

# *Our Guiding Principles*

*The Spirit of Our Founder*

AUTOBACS SEVEN Group *Our Guiding Principles*

Compiled and published by AUTOBACS SEVEN Co., Ltd.

Printed by Toppan Inc.

Published July 2025

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AUTOBACS SEVEN Group



## Introduction

As the automobile industry enters a time of transformation, the AUTOBACS SEVEN Group is committed to expanding its businesses across the mobility sector. To guide our future growth and ensure that our shared aspirations are passed down throughout the Group, we have compiled *Our Guiding Principles*. This collection, based on the handwritten words of our founder, sets forth two essential pillars: the core values that shape our vision, and the principles of practice and action required to achieve it.

To remain a Group that consistently contributes to society, we must continue to face challenges together, united as one.

We encourage every employee across the AUTOBACS SEVEN Group to keep *Our Guiding Principles* close at hand—deepening your understanding, drawing on them as a compass in your daily work, and embodying the founder's spirit of challenge, individuality, and the tireless pursuit of being "Always No. 1."

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Audio File of a Lecture by Toshio Sumino  
*Our Guiding Principles*, Digital Edition

## Toshio Sumino, Our Founder

### The Journey of “Realizing Your Dreams”

Our founder, Toshio Sumino, was born on March 10, 1920, as the eldest son of a merchant family in the city of Osaka, Japan. From an early age he cared for his younger brothers while helping in the family business, where he learned the fundamentals of commerce. A lifelong car enthusiast with a strong entrepreneurial drive, he was determined to succeed in business—vowing not only to achieve success, but to surpass others in doing so. At age 27, he and his brothers launched their first company. The business flourished as a wholesaler to gasoline stations, yet at 54 he made the bold decision to step away from wholesaling—even as it continued to grow—to pursue retail. This turning point reflected both his ambition, cultivated since childhood, and his conviction that he could best serve customers by delivering the products they truly needed in a more convenient way. It was this spirit of challenge and creativity that shaped his path forward.

Mr. Sumino pioneered Japan’s very first one-stop shop for car accessories, and continued to take on new challenges throughout his life in order to remain the leader in this market. He was driven by an overarching ambition to achieve ever-higher goals, an insistence on always being No. 1, and the determination and initiative to achieve these goals.

Believing in his own potential, working tirelessly, and continuing to embrace challenge—this spirit is the very DNA our founder left behind, to be shared and carried forward across the entire Group.

# 願望實現

*A firm desire acted upon will always bear fruit.  
To dream is essential.*

— GANBOU JITSUGEN —

## 願望實現

GANBOU JITSUGEN

“Realize your dreams.” This was the starting point for our founder, Toshio Sumino, and remains a philosophy that everyone connected with our Group should embody.

As Mr. Sumino taught, “The strongest power human beings possess is the power to bring their dreams to fruition. Realizing our dreams is the inner force that drives self-motivation and makes us most powerful.” Self-motivation is the ability to spark and sustain one’s own determination to act. To maximize this power—setting goals, achieving them with strong will and decisive action, and then challenging the next objective in turn—is the very practice of “realizing your dreams.”

What is important here are the goals and dreams that ignite the heart with passion. Believing that the bigger the dream, the better, Mr. Sumino set an ambitious goal within two years of opening his first store. He declared to surpass the automotive accessories retail division of America’s Sears, Roebuck & Co., which was the world’s largest retailer at the time. To make this vision tangible, he placed photos of Chicago’s Sears Tower in every store, alongside his own handwritten calligraphy of “Realize Your Dreams,” motivating employees to achieve each target step by step with the aim of becoming number one in the world.

For him, “Realize Your Dreams” meant this: when you bring your vision vividly to life in your mind, fuel it with passion, believe in it wholeheartedly, and act with enthusiasm, anything can be achieved and made real. He believed that when conviction is sustained, flowers inevitably bloom—and that continuing to challenge oneself in pursuit of dreams would lead to the lasting growth of the Group.

