

Female Employee Dialogue



Developing a Working Environment in Which Women Can Achieve Success, thereby Securing Sustainable Growth

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The JFE Group is promoting an array of initiatives aimed at securing sustainable growth through the strengthening of its corporate structure. One such initiative involves promoting diversity with an eye to developing a working environment in which women can better achieve success.* To mark JFE Holdings being selected as a Fiscal 2013 "Nadeshiko" Brand recipient (see below), we invited female workers from each Group entity to join in a dialogue with Mr. Hajime Bada, the president of JFE Holdings, serving as a facilitator. Here, we present excerpts from the discussions as attendees shared their frank opinions about the reality of working at the JFE Group, as well as their takes on the future.

* The number of female career-track employees in the Group is 519, or approximately 9% of the career-track employees at JFE Holdings, JFE Steel, JFE Engineering and JFE Shoji Trade. Among the fiscal 2013 new recruits, 62 of the 301 career-track employees and 47 of the 112 administrative specialists were female. In the latter job category, women account for approximately 40% (as of April 2013).



JFE Holdings Selected to Bear the "Nadeshiko" Label

JFE Holdings has been selected as a recipient of the Fiscal 2013 Nadeshiko Label, which is awarded to listed companies that have an excellent track record in facilitating women's career development and that are expected to achieve medium- and long-term improvements in their corporate value. This stock labeling system is handled by Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and the Tokyo Stock Exchange and is used as a way of introducing such companies' stock in a way that will attract the interest of investors. JFE Holdings was selected on the basis of its Groupwide initiative aimed at hiring and promoting women through the enhancement of the working environment.

Why Did You Join the JFE Group?

Bada: My name is Hajime Bada, and I'm serving as the president of JFE Holdings. Let me introduce myself and share with you why I joined JFE. Born in 1948, I was one of the so-called "baby boomers." I'm now 65 years old, so perhaps even older than your parents. After joining the former Kawasaki Steel Corporation in 1973, I was assigned to a manufacturing line in the Steelmaking Dept. of the Chiba District of the East Japan Works. Following 14 years of service in Chiba, I worked in the Kurashiki District of the West Japan Works for approximately seven years, and then transferred to the Head Office in Tokyo. It's been nearly 20 years since I moved to Tokyo. Before I even began my career, I had decided to enter a steel company because I studied metallurgy at the faculty of engineering while in university. However, I had been also thinking of pursuing studies in a graduate school. Then, knowing that it had a scholarship system, I chose Kawasaki Steel, not because of a particular admiration of the company. That's how I came to join JFE.

Ozaki: Thanks to Mr. Bada's frankness, I'm now able to share my story without being too nervous. I joined JFE in 1988 after finishing my education when Japan's bubble economy was robust. I began my career at the New Materials & High Technology Lab., engaging in R&D involving new materials, such as rare earth magnets and oxide superconductors. From 1996, I've been in charge of the development of new products and manufacturing technologies in the field of iron powder. As to the reason I joined JFE, looking back at my days in graduate school, where I studied liquid metal in the chemistry department of the faculty of science, at the time positions for women were extremely limited and the majority of female graduate students had no career choices but to become university researchers or teachers. Fortunately, however, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law was enforced in 1986, a year prior to my graduation. I was encouraged and determined to join the first company to offer me a job. That company happened to be the former Kawasaki Steel. In addition, when I was an elementary school student, I'd been impressed by TV commercials aired by Kawasaki Steel. So, I kind of felt I was destined to work

at this company.

Tanigaki: I was a student at a technical high school and studying interiors, such as those made of wood. After I looked at JFE's job posting, however, I happened to begin studying about steel. The more I studied, the more excited I got, thinking that "steel is far stronger than wood... and far more interesting!" On the other hand, I was accustomed to working with my hands and using machining tools to make repairs since my childhood, because of my family background. And I just loved that kind of work. So, I joined JFE. Currently, I'm in charge of the maintenance of energy facilities at the steel works.

