

Overview of Value Creation

# Special Feature: Employees' Roundtable Talk on the Long-term Vision



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Note: The affiliations and titles of the participants are current as of 2024; since FY2025, the four participants other than General Manager Kishimoto are in manager positions.

## Employee-led Revised Long-term Vision and the Three-point “Ideal Image”

In 2025, RIKEN TECHNOS continues to hold “Aiming to become the leading provider of comfort for all living spaces” as its long-term vision. At the same time, as our new direction for realizing this vision, we stated the following three-point “ideal image.”

- (1) Realize monozukuri and value creation with new ideas and approaches
- (2) Contribute to a sustainable society, flexibly adapting to changes in society and the environment
- (3) Ensure employees each have fulfilling jobs and pride, and grow together

The key characteristics of this revision was that it was arrived at after repeated bottom-up discussions—instead of top-down—over a period of approximately one year. In this roundtable discussion, we feature five employees who were involved in studying not just the long-term vision but also its specific direction in the form of the new three-year medium-term business plan. They talked about the significance of formulating the long-term vision while looking back at the process: the necessity of revising the long-term vision now, their respective involvement, and the things they prioritized.

### Each Level's Approach to Discussions and Their Respective Atmospheres

**Kishimoto:** The previous long-term vision had served as the foundation of our medium-term business plans for nine years. In formulating the new medium-term business plan, it was decided to think together with other employees whether we should keep the same long-term vision. As the long-term vision looks at five years, a decade, and two decades into the future, it is not something to be solely determined by the management. Instead, it was thought that employees, who will create the future of the

Company, should take the lead in being involved. This time, chiefs, managers, and general managers conducted discussions at their respective levels, which were then consolidated and further deepened. Mr. Takahashi and Mr. Kimura took part in the manager-level discussions, while Mr. Yamamoto and Ms. Noyama took part in those for chiefs. What was the approach to discussions at your respective levels and their respective atmospheres?

**Takahashi:** We started with everyone gathering their own thoughts beforehand, then came together to carry out discussions based on those thoughts. Managers may be

management positions, but we are close to the front lines and deal with daily issues. That may be why there are many managers who are particular about something, and we often had very lively discussions.

**Kimura:** There were many times when discussions heated up, with members having their own different viewpoints. When we laid out all of the opinions on the table, it was difficult to organize them, and we could not give a conclusion to our discussions. Therefore, halfway through, we changed the process, splitting into several small groups to consolidate opinions before subsequently re-considering them as one big group.

**Yamamoto:** The chiefs took the same approach. We sought to conduct discussions in a way that can bring out viewpoints—going as far as personal ones—while having a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. However, we had relatively more people who were reserved, and there were times when discussions did not seem to be moving forward. As such, efforts were made to create an atmosphere that encourages people to speak up.

**Noyama:** Yes, there was a certain bias in the people who spoke up. However, through participating in the discussions among the chiefs, there were opportunities to learn, in detail, the thoughts and background behind our long-term vision, something that we did not know. This served to deepen our discussions.

### To Change or Not to Change—Frank Discussions about the Long-term Vision

**Kishimoto:** What were the topics discussed at your respective levels, and what were the things that left an impression?

**Takahashi:** The existing long-term vision was formulated in 2016. Therefore, it did not include the concepts of sustainability and diversity, which were still not common back then. As such, there were many opinions advocating for the inclusion of such perspectives in the new long-term vision. In particular, discussions heated up when we were talking about improving employee engagement. When thinking about the future RIKEN TECHNOS, it is essential to have adequate human resources. There were various themes, such as globalization and new businesses, but the managers eventually recognized that the most important thing was to create workplaces where employees have pride, fulfilling jobs, and a desire to work for long-term. This recognition was shared by everyone at our discussions.



