



Tatsuo Yasunaga

Keidanren *Women's Executive Network*

Leadership Mentor Program

Increasing receptiveness and turning diversity into a strength

Keidanren



Keidanren Women's Executive Network

Leadership Mentor Program Vol.25

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Becoming a truly global company

Nurturing Japanese employees who can be globally competitive is important, but the declining birthrate and aging population mean that the pool of Japanese talent will gradually shrink in the years to come. Tapping into non-Japanese local talent will be a key part of responding to this challenge. A hybrid team of Japanese and non-Japanese employees can create work that stands out as a presence in the market. By developing that business well, you can become a truly global company. A commitment to a level playing field is essential in terms of reducing the gap in opportunities, and in our own company we are working to make a thorough switch to English for meetings and in-house materials.

A management approach that increases receptiveness and turns it into competitiveness

In the past, the culture of the general trading companies, or shosha, was marked by certain stereotypes that led to a kind of unequal treatment. The company used to ask: "Is it really all right to send a female employee on a business trip to a place that might not be totally safe?" Today's generation of young employees will simply quit and go elsewhere if the company does not provide every employee with the opportunities they expect. That's one reason why it is necessary to think about how to put together a career program that will allow women to play a full role. The current thinking is to have employees complete their initial training program in quite a short period, and then take on the challenge of the next stage in their careers before they face major life events.

Our workforce fluidity is increasing, as a result of various systems we have put in place on the premise that Mitsui & Co. should be somewhere that people feel they can enter and leave quite freely. Sometimes employees leave us and come back for a new challenge after building up a track record outside the company. A shosha is always reorganizing its portfolio.

In moving people, money, and business to fields with higher growth, it is much better if employees themselves apply to move. Compared to top-down HR decisions, that leads to better growth and development both for the organization and for the individual. We are consciously aiming for a management approach that acknowledges diversity and increases our receptiveness, and turns it into competitiveness.

The value of diversity

The truth that working on diversity requires huge amounts of time and effort was brought home to me by my own experiences when I was transferred to the World Bank at the age of 33. On the other hand, a plan that has been carefully put together over time, through repeated dialogues, tends to be universal and receptive, and understandable anywhere in the world. It is natural to try to get the other person to understand your ideas, but I think it is important to consider how to come up with a win-win strategy that will benefit both sides based on that understanding.

Follow your animal spirits

Solidarity within an organization arises when senior management understands what a job requires and delegates responsibility to subordinates. Once you have delegated a task, you must trust the person to carry it out and stay quiet until the results come in. Patience is important.

Also important is an attitude that asks: How are we going to establish our own bridgehead somewhere where no one else has been before, whether that is a new market or a new industry. In any field, your potential for growth is limited if you stay focused exclusively on the domestic market.

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) are essential for increasing points of contact with the wider world and tapping into growing overseas markets. I would encourage young people to be like guides in the jungle, carving out new territory. Give free rein to your animal spirits!

Mentor Profile

Tatsuo Yasunaga

Vice Chair, Keidanren

Representative Director,
Chair of the Board of
Directors of
Mitsui & Co., Ltd.

June 2021	Representative Director, Chair of the Board of Directors
June 2020	Vice Chair, Keidanren
June 2015	Representative Director, President & Chief Executive Officer
April 2015	President & Chief Executive Officer
April 2013	Managing Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Integrated Transportation Systems Business Unit General Manager,
July 2010	Corporate Planning & Strategy Division General Manager,
May 2008	General Manager, Planning & Administrative Division, Infrastructure Projects Business Unit

