

The Progress of Outsourcing in Japan

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The Progress of Outsourcing in Japan

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Abstract

Outsourcing has been introduced in many companies to cope with the change of circumstances such as globalization and progress of technology.

The history of outsourcing and shared services in Japan are reviewed and their issues are extracted. Future development of outsourcing and shared services are discussed.

Formerly, outsourcing was only an entrusting job of non-core business. But nowadays, it is utilized as a part of business strategy in order to concentrate in core business. Outsourcers enhance their business to total outsourcing services or aim to upgrade their specialty.

Future development of outsourcing would proceed to (1) full outsourcing of strategic utilization and (2) high level professional services.

Keywords: outsourcing, shared services, co-sourcing, core competence, IT

1. Preface

Growth rate of economy in Japan decreased since 1990. Globalization of economy has spread worldwide and mega-competition emerged after the fall of the USSR. Companies in Japan faced to overcome the severe constraints of cost reduction and higher level of quality.

Outsourcing has been introduced in many companies to cope with these conditions as one of a powerful tool. In this paper, reviewing the past history of outsourcing, detailed analysis is executed and issues are extracted.

Future perspective is presented in the last.

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2. Aim of outsourcing in historical viewpoints

In 1990', outsourcing has progressed in strategic viewpoints such as strengthening of international competitive power, coping with the progress of information technology and centralization of management resources to the core business.

Based on MITI's (Ministry of Trade and Industry) report in Japan, aims of outsourcing on those times are summarized as follows.

- (1) Pursuing the Effective Management
- ① Coping with the low growth rate of economy

Under the age of low growth rate of economy, sales volume do not increase and the cost rate increase. Therefore, cost should be reduced by restructuring and/or business process re-engineering.

- 2 Pursuing the effective management in order to cope with international mega-competition.
- 3 Centralization of management resources to the core business in order to make effective use of limited resources.
- (2) Coping with the progress of technologies
- ④ Effective utilization of outsource to cope with the progress of management technology, technical innovation and so on.
- ⑤ Coping with the progress of information technology.
- (3) Matured circumstance
- 6 Success of outsourcing strategy in the USA
- 7 Increase of outsourcing services

Thus, introduction of outsourcing in Japan has been prevailing by the above stated circumstances and the internal motivation to cope with those.

3. Progress of outsourcing in Japan

Now, the history of outsourcing is reviewed in time sequences.

3.1 1960'

Middle or small scale companies that could not hold large computer commenced to entrust data processing jobs to another computer center.

3.2 Before and after 1980

Holding computers inside the company has prevailed as information technology progressed and users needs increased. In 1978, Seven-Eleven Japan introduced EOS (Electronic Ordering System) and made outsourcing to Nomura Research Institute.

According to the de-regulation of communication network, new remote computing system service and communication network service have emerged.

3.3 Before and after 1990

Increasing investment for information system became a big burden to companies. Therefore, outsourcing of information department became regular.

In building large scale information system at the company, the cases of entrusting operation as well as entrusting development to the outsourcer have increased remarkably.

The market of dispatching personnel also spread rapidly.

Outsourcer re-constructed their organization and commenced to build computer center in order to meet the expanding needs of outsourcing concerning information system (Table 1).

Table 1 The progress of outsourcing in Japan

		me i The progress of outsou	
A period	Year	Topics concerning company utilizing outsourcing	Topics concerning outsourcer
(1) Before and after 1990	1989	 Seven-Eleven Japan made outsourcing of information system to Nomura Research Institute. 	
	1990	 Onward Kashiyama made outsourcing of information system department to Nomura Research Institute. 	
	1991	 Taka-Q made outsourcing of information system department to Nomura Research Institute. 	outsourcing service
	1992	 SANYO SHINPAN FINANCE made outsourcing of the operation of information system to IBM Japan. YAMATO TRANSPORT made outsourcing of the operation of information system, communication network system and operation of delivery to Nagasakiya and Nippon Telegraph and Telephone. 	meet the demand of outsourcing service. • NEC increased computer center.
(2) Before and after 1995	1993	• Sanrio made outsourcing of the operation of information system to IBM Japan.	

