

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Special

VOL. 2

Reach for the world, think and work globally



Reports on careers at companies with strong DEI efforts

KPMG / NRI

Norway's lead on equality is result of long effort

Louise George Kittaka
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Norway is internationally regarded as a leader in gender equality and inclusivity, with progressive policies and a commitment to helping citizens balance work and family life. Kristin Iglum, the Norwegian ambassador to Japan, shared her insights on Norway's success in these areas and how diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) have come to be embedded in the fabric of daily life.

Arriving in September last year to take up her role, Iglum was delighted to accept the posting to Japan. Having previously spent eight years representing her country in China, she already felt an affinity for East Asia and was keen to return. "I have a deep interest in what's happening in this region, so when I had the chance to work in Japan, I thought it would be wonderful!" she said with a smile.

"I joined the foreign service in 1991. I've always loved having the opportunity to get to know a new country. An important part of the job is to try and learn about all aspects of the country — not only the politics and business, but also the culture," she explained.

Iglum pointed out that Norwegians generally hold Japan in high regard and are very interested in the culture, with many people loving Japanese anime, manga and food. Norway and Japan also both have cultures rooted in fishing and maritime traditions. She feels a special connection to Japan through her love of reading, as she particularly enjoys the works of Haruki Murakami.

She has been enjoying the opportunity to travel to various parts of Japan, with the "art island" of Naoshima in Kagawa Prefecture standing out for both its renovation of traditional buildings and its modern art and architecture. She was also deeply moved after attending a memorial service in Fukushima Prefecture marking the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami.

Norway takes the lead in DEI

At the core of Norway's DEI philosophy is giving people equal opportunities from the outset, and the Norwegian foreign service celebrates diversity. As Iglum explained, "Norwegian diplomats are encouraged to promote this in work environments across all embassies worldwide. And now that I am the ambassador, it is my responsibility to make sure that there is absolutely no discrimination among all the colleagues here."

"For me, I feel fortunate to have always worked in supportive environments. However, of course, it could have been a different experience if I had been working as a foreign expat in the local business environment," she added.

Iglum says that balancing work and family is not only encouraged in Norway but is also a



The ambassador of Norway to Japan, Kristin Iglum HARUO MOTOHASHI

norm embraced by both men and women. "When you have a large number of women participating in the workforce and most people would like to have a family, then you really need both partners to step up and do their share, because otherwise it just won't add up," she said.

Norway ranked second on the 2024 Global Gender Gap list, highlighting its success in promoting gender equality. Moreover, in 2017, Norway was named the "world's most inclusive economy" by the World Economic Forum, which praised Norway's broad-based economy, job creation, poverty reduction and robust mix of policies supporting education and innovation.

A society where all thrive

According to Iglum, Norway is fortunate to be a small and relatively wealthy country — two factors that have contributed to the development of a very strong social security system. "I think that is actually an important basis for diversity, inclusion and equality, since basic needs are taken care of. We have a health care system paid for through taxes, so you don't need private insurance. And education is free,

early evening.

"People sometimes ask, 'So how do you get the job done?' I can say that efficiency at work is very high. If you know you have to leave the office by 4 to pick up your children at nursery school, then you will get the job done on time," Iglum said. "I never felt more efficient than during the years when I had small kids. I was there to get the job done so I could leave on time!"

Norway's government leads by example. The climate and environment minister, Andreas Bjelland Eriksen, is currently taking 16 weeks of paternity leave, highlighting the country's commitment to normalizing shared responsibilities. His colleague Tore O. Sandvik has stepped in as the acting minister in the interim.

Norwegian civil servants often leave by 3 p.m. in the summer to make the most of the longer days. "We have very strict rules when it comes to vacation time. It's every manager's responsibility to make sure that people take the vacation to which they are entitled," said Iglum.

In a similar vein, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry encourages employees to think carefully before scheduling meetings. If people choose to set up a meeting, then they should ensure there is a clear purpose and an agenda, to make the most of the time.

Step by step to inclusivity

While Norway is a successful example of an inclusive society, Iglum notes that such progress is by no means quick or easy. "I think it's important to mention this has actually been due to hard work taking place over many decades, with consistent efforts, step by step. If we talk about gender equality and women's political participation, for example, it has been a combination of concrete policies from the government at the top and a lot of effort at the grassroots level with local political parties and by women's organizations," she explained.

