

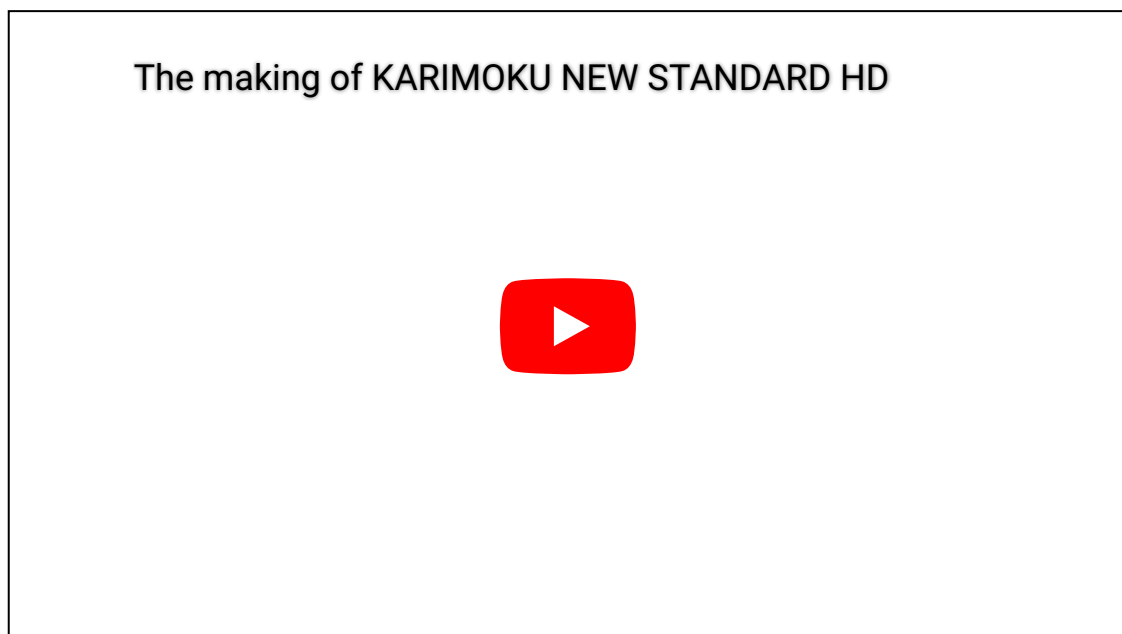
5.2 Operations methods

The big picture

Karimoku is Japan's leading wood furniture manufacturer. The company was started in 1940, when Shohei Kato started a woodworking shop in Kariya, Aichi Prefecture, alongside a lumber dealing business he had inherited. The company started to produce several different wood products, moving into furniture production by the 1960s. The company is known for combining high-tech manufacturing with human craftsmanship, a concept it calls 'high tech and high touch'.

Video 1 shows part of the manufacturing process used to create Karimoku's New Standard brand of furniture. In manufacturing this brand, Karimoku supports hardwood forest regeneration; it uses wood that is both grown and harvested sustainably, and it uses low-diameter trees, which are often otherwise discarded or used to make paper. The production of New Standard furniture is a collaborative process between the Japanese craftspeople employed by Karimoku and international designers.

As you watch the video, notice how the company combines methods that are both capital intensive and labour intensive in its production. (You may wish to watch the video at double speed.)



Video 1. The manufacturing process for Karimoku's New Standard furniture brand.

This subtopic will explore a number of operations methods that make use of both technology and human craftsmanship in order to transform resource inputs into product outputs.