		commenced the service of business traveling office work executing as proxy.
1994	 Omron made outsourcing of the operation of large computer system to IBM Japan Service. Shiseido integrated warehouse in Hokkaido and made outsourcing the operation of warehouse and delivery to SAPPORO EXPRESS. 	 Nihon Unisys built direct marketing center.
1995	 Mitsukoshi entrusted sales at underground hall to food super Daikin. Sushi-chain shop ATOM made outsourcing of delivery to Meiko-Unyu. 	 SOHGO SECURITY SERVICES extended money collecting service. Tempstaff launched outsourcing business of personnel affairs, general affairs and accounting.
1996	 Konami Computer Games Aoyama made outsourcing of illustrating, scenario writing, music creating and programming. MISUMI made outsourcing of human skill appraisal to Recruit Human Resource Center. 	 Mitsubishi and Pasona established Business Corp Inc. as of outsourcer concerning business such as OA machines. Nippon Express made outsourcing of delivery as well as packing and stock control.
1997	 UNY made outsourcing of sports club to The Big Sports. Softbank made outsourcing 	Management Service Inc. that makes managerial

		of a part of adoption work.	companies concerning accounting and general affairs.
(3) The latter half of 1990's	1998	 Philips Japan introduced cafeteria system in personnel affairs' field and made outsourcing. Cosmo Oil made outsourcing of POS data handling to INTEC. 	• GAKUSEI ENGOKAI launched to the
	1999	 Government of Miyagi Prefecture made outsourcing of information system to Tohoku Computer Service. Government of Gifu prefecture contracted with EDS (Electronic Data Systems Corporation) so as to make outsourcing of administrative work. 	Corporation started the service of managing the residences of companies. Chugai Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd established Chugai Business Support which is to handle outsourcing business
(4) After 2000	2000	 PIA Corp. made outsourcing of development and operation of Internet sales system to IBM Japan. Renown made outsourcing of the production of rebecca tailor and distribution to Mitsui & Co., Ltd. 	agency service for general affairs using EDI. • Fujitsu developed portal site
	2001	• Government of Gifu Prefecture made outsourcing of information system to NTT Communications.	 IBM Japan launched the operation of the information system of local government. MANPOWER JAPAN Co.,

·FAST RETAILING mad	e Ltd established the SKILL
outsourcing of SCM system	PARTNER to manage
shop operation to	construction at the factory.
companies such as N	S
Solutions.	

3.4 Before and after 1995

After the collapse of bubble economy, companies made re-structuring and utilization of outsourcing has spread.

Outsourcing contents also expanded from information system to accounting, personnel affairs, production control and distribution.

As for group companies' strategy, shared services companies have been built in order to make cost reduction, pursue effective business.

Shared services companies deal with such as personnel affairs, accounting and general affairs of the group companies.

On the other hand, outsourcer built computer centers, and distribution centers to expand their business (Table 1).

3.5 The latter half of 1990's

Under the low hanging economy of long term, outsourcing was used as a tool for re-structuring and cost reduction.

For example, cafeteria plan in welfare was introduced and outsourcing of employee training was executed and outsourcing of supporting to get new job has increased.

Nippon Outsourcing Corporation was founded at 1997 with the investment of Pasona, NTT Data and Nissho Iwai. That was a commencement of regular total outsourcing business in Japan. It aims to be the strategic partner for the client concerning the outsourcing of BPO (Business Process Outsourcing).

Local government also started to introduce outsourcing services (Table 1).

Outsourcer activated services such as PEO (Professional Employer Organization), and outplacement so as to meet the needs of re-structuring (Table 2).