Over the decades, the government has faced criticism for introducing certain policies supporting societal change, and it has taken time to gain understanding from citizens about why these policies are beneficial.

"For instance, the story of women's political participation in Norway began in the 1960s with initiatives to encourage female candidates in local elections, and at first, nothing happened. Then during the '70s, we had the women's movement, there were campaigns on television, and things began to move. Change definitely didn't come by itself, and if people don't move and ask for change, then nothing will happen," Iglum said.

Iglum believes there are parallels with Japan's current situation. After hitting a record low of 125th out of 146 countries in the gender gap rankings last year, Japan rose to 118th this year, though women's participation in political and economic sectors still lags well behind that of men. Nonetheless, Iglum

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Iglum got together with The Japan Times to discuss Norway's situation in regard to diversity, equity and inclusion. HARUO MOTOHASHI



A family on the Fjellrunden biking trail in Trysil, southeastern Norway. JONAS SJOGREN



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says it is encouraging that the government is taking this matter seriously, and she has welcomed the chance to engage in dialogue with various stakeholders in Japan.

One such opportunity came at a recent symposium organized by the Vision Network, which brings together female governors and mayors from around Japan. They were joined by Japanese women in entrepreneurial roles and female ambassadors for discussions centered around strengthening women's participation in decision-making positions in Japan.

"I think it is very important to have these kinds of opportunities for women to be able to support other women," Iglum said. "But we also need to discuss these issues with men, too — you can't have just half of the population making decisions."

New challenges, perspectives

Issues connected to DEI continue to evolve as fresh challenges present themselves. With the rise of the internet and social media, cyberbullying has become a major problem in modern society. This includes using technology to harass or target someone, or posting personal information, pictures or videos designed to hurt or embarrass someone. Iglum points out that female politicians and those in other positions of power are disproportionately targeted, often becoming the victim of comments about their appearance, for example.

In Japan, online harassment of female local assembly members has also become a serious issue, and younger members who are active on social media are particularly likely to become victims. Problems range from disrespectful attitudes and remarks because of their gender to slurs based on their age, mari-

tal status and other private aspects of their life.

The Norwegian government is tackling the issue through education, since children and young people experience cyberhate and hate speech far more often than adults. With the premise that young people have the right to grow up with a safe online environment, the Norwegian Media Authority provides teaching and discussion resources related to cyberhate, online behavior and democracy for pupils in year five of primary school and upward.

Iglum points out that freedom of speech is a basic value well established in Norway, but that the government's efforts to combat speech that spreads hatred toward other people gets broad support.

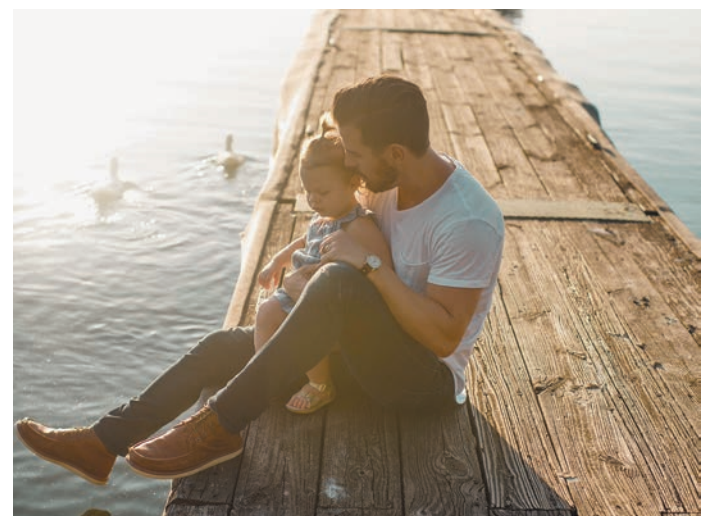
And while conversations about DEI tend to focus on how to empower women in society, men are not a monolithic group by any means. There is growing awareness that gender equality challenges affect men, too, including in terms of education and employment, family life, health, civic life and social inclusion.

Established in 2022, the Men's Equality Commission is a government-appointed commission mandated to examine gender equality challenges faced by boys and men in Norway. Where relevant, the commission will examine the relationship between such challenges and prevailing norms of masculinity.

While Norway's journey to inclusivity took decades of effort, the nation stands as a reminder that sustained policy change and societal engagement can shift norms. With Japan making strides in this direction, there is room for meaningful cross-cultural exchange and continued growth in gender equity for all.



