

The Shiseido Archives: Sustainability and Top Management Change

Yuko Matsuzaki

Information Resources Center, Shibusawa Eiichi Memorial Foundation

Published on May 14, 2016

Contents

Introduction

Shiseido

120th Anniversary

Uses of the Shiseido Archives

New Management and the Shiseido Corporate Museum

Final remarks

This presentation was made possible by the kind cooperation and support of Shiseido's Corporate Culture Department, particularly the current director of the Shiseido Corporate Museum, Mr. Mitsunori Ishii, who is here with us today, and former Director Mr. Atsushi Isoda. I am indebted to them for their assistance, but the opinions expressed in this presentation are mine alone.

Introduction

When a company chooses to replace top management in order to change company policy or direction, the repercussions can obviously be felt throughout the company. If new management does not understand or value the role of an in-house archives program, however, the archives, if not its scope or budget, may be cut or even eliminated all together. Today I would like to look at one example of a Japanese in-house corporate archives program and how it has endured through corporate management change.

Shiseido

Shiseido was established in 1872 by Arinobu Fukuhara when he opened the first Western-style pharmacy in Japan, in the Ginza district of Tokyo. The company's cosmetics business was launched in 1897 when Shiseido began selling a product they had developed themselves, a high-class skin lotion called Eudermine. Incorporated in 1927, Shiseido has continued to expand ever since with the dual missions of "pursuing beauty and health" and "helping people live beautifully" and is now active in approximately 120 countries around the world. As of December 2015, Shiseido included 97 group companies with a total of 64.5 billion yen capital, 763.1 billion yen in consolidated net sales, and roughly 46,000 employees.

Within Japan, Shiseido is involved in the manufacture and wholesale of cosmetics in various price ranges, digital business (e-commerce), healthcare (including beauty foods and pharmaceuticals), and training and education in the beauty industry and medical cosmetic activities through group companies and institutions. Company brand names include: Shiseido, Clé de Peau Beauté, Benefique, BareMinerals, and Nars

in addition to fragrance brands manufactured or sold by the Shiseido Group such as: Elie Saab, Issey Miyake, Narciso Rodriguez, and Serge Lutens.

120th Anniversary

The Corporate Culture Department (CCD) was established in 1990. The new department was based on the beliefs of then CEO Yoshiharu Fukuhara, a member of the founding Fukuhara family who recognized corporate culture as a valuable management asset and who saw the need for a department to archive and manage corporate records to sustain Shiseido's corporate culture.

Although the CCD was a new department, part of its work is the management of previously existing in-house cultural institutions such as the Shiseido Gallery and the Shiseido Art House and the publishing of the existing monthly corporate culture magazine "Hanatsubaki."

The CCD also took on new responsibilities, the largest of which was the Shiseido Corporate Museum (SCM), which was opened in April 1992 as part of the celebrations for the 120th anniversary. The museum is located next to the Shiseido Art House in the city of Kakegawa in Shizuoka prefecture, approximately two hours by bullet train from Tokyo. Open to the public with free admission, the SCM has approximately 30,000 visitors each year. Audio guides are available in Japanese, English, French, Korean and Chinese for the 560 square meters of exhibit space over two floors. On the first floor are exhibits related to the history of Shiseido from its establishment until the current day and merchandise produced during the company's first 100 years as well as special exhibitions and a small theater space for viewing Shiseido TV commercials. Shiseido design history, packaging and advertising materials

from the start of the company to the present day, products from the company's second century, current CSR activities, and production technologies are exhibited on the second floor. Through these exhibits, the SCM aims to increase interest in and appreciation of Shiseido.

Uses of the Shiseido Archives

In addition to the exhibits, the SCM also manages corporate records and information on corporate history and related topics. Including materials and objects on display, there are approximately 200,000 items in the collections. These archives are made available for both internal and external use. Examples of internal Shiseido use include: brand support through the provision of materials for brand renovation and new brand launches; HR and training support; legal support through the provision of information for trademark-infringement suits; collaboration with subsidiaries domestically within Japan and around the world; and "Shiseido History," new content for the company's intranet, set to go live in April of this year.

