

Meeting Society's Expectations

Between President & CEO Haruka Nishimatsu and Masumi Shiraishi, Professor of Policy Studies, Kansai University

Maintaining Pride in Our Work

Shiraishi: For the last few years, JAL has faced a severe business environment, but thanks to the efforts made by yourself and JAL staff there has been a recent decline in safety incidents and irregular operations.

Nishimatsu: It's true that the number of incidents is on the decline. But it's my belief that we must not feel complacent with those numbers. Ideally, we want to achieve zero incidents, but in realistic terms it is impossible to achieve a zero-incident rate on all the aircraft used in the 1,200 flights we operate around the world each day. We are, however, doing everything within our power to lower the number as close to zero as possible. I also believe we have to come up with firm measures against human error. It is of course vital to make all efforts to reduce such error, but here, too, it's impossible to eradicate human error entirely. What is important is to put a mechanism in place such that even if an error does occur, it is not allowed to develop into a serious situation. To achieve that, we must create a corporate culture in which our staff immediately report instances of human error and situations where they feel danger has arisen. In the flight and maintenance divisions, we're seeing a steady improvement in the way these reports are being filed.

Shiraishi: To eliminate human error, the key elements are, I think, the mental attitude of each staff member towards safety and the pride they take in their work.

Nishimatsu: If you have no pride in your work or sense of fulfillment, that cuts into your safety awareness. I believe that society has major operational safety expectations of the JAL Group. This year, we operated a charter flight to transport a business mission led by the Nippon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation), which accompanied Prime Minister

Shinzo Abe on an official visit to the Middle East. I myself participated in that, and the mission was a great success. As a result, I felt JAL had played a role in bringing Japan and the nations of the Middle East even closer together. This was a very welcome development for us at JAL. The fact that we were able to transport senior figures from the business community safely and smoothly to countries where we don't operate regular flights helped boost the confidence of our staff. This is only a single example, of course, but to shoulder the major expectations of society and succeed in a task involving considerable responsibility helps generate pride in one's work and also leads to an increasingly high level of awareness about operational safety.

Shiraishi: Since JAL is a company that by its nature has a high social and public profile, I hope that you can meet the safety expectations of society and bring about increased customer confidence.

Safety and Customer Confidence

Shiraishi: In your business policy, you state that with safety as your first priority you intend to provide a higher-quality service to all your passengers as you expand your global network. But what do you plan to do in concrete terms to increase customer-satisfaction levels?

Nishimatsu: As well as being a social obligation, operational safety is fundamental to the existence of the JAL Group. However, a major task we face is boosting consumer confidence with regard to our commitment to safety. I would like to see not only the divisions directly involved with operations but also airport staff and cabin crew offer a service that customers can feel confident about.

This fiscal year, we established the Customer Satisfaction Improvement Division as a counterpart to the Corporate Safety Division. This new division is charged with achieving



high-quality services for the total satisfaction of our customers.

The next major issue is punctuality. Timely operations are vital for a public-transport organization. Once we have punctual operations, we must pursue comfort and convenience.

We will provide products and services that enhance comfort and convenience for our customers in all situations, whether when making reservations, at the airport or onboard the plane. In addition to safety and greater customer confidence in our ability to provide that safety, increasing punctuality, comfort and convenience will result in greater customer satisfaction.

Shiraishi: Earlier this year, you set up a women's team, the Artemis Project, which was tasked with improving service.

Nishimatsu: The people who most frequently use JAL are businessmen. It's perhaps not surprising therefore that some of our customers have told us there is a distinct male orientation to JAL products and services. So we set up the Artemis Project, which is composed of female staff, to review our products and services from a variety of women's viewpoints. We received the cooperation of women from outside the company in developing these services and believe our male customers will also be satisfied with the higher-quality products and services we're introducing.

Women in the Workplace

Shiraishi: I anticipate great things from your women's project team. The JAL Group appears to be a company where a large number of female staff can be employed in a stimulating working environment, such as experienced female cabin crew providing highly attentive service onboard. You are rehiring some of these experienced cabin-crew members, who are returning to the workplace after having taken time out to bring up their children.

