

GOODHILL Corporation

GOODHILL Corporation Ltd is a major manufacturer and seller of custom-made men's and women's suitware, some 350,000 pieces a year. Its headquarters are in Tottori City. It is a key company in the GOODHILL Group of 10 companies in fashion (apparel), media, and leisure. Its main media companies are Shin Nihonkai Press Company, the cable provider Nihonkai Cable Network Company, and Osaka Daily Press Company. Its leisure category includes Nihonkai Golf Club (a members-only 18-hole, par 72 course and a 9-hole course east of Tottori City), on the shore of the Japan Sea, and House Nihonkai Company, which builds houses.

The group was founded by Toshikata Yoshioka. Hideki Yoshioka is President and son Toru Yoshioka is Executive Director. The family owns the GOODHILL Group; there are no publicly traded shares.

GOODHILL Corporation has a paid-in capital of 100 million yen (\$905,000 at 110 yen/dollar), and revenues in fiscal 2018 (ending July 31, 2018) of 4.46 billion yen, up slightly from the year before. It has 809 workers (February 2019). In addition to its factory in Tottori City, it has factories in Beijing, China, and Bangalore, India. The company has branches in Osaka, Tokyo, Nagoya, Fukuoka, and Sapporo, and sales offices in Hiroshima and Sendai.

The company was founded in 1961 as the head factory of Sambutsu Company. In 1964 the company name was changed to F-one Tottori Factory Company, and in 1967 to Tottori F-one Company, and finally, in 1993, to GOODHILL Corporation. F-one Corporation, which had been publicly listed and in which Mitsui and Company had played a significant role, was taken over by Toshikata Yoshioka, and he became its president. In 2011 the company was de-listed and GOODHILL Corporation purchased the outstanding shares through a tender offer. GOODHILL is the direct translation of Yoshioka, the family name.

GOODHILL has developed a sophisticated, computer-based production system. All the designs, from the pattern making system to the grading system, are based on its original CAD system in the design

department. Its essence is quality output, quick delivery, and relatively low prices. It has a database of 10 million body types. Customers can select from a wide range of suit models, such as traditional British design, Italian mode, as well as trendier styles.

The customer's size and shape are carefully measured, and a basic formula of body type (effectively, a digitized pattern) is adjusted by computer to the specific customer's size. This means that a customer does not have to try on the suit for fittings, which substantially reduces costs and thus prices.

The customer selects the fabric from an immense variety in terms of material, quality, weight, feel, color, and other features. With computer-driven instructions the fabric is cut by automatic cutting machines. The production of pants is relatively simple; once the pants materials are cut, they are sent to a subsidiary factory for production. The jacket is more complex. there are 24 automatic cutting machines. Cutting is fast – 2.5 minutes for the outside fabric using blade-type cutting machines and (the highest speed in the world) 30 seconds for lining using a razor-type machine. The factory cuts 1,500 sets of suit materials a day to provide quick delivery.

Jacket production uses 250 very specific sewing operations, a labor-intensive process. The jacket materials are attached to a moving overhead hanger which transports the garment from one sewing station to the next. In the final finishing line, pants and jacket (specific to each customer) are hand-ironed, subjected to final inspection, then shipped to sales outlets. The sorting machine can sort more than 1000 pieces per hour to over 100 delivery destinations. About 15 percent are orders shipped directly to customers, and 85 percent to the stores where the customer placed the order.

The factory directly adjoins the company office. It is a six-story building, each floor about 5,000 square feet, which is just a bit larger than a basketball court, and basically open. Coats and pants for each order are assembled on the first floor. Most of the floors are used for sewing the jackets. The overwhelming impression is that hundreds of workers are engaged in sewing. This reflects the company's feeling that no matter how automated or labor-saving its system, the basis of suit-making is a hands-on process.

Acknowledgments

On May 31, 2018 I visited GOODHILL Corporation in Tottori City, Tottori Prefecture on the Japan Sea. My visit was arranged by Hirofumi Maki of the Development Bank of Japan in Tokyo. I went with him, together with his DBJ colleague Akihito Uesada based in Matsue, and Ms Akiko Sawada, my interpreter. I met Hideki Yoshioka, president of the company. Following a general discussion about Tottori and his company, he took me through the suit-making factory, which directly adjoins the headquarters.