

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

SEPTEMBER 2020

WEPS IN ACTION



PRINCIPLE 7

Measurement and Reporting

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CASE STUDY: CRE-EN INC. ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT THROUGH REPORTING

LESSONS LEARNED

- Gender equality, as prescribed under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5, is one of the fundamental themes for companies when pursuing sustainability management.
- Companies need to disclose information annually.
- Reporting enables companies to engage with various internal and external stakeholders, and to benefit from their feedback.
- Reporting allows companies to measure progress against their action plans, leading to continuous improvement.
- Reporting is also effective in sharing objectives and targets with employees.
- In addition to its own in-house efforts to conduct gender responsive business, Cre-en can provide solutions for companies to work on gender equality, through its corporate reporting consulting services.

- In order to make reporting work to advance gender equality, it is important to develop and set gender responsive key performance indicators (KPIs), and report on the progress made. Management methods such as PDCA (plan-do-check-act) are extremely important and useful.



CONTEXT

Cre-en Inc. is a Japanese business consulting firm specializing in sustainability issues. It was the first to provide consulting services on sustainability management, in 2000, and has since supported many large companies in Japan. There are around 40 employees. It provides services to approximately 70 to 80 companies on an annual basis.

Cre-en conducts business activities with the vision of "realizing a sustainable society." Cre-en not only provides dedicated consulting services on sustainability management to its business clients, but also implements them in-house.

It is important to have employees with diverse backgrounds who share a passion and enthusiasm for the same goal. Cre-en has been putting together policies and systems to facilitate workplaces where employees can thrive, work comfortably and maintain a sense of growth and accomplishment in their career.

Despite the fact that Japan ranks lowest among the advanced economies in the Global Gender Gap Report issued annually by the World Economic Forum, Cre-en has built a gender-equal human resources policy (including equal pay) and has made gender-equal management a reality. It also discloses information on this in its integrated management reports.

ACTIONS

Cre-en's efforts to create a workplace where employees thrive began after the great east Japan earthquake in 2011. The main objectives were twofold; to ensure business continuity in case of large-scale disasters and to offer a secure working environment for its employees.

The first step was to introduce a telework system and distribute laptop computers to all employees. This took some time as the change required considerable capital investment and a revision of its employment regulations. The provision of laptops was completed by January 2014 and the introduction of telework system by August 2014.

Telework at Cre-en means "a work style that utilizes information and communication technology to work flexibly outside the traditional office location or normal business hours". It also means to be able to work as, or more, efficiently than when in the office. Employees are allowed to work from home twice a week as long as they submit their expected telework days in advance. Such a flexible work style allows employees to balance their work and personal lives better, especially when they are looking after children or elderly relatives.

The company announced a corporate diversity policy in 2015, with the objective of redefining its own in-house processes as well as advocating the importance of diversity to the wider public.

CRE-EN'S DIVERSITY POLICY

We at Cre-en respect diversity. By communicating, understanding and accepting each other, we believe that we are able to maximize the potential of every individual. Such interaction brings innovation, and we believe that through such innovation we can contribute to building a sustainable society. We are committed to advancing our own work culture, which respects diversity, and to actively engaging with our stakeholders through our business activities to build a society that respects diversity.

In 2018, Cre-en introduced a system for full-time employees to work shorter hours, and if needed, to have a second job. The aim is to widen our employees' opportunities outside Cre-en, and to welcome more talented employees who are currently unable to work full-time.

In 2019, Cre-en introduced a web-conference system to improve in-house communication. After COVID-19, it is now using this system daily with its clients.

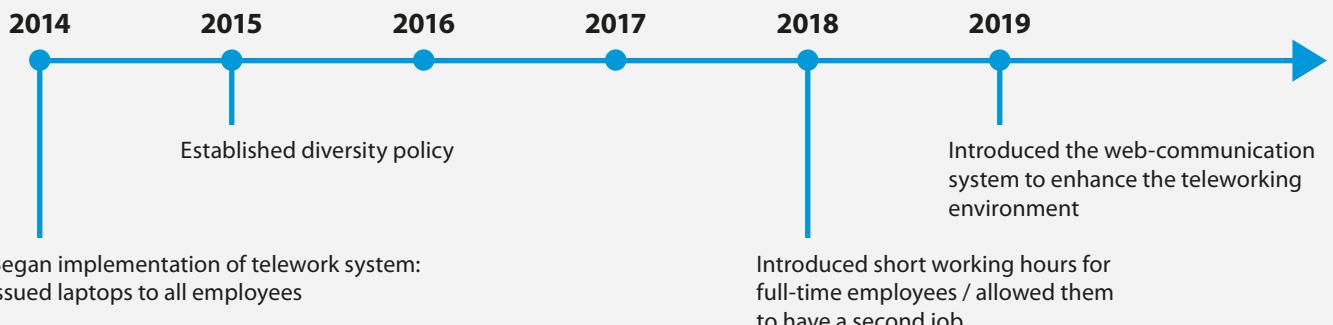
During this time frame, it has also been reporting on the number of:

- Employees
- Senior managers
- New hires
- Directors.

