



ONE YKK

ROUNDTABLE
DISCUSSION

Our People Are YKK's Core

— Advancing Global Human Capital —

Strengthening human capital is a key theme of the 7th Mid-term Management Plan (the 7th Mid-Term Plan), which began in 2025. How will we develop the human assets who will drive YKK's future expansion, based on the YKK Philosophy of the CYCLE OF GOODNESS®? Chairman Hiroaki Otani, Vice President Yoshio Shinoda of the Human Resources Department, and Vice President Jessica Cork of the Global Engagement Office engaged in a discussion about that question.

Key Drivers Behind YKK's Talent Development

—YKK has various teachings pertaining to talent development that were left by the founding president, and they are passed down even today. From among those teachings, what sayings do you feel strongly about?

Otani "You carry the front, I'll carry the back" is a phrase that deeply resonates with me and reflects a strong passion for talent development. To nurture people, you must trust them, delegate responsibilities, and allow them to gain valuable experiences. Supporting them from behind is equally important. I believe this mindset is timeless and universally applicable.

Cork For me, it's "Let's think of Japan as a province of the country called Earth" and "People – go out into the world and open your eyes. Young people – be inspired." Our founder had a global perspective from early on, and I find it truly inspiring that these words were spoken. I believe the reason the YKK Philosophy of CYCLE OF GOODNESS® is beloved by employees around the world today is precisely because of this

inclusive mindset.

Shinoda My favorite saying is "Do not fear failure; experience builds success," which is also one of the Core Values. In 2008, I was posted to YKK Zipper (Shenzhen) Co., Ltd. in the South China region as a human resources specialist and was assigned a project to introduce a manufacturing human resources system by Mr. Otani, who was the president of YKK Zipper (Shenzhen) Co., Ltd. at the time. Although I had only been in the role for a few months, I was able to take the plunge and try to solve problems in the manufacturing sector. Looking back, I remember that it was exactly as the quotations said: "You carry the front, and I'll carry the rear," and "Do not fear failure; experience builds success."



Strengthening Human Capital — Key Points for the 7th Mid-term Plan

— Please reflect on the past in terms of strengthening human capital and enhance employee engagement.

Otani For the three years of the COVID-19 pandemic, YKK experienced hardships in many countries/regions, including unavoidable closures. In this context, we shared the Management Policy of “not inflicting losses on employees” across all companies and protected their employment. We were able to move forward with our employees all over the world precisely because we had a clear policy: the CYCLE OF GOODNESS®. At the same time, I was also reminded that the CYCLE OF GOODNESS® clearly shows us the significance of our existence in society, and who we are as YKK.



Shinoda A major endeavor in terms of our human resources policy was abolishing the mandatory retirement age system in Japan in 2021 as part of the “Challenge to Change the Way We Work” project.

Furthermore, starting in FY2022, we put the Diverse Human Resources Promotion Committee into full operation and also made efforts to promote multi-skilled workers in the manufacturing sector. We also reviewed the rules for granting annual paid leave, and introduced refreshment leave and a job return system in Japan. We have made considerable progress in the last four years in terms of systems, with remote work and flexible working systems becoming more normal. Instead of all employees aiming for the same goals, as in the past, we are building a system where everyone can achieve their own goals, with “autonomy” as the key word.

— Given the current situation, how do you perceive the challenges we face in this 7th Mid-term Plan?

Cork To enhance employee engagement, the first step is to help employees feel that their work is meaningful - and to ensure that their supervisors actively support them in discovering and deepening that sense of meaning together. We also need to take a look from different perspectives, such as whether employees feel valued and supported by colleagues and supervisors, and whether there are opportunities for growth.

When it comes to developing global talent, cultural differences are another key factor. Behaviors can vary by country or region. For example, Japan has a culture where things are often understood without being explicitly stated, but this doesn't apply in the U.S., where expressing gratitude clearly in words is expected.

In the long run, we want to increase opportunities for YKK employees around the world to work outside of their own countries. I believe that YKK's unique strength in “Forest Management” and the philosophy

of allowing diverse talent to grow by leveraging their individual characteristics also contribute to improving engagement.

Shinoda During the 7th Mid-term Plan, we want to implement an approach in which all YKK employees around the world can work organically as one. We would also like to systematically promote the form of YKK employees from all over the world working outside of their own countries, as described by Ms. Cork, while pooling human assets.

What Should the Ideal Employee Look Like as We Approach Our 100th Anniversary?

— As we approach 2034, our 100th anniversary, tell us your thoughts on what YKK employees should be, and what kind of company YKK should aspire to be.

Shinoda For the 100th anniversary and beyond, I hope that employees will keep the YKK Philosophy of the CYCLE OF GOODNESS® and the Management Principle with them as their spiritual axes. In these uncertain times, we want them to be adaptable and able to cope with change.

Cork We want to make YKK a company where each and every employee around the world puts the CYCLE OF GOODNESS® into practice. We also want to foster an inclusive corporate culture that embraces diverse talent and a climate where all employees are respected, and can continue to grow while taking on challenges.

Otani YKK always has been extremely focused on people. At the end of the day, a company is its people. I believe that if we can increase the number of employees who love the company and take pride in it, are highly ambitious, and enjoy their jobs, we are sure to see results. The development of employees is directly linked to business growth. This is exactly the mindset of Forest Management: the growth of individual trees enriches the forest.

From this perspective, we want to develop leaders who can increase engagement within teams that share common goals - leaders who can say, “Even if you fail, I will support you, so go ahead and take on the challenge.” I myself have made mistakes and been supported by many people, but I don't want to simply say, “I was lucky to have had great managers.” If we develop more outstanding leaders like that, we will be able to cope with any changes in the future, and results will naturally follow. That's why I want to invest even more in developing our people.

