



Newsweek International Interview with President & CEO Yoichi Nagae

Newsweek is a major weekly magazine published in the United States distributing 4 million issues worldwide. In this article, Yoichi Nagae discusses a wide range of topics about HEXEL Works from our business objectives to overseas expansion strategies. The WorldFolio website also published a look at this interview with Yoichi Nagae alongside an introduction of HEXEL Works. Please take a look.



Newsweek: Company Introduction article



WorldFolio: Interview with President Nagae

HEXEL Works Employee Selected as Olympic National Technical Official

Kumi Ishikawa, a HEXEL Works employee, has been selected as a National Technical Official (NTO) for the modern pentathlon at the Tokyo Olympic Games! COVID-19 is still having an impact, but we hope the games will go ahead.



Kumi Ishikawa, who was selected to be an NTO at the Tokyo Olympic Games

Message from Kumi Ishikawa

The main role of an NTO is to judge and support the event. The postponement of the Olympics meant various adjustments as well as a re-selection of NTO, which ended up with some openings. I was selected partly because I am certified as an international judge. I have visited the Modern Pentathlon Association and been involved in running events held in Japan. However, due to my inexperience as an NTO, I will learn about the role and skills required at the training for officials planned in the future to be ready for the Olympic Games.

Editorial Note

Thank you so much for reading Innovator vol. 6. In this edition, we visited the Setouchi Branch to interview Kenneth, a new graduate from the Philippines. In his interview, I worked to relax any tension and deliver Kenneth's true voice. That is why I took the approach of first talking with him about his life before gradually getting into the main topic of the interview. I personally think this technique proved a success because I was able to learn more than I would through the questions I had prepared. One regret I do have though is the extensive amount of time I took for the interview because I became so wrapped up in our conversation. In the next issue, I will work to streamline my interviews in terms of time management. I look forward to seeing you all again in vol. 7!

Editor Takao Nagae



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Our Current Status



One of our Safety Conference

Japan has four seasons, with each one having something different for you to enjoy. Spring has cherry blossoms, summer has the sea, autumn has red leaves, and winter has snow. This summer, Japan plans to host the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, which were postponed last year. There are both pros and cons inside Japan with regards to hosting the games. However, I personally believe that, in consideration of the feelings of the athletes, the games should be hosted without any, or with a restricted number of, spectators. The rainy season, though not technically a season, comes at the beginning of summer, and it rains almost every day in Japan for one month. It usually ends around the middle of July, bringing the real start of summer. By the time you have

received this newsletter, the rainy season would have ended and summer would have begun. Every June, during the rainy season, we host a "Safety Conference" at each of our branches in Japan. The objective of the Safety Conference is to ensure safety and health first at all our construction sites. Our employees get together with employees of partner companies who work on the construction sites managed by our company. Awards are presented to companies and workers who have no record of accidents or disasters, and participants share information necessary for preventing accidents at work sites. I think it is a very Japanese event, but, at the end of the day, it is essential for preventing accidents at work sites. Before COVID-19, we would host a party

and get together with our business partners after the conference. Unfortunately, it will be difficult for us to host a party this year. Anyway, on a slightly different note, we are continuing to hire engineers from the University of the Philippines, even though we are still in the middle of COVID-19. Our company does not have an office in the Philippines, so our Coordinator of Overseas Hiring conducted all the hiring activities, such as providing explanations about the company and conducting company entrance examinations and interviews, online. It was the first time we did these activities online, so we were worried that we would not get any applicants. However, we were extremely happy to select three prospective employees. From June, they will learn Japanese, entirely online, from a Japanese instructor for approximately six months. The applicants will finally be able to come to Japan once they pass the final Japanese test. However, every year I remind myself that students of the University of the Philippines are extremely capable, so I am sure that all of them will pass the test. Unfortunately, even I have not had the chance to meet them. However, I am looking forward to going to the Philippines with the Overseas Hiring Manager to meet them once I have been able to get vaccinated.

Takayuki Sakamoto
Director and Senior Executive Officer

INTERVIEW This is what I do!

Our company hires students from the University of the Philippines regardless of nationality every year to secure outstanding human resources. The concerns that I often hear when recruiting candidates are the worries they have about working in Japan. People tend to be apprehensive because they can't imagine what working overseas would be like or are intimidated by the language barrier. We talked with Kenneth from the Setouchi Branch in this interview to provide some idea of what working in Japan is like.