## **The Values that Lead to Realizing Your Dreams**

# 仕事こそ人間形成

## 仕事こそ人間形成

SHIGOTOKOSO NINGENKEISEI

These words also reflect the outlook on life embodied by our founder, Toshio Sumino. With respect for people as the foundation of our management, he believed in responding swiftly to changing times, joining forces to exercise creativity, and contributing broadly to society through work that inspires. For him, work was never just a means of earning income; it was a training ground for personal growth, realized through bringing joy to others.

To bring joy requires creativity and ingenuity. To bring joy to many, teamwork is essential. And for a leader to unite such a team, ability alone is not enough—true leadership must also rest on trust and personal virtue. The lessons and growth gained through work, he believed, profoundly shape a person's life.

That is why our founder sincerely sought to encourage the growth of each individual employee. He urged us to “set ambitious goals and boldly take on great challenges in order to grow further” and to “entrust major responsibilities to subordinates, develop people, and nurture employees who love both their work and the company.”

By valuing the connections between people and approaching work with enthusiasm and a desire for growth, we can enrich not only our time at work but also our personal lives. These are values to be shared and upheld across the Group, in every era.



— SHIN SHIN SHIN —

## 真・心・信

SHIN SHIN SHIN

- ・ 真 (*shin*, “*truth*”): To uphold truth and never speak a lie.
- ・ 心 (*shin*, “*heart*”): To show kindness and compassion, and to walk alongside others.
- ・ 信 (*shin*, “*faith*”): To believe, and to hold firm to one’s convictions.

These represent the unchanging, ironclad rules at the core of our Group. To never tell a lie may sound obvious, but precisely for that reason it is a principle that must be upheld by everyone across the organization.

First introduced in 1983, these tenets reflected our founder Toshio Sumino’s wish that franchisees are not bound merely by a contract of exchanging signage and business know-how, but rather become partners in a shared destiny—united by the common aspiration to create stores that delight their local communities. To align with such partners, he set forth the guiding ideals of 真 (truth), 心 (heart), and 信 (faith).

Though refined over time, these three enduring principles remain immutable, and it is our responsibility to carry them forward across the Group.

# 責任自分論

— SEKININ JIBUNRON —

## 責任自分論

SEKININ JIBUNRON

The concept of “taking personal responsibility” means to be accountable for everything you are involved in and to seek the cause of any outcome within yourself first.

Of course, not every outcome is determined solely by your own actions. Many factors are involved, such as the actions of others, natural events, and the environment. However, our founder believed that success comes not from making excuses such as “I was unlucky” or “It’s the fault of another;” instead, it is crucial to first reflect on whether there was any fault in your own actions or whether you could have done something differently to achieve a better outcome.

To grow, it is important to accept the results and first find ways to improve yourself and the actions you have taken.



— SHIMEIKAN —

## 使命感(経営)

SHIMEIKAN (KEIEI)

This phrase embodies the conviction of having found one's true purpose—that sense of being born to do this work—and the determination to approach it not with the attitude of “I will do this,” but with the passion and resolve of “I must do this.” Our founder embraced his mission “to contribute broadly to society through the creation of a uniquely vibrant car-life culture, and through work that moves and inspires our customers.” His driving force was a profound sense of purpose: to live and contribute not only for himself, but for the benefit of others.

When signs of recession appeared after the collapse of Japan's bubble economy in the 1990s, our founder called on all employees to adopt a sense of mission rather than a sense of crisis. He believed that even in the depths of a severe downturn, if one holds fast to a clear duty and the resolve to act, the necessary path forward will come into view.

Whatever crises we may face in the future, we must remember the meaning contained in this *sense of mission*, and keep moving forward through decisive action, without hesitation.

## 心の健康

KOKORO NO KENKOU

# 心の健康

— KOKORO NO KENKOU —

We believe that people are the true capital of a company. Since our company's founding, we have made the mental and physical well-being of our employees a central pillar of management.

To lead by example, Toshio Sumino, our founder, devoted himself to maintaining his own health, posting his daily regimen in the sunroom of his home and following it faithfully. Thanks to his discipline and indomitable will, he remained active and energetic until just before his passing at the age of 80.

He also imparted to his employees the principles of preventive medicine, particularly the holistic Nishi Health System, which emphasizes illness prevention. In 1992, he established the AUTOBACS Osaka Health Center, enabling the Group as a whole to put these practices into action and foster lasting physical and mental well-being.

