

Our Point of View: Change Comes From the Top

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by Kristen Tabar

At the end of our three-day tour, our group had the opportunity to meet and interview our President Akio Toyota and Executive Vice President Shinichi Sasaki at Toyota's Commemorative Museum of Industry and Technology.

Toyoda-san is a humble man, but one who clearly takes a great deal of pride in explaining some of his family's history, starting with its original loom machinery. The principles of our automotive production system—high quality and safety standards, defect prevention and detection mechanisms—are all evident here, even in machines that are several generations old. As Toyoda-san explained, these bedrock production ideals were the foundation of Toyota from the very beginning.

The journalists asked a wide variety of questions about topics ranging from labor relations in China to the joint development of new electric vehicles with Tesla. Of course, there were also a number of questions concerning our recent recalls. Toyoda-san was very sincere and honest in explaining how the company needed to take a step back and rethink how to make the customers' voice our number one priority, and then develop products that emerge directly from that deep understanding. He believes this is the only way to truly regain the confidence of our customers.

One member of the group asked if Toyoda-san had ever thought of stepping down during this first difficult year as President. He smiled and said that, although this has been a very challenging year, he is dedicated to moving forward by creating safe products that excite our customers and contribute to a growing mobility market – that commitment is a great inspiration for everyone at our company.

The end of things always gives one cause for reflection. I've been with Toyota for nearly twenty years and, as this Japan trip comes to a close, I can say with confidence: Akio Toyoda has charted a bold course for the company. He is steering Toyota in the right direction.

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