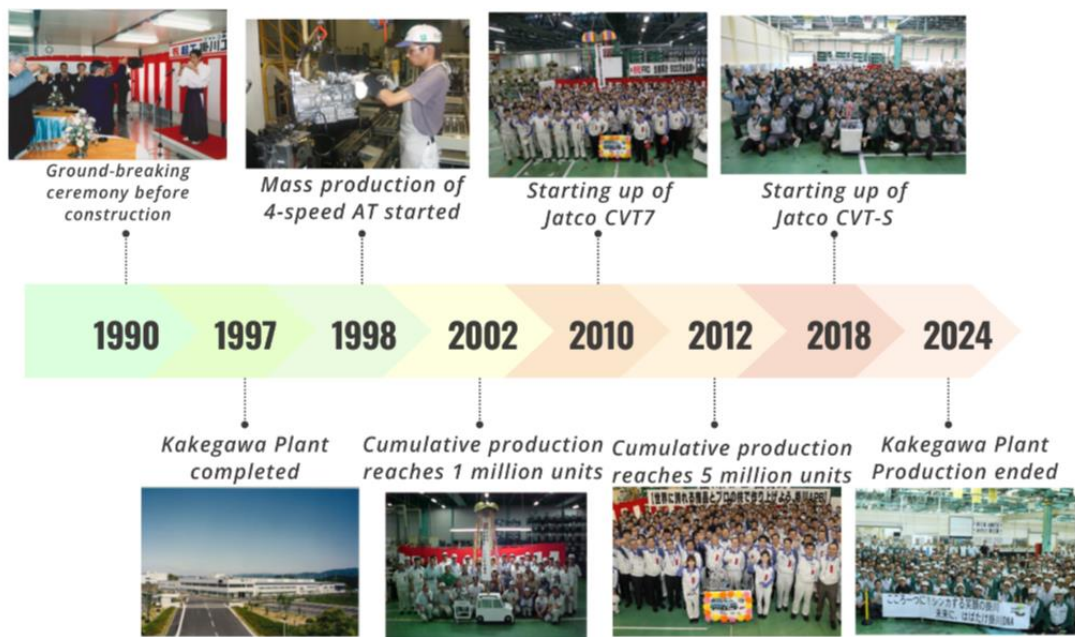


We will never forget Kakegawa Plant (Part 1)

Soar into the future, Kakegawa DNA

The Kakegawa Plant, which began production in 1997 and has produced a total of 12.82 million ATs/CVTs for compact cars and light vehicles, closed its doors on July 26, 2024. Over the course of two weeks, we will be reporting on what the factory has valued since production began and how it plans to make use of this experience. First, we asked the representative about the history and strengths of the Kakegawa Plant.

History of the Kakegawa Plant



The Kakegawa Plant (left) at the time of establishment and now



MA3 Oshima

I was one of the first people to arrive in Kakegawa Plant and was assigned to conservation. A few people came from the Numazu plant, but the plant was spacious and there was only a valve sub-line and an oil pump sub-line in the middle of the plant. I was young at the time, so all I could think about was creating. Thinking back now, I think it was difficult for my boss to transfer the line at that time, but now I am in that position, and the transfer to District 1 is also difficult, so I understand the situation well. I had experience working on lines for a variety of models, including 4-speed AT, Jatco CVT7, and Jatco CVT-S, and it was a hectic time. At the time, there was no logistics station, but it expanded to the north. I also have fond memories of the time when the one-way traffic at the factory changed to the other way around, and when JPH reached 100 vehicles, there were so many people that there were no spaces available in the parking lot when shifts switched between day and night.