For both individuals and companies, without good health, collapse is inevitable. As our founder often said, "The small and strong will outperform the large and weak," meaning that even a small company is superior if it operates with steadiness and soundness.

A healthy mind fuels motivation, and a healthy body enables better work. Without both, the realization of our dreams is impossible. That is why we must remain mindful of our physical and mental well-being each day, and make continuous efforts to preserve it.

**Principles of Practice and  
Action that Contribute to  
Realizing Our Dreams**



— BANJISHOU —

## Approach to Management

### 萬事勝意

“Win by being destined to win.”

Our founder, Toshio Sumino, taught that true victory requires choosing the right battlefield, formulating a sound strategy, making thorough preparations, and building strength in advance. With the conviction that “the strong survive and prosper,” he urged us to strike first with this three-pronged approach. This, he said, is the essence of *banji shōi*—overarching victory—what it means to “win by being destined to win.”

### 強存強栄

The strong win because they are destined to win—and in doing so, they prosper. A company is not meant to be a circle of friends, but a community of strong individuals who challenge, elevate, and refine one another through constant effort.

### 三位一体

Whether at headquarters, in a franchise store, at a related company, or among our business partners, our shared duty is the same: to work together in pursuit of safer roads for society and a richer life for our customers.

### 先制攻撃

The greatest weapon is to remain on the offensive. We must always maintain the mindset of seizing the initiative to win, striking first, and moving from a position of strength.

To achieve our goals, we must constantly consider what can be done and keep acting with perseverance. This spirit of self-motivation and initiative is an essential principle of practice for everyone working within the Group.

# 不易流行

Maintaining a Balance Between  
Offense and Defense

— FUEKIRYUKOU —

*Fueki Ryūkō* (不易流行) expresses the balance between the immutable and the transitory. It means valuing universal principles that never change, while also embracing innovations that reflect the times. Our founder saw *fueki* as the enduring foundation of management strategy, and *ryūkō* as the flexible, adaptive elements that respond to shifting trends. He taught that by treating *fueki* as “defense” and *ryūkō* as “offense,” and maintaining this balance, a company can prevail even in uncertain environments.

Alongside *Fueki Ryūkō*, our founder also introduced the “Five Principles for Success” and the “Seven Key Practical Tasks,” urging every store to put them into practice. More than 30 years later, these words and this way of thinking remain unchanged—an enduring embodiment of *fueki*.

## Five Principles for Success

- Develop people through participatory management
- Instill cost awareness through open management
- Prioritize the local site, the actual workplace, and real materials
- Budget and account with cautious preparation—anticipate shortfalls, plan countermeasures in advance, and build in two or three layers of readiness
- Ensure thorough implementation of policies by all employees, without delay

## Seven Key Practical Tasks

1. Master and apply distinctive skills
2. Foster the vitality that drives unity and integration
3. Sustain continuous growth in revenue and profit
4. Practice low-cost, humble management
5. Develop and demonstrate the ability to sell through completely
6. Strengthen resilience to adapt to change
7. Pursue self-expansion—grounded in passion for the company, love for the work, and a sense of life’s purpose

人間是信用  
行為非信用

— NINGEN KORE SHINYOU —  
KOU HI SHINYOU

In our Group, we place great value on people and have always sought to build relationships of mutual trust both inside and outside the company. Yet in an organization as large as ours, while we may trust the individual, we cannot assume that every action they take is correct. No matter how trustworthy someone may be, it is essential to establish systems and environments that allow actions to be properly understood—this is what ultimately safeguards trust.

Our founder, Toshio Sumino, taught the importance of balancing *jō* (compassion) — trusting people and treating them with care — with *hijō* (rationality) — making judgments based on numbers and adhering to reason. This balance is expressed in the phrase: “Human beings should be trusted, but their actions must be verified.”

He also believed that both compassion and rationality are indispensable for personal growth. An organization built only on kindness and consideration will lack the drive for development, while one that relies solely on numbers will eventually lose its people. By combining these two elements, we can cultivate a culture that embraces change, works together, and courageously takes on new challenges.

