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Business School Essay

My first challenge in business development failed, but the failure gave me a deep insight into business and into professionalism in business.

In 2013, I came to Germany as a business development manager of YKK AP, the world's second biggest window manufacturer. As a pioneer in the European market, I was fully responsible for a comprehensive project, from the establishment of a local office to market entry. There were two major obstacles to entering the German window market. Firstly, [a product "window" is significantly different] depending on the country, region or tradition. Secondly, [the window products] "Made in Germany" have a strong technical component. So, we could not use our Japanese products – and we needed to develop a new product.

According to our market research, I built a business model to enter the market for sliding windows, which are used mostly by luxury customers in a high-price niche segment. In general, sliding windows are much more popular in Japan than in Germany, and so our company had a technical edge in this segment. Although the market size is small, we focused on the establishment of our brand and later would try to enhance volume.

My business model was planned rigorously with theories and confirmed by several consultants. However, my plan didn't succeed at all. The biggest failures were the delay in product development and the misunderstanding regarding [differences of commercial flow] in Germany and Japan.

In order to build our brand prior to product launch, I started product marketing in advance, but this went on for almost two years during which we concentrated too much on the quality of our product. Finally, at the time of launch, our product had almost no technical superiority over the products of competitors.

Furthermore, we could not sell our product through normal commercial channels in the German window market because [the volume] of our product was not enough for dealers. Until I heard an actual refusal, I would not have even imagined this situation. In contrast to the Japanese window market, which is open to newcomers, the German market is very restricted.

As a result, I gave up our business plan and decided to launch the R&D center for developing technology. However, if other plans such as for M&As or for cooperative partnerships with competitors had been taken into consideration from the beginning, the result would have been different. I stuck to a single plan and spent too much time making everything perfect. A series of experiences enabled me to realize the difficulty of my process, motivating me to study for the MBA. In the MBA program I can learn better decision-making as well as flexibility for when I am preparing various choices and not sticking to a single plan.

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