Above: Family skiing at the Halden Canal Regional Park
JONAS INGSTAD
Right: A father spends some quality time with his child.
CALEB JONES



Walk with Pride in Oslo, 2022
CHRISTIAN BATUYONG — VISIT NORWAY

ノルウェーはDEIに関する先進的な政策や取り組みで知られている。ここではクリスティン・イグルム駐日大使に詳しく話を聞いた。

ノルウェーのDEI哲学の中核にあるのはまず、全ての人に平等な機会を与えるということで、外交官も仕事の一貫として多様性を促進することが奨励され、「この職場で働く同僚たちの中で差別が一切ないよう努めることも大使としての私の責任」と話す。

仕事と家庭の両立が男女ともに奨励されるだけでなく当然のこととして根付いているというノルウェーでは、女性の多くが仕事を持つ中で、家族を持ちたいとなればパートナー間で家のことを分担するのは当然のことだ。同国は2024年のグローバルジェンダーギャップリストで2位となり、2017年には世界経済フォーラム

(WEF) から「世界で最もインクルーシブなエコノミー」と評価された。

比較的裕福な小国であることが社会保障制度の発展の要因となっているとイグルム大使は話す。「わが国では医療費は税金で賄われ、教育も無償で提供されています。基本的なニーズが満たされることが多様性、平等、インクルージョンといった問題に取り組む上での重要な基盤だと思います」。

社会制度が整っていることはジェンダーギャップを少なくする意味でも重要だ。ノルウェーも日本と同じように大家族で暮らし、家族内で育児や介護を助け合った時代を経て、政府が保育や高齢者介護制度の整備に重点を置き、女性が仕事を継続しやすくなった。また、ワークライフバランスを重視し、家族との時間を

優先するために多くの親が午後4時に仕事を終え、子供のお迎えに行くことは珍しくない。「そんなことで仕事は終わるのか？」と聞かれることがありますが、私自身、子供が小さい時が一番効率的に働いていた気がします」。

このようなインクルーシブな社会は数十年にわたる努力の積み重ねによるものだと、イグルム大使は話す。「女性の政治参加を例に取っても、60年代に地方選に女性候補を出す動きが始まり、70年代になって女性運動が起き、運動が活発化して物事が動き始めました。人々が変化を求めて行動しなければ何も変わりません」。日本の現状には似た流れがあるとし、政府が問題に取り組み始めたことは大きく、各所で対話がなされていることにも期待を寄せる。

DEIに関する問題は進化し続けている。イグルム大使は女性の政治家やリーダーがサイバーいじめのターゲットになりやすい点を指摘する。ノルウェー政府は子供たちが安全なオンライン環境で育つ権利を有するという考えの下、教育を通じてこの問題に取り組んでいる。また、男女平等の課題は男性にも影響を与えることが認識されており、2022年には男性の平等委員会が設立され、男性の性別に関する課題を調査している。

ノルウェーのインクルーシブな社会への道のりは数十年にわたる努力の結果であり、持続的な政策変更と社会的関与が規範を変えられることができることを示している。同じ方向に向かう日本も男女平等の促進に向けた意義ある対話に期待したい。



Digital transformation
acceleration manager

Nam Hyunyeong

Came to Japan to enter university and gained a degree in political science. Joined KPMG Consulting in 2017 after getting an MBA. As a manager, leads teams helping to accelerate clients' digital transformation.

COSUFI

KPMG Consulting Co. Ltd.

Empowering individuals to unlock their potential and lead with confidence

Louise George Kittaka
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Amid today's rapidly changing digital landscape, KPMG Consulting guides organizations through their digital transformation (DX) journeys. With offices in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and Fukuoka, KPMG Consulting provides comprehensive business solutions for clients. KPMG Consulting leverages its deep experience in technology transformation and risk management, serving as true end-to-end partners for client companies and helping them to realize their new values in the market.

For this reason, KPMG Consulting emphasizes the development of human resources, which is the heart of its consulting services, and strives to create a work environment that utilizes the strengths and perspectives of each employee. It promotes efforts to maximize work performance by establishing systems that allow employees to work flexibly according to their individual mindsets and circumstances.

