

## **What is human resources management based on the respect for human life and dignity?**

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### Profile

Born on July 20, 1957, Kazuto Ono joined the Human Resources Department at Canon Inc. in 1980 and was based in Canon USA from July 1987 to April 1992. He became the Principal Manager of the Human Resources Department in May 1996 and the Vice President of the same in April 2003.

While dealing with numerous personal work-related problems in his department, he felt that a more individual approach to employees' problems was necessary.

In January 2004, Ono established the Human Relations Center. As the Director of the Human Resources Center, he runs the career counseling section and is in charge of implementing Canon's mental health policy and dealing with employees' individual problems.

### 1. Company overview

Founded in 1937, this year marked Canon's 70th anniversary. We recorded non-consolidated net sales (for FY2006) of ¥2,729.7 billion, and an ordinary profit of ¥524.0 billion. Canon employs 21,973 people (as of the end of 2006).

At Canon, we place "respect for human life and dignity" and "focus on technology" at the core of our management philosophy. We have also defined diversification and globalization as the basis of our management strategies. While focusing our company on the growth markets of the times which match technological innovation with the needs of people, we have proceeded with diversification, and we have expanded business in our four main areas (computer peripherals, office imaging products, cameras, and optical and other products). We have also established regional headquarters in five regions around the world, and while we control 219 consolidated subsidiaries, we also conduct community-based development, production and distribution.

Since 1988, we have established "*kyosei*" as our corporate philosophy. ("*Kyosei*" is the philosophy of achieving corporate growth and development while contributing to the prosperity of the world and the happiness of humankind.) Based on this philosophy, Canon aims to be a corporation, which continues forever to contribute to society through technological innovation and which is worthy of admiration and respect worldwide; and since 1996, we have been promoting our "Excellent Global Corporation Plan."

### 2. Basic view on human resources management

The following five guiding principles for employees have been established based on the "respect for human life and dignity," one of the key management philosophies: (1) the "Three Selves" spirit, (2) Meritocracy, (3) Internationalism, (4) Familism, and (5) Health First. Furthermore, the "Three Selves" spirit, "meritocratic lifetime employment" and "respect for human life and dignity" are the management philosophies related to personnel, which are in

accordance with these guiding principles. By evaluating individual performance fairly, we aim for lifetime employment which is based on impartial conditions for employees, not on seniority.

With regard to the employment of disabled persons, based on the view that “employment is one of the social responsibilities of a corporation,” we respect the United Nation’s principle of normalization, and we actively promote the employment of persons with disabilities. In principle, recruitment criteria and employment conditions are the same as for able-bodied persons, but we also give consideration to, and deal with individual circumstances, such as the type and degree of a disability. As examples of working conditions, for persons with physical disabilities, we have incorporated barrier-free designs; and for persons with auditory disabilities, we have made it possible for them to work in divisions where duties can be conducted via email instructions, and in divisions which have a focus on manufacturing. We believe that the most important working condition for a person with a disability is that the surrounding employees show full understanding and consideration for the specific type and degree of disability, and we treat each instance on its merits. At Canon, in keeping with this basic view, we recruit persons who have a cheerful and positive attitude, and who have the mettle to challenge new things with determination, regardless of whether they have a disability or not.

### 3. Changes in the work environment surrounding companies, and the associated impacts

Next, I would like to discuss the changes in the work environment surrounding companies.

At the beginning of the 1990s, following the collapse of the bubble economy, there was a major shift in the structure of Japanese industry, and there were significant changes in the work environment. The rapid advancement of an aging population also had a considerable impact on labor systems. Amid this background, workers changed their attitudes towards work, there was a diversification in the ways people worked, progress was made in IT, and globalization spread. The physical and mental load caused by changes in the work environment and changes in the nature of work took on a different appearance than previously. Also, it seems that the collapse of the lifetime employment system changed the relationship of trust between companies and workers, in both a good and a not-so-good sense. There are also survey findings which show that, as a result of these changes in the work environment, every year, there is an increasing ratio of workers claiming that they have strong concerns, worries or stress about their jobs or work-life in general, and there is an increasing number of workers who take time off of work for mental health reasons.

I also think that the changes in the work environment and the diversification of young people’s outlooks on work have had a considerable effect on the relationship between companies and employees and on the sense of distance between workers and their superiors. In the case of a workplace in which various problems have arisen, traditionally, consultation and support for resolution should have been done directly between workers and their superiors, but in actuality, workplace communication has weakened, and there has been a decline in environments where workers can feel free to seek advice on concerns about the workplace.

### 4. Traditional issues in mental health support

Amid the previously mentioned changes in the work environment, mental health issues

within a company have assumed an importance that cannot be ignored. They are so important that they will influence productivity if left unchecked. Nevertheless, up until now, there has been one significant problem to do with mental health support at companies. That is, there has been weak cooperation between the division in charge of healthcare and the division in charge of personnel management. One of the main reasons is that a duty of confidentiality for the health information of individuals has been required of industrial health staff engaged in healthcare divisions. Another is that there has been some vague perception on the part of personnel divisions that mental health is a problem for medical care, and that it is the purview of some specialist world far removed from the officer in charge of personnel affairs.

