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Company History

Our story

Akio Morita, a young physicist, and Masaru Ibuka, an engineer, first meet each other at research committee sessions during the Second World War. The two men become close friends, though Ibuka is more than a dozen years older. However, sometime before the end of the war, they go their separate ways and lose touch.

A new enterprise

September 1945, and Masaru Ibuka returns to post-war Tokyo. Based in a room on the third floor of Shirokiya department store, he establishes a new business with a small group of engineers. The company is called Tokyo Tsushin Kenkyujo (Tokyo Telecommunications Research Institute), known simply as Totsuken.

After the war the Japanese are hungry for news from around the world, so demand for radios is rapidly increasing. Many people have war-damaged radios, or sets with the shortwave unit disconnected by the military police to prevent them receiving enemy propaganda. Totsuken repair these radios and make shortwave adapters to convert medium frequency units into all-wave receivers.

The shortwave adapters attract wide attention, and Japan's leading broadsheet newspaper, Asahi Shimbun, runs a feature on the products' popularity. Demand for the shortwave adapters increases.

An important reconnection

Perhaps more significantly, the Asahi Shimbun feature is read by Akio Morita, Ibuka's young physicist friend from the wartime research committee. As soon as Morita reads the article mentioning Ibuka's name, he writes to the elder engineer, who replies at once, urging Morita to come to Tokyo and join him as a business partner at Totsuken. Since Morita has been offered a job as a lecturer at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, he immediately moves to Tokyo to renew their acquaintance.

Totsuken to Totsuko

On 7 May 1946, the reunited Ibuka and Morita partner to form a new electrical equipment company, the Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo K.K. (Tokyo Telecommunications Engineering Corporation), also known as Totsuko.

The partners invest the equivalent of ¥190,000 (around £1,200) into Totsuko, starting with a workforce of just 20 people. Initially, there is no machinery and little scientific equipment, and Totsuko's main business is adapting radios and making vacuum-tube voltmeters, the latter of which the company begin to supply in greater volume to government offices.

In 1950 Totsuko launch Japan's first tape recorder, the G-Type, an entirely new consumer device that is the first to introduce the idea of recording, storing and replaying experiences. It will be the first of many tape recording and playback innovations the company will produce throughout the '50s and the following four decades.

From the early 1950s, Totsuko also begins to explore and fulfil the potential of new transistors, made available for patent in 1952 – four years after their invention by Totsuko's parent company, Western Electric. In 1954, Iwama-san, one of Totsuko's board directors, leads a transistor radio research development team to the United States, visiting and reporting from Western Electric's factory. Iwama-san's report spurs Totsuko to develop transistor radios, an innovation that paves the way to silicon semiconductors and television.

A unique vision

From the beginning, Ibuka and Morita are global thinkers, and know Totsuko needs to make the whole world its marketplace. Their true vision is to develop, design and create products that will forge entirely new markets – not only in Japan, but all around the world.

To expand the business within key markets in the US and across Europe, they realise the need for a global identity and brand that crosses cultural borders. Totsuko was found to be difficult for Westerners to pronounce, so they begin to conceive a new name for their company. Initially Morita and Ibuka consider using TTK, the initial of their company, but it's already the name of a Japanese railway company. 'Tokyo Teltech' is considered, until Morita discovers that an American company use the 'Teltech' name.

The sound of a new spirit

Two concepts are chosen to create the name 'Sony': the Latin word 'sonus', which is the root of the words 'sound' and 'sonic', and the phrase 'sonny boy', describing a young person with a free and pioneering spirit.

The new name perfectly captures the mood of the company as a group of energetic people with the expertise and passion for unlimited innovation.

Crucially, Morita insists that the new Sony name is prominent on all products and packaging, maximising the power of the brand. In 1955 the first Sony branded product goes on sale, the TR-55 transistor radio, shortly followed in 1957 by the pocket-sized TR-63, the world's smallest radio. Then, in 1958, Totsuko officially changes its name to Sony Corporation.

Innovation upon innovation

If the 1950s is the age of radio and tape innovation for Sony, the 1960s is the age of television and video technology. In 1960 Sony launches the TV8-301, the world's first direct-view transistor television; in 1968 the first Trinitron colour television; in 1971, the colour video cassette player; and the Betamax VCR in 1975.

In 1968, the same year Sony launches the Trinitron, engineers create a 100 inch screen Trinitron model, boasting flat screen technology: it is called the Sony Color Video Panel, and exhibited at the Sony Building in Tokyo's Ginza. It is the world's largest television receiver and the first to use a light emitting display, a visionary invention that is some 40 years before its time.

In 1979 Sony produces the world's first portable music player, the Walkman: a product that signals a fundamental shift in the way music is heard. Sony launches the world's first CD player in 1982, the first consumer digital video camcorder in 1995, the next-generation high capacity Blu-ray Disc recorder in 2003, and the world's first consumer digital HD video camera in 2004.

Innovations continued in the 2000s with new Cyber-shot digital cameras, PlayStation games consoles, VAIO computers, BRAVIA HD televisions, and Home Cinemas. These digital products herald a new era of convergence technologies, working seamlessly with each other to complement people's lives.

The future is now

In 2012 Sony unveils one of the first 4K Ultra HD televisions, with a resolution four times more detailed than high definition taking you beyond the traditional limits of TV viewing. It's an experience that echoes the pioneering Trinitron model 44 years earlier.

We're always looking to take technology further. In many ways, the history of Sony is a history of innovation – a series of breakthroughs that have made history and redefined popular culture. This is undoubtedly traceable to the spirit of Akio Morita and Masaru Ibuka and, consequently, the company's ethos – to strive to do what has not been done before.

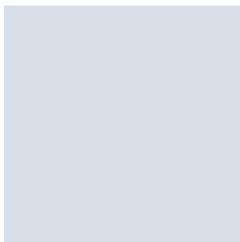
Sony's belief in the power of the imagination – and its will to act upon that power – shines a light upon its past and shapes the future.

Read [more](#) about Sony's history of innovation.

About Sony Corporation

Sony Corporation is a creative entertainment company with a solid foundation of technology. From game and network services to music, pictures, electronics, image sensors and financial services - Sony's purpose is to fill the world with emotion through the power of creativity and technology. For more information, visit: <http://www.sony.net/>

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