

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES



LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

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GENDER EQUALITY AS A FIRST STEP TOWARDS DIVERSITY

Nihon Unisys and its subsidiaries pioneered today's information society by introducing the first computers for commercial use in Japan. For more than 60 years, they have been solving customers' problems by developing systems that support society and industries. With this experience and track record, the Group is now focusing on being central to the creation of business ecosystems, bringing together companies across various industries to create new society-enriching values and to solve social issues.

What was the motivation for signing the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)?

When I first heard about this initiative, I thought, "We would be very happy to sign on!"

Signing the WEPs is the second time that we have supported an international initiative, following our commitment to the United Nations Global Compact. We want to further promote diversity, allowing each individual in our company to be able to express their individuality and accepting the individuality of others. Collaboration among diverse individuals will accelerate innovation, helping us achieve both social and economic value.

Empowering women is just the first step in accepting and leveraging the diversity of individuals. It is one of the most important initiatives at our company.

How the WEPs contribute to your company's efforts to advance gender equality and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals?

We have been focusing on empowering women since 2013 when we created the Diversity Promotion Group within our company. Since then, we have made some progress with Principle 2 (Treat all Women and Men Fairly at Work without Discrimination) Principle 3 (Employee Health, Well-Being and Safety) and Principle 4 (Education and Training for Career Advancement) as we have created programmes and guidelines to allow our employees to continue working while they deal with various life events.

We would like to collaborate with external as well as internal stakeholders to expand our efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment. We will continue our efforts towards Principles 1 to 4 while also working on Principle 5 (Enterprise Development, Supply Chain and Marketing Practices) and Principle 6 (Community Initiatives and Advocacy).

What does promoting gender equality and women's empowerment mean to your company?

Diversity is necessary for companies to grow, and empowering women is the first step towards this.

However, just talking about the need for this often leads to people agreeing in general but disagreeing on the details. There may also be resistance within the organization, since many people feel anxious when they come into contact with something that is new. It is important to turn this anxiety into joy, through various ways.

Diversity can bring joy. I know this from my discussions in Silicon Valley and at Harvard Business School. In the early 2000s, just around the time when the dot-com bubble had burst, I went to Silicon Valley to do a three-day workshop with the managements of various companies there. I was deeply impressed to find that we can have very interesting discussions when people have different perspectives.

After being in touch with such diverse values, I felt very strongly on my return to Japan that traditional Japanese system integrators would not last long. Whenever I have the chance, I tell my employees about the importance of having diverse talent, diverse information and diverse ideas.

In Japanese society, people are highly homogeneous, receiving a similar higher education and having similar experiences growing up. And even though I am the CEO, I can not see everything that is going on in the market. Bounded rationality keeps us from breaking out of our shells and from innovating.

We are used to women being a minority group in business. However, while it is understood in Japanese corporate culture that men tend not to question their superiors, women are rarely afraid to speak up in an organization to express a different view. I hold discussions with a certain group every Monday. The group includes women and an adviser from another country, and I enjoy the unexpected ideas that they offer each time.

You sound very open to new ideas.

I believe that the essence of diversity management is to enhance and express the diversity that a person has within, also called intrapersonal diversity.

However, while you may have this, you often may not be able to express it. Humans are highly social creatures so that when you are in an organization, you tend to kill your individuality to conform to the majority.

Even in such an organization, I feel that more women than men have the strength to express their individuality. The men who traditionally stay inside their shells can enhance their internal diversity if there is someone close to them expressing his individuality. In this sense, it is important to have conversations with various people including women, people from other countries, people with different religious or cultural backgrounds and people with disabilities.

How do you think the WEPs contribute to the broader agenda of advancing gender equality in the private sector in Japan?

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have also been gaining attention in Japan in recent years. An important aspect of SDGs is the globally accepted concept that the business world, including companies, and not nation states or governments, is expected to lead the movement towards achieving the SDG targets.

With us implementing actions based on WEPs and taking the initiative in the Japanese business world, I believe that we can contribute to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in which Japan greatly lags behind the rest of the world.

The term “FemTech” has recently become popular. Solving the issues faced by women using technology leads to social value which, in turn, leads to the creation of economic value. What is important here is that we should promote gender equality with the belief that it is possible to create a better society while doing good business at the same time.

Tell us about your next steps.

Until now, we have been focusing on solving social issues through the use of digital technology. I believe that, going forward, we need to aim towards solving issues by combining technology with an approach that looks at how humans behave.

For example, one of the major hurdles to gender equality and the women’s empowerment is unconscious bias, which includes the idea of a gender-based division of roles which is unique to Japan. One company cannot possibly solve this issue alone, since it is spread throughout society and is caused by a rigid preconception that can only be solved through understanding people’s behavioural principles. So, we need to have a comprehensive and long-term approach.

There is a good chance that technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and automation can contribute to streamlining housework and promoting a better work-life balance as well as achieving flexible work styles and a better quality education. I believe that technology can also help expand the diversity of individuals, improve the relationship of individuals to organizations and increase “psychological safety” in the organization. Facilitating behavioural changes in people can change traditional customs and even cultures. We would like to unlock the full potential of technology and design and implement a society in which each one of us can feel excited.

Women’s Empowerment Principles



High-level corporate leadership



Workplace HR



Employee well-being and safety



Education and training for women



Supplier diversity & marketing practices



Community engagement



Measurement and reporting

