

Foreword

Innovation in a Global Economy



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Since its foundation by Dr Masao Horiba in 1953, HORIBA has been closely associated with academic research, starting at Kyoto University and then, spreading to leading institutions worldwide. This inclination for science is a central part of our entrepreneurial culture, and the successful integration of Jobin Yvon European and American operations in the HORIBA Group does reflect the power of this common cultural value.

Today, while the crisis triggered in 2007/2008 by the hubris of financial speculators is taking its toll worldwide, we can draw from the heritage of our founders a precious way to focus our efforts and emerge stronger: innovation, with its many embodiments.

As the world economy continues to globalize and competitors with a lower manufacturing cost structure come and claim their share, innovative products and services are the privileged way for us to continue to develop from our roots in long developed countries, Japan, the USA and Europe. There is little chance that “me-too” products can be supported in the long run, and courageous decisions will be needed to re-allocate our resources to activities still early in their life cycle.

But what is innovation after all ? A US friend once gave me the famous “half joke” relative definition, comparing innovation and research: in research one takes \$ and transform them into ideas, while in innovation one takes ideas and transform them into \$. Besides the smile,

the value of this definition is that it solidly anchors innovation on the business side: we should be looking for innovations we can sell to customers with a profit. In our domain of measurement and analysis, we have traditionally looked at the fundamental hard sciences of physics and chemistry to get new sensing technology. But today we see the necessity to enrich this strong root with additional knowledge, notably biology with the large potential of the health market or also the softer computer sciences, to facilitate the use of our instruments by a larger community. This has a strong implication on our people base with the need to attract new talent and also opportunities for us present Horibarians to open our mind to new technical challenges and enjoy continuous learning. As engineers and scientists at heart, we tend to equate innovation with a product technical prowess, but it should be clear that in the 21st century service and processes will also be a source of significant business innovations, centered around quality and customer satisfaction. In this respect, the spirit of our BlackJack Project will help recognizing that every idea is valuable and that continuous innovation is a must to improve our business practices.

But how to facilitate innovation ? For most businesses, the days of closed projects are numbered, because the complexity of future products and services requires a depth and breadth of skills no company can afford. The solution is therefore to embrace the “Open Innovation” approach, where we bring our own values and talents into an ecosystem, building on strong consortium and IP agreements, sharing projects risks and benefits with a variety of partners from the academic laboratory to the major global companies, including all colors of start up, small and medium enterprises and public institutions. “Open” also means these partners will be found all over the world, each local contribution enriching the global project. The strength of our HORIBA culture will make it easier for us to enter such “co-development” age, helping to share in an open and fair spirit, proud of our history and looking forward to the exciting challenges of the new century.

Innovating as a trusted partner of leading global players will be the way to serve society by continuously contributing our measurement and analysis knowledge to improve energy, environment, food and healthcare solutions for our planet.