



Keidanren Women's Executive Network

Leadership Mentor Program

Building an Organizational Culture of Embracing Diverse Values and Reaching Acceptable Consensuses



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Thoughts on the Coronavirus Pandemic

In recent years, we have seen that greater efficiency and convenience gained through advancements in science and technology can no longer alone provide people with a sense of prosperity. The key will be to pursue sustainable well-being, through which people can live active lifestyles.

The new workstyle that has taken root amid the coronavirus pandemic has freed us from the constraints of time, place, and distance. On the other hand, anxiety and a sense of alienation have worsened due to fake news, diminishing social bonds in the real world, and other factors. Furthermore, in order to prepare for future crises, we need to make our socioeconomic structures more resilient. It is necessary to accept diverse values by adopting the inclusive attitude of leaving no one behind, and to have a flexible mindset that aims not at reaching full agreement but at a consensus, and not for perfection but for a level that is acceptable, in pursuing development and promoting data utilization. Toward this end, we must improve information literacy, which is defined not only as proficiency in the use of technology but also as the ability to choose correct information, strengthen proactive connections between individuals in the virtual world, break away from the strong Japanese tendency of status quo bias, hone our sensibilities, and engage in dialogue with society.

Lessons Learned from Mistakes on the Job

I have learned everything from mistakes. During

my days in multimedia development from the 1990s onward, I made many mistakes because I adhered to the business operator's perspective in development, turning the means—increasing communication speed—into the end. Going forward, we must shift from a mentality of pursuing technical advantage or competitive advantage to a mentality of prioritizing value and take the lead in defining the terms of competition, as we are now required to compete over those terms. Take 5G, for example. We must first discuss 5G from the standpoint of highest-level objectives in the social, management, policy, and other arenas, including asking what social issues it could solve, before we can think about how to roll it out.

What Management Needs to Prioritize

In order to fulfil the role of leader in an environment with people of different specializations, languages, timeframes, and cultures, you must take responsibility for your decisions, explanations, and results. On the knowledge front, you need to seek out trustworthy advisers. When making decisions, you should have staff with values different from yours close by, with whom you can discuss your thoughts. You must also keep in mind the following: never avoid making decisions, do not attempt to make people act but instead encourage them to do so themselves, and enjoy the presence of diverse values as you go about your daily tasks. In order to build organizational strength, you also need to create an environment conducive to taking up challenges, value empathy, maintain and increase diversity, promote cooperation with other organizations, and foster the spirit of autonomy.

Mentor Profile

Hiromichi Shinohara

Vice Chair, Keidanren
Chairman of the Board of
Nippon Telegraph and
Telephone Corporation (NTT)

Shinohara received master's degree in Faculty of Science and Engineering, from Waseda University in 1978. He joined Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Public Corporation (now NTT) in April 1978. He became a Senior Vice President of the Information Sharing Laboratory Group in June 2007. In June 2009, he was served as a Member of the Board of NTT and Head of the R&D Strategy Department. In June 2014, he was assigned as Executive Vice President and Head of the R&D Strategy Department. He took up his present position in June 2018. Most of his career has been spent in research and development. Especially, he had led strategic planning and promoting of the world's first FTTH (Fiber To The Home), including the development of optical access systems and optical fiber cord that can be easily bent. Since 2019, he has been a Vice Chair of Keidanren.

