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■ Kaizen of Japanese Local Government Offices

.What do you think about your municipal government ? Do they give you good service ? Do they respond to your requests quickly? Are they red-tapist, sectional and bureaucratic ? Do they consider you as their customer or something ? According to the latest NHK TV program “ Special Report of Tokyo Megalopolis”, Kawasaki Municipal office conducted a wide-range special opinion survey about their city office. The result, as out-lined below, is very interesting and suggestive.

Opinion Survey by Kawasaki City		
Question 1.	Answer by	Answer by
Do you think city employees are aware that they are the service providers to citizens ?	Employees	Citizens
	Yes	Yes
	72.7%	42.8%
Question 2.		
Do you think that they make use of citizens' opinions?	Yes	Yes
	63.0%	22.2%

Today, Japanese local government is facing two major issues : one is lack of revenue and the increased cry of citizens for better service by citizens.

- Like other major municipal government offices, government office of Setagaya Ward, which is the largest local government in Tokyo Metropolis with 800,000 population, have recently set-up a special taskforce team called “ We-Do-Right Away” department with 7 employees selected from different departments. Their duty is to go to “Gemba” to see problems and complaints and to listen to citizens who have made the claims. They have received 3,592 items of requirements and complains over 3 months. They include many trivial little things such as dirty public gardens, damaged roads, unlawful parking of bicycles. The city has decided to take special express actions to these complaints through the “We Do Right-away” department.
- An example of Yokohama Municipal Government is interesting. Yokohama has 3.5 million people. Mayor Nakata, a young aggressive administrator, set up

a challenging target to decrease annual expense budget by 10%. As the first step, he made a survey of 30,000 city office employees to ask the following questions.

Question 1. Do you understand what citizens really want with your?

Question 2. Do you really try to reduce your office working time ?

Question 3. Do you think about cost ?

Based upon this result, he is conducting special training sessions for 1,000 office managers to change their way of business to save money and give better service to the citizens.

- Mr. Shimizu, Mayor of Ohta City, a small city in Gumma Prefecture with 150,000 populations, has declared to cut 127 city office employees in 10 years. He is trying to improve the service to citizens while he is cutting expenses. For example, he decided to use more volunteering citizens to work along with city employees. At the city library, 41 volunteers are now working to reduce 18 librarians (about 50%), and to introduce new home-delivery service of books. City Ohta is now famous in Japan for its very special public school system they are going to start from next year. At this public school only English is used in class throughout elementary to high school.

■ German Users Like Japanese Cars, Not German Cars

According to the latest user survey conducted by All German Automotive *Club (ADAC), German car users choose Toyota Lexus as the best car and other 6 Japanese imported cars as the second place to 7th best cars. Porche is chosen as the 8th place and, BMW 11th. The survey was to check how customers are satisfied in the areas of completeness of car, driving comfort and response of repairer and maintenance.

* (ACAC-----Allgemeiner Deutcher Automobile-Club)