

# ***Business Bio***

# ***Harry Hill***



***Harry Hill, Chief Operating Officer***  
***Oak Lawn Marketing***  
*Japan's leading infomercial company*



## ***BUSINESS PROFILE***

**Industry:** Television Infomercials  
**Location:** Nagoya, Tokyo, Shanghai  
**Established:** May 1993  
**Revenue 2005:** US\$23 million  
**Employees:** 600  
**URL:** [www.oaklawn.co.jp](http://www.oaklawn.co.jp)

Founded in 1993, Oak Lawn Marketing (OLM) has been one of the leaders in bringing US-style infomercials to Japan. OLM utilizes a power branding strategy to brand products on TV to drive direct response sales and profits to its in-house call center, internet site and cellular internet site. OLM's corporate culture and Western and Japanese management focuses on implementing the best practices from Japan and the rest of the world.



***Harry Hill** began his career with Nagoya-based Oak Lawn Marketing in the late 1990s. Since he assumed the role of Chief Operating Officer in 2000, Hill has distinguished himself in the areas of marketing and sales, helping drive company earnings into double digits for the last 5 years.*

Fronting the backroom action of **Oak Lawn Marketing** (OLM), Japan's leading infomercial company, is Chief Operating Officer **Harry Hill**, whose skills and marketing savvy have helped take the company to new heights since he joined the organization in the late 1990s.

Introducing himself as the "Infomercial King of Japan," Hill described the phenomenal growth of the Nagoya-based electronic retailing business, which, since its founding in May 1993, has grown to the point where it now controls 2,200 hours of media time per month and broadcasts in every prefecture in Japan. "That's essentially like owning three TV stations," said Hill, who joined the Oak Lawn Marketing management team in 1999 and stepped into the COO role in 2004.

### ***Simple challenge became green light for start-up***

First up, how did a company launched by a "couple of gaijin in Nagoya" find their rhythm and end up with 230 full-time employees, several very profitable subsidiaries, a 200-booth call center with over 400 contract employees, and after-tax earnings in 2005 of US\$23 million? Well, that's almost an infomercial in itself, which Hill played on the video system at the beginning of his presentation at the City Club of Tokyo.

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“We were hired by a TV shopping company in Nagoya 14 years ago to import products for them,” Hill explained about how OLM entered the Japanese business space. “As we started doing that, the man who sold us one of our first products recommended that we should try and use our infomercial and start selling the products in Japan. We suggested this to the TV shopping company owner who said we should buy our own time and do it ourselves.” This challenge was like a green light to a trophy-hungry Grand Prix driver. **The race was on.**

### Maximum branding

“OLM buys time from everybody, normally in 29 minute increments, and runs a process called **PowerBranding**, which we call **Shop Jabranding**,” Hill explained. “This means that instead of selling a little of a lot of products, we brand a certain product to the maximum to sell the maximum amount of units.”

The Shop Jabranding strategy has allowed OLM to create brand awareness and recognition for its top selling products so that in the last few years, the business has had the best selling brand in Japan in categories such as EMS devices (Slendertone), mattress toppers, and steppers. Hill pointed out that it is key for fixed channel companies to have the maximum amount of households and sell-through many products, while in contrast, infomercial companies like OLM/Shop Japan focus on maximum exposure of a small number of products over all different channels to drive sales and profit.

The research phase was followed by a good dose of revealing self-analysis about the strengths and weaknesses of the company, management, and the local market. As recently as four years ago, OLM was three companies in one – a TV shopping company, a call center, and a retail sales division.

“But what we were finding was that we were not succeeding in any one of these businesses. So we made a decision as owners to investigate how we could be a better company. This involved asking ourselves:

- What can we excel at globally?
- What do we enjoy doing? and
- What can be very profitable?”



### Look for best practices and be the first to apply them

Hill then moved on to discuss innovation. He pointed out that one of OLM’s key philosophies for building their business is to look for best practices and be the first to apply them. “The reason we created our own in-house 24/7 multi-channel call center was because no call centers that we tried to hire 7-8 years ago would offer 24-hour service,” he said.



An online shopping site for a wide range of products from all over the world

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Named ‘Best TV Shopping Company’ 2003-2005
- Lateral Thigh Trainer grossed US\$2.4 million in 2005
- Launched Shop Jabranding strategy leading to US\$5.4 million sales in 2005
- Increased TV hours by 35%
- Increased staff retention 62%

## Company Performance Under Hill’s Tenure



## Harry Hill Fact Sheet

- Joined OLM in 1999.
- Took OLM through transitional period of expansion, increasing Japan sales by 74%, global sales by 65%.
- Oversaw introduction of top-selling Lateral Thigh Trainer grossed US\$2.4 million in 2005.
- Skillset: Marketing, Int’l Communications, Product Branding.
- Bilingual (English/Japanese).