Item	Contents
PEO (Professional Employer Organization)	Accepting employer from the contracted company, send them to another contracted company.
Outplacement	Support personnel fired by re-structuring to search new jobs.

Table 2 New Outsourcing Services concerning personnel affairs and re-structuring

3.6 After 2000

Reflecting the low hanging economy of long term, outsourcing needs increased as for re-structuring and cost reduction.

Prevailing Internet caused outsourcing of SCM system and E-commerce system. Furthermore, management method "Selection and Concentration" became popular.

For example, entrusting production such as EMS (Electronics Manufacturing Services) was executed actively.

Tax income decreased at local government, so outsourcing became regular. Outsourcer launched ASP (Application Service Provider) business in order to meet the needs under the circumstance of prevailing Internet (Table 1).

4. Current issue of outsourcing

Outsourcing in Japan became regular so as to cope with the low hanging economy of long term.

At first, outsourcing was introduced in computer and communication field. Recently, strategic outsourcing is expanding from restricted process to sizable amount of process or whole amount of process.

But regular outsourcing which helps core competence management is not prevailing.

4.1 Obstructing factors of outsourcing

Big companies in Japan had a custom to hold every management function

inside their company or their company group for a long time. Therefore, they are apt to hesitate to introduce outsourcing.

Strategic outsourcing must be executed drastically including the employee's shifting to another company. That is not an easy job to an old manager.

Workers at administrative office are still numerous and the cost has not so decreased as those of manufacturing department. Therefore, shared services appeared after 1990's which was one type of outsourcing.

4.2 Obstructing factors of outsourcer

The number of outsourcer is increasing rapidly. There are 120 listing companies in outsourcing field (Table 3). Among them, information service companies are most in number. Design, facility management and consulting field companies are increasing.

Strategic utilization of outsourcing is increasing such as shop design consulting based on market investigation, asset management, property management, non destructive inspection and measurement of environmental data.

But these are rather few. Supplying market is not matured and user needs is not so inflated by this fact.

Field	A type of industry	1990~1994	1995~1999
Information	Software-System Development	16	26
	Data Processing, Information Providing	4	6
	Development of game software	4	6
Consulting	Management Consulting	2	0
	Construction Consulting	4	4
	Shop Design	1	4
Facility Management	Service for Building	1	5
	Maintenance	0	5
	Pest Control	0	2

Table 3 Listing companies in outsourcing field [1]

Dlanning	Advertising	3	3
Planning	Marketing	1	2
Personnel	Dispatching Personnel	0	6
affairs	Operation of Dormitory	0	1
Welfare	Supply of Food	2	3
Medical	Medical Inspection	2	2
Treatment	Contract Medical Office Work	1	1
	Non-destructive Inspection, Measurement of Environmental Data	0	4
Miscellaneous	Disposing Scrapped Material	0	1
	Management of Automobile	0	3
	Stock Control	0	1
Total		41	85

4.3 Social Background of Outsourcing

Compared with the USA, outsourcers of high level services are not so prevailing in Japan.

In the USA, there are social background that

- 1 Investment for short term profit oriented management is common
- 2 Information system is prevailed
- 3 There are many companies.

In the USA, there were many cases that professional personnel engaged in a big company became independent and started business.

For example Ross Perot quit IBM and established outsourcer EDS (Electronic Data Systems Corporation) in 1962. In 1984, EDS became the member company of GM (General Motors Corporation) group and received 7000 computer engineers. In 1996, EDS has separated from GM group. EDS contracted system integration job with First City Bank at 1988 by 600 million dollars and received 400 computer engineers.

Thus, EDS supported to change management drastically. Nowadays, it

became a biggest outsourcer with the contract of more than 35,000 companies of 60 countries in the world.

On the other hand, Japanese commonly esteem generalist than specialist. Therefore, it is hard to bring forth professional and unique outsourcer venture.

Outsourcing has a possibility to enrich effective management with one another supplying own know-how and managerial resources. Strategic utilization of outsourcing enrich effective management.