Reasons for Working in Japan

I thought about getting a job in Australia or the Philippines before deciding on Japan. I chose Japan because I was attracted to the Japanese technology so highly praised even in the Philippines. If I am going to work, I knew I wanted to have a job on leading-edge construction projects. Another important point when I was

deciding on a company was whether they took care of their people. HEXEL Works has programs to help employees acquire certifications, and I feel the company is rooting for their employees. In fact, the company not only supported me financially in getting my certification as a licensed electrician after I was hired but also provided opportunities for me to

train with veteran electricians. I am glad I joined HEXEL Works because of this support.



Gap Before and After Joining the Company

I was able to get some idea of material purchasing and construction based on design and construction drawings at the event introducing HEXEL Works. On the job though, it can be hard to fit in all the equipment as per the drawings or to get the right quantity of materials. That is why it is essential to go to the construction site and check the building to confirm the progress of the work. However, I don't see these as negative aspects of my work. The purpose of on-site management is to complete a building. Grasping the progress on-site is an important job. These things are not a big deal considering the purpose and importance of the work.

Difficulties of Working on Site

Communication is a must to move forward construction while adjusting things with other companies, major construction contractors and other craftspersons. There are also language barriers in communication. To overcome this obstacle, I introduce myself to everyone on a construction site when I arrive. By introducing myself, I let the people I am working with know who I am. I

also try to strengthen my relationship with my colleagues by talking with them about not only work but also private life. Through these ongoing efforts to communicate, the language barrier has disappeared, my attitude has changed, and I've learned to speak more properly, which has made work go more smoothly. The people I work with have

accepted me. I have even become the chairperson of the foreman meeting gathering contractors together to make adjustments to the construction project. I am sure there are still many struggles ahead of me and I look forward to showing everyone I can overcome them all!

Future Goals

I think I need to acquire both on-site knowledge and learn quantity surveying to become an on-site representative. If I ever am in a position of managing others as a representative, I want to

eliminate any communication barriers between us. My goal is to become a supervisor who gives his staff opportunities, building relationships where they feel comfortable sharing their opinions. I

want to support this staff in taking on a wide range of challenges because I myself have had a number of beneficial experiences from my failures.

Message to Up-and-Coming Employees

Working in Japan comes with various worries from the gap after joining the company to the language. The only

way to overcome these worries is to gain more experience unafraid of failure. I hope everyone will take on

the challenge of an unknown world when deciding on their career!

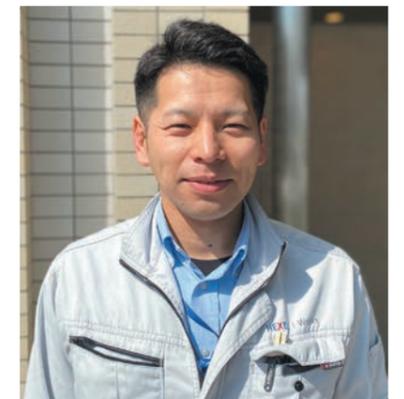
Construction Manager Mizobe who supervises Kenneth also gave his input.

I was worried about how construction on-site would progress because Kenneth and I did not know much about each other when he first joined my team. The first step was to set a common goal for us both and build a closer relationship.

Goal: Complete the project together without increasing the number of employees

By setting the same goal for us both, Kenneth shared his thoughts about the job. This also gave me a chance to think about the best way to teach him to help him grow as an individual.

Kenneth will hone his technical skills on site even more and I know he will become an on-site representative who can drive a project forward!



Construction Manager Syuu Mizobe



Setouchi Branch Office



HEXEL Works and Progress in the Philippines

Motivation Sparking Hiring Overseas

HEXEL Works had been considering the necessity of English-speaking human resources as it expanded U.S. military construction projects which started in 2003 throughout Japan. To satisfy this need, we had been providing language training and support to Japanese employees as way to cultivate English-speaking human resources. However, language training on top of work on site placed quite a burden on these employees and did not achieve

the desired results. As a solution, we thought teaching Japanese to foreign staff rather than English to Japanese staff would help strengthen our human resources and enhance technical capabilities. After a careful examination of several candidate nations, HEXEL Works had refined its search and began recruiting from the wealth of English-speaking human resources in the Philippines.



Company flag of the former Rokko and Associates, Inc.