**Kimura:** During the initial stages of our discussions, the majority opinion was that we should change the long-term vision. I myself was one of them who wondered if the current long-term vision was still appropriate for the times and thought that it could be time to revise it now that almost 10 years have passed. However, as we continued our discussions, opinions such as “Is there really a need to change?” and “What does the current long-term vision lack?” gradually gathered support. The long-term vision that we have been using for the past nine years is not actually bad and there are also employees who cherish it dearly. If so, it may be easier to accept for many people and better instill if we keep the existing vision and add new concepts to supplement it. More members started to feel this way.

**Noyama:** I treasure the RIKEN TECHNOS WAY and memorize everything under our mission, core value, and basic action. In contrast, the long-term vision was not really ingrained at my workplace, and I felt it would be better to change it to something simpler. However, after understanding the thoughts behind the long-term vision, I started to feel that it was also fine as it is now. Even so, there



should be a reason why it did not fully instill itself in the past. Therefore, I started to think about the reason, and at the same time, thought about creating a vision that conveys its incorporated ideas to everyone.

**Takahashi:** In the end, the managers could not reach an agreement about whether to change the words of the long-term vision or not. Therefore, we brought both proposals to the general managers.

**Kishimoto:** Among both the managers and the chiefs, opinions were roughly split in half regarding whether to change or not. After further discussions, we settled on retaining the long-term vision while adding an “ideal image for 10 years’ time.”

### Identification with the “Ideal Image” and Personal Interpretations

**Kishimoto:** What kind of value and significance do you feel regarding the “ideal image” that eventually took shape?

**Takahashi:** I did not always work in the technology field; in my career, I had also been involved in sales and marketing. From this experience, I personally feel that we are in





Aiming to Become the Leading Provider of Comfort for All Living Spaces

Ideal image for 10 years' time



an era where we cannot survive if we do not seek differentiation in monozukuri and value creation. In this sense, I think the words "with new ideas and approaches" show our determination as a manufacturer engaged in monozukuri.

**Kimura:** I am from the Accounting Department. While it is an indirect department, as a member of RIKEN TECHNOS, I have a strong awareness about the need to create new value. At the start of our discussions, no one touched on the Monozukuri Headquarters, and I feel that repeated discussions might have led to it.

**Takahashi:** The purpose of the Monozukuri Headquarters is to raise the overall speed and accuracy of R&D, manufacturing, and quality control, which had been moving separately, by bringing them together. Employees in technology going to our sites more often while those in manufacturing not drawing lines by saying, "This is the job of people in R&D"—such behaviors that further improve each other also help to bring about the "One Vision, New Stage 2027" stated in the new medium-term business plan. They also enhance our baseline capabilities as a manufacturer. In addition, when making products, we consume energy and emit CO<sub>2</sub>. Under such circumstances, how do we fulfill our responsibilities to society? What should we do? This is the thinking behind the second aspect that talks about "flexibly adapting to changes in society and the environment."

**Kishimoto:** We are a manufacturer of plastic materials and may come across negative opinions saying that plastics are bad for the environment. However, there are many occasions where the use of plastics can contribute to society. There are also social issues that can be addressed because of plastics, such as reducing transportation energy through reducing weight or supplementing labor shortages through ease of work. Whether they are environmental or social issues, it is about the kind of ideas that we have to solve them. The intention to focus on this area is expressed by the "ideal image."

**Yamamoto:** The sense of being able to contribute to society through work gives us fulfillment and pride. If you think in this way, you will see that the three aspects of the "ideal image" may seem to be independent but are actually tightly connected.

Approach to Taking on the Challenge of Earning Power and Sustainability Stated in the New Medium-term Business Plan

**Kishimoto:** The two pillars of "Earning Power" and "Sustainability" are stated in the new medium-term business plan. What are your thoughts on how to go about working on them?

**Yamamoto:** Today, approximately half of our net sales comes from outside Japan. As the further shrinking of the domestic market is unavoidable, I think it is essential for us to expand sales globally. So far, most of my work has been for the domestic market. Going forward, I hope to focus more on global expansion, increase interactions with overseas staff, and be more active in their development and such.



