

President Lee Young-Kwan of Toray Saehan Inc.

Quality Leader With Field and Harmony



Toray Saehan Inc. CEO
Lee Young-Kwan

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President & CEO Lee Young-Kwan of Toray Saehan Inc., the winner of Korea Quality Grand Prix in 2004, majored in chemical engineering in college due to the science's attraction of creating 'Existence from Nothing.' His reason was that chemistry started with 'alchemy,' which was regarded as 'magic' in ancient times. What cannot be ignored is also the fact that President Lee emphasizes 'creation,' in particular, due to its 'chemical magic.'

Three elements that CEO Lee thinks more important than others for 'creative quality management' are 'field,' 'real situation' and 'phenomenon.' Lee said, "The information communicated by a reporter is that which he decides based on his own criteria. A manager can make the most appropriate decision regarding risks only when he goes to the field himself, sees the real situation and evaluates the phenomena on the spot."

President Lee is an engineer-turned CEO who has grown in the field for 30 years. Lee joined then 'Cheil Synthetic Textiles' in 1973 and sweated together with field employees in the Gumi plants until the company name changed to Korea Saehan. He became the CEO of Toray Saehan in 1999. Even now, he visits the Gumi plants more than three times a month without accompanying staff and always wears work clothes. That is the reason he knows over 80% of all employees' names and nearly all their family member particulars as well. He talks extensively about their daily life with the employees he meets.

As for his field-centered management, CEO Lee explains: "Checking on the field directly is good education for a president in terms of learning the company's characteristics. In the chemical industry operating a raw materials-reaction-product process in general not even a small error or mistake can be allowed. So, teamwork with 'one body and spirit' is important above all in the process of analyzing charts and deciding how to proceed. The employees in the field can appreciate the importance of teamwork and learn problem-solving methods directly through the performance of a president with more than 30 years of field knowhow."

Asked about his feeling after winning the Korea Quality Grand Prix at the National Quality Management Conference Convention 2004, Lee responded, "First of all, I respect the passion and sense of responsibility of all 850 employees toward quality. This prize will be new momentum to solidify the foundation to achieve our company vision."

As a manager preparing for the future, President Lee places top priority on 'passion and responsibility for quality' in the 21st century quality management paradigm. After establishing the premise that quality management for corporate growth today must move one step forward from the previous concept of field quality management, he stresses the need to develop new technologies continuously based on an excellent quality base and to fulfill and lead customers' new desires for the development of quality management into a creative and company-wide system that contributes to society in the long run. His implication is that value creation must be realized on a quality base and the passion and responsibility for quality is the motivation.