Shift from Experienced Candidates to New Graduates

Our initial recruiting efforts targeted professionals with practical quantity survey and on-site experience who could immediately become technical assets. While the strength of these experienced candidates did broaden U.S. military construction projects, we encountered new problems. We now faced language barriers and the challenges of different work styles. In the beginning, we did not invest much time into Japanese language acquisition because we believed our Filipino employees would learn Japanese through immersion in Japan. This approach caused stress though due to communication errors between our on-site Japanese employees and Filipino recruits. This taught us the

value of having a Japanese education program unique to HEXEL Works for Filipino employees before they come to Japan. Another challenge was the difference in work styles. There was a gap between the Japanese work style in which one person handles multiple tasks and the Filipino work style which has a clear division of labor. These cultural differences resulted in some new recruits leaving the company. This insight led a shift at HEXEL Works from hiring experienced candidates to new graduates in 2015 so that we could develop our own engineers by not only providing comprehensive Japanese language training to inexperienced recruits but also cultivating the on-site work styles

necessary for on-site representatives handling Japanese electrical technologies. Our new graduate recruiting efforts targeted students from the University of the Philippines, the most prestigious higher education institute in the country. We even traveled to the University of the Philippines to deepen our relationship with the school and its faculty as well as take part in the 2016 Job Fair held by the CAPES student organization. As a result of our participation in this event every year since then, we have raised awareness about HEXEL Works and currently receive multiple applications from outstanding students every year.



The recruitment drive at UP started from 2016!!



Providing company information at UP



Assisting new recruits in the Philippines with their Japanese language study

HEXEL Works is actively hiring new graduates in the Philippines. This is because we know the company needs the technical and English skills as well as work mindset of engineers from the Philippines as the technical capabilities in Japan reach maturity. This feature highlights the progress of hiring in the Philippines to illustrate how truly important the Philippines is to HEXEL Works.

Future Recruiting Efforts

Our recruiting efforts of new graduates in the Philippines continue today in spite of the novel coronavirus pandemic that has impacted our business activities worldwide since last year. We have steadily advanced recruitment this year by participating in online job fairs to hosting our own events to introduce the company. Anyone interested should definitely check out the employment information on Facebook and our company homepage! We look forward to meeting as many people as possible!



Meeting with the local Recruit Agent



Initiative to Form a Quantity Surveyor Team in the Philippines

HEXEL Works is striving to form a quantity surveyor team alongside its recruiting activities in the Philippines. We talked with Mr. Kimura, the Guam Branch Manager, about leading the Guam Branch in the formation of this team.

In our main business domain of electrical construction, we do need a wide range of specialized professionals during the actual construction of a building. However, we also need a variety of other professionals before the construction work even begins to secure these important orders. This includes people who can gather information about each project, people who can precisely calculate quantities, people who can make the proper purchases from suppliers, people who can estimate related costs and examine personnel assignments as well as people who can negotiate with our customers. This diverse base of professionals must come together as one on each job to seal any deal and receive the order. Even in U.S. military construction projects which is one of our major business pillars, the same work is done but with one major difference from standard construction projects in Japan. All of the drawings, specifications and other project information are in English.

Our company is recruiting English-speaking Filipino

candidates as human resources for quantity survey operations who are skilled professionals indispensable for us to receive orders for U.S. Military construction projects. We use people in specialized professions locally to decentralize these functions and support our business operations. This initiative makes no distinction between Japan and the rest of the world, eliminates the back and forth impacted by viruses, political circumstances and other such factors, aligns Japan and the U.S., recruits young human resources with the necessary potential and examines new work styles. The impact of COVID-19 began with a lot of confusion from a transition to all online recruiting processes for hiring to video conferences for communication and educational guidance of new recruits. However, we are finally back on track this year. It may take a little time to see the fruits of these efforts, but I hope to continue our work to allow the people in the wide range of specialized positions to work overseas. I look forward to sharing a follow-up report the next chance I get.



Executing On-site Management via Telework

The construction industry has seen on-site management as a task that must be carried out in person on site. However, Yambot Rafael Marte Perez has been conducting on-site management in Guam remotely from our head office in Japan. This Q&A about telework primarily touches on what can and cannot be done remotely for on-site management with the hope of unveiling the potential of remote work in the construction industry.



Yambot Rafael Marte Perez
Engineer - 5th year at HEXEL Works

Q. What kind of work are you doing remotely?

A During remote work, I was mostly preparing the actual installation plans and other diagrams for the Guam Bachelor Enlisted Quarter D&F project. Aside from that I regularly join the coordination meetings with the other companies involved to resolve constructability conflicts that are found in the contract drawings.

Q. What kind of things can be done remotely as an on-site representative? What has become more efficient or easier to do remotely?

A Because of the COVID pandemic, some of the regular meetings are held online unless otherwise needed. I think this is efficient for all the people involved since they can join on their own convenience without worrying about factors that can lead to lost time.

