

# The success factor of Good Design Award as a promotion policy

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Abstract: Good Design Award has been the only comprehensive design evaluation and commendation system in Japan since 1957. Many companies and designers in and abroad participate in the activity to revitalize industry and improve quality of life through design. This academic report states the successful factors of this system from the perspective of the organizer. First, we reviewed the history of the Good Design Award. And it focuses on main system amendments, we validated about the background, the main point of reform, and its effect. Finally, we proposed the system of a new era based on analysis.

**Key words:** *Design Promotion, Good Design Award, Promotion Method, Design policy*

## 1. Introduction

"Good Design Award" hold by Japan Institute of Design Promotion is the most successful design promotion policy in Japan. Perhaps, one of the most successful design polices deployed in the 20th century.

"Good Design Award" is a system simply "to choose and promote good designs". With the aim to fix methodology of design thinking to Japanese industry, Ministry of International Trade and Industry of Japan started this system in 1957.

Good Design Award Lay out in Japan has facilitated design activities in field of industrial products and promoted to its growth. And today, it has grown up to an overall design evaluation system involving all active fields. In Japan, recognition rate of the symbol of winning Good Design Award —"G-Mark", reached 87.7 percent. It has become the symbol of "reliable product". Good Design Award has grown up from a design evaluation system to a "social device" that a lot of people can share the value of it.

The reason of its growth can be considered as a result of a completed "mechanism of promotion" after the reform that took place in 1998 called "institutional privatization" and a series of revolutions thereafter. In October every year, more than 1,000 new Good Design awards are announced. Designers and companies, organizers do their best to promote sales activities and public relations. Mass media expand the news. Retail companies plan sales projects of their own. These activities are effect ordinary citizens. The citizens' sense to design grows; start to catch their preferred products winning the Good Design Award. It is considered that Good Design Award has grown up by building such a positive circle of design (Figure 1: mechanism of promotion) by "chain of billiard basis".

Back into the history of the Good Design Award from the point of view of the organizers of, this paper will go through growth factors of Good Design Award.

First, motivation purpose of its establishment and overview of the policy reforms in 1984 will be introduced. Secondly, by taking a closer look to" institutional privatization "in 1998 and policy reform conducting now, the progress of how success factors formed will become clear.

## 2. Analysis of success factor regarding Good Design Award

### 2.1 The birth of good design product selection system

Good Design Award was founded under the name of "Good Design Selection System" by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry in 1957. A direct background leading to establishment was to avoid "Japan-bashing" in international export. Japan was put in a very poor situation after the war, and expanding exports of goods was essential for people to survive. But at that time, Japanese "copy product" issue emerged as a major international problem. Therefore, the provision of products with high originality became an important issue which is indispensable for Japan to return to the international community. "Industrial Design" has been paid much attention by administration as object to accomplish this task.

Background of the establishment is very complex. First, "Design Encourages Council", which was hold in the Patent Office in charge of design right, proposed establishment of a "system to select and recommend a good design". Research of the preceding system of the United Kingdom and the United States is carried out on based on this proposal. In 1957, it was started as a promotion system organized by the Patent Office. Following year, Ministry of Trade and Industry take over the "Good Design Selection System" along with a series of activities such as organizing the design department and establishing law for export measures. However, before the administration addressing design, "Good design movement" has been deployed by architects and designers pioneering. Base towards the establishment of such a system was well equipped to some extent.