To level up the professional skill, outsourcing market should be extended much more.

Hopeful field would be the venture business market and the public sector.

5. Meaning of outsourcing nowadays

The definition of outsourcing at this time could be stated as "strategic management method to overcome competition concentrating core competence utilizing outer source."

It means that business process is resolved and the process which is not important for that company is outsourced and virtualized as if it were its own function.

Fabless, 3PL (third party logistics), FM (facility management), Housing, Hosting are said to be the important element of virtualized business process which should be outsourced.

Each professional outsourcing company would be able to utilize another professional outsourcing service. This is so called "co-sourcing" which share services with one another.

Outsourcing in business process can be classified as Table 4.

	Partial process	Integrated process	
Contain planning	① consulting investigation, analysis, designing, planning	② outsourcing accounting, personnel affairs, information system etc.	
Do not contain planning	③ dispatching personnel only dispatching personnel to the request	<pre> proxy proxy of daily routine job </pre>	

Table 4 Outsourcing in business process

Next, aims of outsourcing are arranged to the variation of outsourcing (Table 5).

Table 5 Aims of outsourcing to the variation of outsourcing

	Ordinary outsourcing		Strat	egic outsourcing
	Aim	Contents	Aim	Contents
① Objectives	Efficiency	Cost reduction,Enrich quality	Realize strategy	 Create new business Enhance business Strengthen competitive power Improve ROI
②Strategy of outsourcer	Operation	• Enhance scale advantage	Specialize Business entrusted as package	Accumulation of special know-howBPREnlarge contract fee
③Strategy of outsourcing utilizing company	Entrusting non-core business	• Separable non-core business	Strengthen core competence	 Entrust non advantageous business Concentrate core competence Shorten lead time to establish new business Enclose outsourcers professional know-how
4 Cost vs. Benefit	Direct, Short term	• Cannot expect continuation effect	Indirect, Long term	• Bear big continuation effect
⑤Targets	Hard resource	• Packaged function	Soft resource	 Include know-how or knowledge concerning company's culture and climate

6. Outsourcing by the field

6.1 Outsourcing of information system field

(1) Outlook

In 1989, Kodak made outsourcing of information system to IBM and shifted 2000 employees.

Since then, full outsourcing of IT department became regular in the USA.

It was a big contract of 1 billion dollars with the condition that total cost should be reduced 17% and enhance information system's function 30% per year for the following 10 years continuously.

This was so called Kodak effect and became a trigger for the market to make huge growth. The background for this is that companies in the USA at the age of 1980's began to reorganize with the keywords re-structuring and re-engineering.

In Japan, full outsourcing of information system department began in 1990's, which was 10 years later from the USA.

After 2000, IBM Japan accelerated enclosing customers by presenting full outsourcing service and another Japanese venders accelerated the same service as well.

Table 6 shows an outlook of outsourcing at 2001.

Table 6 Outsourcing of information system department [2]

User company	Type of outsourcing	Contract company	Outlook
Japan Airlines	Sell the stock of affiliate company of information system and outsourcing.		Sell the 49% stock of JAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY to IBM Japan. Entrust development and operation to IBM Japan at 80 billion yen with 10 years contract.
Asahi Breweries	Sell the stock of affiliate company of		Sell the 49% stock of ASAHIBEER

	information system		INFORMATION SYSTEM to CRC Solutions.
Asahi Glass	Outsourcing	IT Frontier	Entrust information system business to IT Frontier which is an affiliate of Mitsubishi.

(2) Shift to Strategic outsourcing

Formerly, outsourcing was only an entrusting job of non-core business. But nowadays, it is utilized as a part of business strategy in order to concentrate in core business. Outsourcer enhance their business to total outsourcing services or aim to upgrade their specialty.

Thus, shift to "business service partner" is proceeding.

(3) Diversification of outsourcing

The types of IT outsourcing are diversifying recent years owing to the following reasons.