External use of the Shiseido archives has also been actively pursued by the SCM. One example is reference and research services for media and other external use; such as in the participation of the preparation of [an online course offered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology \(MIT\)](#) in the United States. Shiseido provided historical materials including marketing materials, advertisements, and corporate PR magazines dating from the early 1910s to the late 1940s. A team of scholars and educators used these to create educational materials for courses on modern Japanese history and culture. The site went live in May 2009 and has been utilized for educational purposes not only at MIT but also other universities and high schools around the world.

The SCM has also been active in exhibitions outside Japan since the 1980s. The CCD and SCM have provided corporate archival materials to various exhibitions in the United States, Brazil, Britain, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Russia, Israel, Australia, Taiwan, China, and Korea. In recent years, these exhibitions have been used as tools to support subsidiaries and stores in newly emerging markets.

New Management and the Shiseido Corporate Museum

Over the past decade Shiseido's market share has decreased significantly and the company decided that a change of management was necessary. The new president & CEO, Mr. Masahiko Uotani, took office in April 2014. Mr. Uotani's appointment surprised many in both the media and business world as Shiseido had recruited him from outside of the company, something that they had not done before and is largely unseen in Japan in general as lifelong employment and advancement based on seniority are the norm.

Soon after taking office, Mr. Uotani visited the SCM and, upon finishing his tour, commented that: "a series of continuous innovations have made Shiseido what it is today." Since then Mr. Uotani instructs new Shiseido employees at all levels to visit the SCM. I believe this is because the SCM has successfully built a corporate collection that concretely demonstrates the sustainable development of the company over a long period of time and has made this history tangible in the form of the museum's exhibitions. This is essential, as Ted's predecessor, Phil Mooney, the former director of the Heritage Communication Department of Coca-Cola noted in 1986, because "The types of records preserved in corporations tend to reflect the character of the organization itself... the

archivist strives to develop a collection that represents the totality of the institution.”¹

Central to the SCM’s success is a hybrid model of human resources management that utilizes trained and highly skilled professional curators and archivists. The Corporate Culture Department combines this foundation of long-term specialized personnel with the traditional Japanese system of staff rotation to achieve a synergy of experience in curation, archives management, history and editing with an understanding of business and corporate culture and strong loyalty to and affection for the company.

In Japan it is extremely rare for companies to hire individuals mid-career, even if they are highly trained in a specific skill set. I was thus surprised, although pleasantly so, when I discovered that Shiseido was bucking tradition in the CCD as well as with top management. First of all, Ms. Tomomi Sato, a professionally trained curator, was placed in charge of the Shiseido archives program in the early days of the SCM. More recently, at an event put on by the SCM in Tokyo in February 2013, Ms. Kyoko Okada, the general manager of the CCD at the time, was visibly delighted to introduce her “newly hired professional curator/archivist,” Ms. Chisako Koizumu.

Another factor contributing to the CCD’s success is the high research competency of its professional curators and archivists. One example of this is the research journal *Oiderumin* (Eudermine), published from 1996 to 2012. Named after one of Shiseido’s longest selling products, the journal was a high level scholarly publication that compiled research on themes such as Shiseido or makeup and culture, cultural patrimony, and the sharing of culture. The journal was spearheaded by Ms. Sato, who conducted research herself and also facilitated the articulation of implicit and tacit

¹ Philip F. Mooney, “The Practice of History in Corporate America: Business Archives in the United States,” in *Public History: An Introduction*, ed. Barbara J. Howe and Emory L. Kemp (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1986).

corporate knowledge within Shiseido from management and employees. Although the previous Shiseido management terminated the journal in 2012, while it was published it played an important role in building bridges with the scholarly community outside of Shiseido resulting in concrete projects such as that with MIT as well as a valuable accumulation of corporate knowledge.

Final remarks

Although it seems clear that Mr. Uotani values Shiseido's corporate history and the SCM, it remains to be seen whether the CCD will restart *Oiderumin* or how it will leverage the company's historical legacies under the new management. As this video clip of a Shiseido commercial, created under the new management, demonstrates, however, the company's dedication to innovation is still strong.

High School Girl? (The Secret of High School Girls)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5n3Db6pMQ-8>

http://www.shiseidogroup.com/news/detail.html?n=00000000000001&rt_bt=top-main_002

[002](#)