

# LARGER THAN LIFE

A CELEBRATION OF GREATNESS

A portrait of Akio Morita, an elderly man with white hair and glasses, wearing a dark purple suit, white shirt, and red tie. He is smiling slightly. The background is a textured, light blue-grey color.

*Akio Morita*

(1921 - 1999)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Akio Morita was the **co-founder of Sony** and a major influence in the globalization of business. The imaginative marketing wizard was **responsible for making Sony a top brand name in America**. Many products that have been launched throughout Sony's history can be credited to Morita's creativity and innovative ideas. **His ideas gave birth to totally new lifestyles and cultures, and this is evident from such products as the Walkman and the videocassette recorder.**

## **BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE**

Akio Morita was born on **January 26, 1921** in Nagoya to a family that was involved in sake, miso and soy sauce production. He graduated from Osaka Imperial University in 1944. Trained as a physicist, Morita was an officer in the Imperial Japanese Navy during World War II.

## **SONY**

After the war, on May 7, 1946, Morita and Ibuka founded Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo K.K (Tokyo Telecommunications Engineering Corporation, the forerunner to Sony) with about 20 employees and initial capital of ¥190,000. Morita's family invested in Sony during the early period and was the largest shareholder.

**In 1949, the company developed magnetic recording tape and in 1950, sold the first tape recorder in Japan. In 1957, it produced a pocket-sized radio and a year later renamed itself Sony. In 1960 it produced the first transistor television in the world.**

**In 1961, Sony Corporation of America was the first Japanese company to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange. In 1989, Sony bought Columbia Pictures.**

On November 25, **1994, Morita announced his resignation as Sony chairman**, after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage while playing tennis.

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## OTHER SERVICES

Besides managing Sony, he was **active in building a cultural bridge between Japan and abroad as Vice Chairman of the Keidanren** (Japan Federation of Economic Organizations) and as a member of the Japan-U.S. Economic Relations Group, better known as the '**Wise Men's Group**'. He was **instrumental in trying to ease trade frictions between Japan and U.S.**, and through the publication of such literary works as '**Made in Japan**', he became, '**one of the most well-known Japanese in the U.S.**'

## AWARDS

- Morita was the **first Japanese to be awarded the Albert Medal from the United Kingdom's Royal Society of Arts** in 1982.
- In 1984, he **received the 'National Order of the Legion of Honor'** (Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur), the highest and most prestigious French order.
- In 1991, he was awarded the '**First Class Order of the Sacred Treasure**' from the Emperor of Japan.
- In addition, he **received numerous awards** from countries such as Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, and the United States, which shows the extent of his global recognition.

## WRITINGS

- In 1966, Morita wrote a book called '**Never Mind School Records**', in which he stresses that school records are not important in one's success or ability to do business.
- In 1986, Morita wrote an **autobiography titled 'Made in Japan'**.
- He co-authored the 1991 essay '**The Japan That Can Say No**' with politician Shintaro Ishihara.

## DEATH

Morita emitted a natural radiance, and his personality, which he himself described as "cheerful," was loved by many. His boundless curiosity and challenging spirit extended to his private life; he started skiing, tennis, and scuba diving when he was past 50 years old. He **died of pneumonia at the age of 78.**

## Quotes

"Don't be afraid to make a mistake. But make sure you don't make the same mistake twice."



"Solution to the problem of unleashing creativity is always to set up a target."



"If you go through life convinced that your way is always best, all the new ideas in the world will pass you by."



"Curiosity is the key to creativity."



"The important thing is not to pin the blame for a mistake on somebody, but rather to find out what caused the mistake."