- · Diversified IT
- Security
- · Core competence
- Mobile
- · Governmental market
- · Diversified business model

Their trend is summarized in Table 7.

The shift from hardware oriented to know-how oriented and the adoption of BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) are the current big trend.

Table 7 Diversification of IT outsourcing

Aim	Object	Type of outsourcing	Service
Hardware	Infrastructure	•Operation of server	Housing
oriented	service	system	

1	1		
		·Operation of web	Hosting
		server system	
		•Operation of the	IDC (Internet Data Center)
		system for Internet	
		·Connection of the	ISP (Internet Service
		system for Internet	Provider)
		· Mass storage	SSP (Storage Service
		service	Provider)
Contents	Application	·Internet contents	ICP (Internet Contents
oriented	service	service	Provider)
		· Application service	ASP (Application Service
		by web	Provider)
Process	Professional	·Network,	NSP (Network Service
solution	business	application system	Provider)
oriented	proces	management	
	service	·Solution services	SSP (Security Service
		concerned security	Provider)
		·System operation	MSP (Management Service
		management	Provider)
		services without	
		holding equipment	
Strategy	Total service	·Integrated service	Total IT outsourcing
oriented		concerning IT	
		·Operation service	Business
		_	Process Outsourcing
		process including	
		non IT concerned	
		business	
		· Total operation	Strategic IT outsourcing
		service sharing IT	
1		asset with user	

(4) Issue of IT outsourcing

Information system for the company is one of the critical success factors. Strategic utilization of IT and keeping IT governance are essential for the company.

Therefore, even if company makes IT outsourcing, IT governance organization is inevitable so as to make strategic use of IT, design and spread security policy over group companies and assist CIO (Chief Information Officer), CSO (Chief Strategic Officer) for making high level decision making.

Strength of core business has a characteristic that it is also an intellectual property itself.

Therefore, information system which is essential for company activities should be promoted with the progress of business.

It is often be seen that the bank's ATM (Automatic Tellers Machine) stopping by accident becomes big news.

Thus, information system for service business is the fundamental function which connect customers directly. System's quality means service quality in the above case.

6.2 Office work department

Outsourcing of office work such as accounting, personnel affairs, general affairs plays an important role for the cost reduction, professionalization and quick execution of business.

Cost reduction of the group companies is revealed by the consolidated financial accounting system since 2000.

Thus, effective management of the office work department is becoming urgent issue. Recently, the movement to shared services are activated. Shared services are to concentrate office department work to those of shared services company.

Office work to be executed at shared services company is exhibited in Table 8.

Personnel affairs General affairs Accounting · Salary calculation · Legal affairs · General accounting General affairs Payment · Salary payment · Public relations • Bond Personal information management Compliance Welfare Purchasing • Fixed capital · Education and Training Standard applications Insurance Social insurance • Facility management · Customer services · Tax payment · Tax payment · Internal auditing Adoption · Claim · credit ·Fund·cash management • Foreign exchange Netting

Table 8 Office work to be executed at shared services

Shared services have an advantage that they do not needs drastic firing of personnel and the employees know the job well including the special custom of the group companies.

Future success of shared services depend on the approach how to upraise value such as consulting.

On the other hand, there exist many difficult points in utilizing shared services as follows.

- · Initial investment is needed in constructing new information system
- New shared services company can not necessarily supply best service.
 Their services are often inferior to those of professional outsourcer.
 Furthermore, unless they catch new customers, they can not get proper return for the new investment.

There arise another problem that excellent staffs quit their job after shifting to new shared services company.

6.3 The Public sector

Outsourcing of the public sector's job has an advantage that it causes hiring many people of outsourcer as well as supplying more high level services than before.

Needs of the nation for government service is increasing and diversifying. Therefore, utilizing the know-how of outsourcing of the private sector is expected.

Jobs concerning welfare, disposing scrapped material are regularly outsourced. But there are many cases that outsourced jobs are only a mere operation.