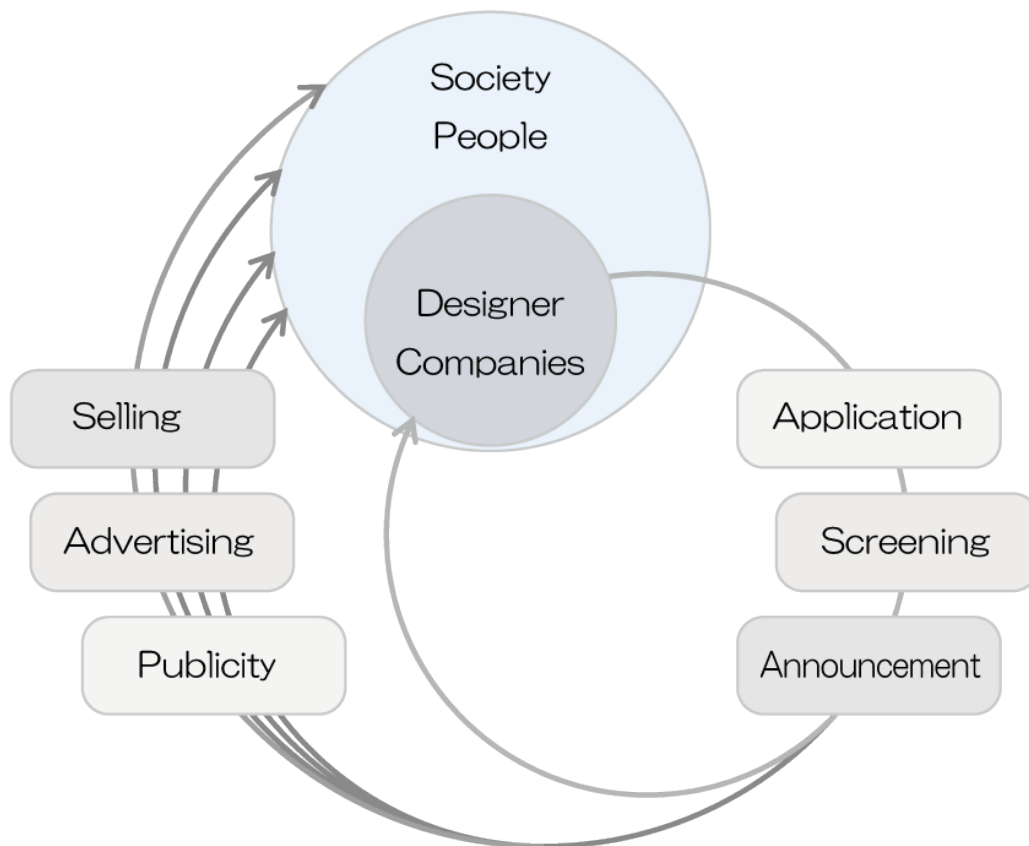


Figure.1 Circular diagram as a mechanism of Design Promotion of Good Design Award

In other words, the Patent Office, who wants to measure the promotion of originality, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry who wants to solve an international problem caused by obstacle for export-expanding and pioneering designers, who want to earn national understanding about the design, overlapping of these thoughts has brought up the "Good Design selection System".

Although the system started, it was a time even the word "design" is still new to people, "products which are designed" were a rare presence. Thus, the "Good Design Selection System", the same while as a tool importing design to the progress of creating products, has too few goods to choose. This is just like a relationship of "chicken-and-egg". It was said that judges used every connection, and ran around to look for "goods of good design". "G-mark", as a proof of the selected products, also as the symbol of the system, has emerged since the system inception. It has been made into seals and sold at that time.

In this way, the "handmade" based operation continued for a time after the establishment, but in 1963, which is the seventh year of establishment, "Good Design Selection System" has been adopted to a "public system" and style worth of selection system was going to be built. The background is due to the inception of design into companies, at a certain degree, "designed product" has went on to the stage. Through these developments, the policy went from the stage of "searching and inspiring" design to the step of arranging "acceptation".

The reform of 1963, in which the system shifted to application system, along with clarifying the application object, and reforming the screening standard and screening criteria, "Japan Export Design Exhibition" is hold under the cooperation of department store in order to announce the winning products. Further, in order to operate this process, "Good Design Selection System Secretariat" was established in the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It can be said that the with the reform of 1963, the right-hand part of the diagram in Figure 1 — "application • judgment • presentation" is, and has been completed in initial stage.

