

S.S. Kim, vice chairman of LG Electronics
Working Hard? Working Smart!

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A recent issue of Time magazine described S.S. Kim, vice chairman of LG Electronics, as the next big player. The LG Electronics' TDR (Tear Down & Redesign) program, the magazine reported, was engineered by Kim. Powered by Kim's devotion, LG scored surprising expansions of 18% and 33% last year in terms of turnover and net profit.

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Kim notes that considering Korea's situation of being sandwiched between Japan's high technology and China's low-priced products survival depends on how well businesses achieve higher quality and implement innovation management. Along with rational risk assessment, these are the key elements of Kim's management strategy.

He says his dedication to the quality movement including Six Sigma is because it gives him a full understanding of the process and onsite status. For example, he likes to tell the story about a CEO who asks the production line worker, "Is everything going well?" The worker almost invariably answers, "Yes, sir." But a CEO armed with an understanding of quality management statistics would ask, "What's the CTQ?" And the worker's answer would give the CEO precisely the information he is seeking.

Kim's philosophy for senior management is that they show strong leadership. He is an advocate of giving decisive directions and conducting process-by-process reviews. Without such tools, Kim says it's just like wishing for good results.

For the successful implementation of quality management, he also believes that it is important to instill a challenging spirit in staff and employees. Kim wants his staff to be free to react like an angry dog. That is to be normally friendly, but when something threatens the business to bark loudly.

When Kim was president of LG Electronics' Digital Appliance Company, Business Week featured him as one of Asia's 25 stars for leading the company to a top position in the global appliance market through innovative overseas brand management.

