

Keidanren *Women's Executive Network*

Leadership Mentor Program

What Leaders Can Do in Diverse Workforces

October 5, 2022



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Leadership Mentor Program Vol.26

October 5, 2022 Keidanren Kaikan, Otemachi, Tokyo

Requirements for Leaders

Life insurance is a form of mutual aid scheme, and modern life insurance dates back to the Meiji era (1868–1912). The life insurance industry faced hard times after World War II, but many women who had lost their husbands in the war actively worked as sales agents, leading to the high penetration rate of life insurance today. Currently 90% of our employees are women, and promoting women's active participation in the business lies at the heart of our diversity initiatives.

During my term as president, I strove to enhance the company's capital adequacy and expand group businesses. At that time, I focused especially on three points: (1) long-term vision (backcasting day-to-day business execution from a vision for 10 years' time), (2) decision-making (making decisions after building consensus), and (3) communication (listening to internal voices and fostering unity).

Requirements for business leaders include: (1) fairness and impartiality, (2) a sense of mission and responsibility, (3) communication skills, (4) decision-making ability, (5) leadership capabilities, (6) historical perspective, (7) humility, and (8) perseverance. Some of these seem commonplace, but I have highlighted them because I believe that spirit is the foundation of leadership. Bearing in mind these requirements, it is important to identify the

next generation of leaders, and to make continuous efforts oneself. I would like to emphasize the "impartiality" aspect of "fairness and impartiality." Leaders must be selfless, always consider the future of the company and its employees, and maintain a state of self-sacrifice. Complete impartiality is impossible, but leaders need to try not to be swayed by self-interest and their own obsessions. In terms of communication, the message a leader conveys is everything. Pace of speech, intonation, demeanor, and clothing are all part of the message. Since keywords rather than arguments will stick in the minds of listeners, it is vital to stress such words. I listed "historical perspective" because we build the future upon the past. In the sense of looking to the past and discerning the future to respond to changes, leaders always need to pay respect to those who came before them and built the past.

True Diversity

The flipside of greater diversity is that some people's views will not be adopted. For such people, what leaders can do is to clearly explain why a certain course of action was taken, and why that person's views were not adopted. To create as many people as possible who can respond to change, it is essential to carefully listen to the views of those who cannot respond to change and explain things to them clearly. I think that is the true meaning of diversity.

Mentor Profile

Yoshinobu Tsutsui

Vice Chair of the Board of Councillors, Keidanren Chairman, Nippon Life Insurance Company

Born in Hyogo Prefecture in 1954. After graduating from Faculty of Economics at Kyoto University, Mr. Tsutsui joined Nippon Life Insurance Company in 1977. Since then, he has held numerous roles including General Manager, Nagaoka Branch (1999-2001); General Manager, Public Affairs Department (2001-2003); Director and General Manager, Corporate Planning Department (2004-2007); Director and Senior Managing Executive Officer (2009-2011); President (2011-2018).

At Keidanren, he has served as Chair of the Committee on Administrative Reforms since 2017 and Vice Chair of the Board of Councillors since 2019.

Nippon Life Insurance Company