## 躰の三原則

SHITSUKE NO SANGENSOKU

Our Three Principles of Discipline

## 復唱復命

FUKUSHOU FUKUMEI

Communicating & conveying intent

## 変身(心)

HENSHIN (KOKORO)

Adapting flexibly to all matters in  
changing times

## 危機管理

KIKI KANRI

Early signs, information & countermeasures

## 復唱復命 Repeating & Reporting

“Repeating & reporting” is a practice that emphasizes the importance of communication. Even in simple exchanges, it is essential to prevent misunderstandings. Saying “I understand” is not enough; we must remember to *repeat* and *report*. Alongside this, our Group rigorously practices the *ho-ren-so-dane* system: *hōkoku* (reporting), *renraku* (communicating), *sōdan* (consulting), *dane* (meeting and building consensus). This means always specifying deadlines, starting reports with the conclusion, taking notes, confirming the other party’s understanding, and providing interim updates.

## 変身(心) Transforming (Mindset)

This principle calls for responding flexibly to the times. While this may seem obvious, *Transforming (Mindset)* goes further: it demands that we broaden our adaptability to all matters—and make changes swiftly. “All matters” extends beyond customer service. It also includes adapting to evolving compliance requirements and addressing social issues that shift with the times.

## 危機管理 Crisis Management

Crisis management means always maintaining a sense of vigilance—verifying the accuracy of information and underlying data, and taking preventative measures in advance. Even information from trusted colleagues must be checked against evidence, and we must stay alert to ensure we gather facts from reliable sources. In today’s world, where social media is widespread and the authenticity of information is often uncertain, this lesson is more important than ever to keep firmly in mind.

# 知勇方法に限界なし

Human wisdom, courage, and ingenuity know no bounds. No matter how daunting the challenge is, we can always generate the insight, bravery, and means to overcome it. That is why we must never confine ourselves by saying “I can’t.” Instead, we should believe “I can,” and rise to the challenge of bringing out our full potential. This is the very spirit of “No limits to wisdom, courage, and methods.”

“Aim big, start small.”

“Turn crises into opportunities.”

“A recession is an opportunity; everyone is a salesman.”

“I can, I will, and I’ll succeed.”

“Don’t run away. Don’t give up. Don’t quit.”

Our founder, Toshio Sumino, left us with many such words of wisdom—urging us to push beyond our limits. The “one-stop shop for car accessories,” offering everything from parts to repair services under one roof, was born from this very spirit. At the time, it was common practice to buy tires from a tire shop and electrical parts from an electronics store. Yet by refusing to set limits and daring to challenge convention, he created something entirely new.

As inheritors of this DNA, we too must believe there are no limits, trust that we can achieve, and continue to challenge ourselves. This mindset remains essential in every era.

## 考働の三原則

KOUDOU NO SANGENSOKU

Our Three Principles of Thoughtful Action

## 責任自分論

SEKININ JIBUNRON

Take responsibility for everything you are  
involved in.

## 悲観的準備

HIKANTEKI JUNBI

Prepare with two or three layers of  
contingency to prevent failure.

## 全天候型経営

ZENTENKOGATA KEIEI

Build a system capable of responding in  
any environment.

## 責任自分論 Personal Responsibility

To grow and succeed, we must take ownership of everything we are involved in. When shortcomings or failures occur, the first step is to look within ourselves for the cause. This is the essence of Personal Responsibility.

## 悲観的準備 Pessimistic Preparation

It is essential to anticipate the worst-case scenario and prepare with two or three layers of contingency. Our founder often reminded us: “No result will ever exceed the level of preparation,” and “Only by preparing 120% can you achieve 100%.” With such preparation in place, you can then move forward with optimism and confidence—believing without doubt, “I will succeed.”

## 全天候型経営 All-Weather Management

“All-weather management” means building a structure that can respond to any circumstance. This includes not only preparing for the unexpected but also adapting to the changing times—and being quick to sense and act on new business opportunities. To achieve this, our creativity must know no bounds, and we must keep our antennas always raised.

成功の壁を  
打ち破ろう

SMI 佐野敏郎

Break Through  
the Barriers to Success



Toshio Sumino and the SMI

## Realizing Your Dreams through the SMI

If you bring your vision vividly to life, fuel it with passion, believe in it wholeheartedly, and act with conviction, anything can be realized and dreams can become reality.