The factory when it was first established (above) and now

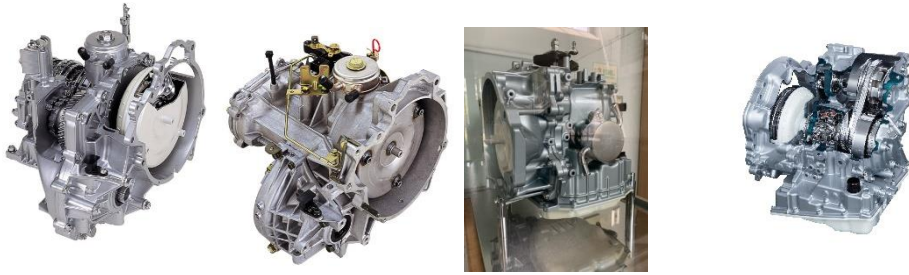
I know very well what is good about Kakegawa Plant, so when I heard that production was being discontinued, all I could say was "it's a shame." In Kakegawa Plant, there are strong horizontal connections between quality assurance, technology, and manufacturing, and they are able to work together incredibly well when problems arise. If there is a problem, it's a good plant where we get other departments involved to solve it. Since I work in maintenance, I often talked about the best course of action, taking into account manufacturing and quality assurance concepts. That's our strength. It was an environment where I could say anything. The offices were connected, so it was a place where we could talk quickly. That was something unique to a small factory.

My memory of the Kakegawa Plant is when we had a problem that stopped the line, but we all came together and solved it, including getting help from other areas. As a conservation measure, it is our duty to "not stop the line for too long."



Mr. Iwabe, Quality Assurance Department

I worked at the Kakegawa plant for 10 years from 1999, and after having experience working in Mexico, I returned to the plant last year for the first time in a long while. (Regarding the end of production) The production volume of CVTs has been declining slightly, so I guess it can't be helped. I hope they will build a plant in Kakegawa again. To be honest, since we built our house during the COVID-19 period, I didn't want to leave, but I wanted to do my best for the company.



(From left) 3-speed AT, 4-speed AT, Jatco CVT7, Jatco CVT-S

I work in the quality assurance department, but at the Kakegawa Plant there is a strong sense of camaraderie among the people on-site, so work went very smoothly. I believe we have been able to grow thanks to the guidance we have received from Suzuki Motor Corporation, our main customer in Kakegawa Plant. We would take action as soon as we received information, regardless of whether it was day or night, and it was a memorable experience for me.

Production Technology Department: Mr. Sato



I only came to Kakegawa Plant in April of this year, so when I heard that production was going to end, I was honestly surprised at how sudden it was and just thought that they were going to transfer the business. My boss told me that opportunities like this don't come around often, but I thought of it as a valuable experience in the sense that it was a job I had never done before. For me, it feels like I've been given the opportunity to take on a new challenge. For example, I was able to see standards documents that I don't normally see, which gave me many insights and broadened my horizons.

I think I have been able to input experience. Kakegawa Plant is close by, so we can work across departmental boundaries. I was accepted immediately when I came here. I was able to build a relationship with him right away. The maintenance, quality assurance, and work site are all close by, and the working relationships are similar, so it was a comfortable environment to work in. So I feel lonely. I feel quite lonely. I'm a little worried about whether we'll be able to build a relationship like we have now.



Kakegawa Festa has always been a place for social interaction

As with the festival, I also participated in a barbecue early on last year and there were many events which I enjoyed a lot. Even though I've only just started here, they have created an environment where I can easily fit in. I had many opportunities to talk with him in between work assignments, so I enjoyed it.

Mr. Nakamura:



I have been involved since the launch of the Kakegawa Plant in May 1997. From a clean slate to when a small sub-line is added. When I first heard (that production was being discontinued), I was more surprised than like, "Are you serious?" Maybe it's just me, but I felt more pride than anywhere else in making a quality product. My fondest memory is when production of the Jatco CVT7 began in 2010. I wasn't selected as a member though (laughs).



Jatco CVT7 delivery ceremony

I was also happy with the 2018 Jatco CVT-S. Kakegawa plant is a place that has been nurtured by its customers. Furthermore, the level of the workers and supervisors who ensure quality is second to none. I can say this with confidence. Our unity was unbreakable; we felt like a family. I played soccer through connections with my peers and juniors. it was fun.