## 2.2 Reform of the system in 1984

1970's "Good Design Selection System" had played a role as an export - promotion policy. But it seems to began to change into a system improve the quality of export commodities with time. Quality standards is provided for each target product, testing is now be required, the test result has become more important than judgment of design. This change is due to the fact that administrative department in charge of this system is merged with the department in charge of export inspection. This new department is called "test design department".

Thinking of the inseparable relationship of quality improvement and design in the development of the product, such a conversion of system is not considered bad. However, the reality of the quality standards is not intended to quantify the performance capabilities interpersonal, it was nothing but composition analysis of the product and mechanical performance in the range that can be measured. Moreover, the standard itself is ambiguous, even lower than criteria inside a number of companies. Dissatisfaction From many of the applicants companies came for this system.

1984, as the host of this system, Ministry of International Trade and Industry was to push through significant reform. This is for shifting the system back to a "system to promote design". Design has power to lead the society. With the recognition of the role of this system as to appeal this power to society, design administrative personnel at the time, along with carrying out drastic reforms such as following, called for a major overhaul for the operation.

Point of reform is to change the system into a "status appropriate to design". In line with this policy, system rebuilding was carried out based on the following three points.

1) Expand the target area into all industrial products.

Although target entries at the time were limited to products available for quality inspection, expansion went on under the recognition that this rule is out of the question. As a result, durable goods including cars, housing facilities, machines for stores and offices, all kinds of stores, all kinds of industrial goods, facilities for education and health care, facilities for public use, has all become target entries.

2) Prove the quality of judgment.

It was decided that all juries should be master-class designers and architects, who are active at the forefront. Their name should be published during the screening. Also a system that all the entries should be brought together to screening is built. These actions made the screening system possible for overlooking all entries from a comprehensive point of view.

3) Systematically introduce awards such as "Good Design Award".

Aiming for improving the incentives for applicants, founded the "Good Design Award", the system is consummated with series of awards such as "Unit Award" and "Award of Small and Medium Enterprises". These awards as the "face of the system" also play a role to present "the tasks for design" after the "welfare Product Award" joined in.

To tell the reform of 1984 in a nutshell, it was to bring the system into the open. As the figure 1 shows, the reform here, by the re-design the process of application, judgment and presentation from the perspective of design-oriented, is trying to appeal the charm the design.

"Walkman" appeared in 1978, and the start of "MUJI" is 1980. As these epoch-making designs starting to get understanding, Japanese design has changed significantly in the 1980s. A methodology that other than increasing added value of products, design is the idea of creating new values, began to spread little by little. The reform of 1984, along with this awareness, has been welcomed by designers and design advanced enterprises. As a result, number of entries has risen rapidly.

## 2.3 Restart of the system as the Good Design Award

1998, at the stage of over 40 years from the system foundation, "Good Design Selection System" organized by Ministry of International Trade and Industry the was privatized, it was taken over by Japan Industrial Design Promotion Organization and continued as the "Good Design Award" .

This "privatization plan" didn't come from a consideration of how the Good Design Award ought to be, but was conducted as part of the streamlining of administration and pushed the government. As the effect of policy that business that doesn't have to be conducted by administration should be privatized, "Good Design Selection System" was selected by stability both in strategy and operation. As for this project, the business capital is almost supplied by applicant. This is another factor leading to privatization.

### 2.3.1 The task of privatization

However, the essential meaning is different between "contract of the business" and "organize". In the first place, "privatization" is the methodology operating and developing a public interest by principle of market activities. As for the Good Design Award, it is a task to replace this "evaluation-promoting system of design" by "fee-charged public interest services". If designers and companies participate in the Good Design award admit its cost-effectiveness, this system will be allowed to exist. By introducing this easy logic, the core of this system, which has been obscured until then, seems to have become clear. To put it very simple, the question is "to whom this system belongs".

First, the re-starting must be based on the understanding of people who are charged for fees about how to share benefits. So Japan Industrial Design Promotion Organization created several plans and consulted with companies and designers who have supported this system.