The company has specific DEI policies – which it calls “IDE” to emphasize inclusion, defined as a “sense of belonging” – to address

the needs of certain groups of employees, ranging from reduced working hours for those raising young children or caring for others, to a mentoring network for women. IDE is part of the DNA of the company, whose culture celebrates diversity, allowing staff to feel their voices are heard and their contributions truly valued.

Nam Hyunyeong, a manager in the Digital Transformation Acceleration (DXA) team, is a case in point. Since joining the firm in 2017, she has embodied the resilience and adaptability that align with the core values of KPMG Consulting. Nam has been consistently involved in DX-related projects. She provides a wide range of DX support tailored to each client's phase, from strategy formulation, business improvement and system introduction to the development of DX promotion personnel and the strengthening of internal systems within the clients.

Challenges into opportunities

Originally from Busan, South Korea, Nam came to Japan to pursue her university studies. Her subsequent journey through the often-challenging Japanese corporate landscape has demonstrated her positive mindset.

“When I first arrived in Japan, I could

barely speak Japanese and thought I'd get by using only English. Since I had enrolled in an international university with a lot of foreign students, I could easily get through daily life on campus with just English,” Nam recalled.

“However, the university is located in the countryside, and once I stepped outside the university, most people didn't speak English. I quickly realized I had to learn Japanese to survive.” She subsequently worked hard to hone her Japanese skills and can now hold her own in any business setting.

Nam enjoyed studying in an environment where multiculturalism was the norm. This foundation of diversity and inclusivity she encountered as a student would lay the groundwork for her future career in consulting.

However, when she started working as a direct procurement buyer for a Japanese manufacturing company after graduation, Nam encountered some cultural barriers, at times feeling marginalized in the workplace simply because she was young, female, or a foreigner.

“But I'm a person who takes pride in my work and doesn't like to lose, so I held tight to my job and kept pushing myself to improve my business Japanese and professional demeanor,” she explained. “Although the envi-

ronment didn't change drastically, I gradually built up my mental resilience and confidence.”

Despite her determination, Nam eventually began to question whether she was on the right path. After much deliberation, she decided to enhance her skills by pursuing further education. “I took the bold step of quitting my job and enrolled in the MBA program at a graduate school in Japan. I rediscovered the joy of learning, and I was also fortunate to have supportive classmates, professors and workmates at my part-time job,” she said.

Building a career in consulting

Upon graduating with her MBA, Nam chose to join KPMG Consulting, based on the career growth she felt the firm could offer. “When I joined KPMG Consulting, I assumed I would naturally work as a business consultant. However, the first project I was assigned to involved a large-scale RPA (robotic process automation) implementation,” Nam said. “This experience made me realize it wasn't possible to do consulting without a grasp of digital concepts. That's when I decided to join my current department, where I primarily support DX initiatives.”

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KPMG Consulting places a strong emphasis on nurturing talent and fostering an inclusive culture. Nam's experiences highlight how the firm encourages individuals, regardless of their position, to take the initiative in problem-solving in the workplace and in designing their own career paths.

Nam struggled in her first few years to elevate her technical skills to a level where she could stay up to date with the latest technology. "I realized that rather than trying to turn my weaknesses into strengths, it would be more effective for both myself and my clients to focus on enhancing my strengths while seeking help from colleagues in areas where I was lacking. This has allowed me to maintain balance," Nam commented. "After that, I could collaborate with team members and successfully execute projects without trying to handle everything alone."

Her proactive stance and can-do attitude propelled her forward, and she was promoted to manager.

Fostering inclusivity

Nam's role at KPMG Consulting has evolved significantly since her early days with the firm. "When I was a junior consultant, I primarily worked on single projects at a time. But since becoming a manager, I often handle multiple projects simultaneously," she said. This shift has enabled her to take a macro perspective on challenges and devise strategies that address broader issues.

As a manager, Nam is keenly aware of the importance of creating an inclusive environment within her team. "Although I'm relatively good at communicating with people, I realized after becoming a manager that team management in a business context is not as simple as just being friendly. You need to have a broad perspective, a hunger for growth, sincerity and strong ethics," she explained.

