Special Feature: Going Beyond the Boundaries

Recap of “Going Beyond the Boundaries of the Current Sogo Shosha” from our last edition

For the Marubeni Group to continue to provide new value to customers and society in a constantly changing world marked by ongoing digital transformation, the Marubeni Group itself must continue to evolve by going beyond the boundaries.

The Marubeni Group will create new value by synergistically reconfiguring its assets without being constrained by product-based organizational silos.

In the previous edition of this publication, we reported that Marubeni has established and started to successfully implement systemic supports for these efforts from three standpoints—human resources, mechanisms and time—in addition to newly appointing a CDIO (Chief Digital Innovation Officer), establishing a Digital Innovation Department, and, through activities that transcend organizational and geographic boundaries, promoting Group-wide digital strategies and creation of new business models through innovation.

In this edition, we present specific examples of initiatives that utilize these supports.

Please see: Previous edition No.124 Special Features

The Business Model Canvas as a Synergy Platform

The Marubeni Group possesses a wealth of business experience, knowledge and know-how amassed over decades. One tool for learning about these resources is the so-called Business Model Canvas.

Marubeni Group’s Business Model Canvas is a library of information on some 300 business models’ assets, transactions, human networks, earnings models and competitive environments compiled into a database accessible by all Marubeni Group personnel.

Learning about the foundations of the Marubeni Group’s broad range of operations across its business groups, will help Marubeni Group personnel to create new businesses and business models.

Internal briefings are being conducted to broadly disseminate information on how to utilize the Business Model Canvas, and cross-Group initiatives that utilize it are already starting to take shape.

The value customers are seeking, the value that the Marubeni Group is delivering to customers, earnings flows and other such information have been compiled from the customer’s standpoint for some 300 different business models into a single database.

A briefing on how to utilize the Business Model Canvas
The 15% Rule is a company-wide initiative to allow employees time to consider and implement improvements to business processes through inventiveness and ingenuity, and innovation that transcends product verticals. The 15% Rule allows employees to devote up to 15% of their working hours to endeavors such as examining their own current jobs from different angles, exploring prospective businesses they want to bring to fruition, and exploring subjects outside of their field of specialization. Personnel are encouraged to also use the 15% Rule to prepare for participation in the Business Plan Contest scheduled to be held in January 2019. Additionally, the Marubeni Group is utilizing shared office spaces based on the idea that sitting at the same desk in a conventional office is not conducive to the free flow of ideas.

Cross-Group Initiatives
On two days in September 2018, the Power Business & Plant Group and Transportation & Industrial Machinery Group conducted their first section of joint training program. The program was attended by 51 mostly young personnel with the aim of preparing the ground for the two business groups, both of which are involved in machinery-related businesses, to collaborate together in new fields of business. Selected managers from both groups became lecturers. Participants were put in teams to first introduce their businesses and its issues, which then they sorted out the advantages and issues of both groups. The second section of this training program planned in late November and early December 2018 will debate on the possibilities of the cross-group prospective and ways to synergistically combine internal resources with their sights set on the future business environment. They will then present them to the management of both groups.

Promoting the Free Flow of Ideas
The Digital Innovation Department has been hosting monthly Marubeni Innovation Salons since June 2018. Despite being held on weekday evenings, every one of the salons has been well attended by 50-100 of both Marubeni and Non-Marubeni personnel. The aim of the salons is to foster a culture of innovation within the Marubeni Group by stimulating Marubeni personnel through exposure to external knowledge and interaction with speakers who are actually taking action and endeavoring to innovate in their respective fields.

[Image: Commemorative photo after the training program with all of the participants]

[Image: Marubeni Innovation Salon held at the WeWork Ginza Six coworking space]
The Marubeni Group handles a diverse range of products and business domains. The Group has launched the "Marubeni Academia" as a program to cultivate human resources capable of providing customers and wider society with optimal solutions that transcend such product verticals and, in turn, cultivate human resources who will become the Marubeni Group’s next-generation leaders.

To date, a group of 25 Marubeni Group personnel from around the world with a diverse mix of personalities and career tracks have gathered together for a total of three weeks in June, September and November 2018 to participate in intense brainstorming and debating sessions.

The Marubeni Group is expanding personnel exchanges with unaffiliated companies with the aim of discovering potential value and functions through the eyes of outside observers. Reciprocal, temporary exchanges of personnel between the Group and unaffiliated companies with different corporate cultures, of which include manufacturers, municipal governments, financial institutions and other entities are imparting fresh vitality to the Marubeni Group.

As mentioned in President Kokubu’s message, our vision for the Marubeni of the future is a "Global crossvalue platform." The Marubeni Group will address societal challenges and growth-related themes through cross-product initiatives (horizontal expansion) in addition to initiatives based on existing product verticals (vertical evolution). Our tasks are to transform the Marubeni Group into a global platform that helps to break down boundaries, and reconfigure our businesses from a multidimensional standpoint.

The examples presented in this Special Feature are but a few of the initiatives toward those ends. In addition to these initiatives, the Marubeni Group is adopting and promoting mechanisms to spur a variety of autonomous reforms on a Group-wide basis. The Marubeni Group will continue to pursue reform with the aim of going beyond the boundaries of the current sogo shosha.