

【Series FUKUBITO】 Eiko Akiyama, Expert of Sales

Episode 1: This is the only thing I can do.

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Eiko Akiyama is a sales expert who has created a top sales for more than 40 years at imported luxury brands such as CELINE, GIORGIO ARMANI, PRADA, and Tiffany & Co., starting with domestic apparel brands. From her active childhood to the intense Spartan

education she had as a salesperson from her mentor at work, to the days of driving growth of sales, people, and stores while changing brands, to the deep and long-term relationships with a customer that have lasted for more than 40 years. The half-life of Eiko Akiyama, who is currently conveying the keys of success to salespeople as a store management consultant, is traced **in a seven-part of "FUKUBITO"** with her style of the highest sales work.

【Episode 1】

Akiyama was born in Hyogo Prefecture in 1953 as the eldest of two siblings. While protecting her sickly younger brother, she spent a bright and active childhood. In elementary and junior high school, she was good at studying and exercising. And two encounters in high school opened the way for her to become a fashion salesperson, which could be said to be her "calling" in the future.

"I will protect my younger brother"

Girlhood with a lively and strong sense of justice

In my childhood, I was tomboy, healthy, able to exercise and study, child like a "hero". But on the other hand, my younger brother was sickly and not good at exercising nor studying. When my younger brother was bullied by neighbor children, I would always defeat them. I

was such a child with a strong sense of justice. When I was young, my parents divorced. At that time, I was determined to protect my younger brother.



Image by: FASHIONSNAP

I have loved clothes since I was little. My favorite pastime was to make cloaks, skirts, and crowns by cutting and stapling up old curtains. Wearing them, I used to play princess with my friends in the neighborhood. But I preferred to do it to others instead of myself such as "You look good with this, so try this." Looking back, that may have been the first time I started to develop into clothes.

I still remember that I was the first runner in a mixed relay of class-matches in elementary school. I had a good start and was in the lead, but when I saw a boy of another class trying to overtake me from behind, I thought, "If I continue like this, I'm going to lose," and I grabbed the boy's gym clothes. He fell, and I passed the baton to the second runner in first place. But my team was disqualified for mistreatment, and I was ignored by my classmates.

I regretted what I had done. Although it is a funny and embarrassing memory, that was the moment when I realized my potential "competitive nature" that can be applied to me now.

"This is the only thing I can do"

An encounter with fashion that determined the future

In junior high school, I belonged to the track and field club and broke many records in intercity and Hanshin area tournaments. I was good enough to be in the top 10 at the national tournament. I didn't even think about becoming an athlete. But even if it was hard, practicing silently and stoically by myself to break my own record on a big stage was fun and pleasant. I felt "rewarded" for the first time.

But in high school, I fell off all at once. Although I was able to maintain my grades without any special effort until then, partly because it was a school with a high deviation value, my grades dropped sharply. Even in track and field, I was being overtaken more and more. I didn't like losing, lost my confidence, and quit track and field.

Instead, I was interested in fashion. When I was in my second year of high school, I admired Lisa Akikawa, who was the model for the first issue of anan, and I obsessively looked at the magazine. Around the same time, I went to a boutique for the first time. It was

a big impact on me. A nice salesperson recommended clothes that look good on me, did my fitting it, and complimented me. At that time, I was already thinking "I want to do such a job" "This is the only thing I can do."



Image by: FASHIONSNAP

In my high school, I was the fashion leader. At that time, it was just after the student movement, and students insisted on "let us be free" to be allowed to go to school in private clothes. Although most students wore uniforms in the end, I enjoyed wearing my clothes to the fullest every day. I was influenced by anan, such as wearing a top with a gray and Bordeaux border pattern, a gray velvet miniskirt with knee-high socks, and a pair of sneakers in different colors on the left and right. When I was walking up the stairs of school dressed like that, the teacher said, "Eiko, I can see your pants!", and I said "Yes, I'm showing it!" (laughs).

When I wore new clothes to school, everyone would imitate me, and sometimes I would take my classmates shopping. At the time, in a co-ed school, couples would want to do a pair look on a school trip. So, I went shopping with them and coordinated everything.

"Wearing same clothes is not cool. If one of you is going to wear a pink polo shirt, the other one should wear pink socks." Then, on the school trip, they were very happy.

In that way, I really liked and was happy when people became beautiful and happy with my advice from that time. —**To be continued in Episode 2**

Text: Erika Sasaki

Planning & Production: FASHIONSNAP

【Series FUKUBITO】 7 episodes of “Eiko Akiyama, Expert of Sales”

Episode 1 —” This is the only thing I can do”

Episode 2 —” OK, that's where my life started”

Episode 3 - Intense spartan education at CELINE

Episode 4 – What can only I do?

Episode 5 – Decision in 50s and Transition to Jewelry

Episode 6 – HERMÈS, the memento of a customer for 40 years

Episode 7 – Aiming to improve the status and value of salespeople