Generally, the public sector's outsourcing cost is higher than those of the private sector. Therefore, there are many improving points in utilizing outsourcing.

Outsourcing concerning information system is already executed at Miyagi Prefecture, Gifu Prefecture and Sumida Ward in Tokyo. Kochi Prefecture is examining the outsourcing of survey and entertainment event to the private sector or NPO. Kyoto City is outsourcing bus service to a bus company.

These are the cases to introduce private sectors' effective management method. These trends would prevail much more in the whole country.

Reduction of tax or expanding grant would be useful for the growth of outsourcing market.

7. Issue of outsourcing and future development

7.1 Issue of outsourcing

Outsourcing Conference reported "Investigation of competitive power enforcement of service industry" [3] and the Table 9 and 10 are the one extracted and summarized from it.

Table 9 Effect of introduction of outsourcing

1	Shift from fixed cost to varying cost
2	Swift development of business
3	Cost reduction

.4	Upraise professional skill
(5)	Restructuring
6	Concentrate to the core business
7	Improve cash flow
8	Shorten lead time of business process
9	Launch to new business

Table 10 Complaints in introducing outsourcing

1	Vague responsible personnel/organization
2	Low performance compared with initial contract
3	Low level of know-how
4	Increase cost
(5)	Less communication with another department
6	Trouble about contract
7	Decline morale
8	Outflow of know-how
9	Trouble between labor and management
10	Outflow of secret
11)	Trouble about fee

For about Table 10, they are arranged as follows.

(1) Issues about business flow

Issues about business flow are ①, ⑤, ⑥, ⑨. Previous confirmation in making contract would decrease these problems.

(2) Problem concerning performance

2, 4, 11 are the problems concerning service level performance.

SLA (Service Level Agreement) must be fixed previously and the reward or penalty should be made clear according to the performance.

(3) Problem in settling the outsourcing business field

③, ⑦, ⑧, ⑩ are the problem that outsourcing fields are inappropriate.

For about core competence field, careful examination should be done in making outsourcing.

7.2 Future development of outsourcing

Under the age of low growth rate of economy, companies should concentrate in core business and utilize outsourcing for non core business. One of the important points for that is the thorough utilization of information and communication techniques.

Broadband IT technologies is bringing us ubiquitous society.

Future development of outsourcing would proceed to (1) full outsourcing of strategic utilization and (2) high level professional services (Table 11).

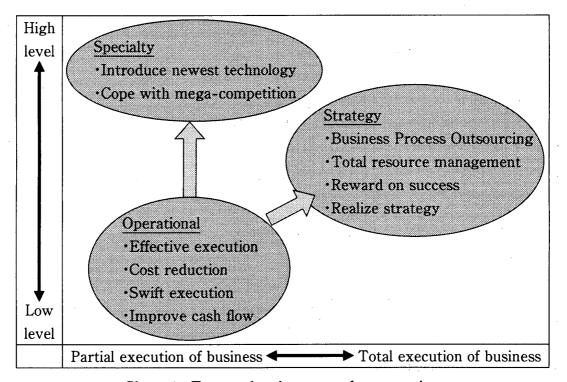


Chart 1 Future development of outsourcing

(1) Strategic Full Outsourcing

Strategic full outsourcing would proceed so as to realize corporate strategy utilizing such as information technology, 3PL, facility management and property management etc.

(2) High level Professional Outsourcing

High level professional outsourcing would proceed in the field such as mobile contents design and development, CTI (Computer Telephony Integration), IT research and development, IT training, patent management, asset management, legal consultation and accounting consultation etc.

8. Concluding Remark

The history of outsourcing and shared services in Japan were reviewed and their issues were extracted. Future development of outsourcing and shared services were discussed.

Regular outsourcing began in Japan 10 years later than the USA. It is still on the way to proceed.

How to make effective use of outsourcing would be a great key factor for success.

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