"These qualities shouldn't be left to the individual's efforts alone; the organization —



COSUFI

KPMG コンサルティング株式会社は組織のDX戦略の策定などデジタル変革を幅広く支援している。技術変革やリスク管理における知見を活かし、クライアント企業のパートナーとしてマーケットに対し新たな価値を提供している。

そのため、コンサルティングの源泉である人材の育成を重視し、社員一人一人の強みや視点を活かす職場環境の実現に力を入れている。個人々の状況に合わせ柔軟に働ける制度を整備し、仕事のパフォーマンスを最大化する取り組みを推進。IDE (包括性、多様性、公平性) が企業文化の根幹に組み込まれており、多様性が尊重され、強みや特性を活かすことができるカルチャーになっている。

DXA部門のマネジャーである南暎さん(2017年

and senior members like myself — must guide them. This, I believe, is the most critical role a manager should fulfill," she said.

Nam articulates her expectations and goals with her team. "What I prioritize in my communication is honestly and accurately conveying my expectations, my feelings, and the shared sense of purpose I want our team to have," she said. By fostering an open dialogue, she strives to maintain an environment where team members feel valued and empowered to contribute their ideas, with communication naturally becoming two-way.

Diversity in driving innovation

Nam's focus on communication informs her interactions with her clients, too. As she has taken on more responsibility for client projects, she recognizes the pressure that comes with engaging top management. "It's not just about providing high-level expertise but also ensuring that every word and action reflects the value of a professional," she noted.

At KPMG Consulting, diversity is viewed as a key driver of innovation and creativity. Nam's experiences in the firm highlight how diverse perspectives lead to more effective solutions for clients. According to Nam, while nearly all companies are now adopting DX in their operations, many of them still feel they are not fully benefiting from it. One key issue often cited by firms is a lack of in-house talent

に入社し、DX全般に関わるプロジェクトを推進している。戦略策定から業務改善・システム導入のほか、企業内のDX推進人材の育成や体制強化など、クライアントのフェーズに合わせた支援を行っている。

韓国・釜山出身の南さんは大学進学とともに来日し、大学卒業後、新卒で日本の企業に就職。その後、国内の大学院に入学し、MBAを取得後、KPMGコンサルティングに入社した。最初のプロジェクトで大規模なRPA(ロボティック・プロセス・オートメーション)の実施に関わった経験から、コンサルティング業務にはデジタルの概念を理解することが不可欠だと気づき、現在の部署に加わった。

自身の強みを伸ばし、同僚と協力しながら積極的にプロジェクトに向き合い成果を出すことで、主体的に業

As an art lover, I enjoy visiting museums as well as painting. I am always looking for the next subject to paint. My two cats, Evie and Jena, give me support and comfort when I'm working from home. NAM HYUNYEONG



I started playing golf recently. When I hit the ball, it doesn't go very far — or forward — but I still enjoy the spacious surroundings and that's more than enough. NAM HYUNYEONG

who can drive DX with a comprehensive view.

"In many of our projects, clients lack leaders who can spearhead DX initiatives internally, or it becomes heavily dependent on a few individuals, leading to frequent reliance on consulting firms as external resources," Nam pointed out.

"While utilizing external resources is undoubtedly effective, companies must have in-house talent capable of leading DX. To create a culture where DX naturally occurs, we focus on establishing a foundation for continuous growth," she said, adding that the end goal is to facilitate a situation where clients can advance DX independently.

Some of Nam's projects take her into areas where she has no prior experience. However, she always makes a point of actively engaging with the task at hand, drawing in her colleagues and striving to exceed client expectations.

Looking to the future

Nam sees her career as a means to achieving "happiness" in the workplace. "It's the small moments, like producing a slightly better document or getting positive feedback from clients for my team," she explained. Such moments of fulfillment contribute to her overall sense of purpose and satisfaction in her work.

"I don't have a particular focus on detailed

mid- to long-term career plans at the moment. I want to steadily build up my professional skills, face each challenge step by step, and keep putting in the effort so that I can be even 1 millimeter closer to a happier tomorrow," she said. "That said, in the long run, I'd like to become a partner, a senior position within the firm, and continuously provide substantial value to clients and the market while also helping to nurture consultants who can do the same."

"I aspire to become a partner who can create an environment where our diverse members at KPMG Consulting can continue to positively impact themselves, business and society, leveraging their individual skills, talents and abilities — all the while being driven by a shared sense of purpose," Nam explained.

Nam's journey serves as an inspiring example of how KPMG Consulting's IDE-forward culture empowers individuals to unlock their potential and perform with confidence. Through an inclusive environment that encourages all employees to contribute, KPMG Consulting exemplifies how embracing diversity enriches both the workplace and the clients it serves. Fostering diverse working styles allows employees to build careers in line with their individual growth aspirations, discovering and creating their own "happiness at work."