Takada: I'm a graduate of a technical high school, too. After graduation, I was kind of determined to start my career at a manufacturing company. Just like Ms. Tanigaki, I had become interested in steel when I saw JFE's job posting. In particular, I was attracted to and studied steel manufacturing processes as well as how automobiles and buildings are produced using steel materials. Moreover, my homeroom teacher recommended me to enter JFE. That's how I entered this company, despite knowing that female workers are in the minority in its workforce. I'm now serving as a quality inspector of conditioning lines for UOE steel pipes used for gas and other pipe lines as well as in the construction of plants and other structures.

Togane: After joining in 2011, and I immediately after that I underwent on-site training at the Kure Shipyard in Hiroshima for one year. Then I transferred to the division I currently belong to. Now I'm engaged in basic design of semi-submersible* floating structures as well as FLNG, or floating production, storage and offloading facilities for natural gas. I had long aspired to be involved with offshore business which is promising field in the shipbuilding industry. IHI Marine United was the only one that offered a position matching my aspiration, which was the incentive why I made a choice of the company.

Ohno: I joined in 1999, and, until my transfer to my current department in January 2013, I was engaged in the domestic marketing of heavy plate, targeting heavy machinery manufacturers as well as shipbuilders. At present, my principal role in the department is planning and organizing various types of in-house training programs. In May 2014, I organized a



Hajime Bada
President and CEO, JFE Holdings, Inc.



Yukiko Ozaki
General Manager, Iron Powder & Magnetic Materials Research Dept. Steel Research Lab., JFE Steel Corporation



Saya Tanigaki
Energy Office, Energy Dept., Keihin District, East Japan Works, JFE Steel Corporation

* Semi-submersible: a floating offshore structure whose lower part is underwater.



Keiko Haraoka
General Manager, Human Resources
Dept., JFE Engineering Corporation

plant tour at the Kurashiki District of West Japan Works, with nearly 40 career-track employees participating in the program. I decided to join a trading firm because it's always been my desire to do work that entails robust communications with many people.

Haraoka: After joining the former Nippon Kokan K.K., I was assigned to the Cost Management Office of the Planning Administration Department. After that, I was in administrative accounting for nine years and went on to gain experience in the management and reorganization of subsidiaries. From April 2010 to the present, I've been in charge of human resource affairs. The reason I chose JFE is simple: I wanted to engage in administration of construction projects for bridges and waste incineration facilities so that I can boast that "It's me who made this plant!"

Okamoto: I joined the former Kawasaki Steel in 2002, so I was one of the last employees who entered this company prior to the merger. I began my career in the Kurashiki District in West Japan Works and then I was assigned to the Labor & Personnel Section of the General Administration Department. At first, my role was in the human resource management of on-site operators. To explain why I chose JFE, I have to go way back to my days in elementary school when I attended a plant tour held at a

steel works in Kurashiki and was extremely impressed. It was so overwhelming to walk around the vast plant premises and take a close look at all the amazing steel manufacturing facilities and processes. Later, I met a person who worked at the former Kawasaki Steel just as I was seeking to start my career. This made my desire to work at a steel-making company realistic; that's why I entered Kawasaki Steel.

How to Better Strike a Balance between Work and Family Life

Bada: Thank you very much. Now I see everyone had different motivations when joining JFE. Let us now discuss "how to better strike a balance between work and family life." Please be frank when sharing your perspectives.

Okamoto: I have three children, ages five, three and one. Because I have to take care of them, it's difficult for me to work overtime. However, my per-hour productivity is far greater than before I got married. Until I became a mother, I was able to stretch out my work hours as long as I wanted. But this made me rather dull and tired eventually, because I was thinking about work all the time. After I started to take care of my children I've got bet-

ter at switching my focus to housework and child rearing when at home and vice versa. Because of this, my mind is refreshed every morning before I begin my work, although I often find myself feeling physically exhausted due to child rearing.