"Plan 1" is a proposal to inherit the system as a project of design evaluation. It is a method results in improving design by clarified evaluation criteria and clear feed-backs. Moreover, by recognizing excellent design, the incentive also increases. It sounds ideas about design consultant business or human resource development business, but in this proposal, both the target user and cost-effective system it quite clear.

"Plan 2" is a proposal concentrated on "G-mark" which has already reached a high recognition rate even at that time, to be deployed as a business platform. Companies are to develop plans using "G-mark" and announce their achievements to encourage people's understanding of the design, and claim the superiority of their own. Since this kind of design business actually appeared in the early 1990's, this plan was proved to be feasible.

But these proposals were all denied. Inheritance plan selected by designers and companies that have supported this system was "Plan 3", "based on the results so far, develop into a open system that everyone can participate ".However the Design Promotion Organization Promotion side had predicted that as participants decrease because of privatization, this expansion plan will be hard to carry out.

However, according to the questionnaire survey carried out at the same period, besides leading designers and companies, almost all applicants answered "will apply even if this system is privatized". In addition, as for the authority assumed to be lost by the "privatization", many positive voices were heard as "Authority will bear by support from people, by attendance of leading companies, architects and designers."

### **2.3.2 The way new system ought to be**

For the Japan Industrial Design Promotion Organization, voices of participants were supportable. However, it was not easy to design base on the logic of privatization "develop public interest in principles of market activity ". As long as this system aims in expansion of public increase, the achievement should be enjoyed by everyone. But the cost will beared by designers and companies participating in this system. There is a contradiction. A viable mechanism can be established only when the interests of the participants associated with public interest increasing. Re-examining the mechanism from this perspective, it is putting more weight on "choose" but lack of "spread" as a selection system. It ended up as a typical example of means becoming self-purposed after 40 years since its establishment. Therefore, it was decided to go back to the starting point of this system from the perspective of discovery and redevelopment of "expansion and development element" and to discover the point to reborn the system.

Not limited to this system, the design evaluation promotion system that raised the idea of Good Design, emerged as a movement that to select "good design", introduce it to consumers and industry, and try to form a better society. In the early days of "Good Design Selection System", "Preferred circulation" such as in Figure 1 should have been assumed. This thought might also leads to establishment of "design department" in the Ministry of International Trade and Industry. But after 40 years it should be said that "Good Design Selection System" has been preoccupied with this single root but missed other directions.

It seems that as the "Good Design Selection System" weathered away, has the idea to take advantage of design as social wisdom became past. Also the concept of design award as "social propulsion through design" seems not to be accepted today. Rather, expectation for design is growing. The design here does not mean creating different things that color life, but addressing to social challenges, such as ecological design. By development of information society, "society propulsion through design" is also considered potential.

With such thought, We believe that Good Design system could go more further than any other design movements ever before. The direction of design, rather than the linear idea, at least should be looked as "cyclically model" that Good Design movement has aimed for. And as a conclusion, this "Select System", close to the certification system, should be changed into an "award system" to share the joy.

### 2.3.3 Start of the new system

The "Good Design Selection System", which insist for many years, that the design should be built from the user's point of view. However, the system didn't come out that way. It's surprising for us to know that it's the privatization that gave us the opportunity to re-capture from the start.

The point of privatization is to balance private interests with public interest. But for good design award, the strategy is to induce private interests by enlarging the public interest. However, after all it's just a wishful thinking "If a lot of people support and need this system, the circulating should go on well". But there is a believing, if all steps of the system are well designed, it should be supported by people. With the hope and belief, we went on designing the concrete system.

#### 1) Create contact to Customers

First, the fact that "Good Design Selection System" has lost was a perspective of dialogue between society and consumers. Complete "select", announce the result and carry out simply ceremony as the finish. For applicants, this system seems only suitable for industry. To produce a "prefer circulation over the Good Design", it is necessary to provide the opportunity for customers to evaluate applicants. Therefore, we decided to develop the screening venue that was not open to the public until now to "Exhibition that target general consumers (Good Design Expo)".

