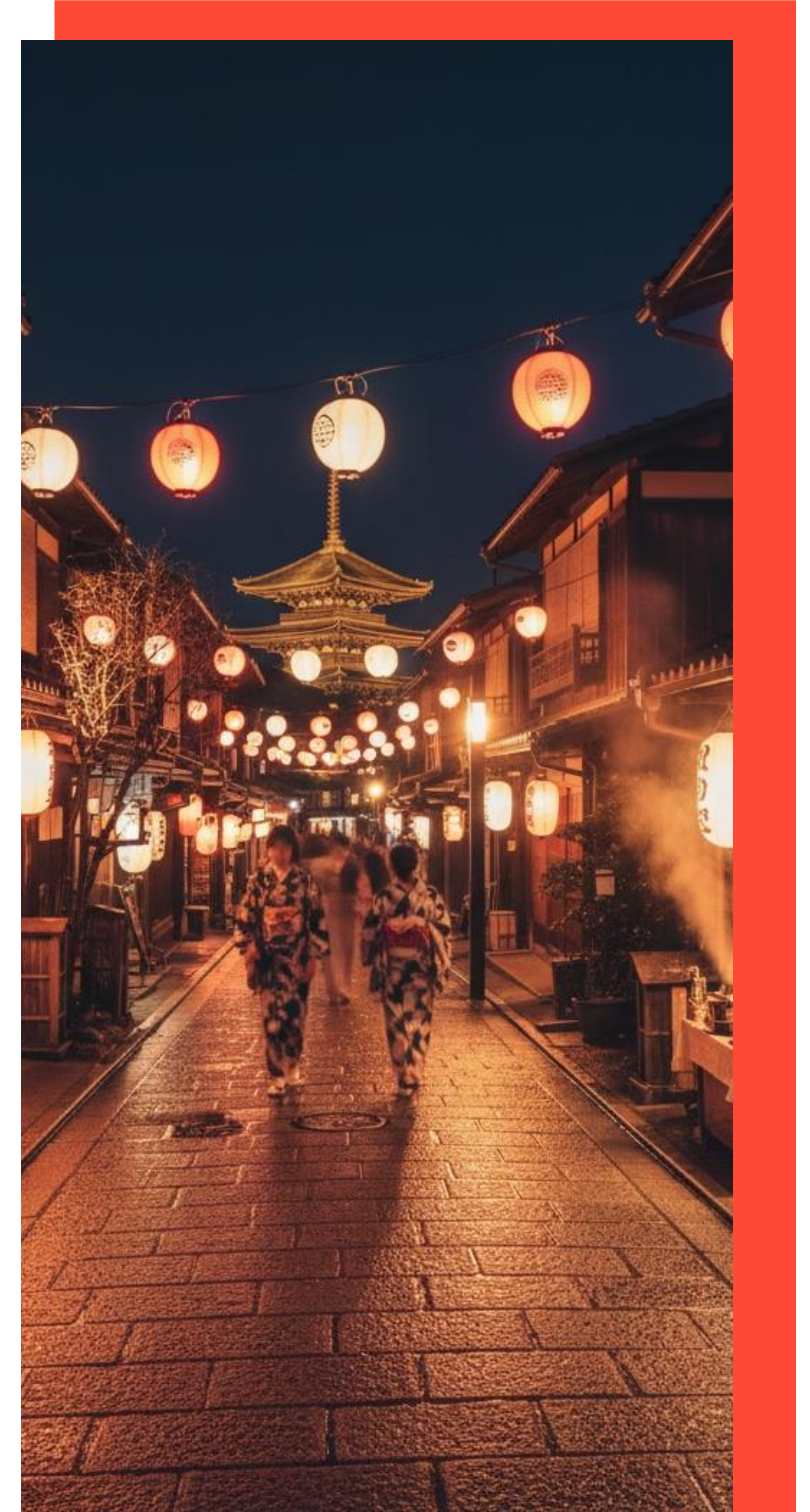
BUILD BONDS:

JOIN NOMIKAI (DRINKING GATHERINGS). THIS IS WHERE HONNE—TRUE FEELINGS—COMES OUT, AND REAL RELATIONSHIPS DEVELOP.

SAVE FACE:

NEVER CRITICIZE ANYONE IN PUBLIC. ALWAYS GIVE FEEDBACK PRIVATELY TO PROTECT RESPECT AND HARMONY.

KEYS TO INTEGRATION



THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION.

11

NOW
IT'S TIME
FOR
QUESTIONS.



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

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