超える価値を提供することを目指している。

南さんは自身のキャリアを「幸せをつかむための手段」と捉えている。提案力のある資料を作成した、メンバーのプレゼンが好評だったなど、日々の積み重ねを大事にする一方、長期的には最上位職であるパートナーとなって顧客やマーケットに持続的な価値を提供するとともに、次世代のコンサルタントの育成にも寄与することも目標にしている。

KPMGコンサルティングはIDEを推進することで、個々の潜在能力を引き出し、自信を持って業務を遂行するカルチャーを実現している。また、多様性を受け入れ、全社員が活躍するインクルーシブな環境を育むことで、KPMGコンサルティングは職場にもクライアントにも豊かさをもたらしている。

KPMG Consulting Co. Ltd.

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At KPMG Consulting, as a member firm of the KPMG global organization, we support our clients in the fields of business transformation, technology transformation, and risk and compliance. We strive to help enterprises enhance their corporate value, guiding them on their journey to excellence.



Tokyo office: Otemachi Financial City South Tower, 1-9-7 Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0004, Japan
URL (KPMG Consulting): <https://kpmg.com/jp/kc>
URL (Recruitment): <https://recruit.kpmg-consulting.jp>





System engineer

Eri Yokoishi

Originally from Nagasaki Prefecture. Graduated from university in Kumamoto and worked in a tech company before joining NRI in 2018. Currently in NRI Europe's Denmark branch in Copenhagen as part of a training program.

ERI YOKOISHI

Nomura Research Institute Ltd.

NRI opens a window to the world for young employee

Kaori Shoji
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

When Eri Yokoishi was studying at Kumamoto University, she was a marketing and media major. As an undergrad, she devoted her time to studying cases on corporate marketing and how it leads to business opportunities. She didn't really plan for a career in IT, but as she learned about multifaceted problem-solving and effective client communication, she began to consider the possibilities and potential of IT as a way of implementing those issues.

Upon graduation, she decided to deploy the skills and knowledge acquired in her years at university by joining a tech company. "I had no prior knowledge of systems technology, nor did I have any engineering skills," said Yokoishi. But through her peers in the workplace, she quickly learned the ropes of industrial systems architecture and its enhancement.

Seeking more opportunities

And then in 2018, Yokoishi switched tracks by leaving the company and joining the DX (digi-

tal transformation) department at the Nomura Research Institute (NRI) in Fukuoka. What triggered the shift from marketing to tech, and then to corporate digital transformation and financial technology? "I think it's because I was looking to gain experience in a wider range of business. The work at the Nomura Research Institute is demanding, but at the same time it's very rewarding and stimulating."

At the time of the online interview, Yokoishi was in her fourth month of living and working in Copenhagen, Denmark, as part of the Nomura Research Institute's in-house trainee program. "My mission is to achieve a more balanced workplace for NRI's IT engineers in Japan by making full use of NRI's three overseas operations. Specifically, this means deploying these overseas operations to take on some of the workload of our Japan-side IT staff, who are working to maintain, enhance and troubleshoot operational systems and respond to client queries on a 24-7 basis."

Yokoishi herself was pretty much on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. "Maintaining and operating NRI's systems for our clients is crucial to the DX department," she said. "It's a matter of course for a client to demand that

level of commitment. If I were a client, I would do the same. At the same time, I feel it's good to transfer the bulk of systems maintenance and operations overseas. It's working on a global scale, which is made possible because of the time differences between Japan and abroad. When we make this work, the burden on the Japan-side staff will be significantly decreased. I'm hoping that will happen."

In 2023, before going on board the trainee program, Yokoishi worked on a project to enhance a securities system as a team leader of about 15 team members. "The work required immediacy in responding to urgent situations, gaining client trust and building a stable and robust operational system. Every task was critical to gaining client satisfaction and improving the system. When there was trouble, we were called upon to respond at all hours of the day and night."

Looking back, Yokoishi says the experience made her stronger as a professional — not just mentally but in gaining skill, acumen and knowledge. "I also developed an app and cooperated with offshore companies on a big project. In hindsight, I think the experience gave me the wherewithal and confidence to put in my application for the trainee program."

By learning to communicate with engineers from overseas, I also learned the joy of working as a team in a diverse environment, with everyone making a joint effort to achieve a specific goal."