Ozaki: I know how you feel. I struggled with raising three children just like you are doing. However, all of my children have now become university students so child rearing is no longer physically exhausting, but it's becoming financially harsher! I gave birth to twins in the year when the Child Care and Family Care Leave Law was enforced, so I was able to take one-year childcare leave.

Okamoto: In my case, my husband is working at the same company. Whenever our child develops a fever, we have "emergency meetings" to decide who takes a day off. Sometimes, one of us takes the morning off while the other takes the afternoon. I suspect that this kind of arrangement could not be made easily if each of us was working at different company.

Ozaki: I agree. Going forward, in step with growth in the number of female workers at JFE, the number of "intra-office" marriages might increase. Notwithstanding intra-office marriage, I believe that it is crucial to create a corporate culture that welcomes male workers' decision to take childcare leave or apply for shorter working hours.

Haraoka: When one of the male workers serving in my department took childcare leave, I encouraged him to take a sufficient period off. Nevertheless, his leave was merely around two weeks. I therefore assumed that it was too scary for him to take off more than two weeks.

Bada: I admit that many have a fear of being absent from work. On the other hand, most people have no trouble with leaving their workplaces for a month or two due to a business trip or training. So, I suspect that the cause of that kind of fear might be just differences in the ways how they view things. You know, there are even people who assert that all male workers should be legally obliged to take two-month childcare leave, so that they can learn more about society!

Ozaki: That would be such a nice idea. We are employed under the same conditions as male workers and are expected to work as hard as they do. However, when it comes to family life,

female workers tend to take greater roles. Because of this, I would like male workers to experience the struggles we go through in maintaining family life.

Haraoka: In recent years, there have been more families in which the husband stays home. But I imagine that, in this country, it would be so hard for such a husband to be accepted by a group of mothers gathering in a park with their children, no matter how much he may wish to get along well with them. I believe, accordingly, that not only do workplaces need to change, but the country's prevailing culture must be changed as a whole. It is indeed a challenging task.

Bada: JFE Engineering has the Kodomo-no-Mori JFE Childcare Center. What is the utilization rate like?

Haraoka: We permit commuting by car so that more staff can utilize the facility. With the aim of contributing to the local community, the facility is also available to families outside of the Group on Saturdays and Sundays, providing them with daycare services. So users are gradually growing in number.

Ohno: JFE Shoji Trade hosts Mothers' meetings three times a year during which employees are given the chance to interact with staff on childcare leave.

Haraoka: In addition to childcare leave, taking leave to provide nursing care is an issue that many people confront. I believe that a system whereby staff can work at home is the solution. Although it might be difficult to establish such a system for all job categories, an effective system can be put in place should the scope be appropriately defined.

Bada: Well, I think the Group can address that issue by flexibly adjusting its personnel administration system, although it must tackle many other challenges going forward. By the way, the JFE Group's corporate vision is "contributing to society with the world's most innovative technology." Because the Group's manufacturing operators are expected to maintain their skills and accumulate know-how to play key roles in this vision, aren't they also facing various challenges when trying to utilize childcare and other leave systems?

Takada: I suppose they are. For example, when I'm handling a grinder, I can sense how far I had ground the material to within a millimeter, even without measuring it. The more time I've spent

What Happened When Female Workers Joined a Steel Manufacturing Site for the First Time?

Bada: I had served at a steel works more than 20 years. However, when I was at a steel manufacturing site, there were never any women. Because it's hard for me to picture women working there, can you share with me challenges that confront you as you work on-site?

Tanigaki: Although the office building I regularly work in has female showers and rest rooms, I've sometimes been troubled when I make my daily rounds through the districts I'm in charge of. All alone, I have to take longish trips by car to check such facilities as power plants and transformer stations, but I find fewer female than male rest rooms in the vast premises of the steel works.

