

*Chapter Five*

# **Genchi Genbutsu**



**Lesson:  
Go to the Source  
and Learn**



“  
*He (Michael Jackson) would  
watch tapes of gazelles and  
cheetahs and panthers to  
imitate the natural grace  
of their movement.*”

— Quincy Jones



**A**s they walked from the gas station, Jake turned to Finbarr.  
“Does everyone know everyone’s business here, Finbarr?”

“Naw. No one is interested unless it has to do with sex, drugs, rock ‘n’ roll, religion, sport, education, money or your neighbor. Apart from that no one bothers anyone else—unless of course, it’s interesting. Mind you, Jake, you might learn something from it though.”

“How?”

“Well, like, in a sense, it’s a kind of market research—people know what is going on in their space. Businesses need to have the same kind of philosophy. Understanding customers, understanding your space is critical to staying alive.”



Jake nodded in agreement. “Trouble is, it costs to know what is happening. I don’t have sufficient budget to really understand my customers.”

“Aw, poor old Jake. You haven’t got sufficient budget? That is a load of old hogwash. We were talking about President Lyndon Johnson the other day. I’ll tell you another story about LBJ. When he went to Washington first as a congressional aide, he stayed in the Dodge Hotel with a number of seasoned congressional aides. Johnson’s biographer, a guy called Robert Dallek, says Johnson showered four times the first evening.”

“He must have been pretty clean by the time he was finished.”

“He might have been, but that’s not why he did it. This was the 1930s and the hotel had only communal facilities. Each time Johnson showered, he queried different aides as to what was happening in Washington, who the movers and shakers were and who got things done. LBJ had his finger on the pulse all his life and spent a lot of time understanding his market. But think about it. That shower incident only cost time—no expense involved—but the result was that Johnson substantially improved his knowledge of his market. Jake, you *can* find out what is happening in your market. Spend time in the supermarket