Working in a diverse environment

Once the project was up and running smoothly, Yokoishi applied for the trainee program, and passed with flying colors. Aside from the impact on her career, "I thought this could be the first and only time in my life that I could take off and go overseas long-term, on my own," she said. "Before coming to Copenhagen, the idea of a global project didn't cross my mind very often. But now I've learned that there's more than one way of looking at a project and multiple ways to think about — and coordinate — it with a team. The program is only for one year, but now that I've made new discoveries, once I'm back in Japan I hope I will get a chance to work on a global project again."

Yokoishi added: "Coming from Japan, I have noticed the vast differences in culture and language. Copenhagen is a completely different environment from anything in

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Japan — I feel it's much more diverse and international. Every day is a learning experience for me, and it's so enjoyable. Right now I'm studying both English and Danish while working on the job. Learning Danish is especially a struggle, but when I find myself actually communicating with my colleagues here in their language, I feel a surge of happiness."

Fostering young global talent

Yokoishi said that back in Japan, she was not what you would call an "overseas-minded person." The first time she went abroad was during university. But she was selected for the overseas trainee program for her vision and commitment.

A spokesperson for the Nomura Research Institute said: "We at NRI strive to foster employees who can work within and for the global business community. We felt that Yokoishi had a clear, concise strategy for utilizing the trainee program and was eager to learn the how-tos of globalizing the DX business department."

The spokesperson added: "The DX department is mainly staffed by male employees, but Yokoishi had a high level of commitment to the work. We felt she would be an asset to the trainee program. When this mission is over, we are confident that she will use her experience to take our company to a higher level of global development."

Finding consensus and balance

As Yokoishi continues to work in Copenhagen, she said, "I find that it's difficult to strike a good balance between corporate governance and outsourcing. It's hard to reach a consensus among the different departments and still follow all the rules and guidelines. But I strive to do just that. It's imperative for me to search for the most viable and effective solutions in order to build a more robust network system that is operable and effective for our clients."

It's amazing to be able to travel around Europe as if I was traveling domestically in Japan. In London I went to the theaters and saw a musical. ERI YOKOISHI



This is me in Munich for the Oktoberfest. ERI YOKOISHI

Working in Copenhagen has also provided Yokoishi with a new window on work cultures outside Japan. "I attended the Nordic Fintech Week, and it was an eye-opening experience," she said. She recalled how she was struck by a credit card company that was working to increase security levels at no extra cost to their clients. "They were also introducing a system where the user can receive receipts for their purchases right on their smartphone screens. Every time they

pay with a credit card, the data shows up on their smartphone screens and can be stored in a personal folder. This not only slashes paper waste, it enables the user to track their payments and protect their personal data. Everybody wins." No trees are cut down either, which is a bonus.

"Back in Fukuoka, my life had been crammed to the gills with work commitments and I think I assumed it was the same everywhere. But here in Northern Europe, there are different ways to do business and to look at the finance industry. Companies are rated and evaluated for their work in sustaining the environment and achieving diversity, equality and inclusivity within the workplace. SDGs is a very big issue here. This vector of business is different from Japan, where companies are evaluated mainly for growth and profit."

Learning to relax and unwind

Being exposed to a new working environment brought about a big change in Yokoishi's own lifestyle. "I was used to working long hours, so I was completely surprised when I learned that in Copenhagen, some companies have a culture where people stop working at 5 p.m. On Fridays, people start eyeing the door by 4 p.m., and by 5, there's practically no one left in the office. Everyone has plans for the weekend that

they look forward to all week. Spending time with family and friends is precious, too. Personal lives are very important to the Danes and to Europeans in general, which was something quite new for me — an eye-opener for me."

Because of this, Yokoishi added that she, too, has learned to relax and unwind. "You don't have to show your passport to travel within the EU, and so I've taken little trips over the weekend." Having ample down time is actually good for the workplace, said Yokoishi, since everyone returns to work on Monday fully refreshed.

As a nation, Japan may lag behind in that area, but Yokoishi feels that at the Nomura Research Institute, employees are treated as individuals — something that many Japanese companies struggle to do. "I never felt that I was being treated differently because I am a woman. I've never been told that I should leave early just because I'm a woman," she said.

The Nomura Research Institute spokesperson said, "We ensure that diversity and inclusivity are prioritized on every level. As for gender equality, NRI are doing well on this front. There are women engineers who are also mothers. There are women department managers and executives. Many men take paternity leaves. And we always value our foreign colleagues and partners."