Compare to the "Preview" of 1998, when the first year of "Privatization", its 10 years later, on 2008, "Good Design Expo", participants increased from 8,000 to 40,000. "Preview" has a strong image of "Mutually learning place", target on students and enterprise human resources. General visitors increased eventually, and then a few families appeared.

I supposed that the conversion to "event that can be visited generally" changed the social positioning of Good Design Award. For instance, Mass media, increased families, and the increase of TV coverage in

particular. By the appearance of increasing families, this event finally positioned as something newsworthy. And I suppose it has been concerned as no more an award system only for industry. Therefore, by this public event, Good Design Expo, Good Design Award was succeeded in getting more extensive social cognition. From that day, the day of Good Design Award was announced, will also be featured in TV news of key station.

## 2) Create "Words for calling"

Success or failure of the Good Design movement is applied to whether or not procreation sympathy resonance between consumers and selected products. In other words, it is a question with the "how to tell" and "choice".

"How to tell" is to be clear about each awarded subject of "Why chose it to be Good Design Award". However, the word doesn't indicate good point, but its role in the social life, and discourse of leader ability. At this time, instead of the "tell what to chose"; the concept of "Catch tell and chose at the same time" was reconsidered. There the "screening criteria" substantially revised.

Up to 1997, in "Good Design Selection System", "selection criteria" didn't change since it been defined in 1963; it is made up by 5 items "Beauty, Function, Performance, Safety, Proper Production • Valuation". From late 1980s, by catching Concept and Design, Complex examination deployed, in such a situation, we developed new "screening criteria" as follows.

Firstly, besides name a design as Good Design, there has rules that must be observed, also could be considering as part of Design ethics. We organized it into 10 categories, such as usability, safety, comfortable, consideration of environment, etc. According to the experience of screening, we extracted 30 items for "point of why the design is excellent". These are included from multiple perspectives such as life of "Providing new ways to enjoy", industry of "business creation", environment society of "considering ecology & suitable environment". Then items such as "New community proposal" or "Sustainable society" presented as "Design that open the future".

This "screening criteria" is clear and easy to use, even beyond the screening of Good Design Award, also performed in design reviews of many companies and schools.

## 3) Design is required in all areas

Purpose of Good Design Award is design mind of everyone or if we say it today, creates "Design Thinking". Through the awarded objects to provide "Good examples" that improves design mind is the main role of Good Design Award. In such a perspective, "Good examples" appears not only in industrial product but also communication activities such as advertising or publicity. And consumers are also workers engaged in industrial activity in one side. Therefore rather than a "good example" in the family life only, there may some in community and industrial activity where a hint formats. "Good Design" exists in every user groups without difference of age. To be simply, in various scenes of one day, the more number of times you encounter "Good example", the more design mind will be improved. As Good Design Award, rather than a design concept that works only in a certain area, the concept of common to all should be offered. In order to

cultivate such a powerful design, we believe Good Design Award should provide an “Arena”, like the Mixed Martial Arts, for all fields of design.

Based on this perspective, Good Design Award, opened for all industrial products in 1984, then from 1994, opened for Facilities of architecture and public works. Reformed in 1998, Good Design Award added the information and communication field, then reborn into a system that covered all areas of design, called thing, space, and information.

Since 2000, we have taken aggressive activities in the design area such as new community design, promotion design, and service design. The emergence of this new field area strongly encouraged human resources and companies that tried to produce new things by using wisdom of design.

By this opportunity,

Also to this opportunity, industrial field including agriculture, welfare and healthcare, finance, and information services, research and educational institutions, regional and local government and NPO Corporation could participated in Good Design Award as well. So, the breadth of the applicant becomes a major feature of the Good Design Award as seen internationally.