Takada: I have no trouble with my office facility, either. However, I sometimes happen to see a male worker entering a temporary toilet at an outside jobsite. Whenever this happens, I just look up to the sky and quietly pass him by...although I'd rather laugh because most men seem to be panicking in these situations!

Bada: It will take some time to set up female rest rooms all around the steel works' vast premises. However, because I'm convinced that female manufacturing operators will grow in number, I'll go on investing in necessary infrastructure development.

Tanigaki: I know some cases where facilities have been improved for the sake of women. For example, there were some rusty doors in a certain power plant that I'm in charge of, and they were too heavy for me to open. However, repairs were carried out and I found those frequently-used doors mended, although some are still too heavy for me.

Takada: I, too, have faced challenges and have seen some areas I expect the company to improve. Nevertheless, I'm very happy with my fellow operators and other comrades. They are so accepting, and especially, senior colleagues tend to take care of us as if we were their daughters. That's why I'm happy working at JFE!



Eriko Okamoto
IR Office, Finance and Investor Relations
Dept., JFE Holdings, Inc.



Chie Ohno

Human Resource Development Team,
Human Resources & General Affairs
Dept., JFE Shoji Trade Corporation



Mayumi Togane

Naval Architect, Project Engineering
Group, Engineering Dept., Offshore and
Engineering Div., Japan Marine United
Corporation

on this, the more accurate my sense has become. However, whenever I take off for a while, my senses get dull. Also, when I roll pipes to move them, I can sense each pipe's unique bends and weight, even if they are produced at the same facility. It depends on whether the pipes were produced earlier or later in their production lot. But this kind of perception, too, can be lost if it is not constantly trained over long years.

Our Future Goals as Pioneers

Bada: Currently, the JFE Group is promoting its fourth medium-term business plan (fiscal 2012–2014), which sets forth policies including for the strengthening of the domestic profit base and the development of new products and process technologies. I think all of you are pursuing respective duties to realize these policies. As the Group is encouraging each of its female workers to take a greater role in its operations, could you share your goals for the future before closing this dialogue?

Togane: Because I'm involved in offshore business, my goal is to manage EPC (Engineering Procurement and Construction) projects of offshore structures not only engineering. Moreover, I want to see off their departure to the ocean when they are undocked and towed. However the current business environment is more favorable for South Korean and western players, so it has been frustrating to see Japanese players struggle to gain a stronger market presence.

Bada: I feel the same way about recent conditions. However, offshore business is attracting interest as one of the most promising fields for Japan. Japan Marine United has invested in a Brazilian shipbuilder and I expect the company eventually will have the strength to execute offshore platform EPC projects.

Togane: That's right! Since the integration of Japan Marine United, more engineers have been assigned to offshore business. All of us are looking forward to striving toward future successes. Also, since joined I have seen more fellow female engineers in the company. I think my role regarding younger female engineers is to improve the circumstances surrounding us of how to utilize childcare and other programs for work-life balance, with due consideration to gaining the understanding of our colleagues.

Ohno: When I joined the workforce, I was helped by some brilliant senior female col-

leagues, who always looked happy even though they were busy and were counted on by supervisors. After working with them, my goal has become a professional like them. In my duties in human resource nurturing, I'm striving to become a reliable senior colleague for my younger comrades.

Bada: JFE Steel has set up the Diversity Promotion Section, pursuing initiatives aimed at creating a working environment that helps women's career development. Does JFE Shoji Trade have a similar human resource nurturing program?

Ohno: Yes it does. We are implementing such programs as plant tours inviting mid-level female personnel who already have extensive experience in their fields. One such tour organized recently went through JFE Steel's steel works and JFE Logistics Corporation's loading yard. This program has garnered favorable feedback from participants, as they are able to take a closer look at how the Group's products are manufactured and distributed.

Bada: Unlike JFE Steel, JFE Engineering and other manufacturing companies, a trading firm's business depends solely on the know-how and competencies retained by its human resources, as they have no production facilities. I expect JFE Shoji Trade will encourage a greater number of its female employees to strive for success in their careers.

