

## Gender in the Workplace

### Creating a workplace that is friendly to everyone

Asahi Shimbun Co., Ltd.

朝日新聞

#### Establishing a system and creating a culture that takes into account the motivations of employees

Asahi Shimbun has a corporate culture in which employees can speak up freely and is making steady efforts where women can also raise their voice to create a workplace friendly to them. In the newspaper industry, the number of male employees has been dominant for a long time; in Asahi Shimbun 80% of all employees (approximately 4,500) are men. In recent years, there are almost equal number of women and men joining the company soon after graduating universities. However, due to structural problems in the newspaper industry, where working late hours is normal to publish morning papers, it has been a challenge for female employees to continue their career, as they are affected heavily by life events such as childcare and nursing care.

In response, Asahi Shimbun has strengthened systems such as childcare leave, nursing care leave, and shorter working hours so that female employees can continue to work. In addition to introducing these systems, it is also important to create a supportive culture so that women can actually use these benefits. Training for managers is particularly important. The

company explaining the details of these systems and trains managers on how to counsel their subordinates. The training emphasizes that it is important for superiors and subordinates to communicate sufficiently because each employee has different needs.

Asahi Shimbun also provides training for employees who have returned to work from maternity leave or childcare leave; and encourages the participation of the employees' partners. During such training, the trainer emphasizes that a sense of cooperation between men and women in housekeeping is essential for both men and women to work at equal footing. Since the company extended the retirement age by five years a few years ago, it expects more employees will have health problems and may need nursing care. The burden of additional work on employees who remain in the workplace will inevitably increase temporarily when someone takes leave. However, the company is calling on its employees to have a spirit of "mutuality" in light of the possibility that everyone will be in the same situation in the future.

As a result of these efforts, the number of new employees taking childcare leave is about 40 each year, with both women and men taking

leave. For instance, in 2018 31 female and 8 male employees took leave; and the number of male employees taking childcare leave is increasing year by year. The rate of employees returning to work after childcare leave and the rate of employees continuing work for one year or more after returning to work are both 100%. After returning to work, employees can take advantage of the short working hours system or flexible work hours which allow them to start work early or late. Both of these working-time arrangements can be used until the child graduates from elementary school.



In addition, tele-working was introduced in 2017; and the number of employees working from home is steadily increasing. Furthermore, if an employee who has retired due to family reasons—such as childcare or nursing care—wishes to re-join the company, he/she can apply to a job return system (re-employment system).

#### Changing the ways of working in the editorial department

About half of Asahi Shimbun's employees work in the editorial department. Here reporters cover and write articles, editorial reporters edit them, and reviewers check the articles. Reporters in particular tend to work long hours because they go to interviews during daytime



and write articles after returning to work. In order to reduce their burden, managers ensure that their team members can take annual leave.

In order to track working hours accurately, the company has also introduced an automatic system that records login and logoff time of the personal computers. In line with the needs of a digital version of the news, Asahi Shimbun is progressing to reduce work hours, for instance, by setting deadlines earlier than those determined for morning papers or revising night shift. These efforts to create a better workplace have been ahead of the industry average and many other companies are starting to implement similar changes, bringing about changes in the industry as a whole.

The Asahi Shimbun Group is vigorously engaged in various activities to promote workforce diversity by supporting women's career development and revitalizing society as a whole with improved awareness. In honor of International Women's Day, Asahi Shimbun works on company-wide projects for women such as "Dear Girls," which intensively disseminates articles on gender, "WORKO!," which aims to solve social issues for working parents, and "Aging Gracefully," that proposes new values for women in their 40s and 50s.

#### NOTE



MNE Declaration  
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