

## **With Sales of 25 million, Sunmark Publishing Takes on the World**

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The books of Sunmark Publishing have been released by publishing companies across the world and continue to sell well. *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, is a four part series, which together with the electronic edition has had an 8.2 million copy print run. 3.5 million copies of *A Compass to Fulfillment* have been printed, and 3 million copies of *The Hidden Messages in Water*. Altogether over 25 million copies have been issued overseas and this is an incredible accomplishment. For Japanese book publishers, precedents for successive international million sellers are rare. Why do Sunmark books sell so well overseas? This report covers the path Sunmark has followed up till now and in some part the secret of their success.

### ***The Hidden Messages in Water: The Impetus for Copyright Sales A 3 Million Copy Success Across 35 Countries***

#### **The Beginning at Frankfurt Book Fair**

For the majority of Japanese publishers buying and selling publishing rights through agent companies is common. However, purchases are most numerous, and having bought up the rights for an overseas title, they will release a Japanese edition. Needless to say, this has created a market for a diverse field of topics such as business books, practical guides, literature, children's books, cultural topics, general books, technical books, and so on.

In terms of copyright sales, in recent years Japanese comics in particular are doing rather well, but among standard books there are not many examples that have become international hits. In these circumstances, the conspicuous momentum of Sunmark Publishing is attracting some attention.

Sunmark became actively involved in the copyright business in 1997. They first began looking for such opportunities at the Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany. Now Sunmark has signed around 1,500 contracts with publishers around the world, and has launched successive million sellers. The number of copies printed has grown to over 25 million copies. Sunmark is now attracting attention not only in Japan, but also around the world.

Sunmark have partnered with U.S. company Beyond Words Publishing. Previously Sunmark was exhibiting at the Japanese pavilion of the Frankfurt Book Fair, but now they negotiate copyrights in the same booth with Beyond Words.

Their relationship was cemented over the purchase of rights for *Forgiveness: The Greatest Healer of All*, which was published in 2000, and which in Japan alone had a circulation of 200,000 copies. This was followed in 2004 by the sale to Beyond Words of rights to *The Hidden Messages in Water*, which was released in Japan in 2001. After Beyond Words released the book in the U.S. it was great success with 470,000 copies published, and it spent 28 consecutive weeks in The New York Times Best Sellers list.

Having published 300,000 copies of this bestselling title in Japan, 1.4 million were published in China, 260,000 in South

Korea, and across 35 countries and regions a total of 3 million copies were published. The popularity of the book rested on its contents which found life lessons in the analysis of numerous photographs of frozen water crystals. Another big factor was that the author, Mr. Masaru Emoto, was regularly giving seminars around the world.

That book was the initial impetus for Sunmark Publishing's international publishing enterprise. It also proved providential for Beyond Words Publishing who later signed a collaborative contract with the major publishing house Simon & Schuster, and were thus able to greatly expand the scope and diversity of their distribution within the U.S. Not only that, but the popular Australian writer, Rhonda Byrne, whose DVD, *The Secret*, had sold 200,000 copies from online sales alone, was enamoured of Emoto's book, and this created the opportunity for Beyond Words to publish the book version of *The Secret*. This became a big hit for the company, with 50 million copies released in over 50 countries.

These events occurred when Nobutaka Ueki, the current President of Sunmark Publishing, was Chief Editor. Ueki is well known in the Japanese publishing world for having edited *IN-Brain Revolution* in 1995, which with its sequel sold 5.5 million copies. He was also in charge for *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*, which went on to sell over 1 million copies.

### ***Discovering Unknown Writers***

#### ***Successive Million Sellers***

Ueki became President in July 2002, and under his leadership Sunmark's momentum as a leading domestic publisher has endured, with successive releases of million seller titles such as *The Enzyme Factor*, *A Compass to Fulfillment*, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, *Even the Stiffest People Can Do the Splits*, and *The "Trunk Muscle Reset Diet" That Top Models Have Kept Secret*. Although Sunmark has not previously published much in the literary sphere, this changed with the publication of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*, the first book by playwright, Toshikazu Kawaguchi. A three-part series, its sales exceeded 1.22 million copies, and it was also a hit in Taiwan where it sold 100,000 copies.

Not relying on literary masters or big name authors, Sunmark has discovered many previously unknown writers who go on to great success. President Ueki receives repeated requests for lectures within the publishing world.

### **Building a Hit Story**

#### **Domestic Publicity as an Investment**

President Ueki, in lectures and other media, often speaks of "learning from natural universal principles" as the company philosophy, and of the creativity that brings out the energy of the author to its fullest. He does not try make the company look important by releasing distribution figures at home and overseas.

To reporters he often speaks of "luck", and says that "publishing is gambling".

Perhaps by luck he is referring to special features on TV shows, or publicity campaigns that lead to reprints, but Sunmark has recorded data with details of how each title has become a hit in the past. These things are thoroughly considered when making market predictions. Even so, when deciding on a large print run, any title will feel like a gamble.

Such topics can be covered on a later occasion, but in fact when deciding on large print runs, there is an aspect which is done with an eye to growth in international business. Newspaper advertisements, advertising banners on trains, TV promotions, social media campaigns, are not only important for sales in Japan, but can be ranked as investments which will accrue advantages for future copyright negotiations.

Furthermore, Sunmark is now entering the character business and to this end a four-person project team established Penguin Airplane Factory last spring. Utilizing social media, the baby penguin characters called Penta and Koharu, are becoming increasingly well-known. In April this year, Penguin Airplane Factory had its first booth at the Licensing Japan show at the Content Tokyo 2019 exhibition, and entered into rights negotiations with numerous companies. In the near future, books, animations, and merchandise featuring these two penguins may be popular around the world.

Sunmark Publishing are creating products with the international market in mind. Since the company first began finding their way in 1997, 22 years have passed in which they have raised the status of their authors, and created a new readership around the world.