Haraoka: I hope that my company will become a workplace that has no barrier to impede female employees. Whether male or female, each worker is an indispensable part of the workforce. Gender is merely an aspect of individuality. I was in the first group of new recruits to join the company as administrative career-track employees; at that time the majority of my fellow workers were men. So, I've worked hard to better adapt and live with the circumstances. As a result, however, I might have ended up giving my colleagues a limited and fixed concept about how female staff should work. Now, I'm thinking that my past working style is becoming rather a burden for my junior female colleagues. I wish the company could provide a workplace where everyone enjoyed working and still remain himself or herself. To make it happen, I suppose I would have to take some initiative in creating a working environment in which the atmosphere is unconstrained. Lately, I've come to speak more boldly and give my honest perspective so that those around me can better under-

stand how women see things.

Okamoto: Ms. Haraoka's story reminds me of how many challenges we must overcome going forward. On the other hand, although it's been 12 years since I joined JFE, we now welcome female new recruits every year. So, female workers are becoming anything but "special" in the workplace, making me feel that gender difference no longer constrains my daily operations. I expect that 10 to 20 years in the future, the company will be a wonderful workplace where a number of women are enjoying successful careers. When I think of my personal goals, I recall the words of encouragement my supervisor, who had previously served as the head of my first department, gave me at the time of his retirement, "I know you are now going through one of the toughest times of your career. But once you reach your 40s, your current struggles will start to bear fruit. Hang in there!" I'll work hard on my current duties to gain the trust of those inside and outside of the company, thereby making my career flourish in my forties.

Ozaki: Because I entered the workforce just after the enforcement of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law, I was determined to work here up until the retirement age, so that I could be a good example as a "groundbreaker" under the new law system. I've still got that determination. Another personal goal, as a general manager of a research department, is to accomplish as many breakthroughs as possible in my development projects, thereby creating new products and technologies that will be mainstays many decades later. I'll then be looking forward to seeing the on-site operators, including Ms. Tanigaki and Takada, demonstrate their skills in utilizing these breakthroughs.

Tanigaki: I'll do my best! When I joined JFE, colleagues around me were a bit awkward. Perhaps they were nervous having a female worker join them. Nevertheless, now I feel like they consider me an essential part of the workforce, even though I'd never pretend to be anything but myself in order to fit in. However, because I was the first female worker in the department, my track record will become a kind of standard for female workers in terms of "how competent can women become?" I'm committed to working hard without compromise no matter what my task

is, so that I can remain a good role model for junior female workers who will join in the future.

Takada: My current goal is to acquire a qualification required to complete a certain product-inspection process. Because I'm not qualified, I've been frustrated in that I have to ask a senior colleague for help whenever necessary to finish that process. Another goal is to help establish a closer collaboration between pipe manufacturing and conditioning sections in welded pipe manufacturing works. These sections' common aim is to deliver high-quality UOE steel pipes as much as possible. As a female employee responsible for the conditioning process, I'll have more robust communications with fellow female staffers who take care of manufacturing so that we can make good proposals to our supervisors.

Bada: Sounds wonderful. I'm so grateful that you are striving to make improvements in your respective workplaces. Thank you for joining us today. As I listened to each story, I was so impressed at the strong level of commitment to work that each of you maintain. That's just what I've expected from JFE employees. I'm convinced that our future female colleagues will follow your paths. Moreover, thanks to your efforts aimed at being good role models, I expect that those female workers will work vibrantly in JFE, and, in turn, become role models themselves for the next generation of female workers. I would be very happy if JFE becomes an employer of choice for women in this way. I'm determined to promote diversity even further, creating a workplace that welcomes employees with diverse individuality and encourages them to achieve success. I'm also looking forward to see all of you developing successful careers as pioneers.



Mio Takada

Welded Pipe Plant, Welded Dept. West
Japan Works, JFE Steel Corporation