Because support for an employee suffering mental health issues changes depending on the individual as well as on the timing and other circumstances, it is something that should be advanced in cooperation with industrial health staff or with an attending physician. However, it seems that, in reality, the distance between the company and the attending physician was so far, and, depending on the company, the cooperation between the officer in charge of personnel affairs and the industrial health staff was not necessarily adequate. One of the significant keys to proper mental health support is how cooperation between the healthcare division and the personnel management division, cooperation with the workplace, and cooperation with the attending physician is being conducted.

#### 5. Measures for mental health at Canon

From a compliance or CSR (corporate social responsibility) perspective, that is, from a perspective of the “social responsibility of a corporation,” companies have an obligation to protect the safety and health of workers, and to ensure an environment in which workers can engage in their work comfortably. Based on this view, we regard mental health issues both as a risk management issue for the company, and as a fundamental part of the management of personnel affairs based on the respect for human life and dignity.

Furthermore, at Canon, in the past, we have taken comprehensive mental health measures by implementing a range of actions related to mental health care in a deliberate and systematic manner. Furthermore, for the purpose of collectively organizing these actions and combining them into an even better strategy, in 2005, we formulated the “Mental Health Promotion Plan,” and we have since adopted the plan in the Central Health and Safety Committee in order to promote plans with labor-management unity.

#### 6. Individual measures for mental health

Our primary preventive activity is self-care education which is conducted as part of education for management and education for regular employees. In particular, for the purpose of educating management about the care of their staff, starting with the dissemination of knowledge on mental health, training is conducted with an emphasis on active listening and on role plays. Education is promoted in a way that management can nurture better communication with their staff.

Our main secondary preventive activity is individual health guidance by industrial health staff. At Canon, we conducted approximately 60 hours of training for our industrial health staff, including on information about mental health diseases, assessment techniques and case studies. This led to the improvement and standardization of the level of mental health

support provided by industrial health staff, and it proved useful in improving the subsequent health guidance. Furthermore, we provided the officers in charge of personnel affairs with the mental health education necessary for cooperation between personnel management and industrial health staff. As another initiative, in FY2005, we introduced external EAP based on cooperation with the Kanda-Higashi Clinic. Although the bulk of mental health care is guidance provided by in-house industrial health staff, we believe that we have been able to provide more effective care by utilizing external resources that allow workers to freely access consulting services, and by linking in-house health guidance with EAP.

As a tertiary prevention, in July 2004, we introduced the “Back-to-work Support Program,” and during this time, more than 100 employees have utilized this system. The core of the program is the “*Tameshi shussha*,” which is conducted prior to a person resuming work. “*Tameshi shussha*” refers to the period during which a person gradually becomes accustomed to coming to work for a prearranged length of time, while seeking to stabilize their work-life rhythm, which would have been skewed during their time away, and to build up their basic strength. It has proven itself effective as a measure for assisting employees in their smooth return to work.

#### 7. The importance of cooperation in mental health

Based on the recognition that the preservation of mental and physical health contributes to the increased productivity of a company, we have viewed mental health measures, not only from the traditional viewpoint of social service, but also as the very foundation underlying the management of personnel affairs based on the respect for human life and dignity, and we have been working to fulfill the range of previously mentioned mental health measures. The question of how best to achieve cooperation between the healthcare division and the personnel management division, cooperation with the workplace, and cooperation with attending physicians is important in order to effectively advance the mental health measures. Amid the issue of conflict between the “responsibility for worker safety” and the “duty of confidentiality,” which must both be observed by the relevant parties, at Canon, we provide mental health support with cooperation between the relevant parties based on fiduciary relations, while giving full consideration to these two issues. For each employee who is struggling with a mental health issue, consultation and checks are conducted between the relevant parties on a case-by-case basis, and approaches are considered which are appropriate for that person.

#### 8. Conclusion

We view mental health issues at Canon from a perspective of the management of personnel affairs, based on a viewpoint of risk management. We believe that promoting efforts for mental health will raise work efficiency, and in turn, will lead to the creation of a comfortable workplace environment. We recognize that, in addition to the implementation of individual mental health measures, the future challenges for our company include the preparation of a system for effectively implementing existing measures, and the development of new measures. I believe that resolving these issues will lead to the creation of a workplace culture in which each and every employee maintains a high level of motivation, and in which workers maintain good communication with their superiors and with other workers, while each respects the other’s human nature. The management of

personnel affairs based on the respect for human life and dignity will lead to the development of a work environment and workers, who perform their duties with vitality and good cheer, and with a consistently high level of motivation while successfully alleviating stress. I believe that this is what will lead to the development of a strong organization and which will further contribute to the development of the company.