At the Nordic Fintech Week 2024, I got to meet new people from the industry and take in the latest trends. ERI YOKOISHI

熊本大学でマーケティングとメディア研究を専攻した横石江里さんは、マーケティング手法や企業のケーススタディを通して課題を多角的に分析する力や効果的なコミュニケーション力を身に付けた。業種にとらわれずにさまざまな分野の仕事ができそうだとIT業界の可能性を考えるようになり、卒業後は技術系企業に就職。産業システムの基盤構築やエンハンスを担当していた。2018年に転職を決意し、野村総合研究所(NRI)に入社した。仕事は求められるものも多いが、非常にやりがいがあると話す。

横石さんは現在、DX基盤事業本部 福岡ソリューション開発部に所属し、社内の海外トレーニー制度を活用してNRIヨーロッパ・デンマーク支店に赴任中だ。インタビュー時、コペンハーゲンでの生活は4ヵ月目だ

った。「私のミッションは日本社員のエンゲージメント向上とグローバル3拠点を活用した24時間365日運用を実現することです。具体的には、所属元で24時間365日運用保守している国内ITシステムに関する保守・運用業務を海外拠点に移管することにより、『海外との時差を駆使したグローバルなワークシェアリング』、『国内システムにおける夜間対応の移管』を実現し、日本社員の負荷軽減を図れればと考えています。

派遣前、横石さんは15人ほどのチームのリーダーとして証券システムのエンハンス業務を担当した。「即時性、安定性、信頼性、堅牢性が求められ」トラブル時は昼夜を問わず対応に追われることもあったが、この経験を通じて「技術面・知識面、そしてメンタル的にも大きく成長できた」と感じている。職場では性別は

関係なく、一個人として尊重され、「やりたいことがあるらばやってみればいい」という文化があり、横石さんはアプリ開発にも携わることができた。「海外のオフショア企業と協力してプロジェクトを進めたことが、トレーニー制度に挑戦するきっかけにもなりました。海外のエンジニアと英語でコミュニケーションを取り、一つの目標に向かって活動する楽しさを知ることができたのは貴重な経験でした。」

キャリア面での挑戦はもちろん、「人生で初めて長期間海外に行くチャンス」と考えてトレーニー制度に応募し、見事選ばれた。NRIが「明確なグローバル志向を持った社員であり、ミッション終了後も弊社のグローバル展開を担って活躍してもらえ」と期待を寄せる横石さんは多様性と国際性に富む今の職場でプ

ロジェクトを多角的に見る視点やチームとのさまざまな調整の仕方を学んでいる。「ここで身に付けたグローバルな考え方を活かして帰国後はグローバルプロジェクトに関わりたい」と意欲的だ。英語とデンマーク語も勉強中で、特にデンマーク語の習得には苦勞しているが、同僚とのコミュニケーションができたときには大きな喜びを感じていると言う。

日本とは異なる働き方を目の当たりにし、自身の働き方も変化していると言う。「いくつかの現地企業は、金曜日には午後4時には帰る準備を始める人が多く、クオリティー・オブ・ライフやワーク・ライフ・バランスを重視し、家族や友人との時間を大切にしています。こうした働き方が職場全体にいい効果をもたらすことを実感している。

Nomura Research Institute (NRI)

The Nomura Research Institute creates new social values by providing integrated services ranging from consulting to IT solutions, addressing organizational and business transformation for clients, and tackling various societal issues.

NRI offers a unique business model by combining its "consulting function," which guides clients from identifying challenges to formulating precise solutions, with its "IT solutions function," which leverages advanced technology for system development and operations.



Address: Otemachi Financial City Grand Cube, 1-9-2 Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0004, Japan
URL: <https://www.nri.com/en/>



Democrat vs. Republican

America vs. China

White vs. Black

Economy vs. Ecology

Wealth vs. Health

Urban vs. Rural

Government vs. People

Dogs vs. Cats

Coffee vs. Tea

Man vs. Woman

Monopoly vs. Share

Privacy vs. Surveillance

Politics vs. Science

Think vs. Do

Reject vs. Embrace

You vs. Me

Argument vs. Dialogue

Where there's division,
there's an opportunity for progress.

#BeyondVS

Dialogue matters.

thejapantimes