#### 4) From selection to award

Question of how to name the new system at the end remained. Basically, as a "Selection System" it can be understood from its name “Good Design Selection System”. The winning products receive a document issued by Minister of International Trade and Industry, and described as "Certification of Good Design ". That means this system has been recognized as one of the "certification system" administratively. At that time when the system established, there was also opposing views about whether can be "certified" as Good Design for products that considered has necessity for the government to promote. However for that stage, since products that can be called a good design was less, no particular problem occurred. Conversely, the criteria of "certification" was reluctant of choosing "Not bad" gradually became more pronounced. 1984, by the opportunity of system amendment, discussion on "what should be the selected" has been repeated constantly, for instance, judges who had supported screening of 70's believed "To decide whether good or bad is consumers who pay money on design. This system could provide information for consumers to understand the difference and help for determines." This opinion received most support of leading candidates and judges, in late 1980, the system advanced as “To clarify the good point". In other words, in such a situation, this system should convert from "Selection System" to "recommended system". However, administratively transition from enactment to recommend considered as some kinds of reflection of recession. For this reason, at the time that design administrative department in charge of, "selection" was remained.

By 1998, matter how to look at this system was no longer a "Selection System". With a screening attitude of "To clarify the good point", in a stage that convey it to people or society as "Address words", it's required to make a clean break with “Selection System”.

We chose the name "Good Design Award" is due to the fact that how it is used. Correctly it should be "Selected as Good Design", but many winners have been public as “We won the Good Design Award". Not "We have achieved the standards that recognized by government ", but simply consider it as “We are good”,



the communication in winners was highly effective. The trend is also one of the factors that it was no longer a "Selection System".

This system was established with the goal to promote the understanding of design. Its first target was industry, and then by expanding the field of view on customer and society, we assumed it achieved the goal of "development of Design Mind" by 1997.

Therefore, new "Good Design Award" started people who understood became supporters, and then by providing a forum to demonstrate the design thinking of people, play a role as a device for leading the society. These are reasons of the name "Good Design Award."

### 2.3.4 Effect of System revision

System rebuilt due to privatization that took place in 1998 and pushed forward in consideration of "communication with consumers". As long as not getting support of consumers, and closed to reality from a sense of urgency that this system would not survive, it advanced the reform. To "Preferable circulation around Good Design" as intent, lead to "communication with consumers", we should build "Platform" and organize "Words", enhanced the "content". By placing the point of view in "public relations" as Figure-1, we rebuilt all of the structure.

However, the conclusion was not be made in 1998. With results of trials and errors over several years, the reality is we achieved the design concept. Even use "Communication", before to contact with customer, we had to emphasize the interaction with the applicants first. Applicants and organizer, is in the relationship opposed practice in aspects of screening. In order to cross over it, mutual trust is essential. However, in era of the "Good Design Selection System", because the system had been rigid, we met a situation of criticism to screening that cannot be taken as "good meaning". Thus, of applicants had distrust, and to dispel this has become a continuing challenge for organizer.

Therefore, we actively "communicate" "with designers and companies that have supported this system for many years at the same time. The purpose of this system is socialization of design, while applicant and organizers become co-operators. The point of reform is the change from "review business" to "PR business", and essential business funds change as well. Especially, for "Exhibition" as cornerstone of reform, because it requires substantial funding, to convince this cost burden was the first barrier. By held such communication frequently in response to business step, methodology and purpose of the newborn "Good Design Award" went to penetrate gradually.

In accordance with exposed screening venue, "Good Design EXPO", media coverage increased rapidly was firstly noticeable. Over 100 companies participated in press conference of the Good Design Award lined up with many TV cameras. As a result, broadcast on TV news and feature article in the magazine or sub-Media increased, further it has appeared to become an increase in coverage to various award objects.

On the other hand, awarded designers and companies perform promotion by using the "G Mark", proof of Good Design. Although this began from the launch phase of the system, use this "G Mark" evolved significantly in the period in the privatization. Some companies used "G Mark" for "Advertising campaign of company's reliability", various methods of appealing has been developed and then spread over the public.