Q. What are some things that can be done remotely but are better done on site?

A There are amendments to the project wherein some of the construction requirements are changed. Sometimes, these amendments are received from the customer after the work has already started which means the updated plans should be passed to the workers as soon as possible. Going to the site personally to hand out new plans while giving an explanation is much more efficient.

Q. What kind of work cannot be done remotely and why?

A Performing quality control of the actual installation is the main thing that I was not able to do because I am not present there.

Q. What do you think is required to standardize remote work as an on-site representative?

A Fast and reliable internet connection is the first step that I think is needed for doing any job remotely not just in the construction industry. With a good network connection and the right software or application, I think that it is possible to see the construction site clearly through live cameras as if you are actually there.



After One Year Working at HEXEL Works

One year has passed since John Eric Tagorda Martin and Lucas Niegel Reodica Cabading came to Japan after joining HEXEL Works in 2020. We asked them about how their lives have changed in Japan. We hope this Q&A will give you some insight into what life is like in Japan.



Q. How has your life changed since moving to Japan from the Philippines?

Eric Since it's my first time living by myself, a lot has actually changed since I moved here in Japan. I have to do everything by myself like maintaining my condo unit and cooking my own food. I still haven't found a good Filipino restaurant here in Fukuoka so I usually make it on my own. However, I'm not really good at cooking but it usually turns out fine since it's still edible (and tasty too, sometimes). Also, I go to work via bicycle and bus. Unlike in the Philippines, bicycles are common here in Japan. The sidewalks are wider and there are bicycle lanes so I know that I'll be safe. Despite these changes, I always try to experience and find things that can make my stay here enjoyable and worthwhile.

Q. Do you have fond memories of any events or hobbies outside of work?

Eric Last year, my batchmates and I went to Kyushu Island before one of us leaves for Okinawa for good. From Fukuoka to Saga and then to Oita Prefecture, we visited several famous tourist spots like Hells of Beppu, Mt. Aso volcano crater, and others, in just a day. We also ate their specialty food like Beppu's toriten, Yufuin's croquet and a lot more. Out of all the places we visited, the most enjoyable was the Ryumon Falls in Oita. Even though it was cold, spontaneity got the best of us and we decided to take a dip. We jumped and sled around the rock formations which was something that I haven't done for a long time. Even though it was actually a farewell trip, I felt like we were kids again so it was a bittersweet experience.



Lucas Even before moving to Japan I have always wanted to try learning photography. I saved up for a few months and finally bought myself a camera. I was horrible at first, but without caring about how bad I was, I just kept taking pictures with the goal of preserving what I saw and felt at that moment. I usually take pictures of just about anything, but I like taking pictures of scenery the most. My favorite picture would be that of Hirose-dori in Sendai, where I work, in the middle of Autumn. It was a road I saw every day on the way to work but on that day the trees were a full yellow and it was a scene begging to be captured. I took the shot, looked at my camera screen, and I thought "Yeah, I'm so glad that I'm in Japan".



Q. Is there anything that made you happy recently outside of work?

Lucas Every day, I am glad that I made my decision to work and live here. From camping during the heat of summer, taking photos of autumn scenery, snowboarding in the mountains, watching the cherry blossoms while drinking beer, there are too many times to count that I thought it is wonderful I am in Japan. To my Filipino friends who went on a trip with me, to my ever so kind workmates who welcomed me and helped me adjust to life in Japan, to the people I met while taking photographs, it is the people I shared those moments with which makes it memorable. Knowing that by being able to speak in Japanese that I am able to establish great relationships is what makes me happy right now.



Q. Do you have any words of encouragement about working in Japan for those coming up after you?

Eric Moving here to Japan to work is not a simple thing to do. There are a lot of changes and adjustments that must be done in order to live harmoniously with Japanese people. Despite the ongoing pandemic, different members of the company made sure that we will be given safe accommodations and that our safety will come first once we started our work here in Japan. It's really hard at first but the new experiences, learnings, and friends, that you will gain will make it worth it.

Lucas To be blunt, living and working in Japan is difficult. It takes determination to leave everything behind and plunge yourself into unfamiliar territory. If you are a person who craves for something new, willing to plunge to unfamiliar territory, and has a desire to make things work, then working in Japan is possibly for you. Once you get used to it, every challenge and frustration would be worth it, and the sense of satisfaction is surreal. When the going gets rough, you have your upperclassmen to support you along the way so just keep on moving forward!