



Keita Ishii

Keidanren *Women's Executive Network*

Leadership Mentor Program

Organizations and Leaders That Help People Shine



Keidanren Women's Executive Network

Leadership Mentor Program Vol.35

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A One-Size-Fits-All System Does Not Work

ITOCHU Corporation aspires to be "A Challenging but Rewarding Company," and works to raise productivity and help a diverse workforce thrive. Our efforts to advance women's empowerment in particular reflect more than twenty years of trial and error. At first we set numerical targets and poured our energy into building the systems needed to meet them. But because every employee has different circumstances and values, it became clear that a one-size-fits-all framework would only go so far.

Drawing Out People's Strengths Through Flexible Work Styles

The results of these measures to advance women's empowerment really began to show once we introduced company-wide work-style reforms, above all our Morning-Focused Working System (which, among other things, bans overtime after 8:00 p.m. and pays a wage premium for early-morning work). As the long-hours culture was rethought and people grew used to concentrating their work into a limited window, employees found it easier to shape their own way of working around their individual circumstances. This led to less overtime, higher productivity, and a lower turnover rate.

Systems Must Be Continually Refined

Today we are going further still, making childcare leave mandatory for male

employees and stepping up the appointment of women to executive roles, as we work to keep advancing both how people work and how the business is run.

A system is not something you build once and then leave alone. What matters is to keep listening to the people on the ground, revisiting it again and again, and refining it into a framework that truly works.

A Leader's Role Is to Provide Experiences That Foster Growth

There is no set formula for leadership. The ideal form it takes, and the relationships it builds, vary with the situation, the make-up of the team, and the leader's own character. Even so, a leader in a company has one essential task: to draw out each team member's abilities and motivation to the fullest and to give them the kind of good experiences that drive growth. And good experiences are not limited to successes. The very process of taking on a challenge can itself become a catalyst for growth.

Always Positive and Forward-Looking

To fulfill this role, a leader must engage with team members openly and with genuine warmth, understand what makes each person distinctive and convey clearly what is expected of them, and actively create chances for the team to connect, strengthening the sense of unity across the organization. Leadership is the example you set. A leader's positive, forward-looking attitude is what sustains the growth of both people and the organization.

Mentor Profile

Keita Ishii

Vice Chair of the Board of Councillors, Keidanren Representative Director, President & COO; CSO, ITOCHU Corporation

Mr. Ishii joined ITOCHU Corporation in 1983. In 2010, he became Chief Officer for Indo-China and President of ITOCHU (Thailand) Ltd., stationed in Bangkok. He served in various positions, such as Chief Operating Officer, Chemicals Division (2014), President, Energy & Chemicals Company (2018), before being appointed Representative Director, President & COO in 2021. Since 2024, he has served as Vice Chair of the Board of Councillors and Chair of the Japan-Thailand Trade and Economic Committee at Keidanren.