## Setting Your Goals through the SMI

Success entails setting a worthy goal and progressively setting out to achieve it.

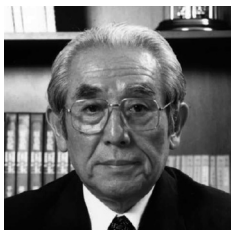
### What is “SMI”?

SMI, or the Success Motivation Institute, is a personal development program created by American entrepreneur Paul J. Meyer. By guiding individuals to set clear goals and visualize them vividly, the program strengthens motivation, drives continuous achievement, and helps turn aspirations into reality—a true pathway to success. Through SMI, our founder broke through the “walls” he had unconsciously built with thoughts such as “I can’t” or “It’s impossible.” This breakthrough led to the creation of Japan’s first “one-stop shop for car accessories”—a concept that did not exist at the time. SMI thus became one of the vital pillars supporting the growth of our Group.

## The 12 Rules of the SMI

- Rule 1 People develop habits, and habits develop people. The individual is always the main character. Establishing agency is the key premise for success.
- Rule 2 The greatest discovery of this century is the law of the mind: by changing one's mindset, one can change one's destiny.
- Rule 3 Success is merely the inevitable outcome that results from doing ordinary things with extraordinary dedication.
- Rule 4 The three conditions for success are clear goals, a concrete plan, and the motivation and strength to pursue them. Focus on building these conditions.
- Rule 5 All successful people act according to a plan. The SMI is built on the principle of disciplined action planning.
- Rule 6 Master the art of aiming big but starting small. The useful path is to unify one's vision and the steps required to achieve it.
- Rule 7 Concentrate on a clear target. Replace negative thoughts with positive ones. Harness the power of repetition with pauses. This is the foundation of the SMI method.
- Rule 8 Re-educating the subconscious is the surest road to human development. Follow the steps, don't rush, don't panic, continue to experiment, and execute the plan.
- Rule 9 Dialogue is the heart of leadership. Strive to be both a facilitator of dialogues and a trusted advisor.
- Rule 10 The main causes of monotony, stagnation, or anxiety about the future lie within one's own attitude and actions.
- Rule 11 Sustained success requires the maturity of the whole person. Aim for balanced growth across the six dimensions of life.\*
- Rule 12 True success belongs to those who find life within their work. Strive for the realization that we do not live in order to work, but rather, we eat so that we may work with purpose.

\* Health, social life, education, spiritual aspect, economic aspect, and family life



**Toshio Sumino**

Founder of AUTOBACS SEVEN Co., Ltd., born on March 10, 1920. In 1947, Toshio Sumino established Suehiro Shokai, a privately owned auto parts wholesaler in Fukushima-ku, Osaka. The following year, he founded Fuji Shokai Co., Ltd. in the Deiribashi area, engaging in both wholesale and retail of parts, supplies, and accessories. He later spun off the wholesale division to create Daiho Sangyo Co., Ltd. Although wholesale accounted for 50% of sales, in 1974 he made the bold decision to exit the business and open the AUTOBACS Higashi Osaka Store, Japan's first comprehensive specialty store for automotive supplies. This pioneering move laid the foundation for AUTOBACS' future success. He passed away on March 9, 2001, at the age of 80.

## **A Must-Listen for All Group Employees: Our Founder Toshio Sumino on “The Journey of Challenges”**



In a talk titled “The AUTOBACS Journey of Challenges,” our founder Toshio Sumino reflects on his entrepreneurial journey, his management philosophy, and his views on life, beginning with the business he launched at age 27. Scan the code above to experience the powerful, charismatic voice of Mr. Sumino—recorded when he was 72, yet still brimming with vitality.

**Chapter 1** Message and Current Status

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**Chapter 2** Startup and Entrepreneurship

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**Chapter 3** AUTOBACS

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**Chapter 4** Period of Scaling-Up and Development

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**Chapter 5** Franchise Management

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**Chapter 6** Nishi Health System

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**Chapter 7** Management Philosophy

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## ***Our Guiding Principles, Digital Edition***



Scan the code for the digital versions (available in English) of *Our Guiding Principles*.