

Special

It takes more than just efficiency to jump hurdles

Turning a Weakness into a Strength

Pursuing the potential in waste, inconvenience, risk, deficiency, and weakness

Post-WWII Japan built a strong economy through the pursuit of efficiency. But after the bubble burst, its economy stagnated and its society has yet to recover its vitality. Efforts are now being made to create new products and build a diverse, rich society. To this end, those that were outcast for the sake of optimization as being weak or a waste are being reassessed and utilized.

Photos/(spread) Satoru Naito, (people) Tomoya Takai Text/Shiori Ito (JQR Editorial)



Going on a date in the days before cell phones was dramatic. Your date has yet to arrive at the arranged place. You are sure you agreed to meet at the South Exit of Shinjuku Station, and that you have the right day and time. You wait 10 minutes, 20 minutes, but nothing. The longer you wait the more you fret. You have no way of contacting your date. You could call home, but there is a long line for the public phone nearby. Then there is always the chance that your date will arrive in the few minutes you are away and you will miss each other. What do you do?

Inconvenience generates drama

When met with such unpleasant situations, our patience, imagination, decisiveness, memory, powers of observation and other senses work simultaneously as we wait. Before cell phones, all rendezvous were important, and the joy at meeting without a hitch was great. On the other hand, the pain of being stood up was also great, and we could only guess at what our potential date was thinking. Nowadays, however, cell phones and smartphones are perfectly suited to all

dating situations. There is no need to remember the exact day or time of a date. If you are late, you can just text using Line, or any one of the many other messaging apps available. So there is no need to be on time. You do not even need to feel bad about your tardiness.

In exchange for convenience

Life is indisputably more convenient now, but in exchange we no longer play lead roles in our dramas. Of course, we cannot turn back the clock, and would find it difficult to relinquish the convenience we now enjoy. But, dealing with the consequences of any inconvenience we once faced was undoubtedly good for us. We should cease hating and avoiding inconvenience, eliminating waste, running away from risk, ignoring deficiency and not caring about weakness. We should focus on and utilize the strengths within these weaknesses, which we perceive as negative. If we can achieve this, we can without a doubt reach as yet unseen riches.

Muu, pictured on the left, is a weak, one-eyed robot that mumbles. When placed beside children, even the most timid of them will willingly talk to it.