

## CIO MESSAGE

# Accelerating the growth of business by enabling it to work effectively

## Kazuko Sakai

Executive Officer and CIO in charge of Business Intelligence  
President and Representative Director of INTAGE TECHNOSPHERE Inc.



The Business Intelligence segment of the INTAGE Group provides customers with system development and other solutions. At the same time, the segment supports the Group's businesses on the IT front. We interviewed Ms. Kazuko Sakai, who is the president of INTAGE TECHNOSPHERE Inc., the segment's core company. We asked her about the current status of the business, the challenges it is facing and her thoughts about organization building and career development.

### Q<sup>1</sup>

Please tell us about your roles currently.

As the Executive Officer and CIO of INTAGE Holdings, I oversee the Group's information strategy. At the same time, as the person in charge of Business Intelligence ("BI"), I am committed to customers' DX with a focus on the areas of data infrastructure and data utilization.

Unlike other IT companies, we have strengths in the area of data utilization. While other companies can also collect data and build data infrastructure, it is important to build an infrastructure with the goal of extracting really meaningful data from vast amounts of data. I believe that our advantage in the entire series of processes that includes data collection, cleansing, processing, aggregation and analysis is our data utilization capabilities based on our understanding of data.

We have begun to receive offers to collaborate from companies providing cloud-based platform services such as Snowflake Inc., indicating a certain degree of recognition of our capabilities.

### Q<sup>2</sup>

Looking ahead to the future, in what areas do you feel we are facing challenges regarding the expansion of BI and the information strategy of the Group as a whole?

Regarding the expansion of BI, we will support and work together with customers in their implementation of DX. This point will remain unchanged. I believe, however, that we can acquire a wider array of customers and expand the business by improving the level of our solutions, including data integration infrastructure and data utilization, in addition to increasing our strengths in particular industries such as the travel and pharmaceutical industries.

To do this, we established the new Business Synergy Center this fiscal year and developed a policy of focusing our efforts on the construction of data infrastructure and data utilization. We have positioned the Business Synergy Center as an investment area and are establishing our DX solutions, aiming to increase the number of new customers. We would like to continue to achieve growth by transcending the framework of operating departments serving customers on an industry-by-industry basis, strengthening cooperation with our collaboration partners, and proactively proposing solutions, including data utilization, the strength of BI.

Securing human resources is also a challenge. Human resources specialized in project management, cloud computing, security, and other fields are essential for our future growth. In recent years, the mobility of human resources in the IT industry has increased, mainly reflecting the increase in wages. At present, we are focusing our efforts on recruiting workers mid-career, in addition to new graduates. We are advertising our advantages to IT engineers who are eager to do a wider variety of jobs. Those advantages include the expansion of the DX business with the aforementioned data utilization, the development of a wide range of careers, from careers programming applications to careers building infrastructure, the breadth of the jobs we do as a prime vendor, and our worker-friendly corporate culture and environment. We have begun to see a certain degree of achievement from these efforts. Having said that, in terms of absolute numbers, our human resources are insufficient. Therefore, we have begun to act to improve the security literacy and IT literacy of the Group as a whole in parallel with the above. We are working to enable Group employees to solve general IT-related issues on their own despite not being IT human resources. This will enable our IT human resources to work on operations with greater added

value and improve the level of our technologies. I also believe that improvement of the security and IT literacy of the Group as a whole is also a necessary measure for strengthening cyber security in response to the current environment.

**Q<sup>3</sup>** You are also committed to improving the corporate value of INTAGE TECHNOSPHERE, where you are the president, and improving the value it provides, by leveraging its team members' capabilities based on the company's Vision, Infusing soul into data and inspiring the world. Could you tell us about this initiative?

The INTAGE TECHNOSPHERE Vision was created by employees and announced in 2020. It is important to ensure this Vision becomes entrenched throughout the organization, so we launched the Vision Entrenchment Project, which includes initiatives we implement every year.

I hear that, these days, an increasing number of employees are acting aggressively because the Vision has become entrenched. We have also begun to see young employees proactively communicating information internally and externally. Employees' recognizing the power of data utilization based on understanding data, which is expressed as "Infusing soul into data," leads to a natural increase in behaviors and events that can be seen as indicating loyalty to the company, and also to the provision of information outside the company. Recently, people outside the company have begun to express their alignment with our Vision. I am very happy about this. This series of activities accelerates information provision and standardization within the organization, further strengthens our culture of co-creation, and increase our competitiveness.



INTAGE TECHNOSPHERE Inc.'s vision

The most important thing is that employees associate what they want to do with the Vision. If they do not, they tend to work reluctantly or with a feeling that they are being forced to work. When employees' goals are consistent with the Vision it will speed up work and make it more enjoyable for them to take the initiative in their work. You can make decisions promptly when everyone is aligned.

Establishing an organizational culture such as this enables the self-directed development and training of human resources. Even if we don't teach employees everything from the basics, they can learn through joining in the organization, and will be able to adapt smoothly to it even if they were

hired mid-career. In this way, I would like the Vision to lead to the sustainable growth of the company and the entire organization.

**Q<sup>4</sup>** You are active not only within the INTAGE Group but also in the IT industry and on a number of fronts partly because you are a woman who is a corporate officer. Could you also tell us about your activities outside the company?

From 2007 to 2008, when I was the General Manager of INTAGE's Personnel Affairs Division, I was engaged in activities such as the recommendation of the utilization of women that were members of the Japan Women's Innovative Network (J-Win) through its subcommittee on corporate personnel affairs. This is also linked to our internal initiatives, and I created various systems and programs during those two years. At present, the career design program and the refreshment leave program (the planned taking of nine or more consecutive days of leave) still exist. The goal of the refreshment leave program is to encourage employees to proactively take paid leave and eliminate operations which are dependent on individual skills. During this period, we also saw the first male employee take childcare leave and the first employee work remotely. Regarding the refreshment leave program, some male employees said that even if they did take leave, they would have nothing to do. After having taken leave, however, they said that they were highly satisfied with it, against their expectations. Many of programs like these were introduced in response to the opinions of people working on the front lines. I think that INTAGE had a culture of accepting these voluntary activities.

For two years from 2019, I served as the president of what was then known as Kanto IBM User Kenkyukai (Kanto IBM user study group) and vice president of what was then known as Zenkoku IBM User Kenkyukai (national IBM user study group)\*. At present, I am a member of the CIO Executive Forum of the Japan Users Association of Information Systems (JUAS) and a member of the Consideration Committee of the Female DX Leader Development Program. I also lecture young employees and section manager-class employees in the information system departments, and engage in other activities. In addition, I belong to the Travel Management Club, which is a voluntary study group of business managers from the travel and tourism industries. I became its director this fiscal year.

I think that other people should also experience leading in an unknown environment. It is difficult to lead in a completely new situation or lead completely new people, but experiences like these will enable you to understand your position objectively, and working to compensate for your shortcomings will empower you and enable you to have self-confidence. I myself was by no means eager to take a leadership position, but it is important to learn things and work to fulfill the duties assigned to you. When you are assigned a role, you may be naturally encouraged by the environment to learn things. I think that my experience demonstrating the capabilities of a team in an unknown environment was valuable, and experiences like these help develop leadership skills. Therefore, I want people to proactively experience work outside the company, regardless of their age.

\*The Kanto IBM User Kenkyukai and Zenkoku IBM User Kenkyukai ended their activities in 2020, and their activities were taken over by IBM Community Japan.