



The importance of “strong individuals” opening the way to a “strong organization”

Nichimo's human resource strategy is to nurture “strong individuals” and to build a “strong organization” by bringing those individuals together. Our employees talked about human resource strategy now and in the future.



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Linking “strong individuals” to a “strong organization”

Approach

► **Kojima** Nichimo has a long tradition of delegating authority to individuals and leaving them to develop the business at their discretion. I think that compared to other companies we have an environment in which it is easier to accumulate knowledge and experience, which makes it easier to develop strong individuals. Possessing knowledge and information that was absorbed on the front lines is an important part of leveraging the individuality of employees. Front-line experience leads to enhanced credibility with customers. Also, when we say “strong individuals,” we do not mean that the individual always comes first. Rather, I think we need to act at all times as an organization,

keeping in mind what the respective departments value as important, and maintaining an awareness of quality and brand. **What is important is linking “strong individuals” to a “strong organization.”**

► **Kawamata** This kind of workplace environment is certainly one of our distinctive features. And yet, if we were to become a kind of collection of one-man businesses, that would also be harmful. **To become a strong organization, we need to ensure that the knowledge and experience of individuals is passed on as part of the business.**



Moving forward with the visualization of processes

Specific measures

► **Tachikawa** The key to operational efficiency is that individuals are able to smoothly hand over the processes that they have been assigned. When I returned to my career after childcare leave, I picked up work from an employee who was moving elsewhere, and having proper handover documentation helped me enormously. Digitalization continues to make advances, and it is important to visualize processes so that you can hand them over to somebody else at any time.

► **Kojima** That is definitely the case. In order to avoid the harm caused by becoming the kind of collection of one-man businesses, **the processes for which you are responsible must be kept well-organized.** If the processes

are handed over then the information will also be shared, and **it is exactly this that leads to the formation of a strong organization.** Visualizing processes help you to come up with ideas such as, for example, consolidating the sales operations into one department.

► **Kawamata** This might be true of every company these days, but with labor shortages becoming normalized, we are being required to systematize operations, and to make processes more efficient and optimize the allocation of personnel, which also includes considering outsourcing. If we make progress with the visualization of processes, this will also make such judgments easier to make.



Diverse work styles, and active participation by women

Specific measures

► **Kawamata** I believe that if you can organize the different processes, it will lead to the resolution of various issues

related to employment, such as working from home, and the active participation of women and of persons

with disabilities. Due partly to the nature of the marine products industry there are still some issues with the active participation of women, but first it is important that we create an environment in which women can work over the long term.

► **Kikyo** I agree. How to work at Nichimo going forward is a topic of discussion in conversations among women. I find it very encouraging that there are some people, like Ms. Tachikawa, who continue to work while caring for children. Now there are various role models for working women, such as working while providing child care, and devoting oneself to work without getting married. I very much want such situations to be taken into account when considering workplace issues.

► **Tachikawa** In discussions about active participation by women, the focus tends to be on balancing childcare with

work, but there are other matters to consider, including physical issues. As I see it, approaches to work vary even among women. When thinking about how to resolve matters related to workplace, it might be a good idea to start by listing the issues that women confront in the workplace.

► **Kojima** I agree on the importance of taking into account the needs of women in the workplace. As Mr. Kawamata points out, the marine products industry has traditionally been dominated by men, and even when women were assigned to sales roles they were not always accepted by customers and found it difficult to establish themselves. In recent years there has been a generation change among customers, and the industry circumstances have also altered significantly. In terms of the external environment, it is becoming a more comfortable workplace for women.



Clarifying personnel evaluation standards, and establishing an evaluation system

Specific measures

► **Kawamata** Having made progress in visualizing processes, human resources development at Nichimo is moving to the next stage. Currently we are gradually moving towards clarifying the abilities required of personnel from a long-term perspective, providing new training opportunities, and changing the evaluation system. We also recognize that utilizing DX will be essential for improving business efficiency and shifting to a paperless workplace, so we have set up meetings centered on younger employees to investigate this.

► **Tachikawa** With regard to personnel evaluations, we concentrate on the two issues of creating a fair personnel system in which people who work hard are rewarded properly, and of ensuring that the system that we build

is then operated properly. The top priority is building a personnel system that is accepted by both superiors and subordinates. Also, the diversification of employment formats in recent years has meant that in some ways personnel management has become more complicated, and this is something else that we want to improve.

► **Kawamata** We are actually right in the middle of establishing a new personnel evaluation system, and Ms. Tachikawa is one of the people involved in these discussions. Partly due to the fact that Nichimo has performed well in recent years there has been a tendency for evaluations to tilt in the direction of performance, but we want to change the personnel evaluation framework to also assess business processes, approaches, behavior, and other factors.



Expectations for increased corporate value and the future of Nichimo

Approach

► **Kawamata** I believe that it is easier to create the right conditions for nurturing staff in an organization where policies are clearly set out.

The boss should not just say “Go out and make sales,” but rather something like “We’re developing good products to expand sales in such and such a market. So you should focus on such and such an area.” I believe we need to be sharing plans in this way. I also believe a policy of looking at the big picture is important for generating profit for the Group as a whole rather than for individual businesses only. It is precisely such approaches that will lead to sustainable growth for the Group as a whole.

► **Kojima** This is something we also mentioned earlier in the discussion, but by nurturing strong individuals to build a strong organization we seek to increase corporate value. Primarily this means growing by expanding sales and generating profits, which leads the way to increases in corporate value, but it is not enough simply to make money; **it is also important to increase the value of human resources. By having them accumulate experience and knowledge, which they then organize and share, I want them to increase the value of individuals and in turn of the organization.**

► **Tachikawa** Looking around me I see many employees who are younger than myself, so at some point I seem to have become a mid-level employee, but I myself have learned a good deal from younger employees, and been stimulated by them. I feel it is extremely important for Nichimo that young employees are the driving force behind new trends and ideas. I hope we can follow up properly in such a way as to ensure that such ideas are not extinguished.

► **Kikyo** I think there are certainly things that can only be done by younger employees. Awareness of such issues as active participation by women and improvements in the workplace environment tends to get diluted by the day-to-day pressure of dealing with the task in front of you, but as an employee of this company called Nichimo, this discussion has reawakened my determination to maintain a sense of these issues at all times as I tackle my work. I also have gained a good understanding of the approach to human resources strategy outlined by Nichimo. I too will have younger employees around me, so I intend to ensure that my own work is well-organized so that I can share it with others at any time.