

Prioritizing safety, consideration for the environment, and relationships of trust with local communities and employees

Maeda Metal Co., Ltd.

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Maeda Metal Industry Co., Ltd. is located in Tachikawa City, Tokyo, and operates a metal recycling business in which metal scraps such as iron, copper, aluminum, and stainless steel from civil engineering works, demolition contractors, and factories are collected, sorted, processed, and sold to steel manufacturers. As it is rare for a metal recycling industry to exist in the city, the company continued its business while building relationships of trust with the local community. In January 2019, the company celebrated its 70th anniversary. When the company was founded, there was nothing around it, and it expanded its business while purchasing ever more land. However, as local development progressed, the number of houses also increased, and it became essential to build relationships of trust with local communities and invest in facilities that give consideration to safety and the environment. To reduce the noise, dust, and vibration that could cause pollution to the city, the company has made every effort to invest in maintaining the business in the community, such as making the walls of the factory soundproof and installing mists on the ceilings to reduce dust.

Today, the current and third president, Soichiro Maeda, took over the business when the second (current chairman) was 65 years old. From the outset, the previous president had a firm intention to pass on the business while he was healthy, and Maeda, who inherited the company at that time, was young at around the age of 35. The previous president said that the succession of the business in a new and flexible age was good, and Maeda is currently doing the business while consulting with his predecessor.

As many as 10 employees commute from the Tama region. President Maeda continued the employee-first philosophy of his predecessor, giving consideration to the working environment, such as setting up break rooms and allowing employees to take ample time off from work. Some long-time employees took three weeks of leave at a time. Currently, the company does not hire new graduates. At present, he says he has no plans to make the company bigger.

Creating a "local forest" that vitalizes individuals



In April 2019, the company opened a facility called "Medical Forest Tachikawa," which combines medical facilities with nursery schools. Based on the concept of "medical care forest," they aim to create a place where every member of the community can be energized. In addition to contributing to the local community, one reason behind the establishment of the facility was to continue its business. In light of the recent housing demand around Tachikawa, if the land adjacent to the factory, which was the material storage place of the building company, was sold, it is highly likely that apartment houses will be built, and it would be difficult to continue the business. For this reason, Maeda decided to purchase the neighboring land, and this led to the idea of a medical mall that was based on the idea of creating a business that could contribute to the community and a place where residents could feel good about the area. At the beginning of the project, it was difficult to find medical institutions willing to participate in the project, but Tama Shinkin Bank, which had a close relationship with the bank, provided strong support. The company received various forms of support from the Tama Shinkin Bank, including not only loans but also information on medical institutions and doctors. It also received praise for its contribution to the community. Maeda said that the Tama Shinkin Bank, which looks outside the figures, is a vital entity for the region.

Awareness that everyone should create a better society is important

Concerning SMEs support, he said, "Customers tend to be attracted to those companies they can easily contact without knowing the actual situation, even though they are actually engaging in management that takes social responsibility into account, such as giving consideration to safety and the environment. Those who want to sell metals at a higher price may go to a company with a higher purchase price and not come to a company that is fulfilling its social responsibilities seriously. There are actually companies that make me wonder how they are able to make some purchase prices possible. I believe that society as a whole should give preference to companies that care about sustainability. It may be necessary to provide tax incentives and certification systems for companies that are undertaking sustainable initiatives." He stressed the necessity of creating social structures to increase the number of companies that are making efforts to improve the working environment.

As for public procurement, he said, "We used to do tenders, but now we do very little. I don't think any company with a problem with the working environment and the safety and the environment will be eliminated in the system where the bid price is the only winning bid."

"Since companies and organizations with long-term employees are likely to have higher productivity and less prone to accidents, it is understandable that investing in the maintenance and development of human resources has long-term cost advantages, but more companies will likely engage in such research and evidence data," he explained how specific support for SMEs should be provided.

As for the creation of a sustainable society, he said, "I think that education is important. I think everyone needs to be conscious of creating a better society, and we need to educate people in a way that is consistent with that direction I think it's a long-term topic." Indicating his belief that we need to take a long-term view.