Nishimatsu: If we provide an environment where staff can leave the company for family reasons in the knowledge that they can return to work once they've raised their children, that will lead to a broader array of lifestyle choices. In addition to considering the work-life balance of our employees, if we have staff who possess a wealth of experience serving our customers, it follows that customer service will also improve.

Shiraishi: I also believe cabin crew who have brought up



Haruka Nishimatsu
President and CEO

their own children are best equipped to understand the needs and desires of customers accompanied by children.

Nishimatsu: To reply to the needs of our many different customers, we should probably also look into diversifying our staff. I believe that diversity will result in improved customer service.

Shiraishi: It's very important that companies hire and actively support women in all their activities. If such support is adequately provided, it will help combat the problem of Japan's low birthrate. It's important for society as a whole to support those who are bringing up the next generation of children.

JAL's Social Responsibility

Shiraishi: JAL is trying to address environmental issues. For example, you're using lighter tableware with inflight meals to reduce the overall weight of the aircraft.

Nishimatsu: The weight of the aircraft has a direct bearing on the amount of fuel consumed and thus the volume of carbon dioxide emitted. As a consequence, we're adopting

all kinds of measures to reduce the weight of our payload. We use porcelain tableware in First and Business classes, but about three years ago we introduced lightweight porcelain and reduced the thickness of our forks and spoons. We will continue in our efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions so as to make whatever reductions we can in the burden we impose on the environment.

Shiraishi: As the CEO of a listed company, you naturally comply with relevant laws and regulations and look to make a contribution to your shareholders and customers by seeking to raise corporate value, but CSR activities are at the vanguard of those efforts. I believe the issue for JAL will be whether you, as a company, can make a contribution to society that goes beyond commercially measurable values.

Nishimatsu: As an airline, we naturally undertake initiatives to reduce CO₂ emissions, but we're also involved in various kinds of environmental activities. Since 1993, we've participated in a tropospheric-observation project, which analyzes air samples collected from altitudes of around 10,000 meters. Under the new tropospheric-observation project, which began in 2005, aircraft installed with CO₂-measuring equipment are operating over a broader area of the globe. The data accumulated represents a major contribution to research on global warming, and we will continue our active support of such projects.

CSR on a Global Scale

Shiraishi: JAL joined the oneworld airline alliance in April, within which participating airlines serve almost 700 cities in nearly 150 countries.

Nishimatsu: Geographically speaking, oneworld is an extremely well-balanced alliance. We can view the alliance as a collection of airlines that prioritize quality, having bases

Masumi Shiraishi

Born in Osaka Prefecture in 1958, Shiraishi completed a master's degree at Kansai University Graduate School. She became a senior researcher at NLI Research Institute and associate professor in the Department of Social Economic Systems at Toyo University before becoming a professor in 2006. She assumed her present position in 2007. Specializing in the barrier-free concept along with the relationship between Japan's low birthrate, the aging of society and regional systems, Shiraishi is the author of a number of books related to these issues. She has served as an advisor to JAL since 2006, in which capacity she has made numerous proposals regarding the products and services of the JAL Group.

in North and South America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania. Our customers can now look forward to many benefits, such as smooth transfers between participating airlines and the accumulation of mileage when traveling with oneworld-member airlines. This alliance has made round-the-world travel markedly easier.

Shiraishi: Your participating in a global alliance means that customers from all over the world will now use JAL flights. So you're no longer dealing mainly with Japanese passengers, but need to consider how best to cater your services to people from many different countries and cultures.

Nishimatsu: The airlines in the JAL Group employ flight crew based in locations outside Japan, such as Europe, Asia and South America. However, they have all studied Japanese culture and customs and provide customers with the same attentive service at which the Japanese excel. I'm convinced that people from around the world will understand and enjoy this Japanese style of service. Looking to the future, we must strive to ensure that people identify not only with our service, but also with our corporate stance and CSR activities.

Shiraishi: I would certainly like to see you faithfully implement the ideas you've just mentioned and continue to be an airline that lives up to the trust placed in it by customers.

