

Foreword

Making a Fresh Resolve at the Beginning of 2005

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Development department is tackling, with all its power, not only the development of unique and unrivaled products but also the development of machines that can comply with Tier III emissions regulation that is to take effect from the next year as well as the Tier II noise regulation of Europe. Many models that we have not experienced are now under development, and we are planning to put them on the market one after another from the latter half of this year to next year. Concerning the development of unique and unrivaled products, we have organized a project team, and have made advance studies by selecting from many ideas proposed, which are to be narrowed down to the items to proceed to development steps. It is necessary to build quality plus reliability properly into our product during the quality confirmation of prototype machines. Not limited to the development department, all the departments are very busy preparing for mass production in domestic plants, for the startup of overseas production, for market introduction, including the preparation of sales/service materials and sales promotion plans, etc. This year is very important for Komatsu to show the result of the "Successful Reform Effort Based on Spirit of Manufacturers" activities progressed until now.

Construction equipment that we are researching and developing is used under various environmental conditions in the world, and the machines that we are manufacturing are the embodiment of our know-how, incorporating abundant experiences and improvements. Problems inevitably accompany to design changes made. If quality is not built in sufficiently in the development stage, problems will arise when starting up mass production or after products are introduced to the market.

The key point is how to apply the comprehensive ability of Komatsu, and how to build it in, to the quality confirmation of prototype machines. For this, it is important to make problems and challenges visible ("Visualization") so that all the members can understand the issues and participate in discussion and express their opinions. When the persons participating in the discussion correctly understand the content of problems, which part was changed, what the fact is, and how it is evaluated when reviewed and compared to other similar models, etc., they will come up with experience-based FMEA and FTA, and will easily come to an appropriate solution. You probably have experienced that quality confirmation progressed smoothly for those changes that you were anxious about and you progressed carefully through discussion, while problems arose unexpectedly with those changes with insufficient or no investigation.

As the world develops and changes more and more rapidly and things become more complicated, role sharing in R&D is spreading widely and "visualization" and communication have become increasingly important. The first step to market introduction is that the development force, as origin, develops a sure product and hands it over to the next step. This year I would like to brace myself up strongly to fulfill our difficult mission.