**Noyama:** My current work revolves around adding new value to existing products. We are adding newly created value, but it is quite difficult to set a price matching the value as several processes are involved. To offer value at a price that is acceptable to our customers, I hope to work from the starting stage of product manufacturing to establish pricing that will generate profits.

**Kimura:** From an accounting perspective, I want to communicate—in a manner that is easier to understand—information that I hope the people in our departments can know, such as profit and cost structures. Accounting training for new employees has also started this year, and

I hope to energize the Company as a whole by further invigorating such initiatives. As for sustainability, I feel its importance on a daily basis, especially because of the recent increase in situations where we are required to disclose non-financial information. My department is deeply involved in information disclosure, such as the securities report, and I hope to further enhance our disclosure of non-financial information.

**Takahashi:** If I were to say one thing about sustainability, it would be risk management. Supply chain management can also be found in the new medium-term business plan, and recently, there are increasingly more cases of impact on product manufacturing due to raw material discontinuation and such. Therefore, business continuity management (BCM) has become more important than before. It is crucial to properly establish technological backup plans so that we can immediately respond even if the supply of raw materials stops. Currently, we are working on such plans for compounds, films, and food packaging. Such initiatives will eventually become strengths of the RIKEN TECHNOS GROUP.



**Kishimoto:** Our technologies use generic products to create uniqueness. At the same time, we are also required to create special functions using new materials such as carbon nanotubes. How far do we go with existing generic products, and when do we bring in new materials? It is important to make the appropriate decisions while looking at the market and the external environment. Therefore, I especially hope that the younger generation will make it a habit to be sensitive to changes, analyze things, and make choices.

Lessons from This Experience and Messages to Convey Going Forward

**Kishimoto:** Through the experience this time, did you learn anything new or have anything you want to convey to your colleagues or subordinates?

**Yamamoto:** Before this, I did not have the opportunity to discuss so deeply with people from other departments. The chief-level discussions this time allowed me to understand the thinking of other departments, and I think my own thinking also changed significantly. Instead of simply conveying the experience I had this time to my

workplace colleagues and subordinates, I hope to think and grow together with them.

**Noyama:** A big takeaway was that I realized the existence of gaps between the respective issues faced for compounds, films, and food packaging. Since before, people often talked about combining compounds and films, and I think a major theme is the specific way to realize this. Regarding the spread of the long-term vision within the Company, we are still halfway there. I hope to return to the three-point "ideal image" at future milestones and be able to convince people about "This is why we are taking on the challenge of this medium-term business plan now."

**Kimura:** Numbers are used as familiar indicators no matter which department you are in, and we often see corporate performance being talking about using numbers. Therefore, I hope to help my subordinates, people from other departments, and the Company as a whole properly understand these numbers and be able to use them in their own activities. I also have many opportunities to be involved in accounting-related internal education, and I hope to convey the educational content in ways that are easier to understand while linking it to our long-term vision.

**Takahashi:** I think the thing I can do for the next generation is to properly incorporate the words of the long-term vision in every action. There are many kinds of tasks in our daily work, and I strive to let my subordinates understand how they are linked to the long-term vision. I think this is our responsibility as people who participated in the discussions this time.

**Kishimoto:** The RIKEN TECHNOS WAY was also formulated after many workshops conducted by each level. I think this is one reason it has become ingrained within the Company. The long-term vision this time was also formulated after detailed discussions at each level, and I feel it will be easier for people to accept it as their own and transition toward action. Work on monozukuri and value creation to earn, through which we solve social and environmental issues—this will lead to pride in our own work. As Mr. Yamamoto said, the three aspects of the "ideal image" are deeply connected to each other. To achieve a beneficial cycle, each person also needs to grow themselves. As a guideline, let us all take ownership of the long-term vision and the "ideal image."



Overview of Value Creation	Contribution through Core Business	Environmental Protection	Coexistence with Society	Strengthen Business Foundations	Stakeholders	Data Section
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