More recently, some large sellers began sale campaign on the theme of "Good Design Award". And we believe this would also be the effect of conversion of above. According to this development, we can also understand it as the process of Good Design award being socialized.

By privatization, Good Design Award, it restarted as a three-legged race by applicants, winners and organizers, since third party such as media, advertising agencies, sellers participated in, Good Design Award has become "for everyone". Voluntary Business by a third party in particularly, promotion process to consumers is now going to be deployed automatically.

This has resulted in the stability of the Good Design Award as a business. Thus Good Design Award was able to establish a "Preferable circulation surrounding design". The start of the circulation is from 2006, which is the 50th anniversary of Good Design Award, the fact finally came to be realized is just happened in last few years.

## 2.4 The Good Design Award from Demand Aspect

After privatization, Good Design Award began to re-grow steadily as described above. However from 2006, its 50th anniversary, judges as architects or designers found out the "Views and approaches of products" has started to be displacement from this era. Straightforward, it seemed to be screening in "Perspective that provides things". Japanese design, has achieved great success in developing industry. This experience became sort of seed, pointed out a new social structure which no longer be seen according to INTERNET or SNS. Most judges have received the influence under these fetters. Simply because have assessed from the side of the society and life,

"Good Design Award" may have a social significance of existence.

This is the key tipping point in privatization; existence reason of Good Design Award will disappear without this part. However, screening in "Perspective that provides things" is contrary to this direction obviously, that is reason we felt sensuous displacement occurred there.

Architect Hiroshi Naito, who has served as chief judge from 2007, as recognized that the era has clearly changed, for the purposes of this system, was determined to describe it instructs to perform a clear screening from demand side, and the screening result rating viewed from the side of life and society.

## 4. Conclusions

Currently, "Good Design Award became a place of "Design of Me" gathered various industries such as sales and manufacturing, architects and designers, administration be adjusted driving force of society, various NPO and research and educational institutions. Built a place gathered various players who make up the society will be the greatest achievement of the "Good Design Award". Then, among the various designs from these players, to increase more players in participation and create a structured to select the "Design that healthy developing society and life" will be challenge imposed on us in the future. And then the new mechanism is whether an "open type platform" is an impossible subject we could assume at this stage.

Unquestionably, "Good Design Award" is a system under good design movement in 20th century.

A design movement based on the principle of hope "Good faith should move the society" has been developed in various countries and regions. When establish this system, we referenced good design movement in Modern Museum of New York and Merchandise Mart in Chicago, Design Selection carried by Design Council in UK.

When even the creation of this system, I have to reference and Good Design movement Merchandise Mart in Chicago and modern Museum of New York had been deployed, the design selection of Design Council in the UK had been deployed. Mechanism of them became the "First page in the history of design", only Good Design Award in Japan, that it was able to establish a "structured of promotion" to consumers and created a "Positive cycle surrounding Good Design".

As "system that can support, system to be able to rely" for designers and companies, furthermore it is been able to grow into the "trusted system" also for consumers.

I believe "Good Design Award" entered a new stage by the unprecedented disaster of 2011.

Japanese consciousness has begun to change significantly during the disaster. Everyone thought that it's time to make a clean break from the life of enjoying consumption. I suspect almost everyone was obtained a consciousness of "Let's live in a life without luxurious. And find richness there". "Good Design Award" must taken, a change of Consciousness similar to this determination.

Upon the start of the Good Design Award, Mr.Fukasawa, who has been served as chief judge from 2010, has been cast particularly important words for every year. When we put them together, they are "Richness, Reasonable, beauty and easy to use, and harmony".

Thought that appeared is just what "Good Design movement" aimed.

In the high growth of the economy, we should think catch up "Good Design" as a thought that had been drowned out in this era.

Japanese have been able to have by a glimpse of the coming society and life by the unprecedented disaster. We have device to share design that gave birth to "Good Design Award".

If undertake initiatives to experiment to the future with this device, we may be able to contribute even a little to the history of human beings through the design.