These numbers are disaggregated by sex.

At the same time, Cre-en has been encouraging all eligible employees to take parental leave and ensuring a 100 per cent return to work afterwards. The company encourages clear communication between managers and employees, as well as among peers, to build an environment of trust and mutual understanding.

TIMELINE



CHALLENGE

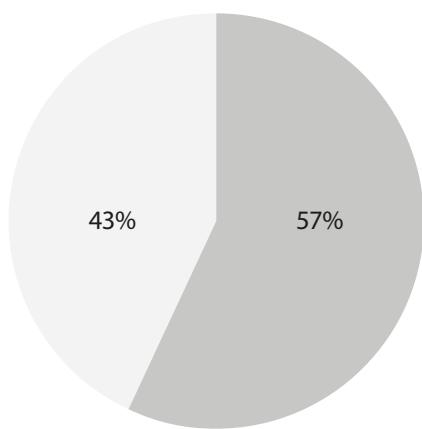
The challenge was to train women leaders to take up senior management positions, as only 25 per cent of these were filled by women.

However, women were more reluctant than men to take senior positions.

RESULTS

As a result of the various efforts in promoting sustainability management, Cre-en was selected best company by the Great Place to Work® Institute Japan. This is a prestigious award as the results are based on

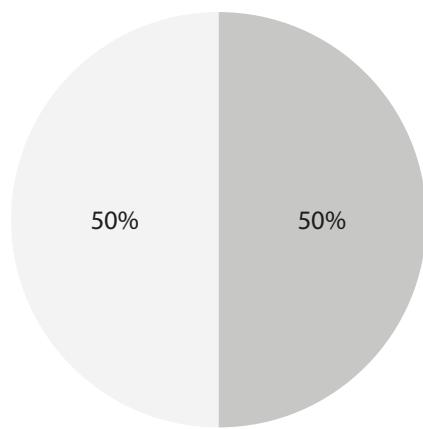
employees' satisfaction. Cre-en was also selected as one of the Top 100 Telework Pioneers by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.



Share of male and female employees

Male

Female



Share of male and female directors

Male

Female

Cre-en has also achieved 100 per cent attainment of parental leave, as well as parents' full return to work. More than 50 per cent of employees are now women, and women constitute 50 per cent of the board of directors. These achievements have improved the company's reputation. Cre-en now attracts many strong candidates when recruiting.

These changes are not the only result of our efforts to promote gender equality – we have also seen total sales grow by 150 per cent between 2016 and 2020, and operating profit increase fivefold.

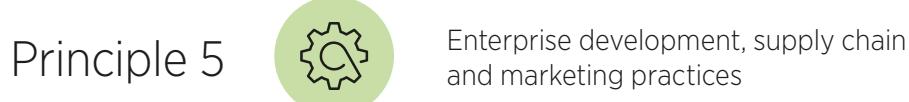
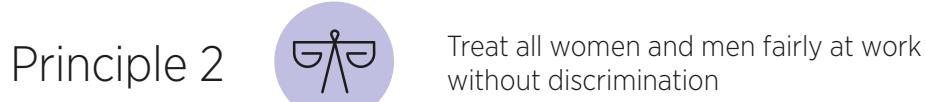
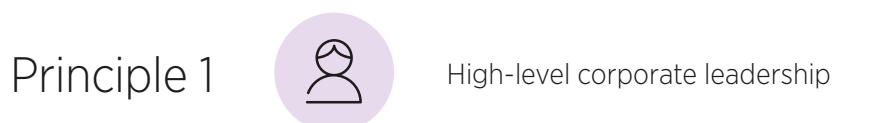
RECOMMENDATIONS

Cre-en has steadily built good results by simultaneously promoting sustainability management and its reporting. Reporting is a way of communicating to a company's internal and external stakeholders about its commitments and results, and of being accountable.

Dialogues based on reporting are effective in building trust and credibility – without which it would be impossible to manage the business successfully.

THE ROLE OF WEPs

Signing the WEPs and publishing the commitment on corporate websites will help in attracting talented staff, in particular women. For Cre-en, being selected best company by the Great Place to Work® Institute Japan, and Top 100 Telework Pioneers by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, has had similar positive impacts.



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