Empowering Women Through Peer-to-Peer Support

How Peer Support Systems Empower Working Women in Japan

Lean In Tokyo
Global Shapers Community Tokyo Hub

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Summary

- **Objectives**

The goal is to create a society in which women in Japan feel empowered and can bring their authentic selves at work. The state can be defined by becoming free of worries and obstacles to their desired careers, or, if they do have worries, they know how to find solutions. To achieve this goal, we will identify 1) women's worries about career and their causes, 2) effective ways for women to find solutions to their worries, and 3) support systems within the companies for women to feel empowered.

- **Method**

Online surveys and interviews

- **Results**

1) Fewer women than men can be themselves and feel empowered at work. In order to be themselves and feel empowered, it is important for both men and women to gain the sense of purpose and growthin their work and to have a clear idea of what they want to do in the future.

2) In order to find solutions to concerns and feel empowered, the survey found that peer support outside the company, such as participating in community and sharing concerns with familiar people, is considered more effective than networks within companies. Some said that consulting with people outside the company gives them an objective point of view.

3) Although many respondents mentioned the importance of external systems, the survey revealed that peer support systems within companies are very important and effective in building self-confidence. The more women felt that they were able to be themselves and felt empowered, the more effective they felt the peer support system and networks within their companies were and the more they participated in peer-to-peer supports. However, there were not many examples of the use of such systems, and overall, the use of corporate support systems did not seem to be progressing. There were high expectations for the development of communities and peer support systems at work, as well as subsidies for participation in events and seminars outside of companies.

- **Conclusion**

・In order to solve problems related to career and work, such as difficulty in gaining confidence, it is effective to share their problems with their peers and support each other.

・In order for women to find solutions to their career and work problems, peer support systems are very important, but the status of the support system in companies is currently insufficient or inadequate. By expanding peer-to-peer support in the future, there is a possibility of improving work environments for women to be themselves and feel empowered at work.

Introduction

Background

While the promotion of women in workplaces has been touted as a part of diversity and inclusion in recent years, Japan ranked 121st in the 2020 Gender Gap Index released by the World Economic Forum. Unfortunately, women in Japan still face a deep-rooted sense of value that women should be responsible for housework and childcare. We often hear the voices of women who feel uncomfortable in male-dominated workplaces. Although it is now common for women to pursue careers, there are many women who are caught between the advancement of women and the old values of gender roles.

In order to help women overcome obstacles in their careers and feel empowered, Lean In Tokyo and Global Shapers focused on the effectiveness of peer-to-peer supports. Based on our own experiences of running communities, we believe that communities, where women can share their problems and support each other, are efficacious.

Various studies had shown the effectiveness of peer support. For example, a study by the Harvard Business School[1] found that increasing a sense of belonging to the workplace through promoting mentorship and community activities within companies can improve employees' job satisfaction and individual productivity. Furthermore, a Gallup study[2] found that the social aspects of the workplace (e.g., relationships) are the main reason why many women continue to work in the same workplace.

However, there are not many companies that have focused on the effectiveness of peer-to-peer support and have implemented such systems as a part of diversity and inclusion measures. In this context, we wanted to clarify the effectiveness of peer support systems in Japan through surveys and interviews of successful corporate initiatives as well as working women. We want to promote such initiatives in order to help create a society in which women can feel empowered and bring their authentic selves to work.

[1] Evan W. Carr, Andrew Reece, Gabriella Rosen Kellerman, and Alexi Robichaux, "The Value of Belonging at Work" Harvard Business Review. 2019-12-16. https://hbr.org/2019/12/the-value-of-belonging-at-work, (2021-02-07)
[2] ANNAMARIE MANN, "Why We Need Best Friends at Work" Gallup. 2018-01-15. https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236213/why-need-best-friends-work.aspx, (2021-02-07)

About Authors

- **Lean In Tokyo**

Lean In, a global civic initiative led by Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg, was initiated after she published a book titled *Lean In* in 2013. Today, about 50,000 circles in 184 countries are engaged in various activities to realize a diverse society by supporting the advancement of women. Among them, Lean In Tokyo was launched in March 2016 as a regional representative of Lean In.Org in Japan, with the goal of creating opportunities for women to take the first step and increasing the number of peers who can support them.

- **Global Shapers Community Tokyo Hub**

The World Economic Forum is an international organization dedicated to improving world affairs through cooperation between the public and private sectors. It works with political, business, and other key leaders in society to shape the global, regional, and industrial agendas. Founded in 2011, the Global Shapers Community is an international organization of the World Economic Forum and is comprised of youth leaders under the age of 32 around the world and are active in a variety of political, scientific, and economic fields. About 3,000 people around the world have been selected as Global Shapers, and about 60 young people from Japan have been selected as Global Shapers. The Global Shapers are engaged in a variety of projects that transcend national boundaries and organizations, with the aim of creating a better future for all.

Research Overview

Method

- **Online Survey**

Target group: People in their 20s to 60s who work at companies, etc.
This includes part-time workers, temporary workers, and those who are currently on maternity or childcare leave.
Number of survey respondents: 318 (261 women, 54 men, 3 others)
Implementation period: October 12, 2010 - November 12, 2020
Target area: Nationwide

- **Interview**

Individual interviews with women who feel unsatisfied with their current work and those who are utilizing peer support systems inside and outside of the workplace.
In addition, with the cooperation of companies that are implementing initiatives that enable women to support each other, we conducted interviews on the outline of their initiatives, systems, and effects.

Survey respondent attributes

Sex
- Other 0.9%
- Male 17.0%
- Female 82.1%

Age
- Over 60s 0.9%
- 50s 6.3%
- 40s 21.1%
- 20s 36.8%
- 30s 34.9%

Position
- Other Specialists 8%
- Business Owner / C-suite Executive 7.9%
- Director 4%
- Manager 9.4%
- Unit Head / Supervisor 18.2%
- General Employee 52.8%

Profession
- Part-time Worker 1.6%
- Other 2.5%
- Civil Servant 5.0%
- Self-employed 4.4%
- Business Owner / C-suite Executive 6.0%
- Employee (Non-regular / Contract) 5.0%
- Employee (Full-time) 75.5%

Marital Status
- Married in the past, now single 2.8%
- Unmarried 48.1%
- Married 49.1%

Number of Employees at Workplaces
- Less than 50 18%
- Over 50, Less than 100 5%
- Over 100, Less than 300 11%
- Over 300, Less than 1,000 16%
- Over 1,000 50%

n=318

Summary of Results

Part 1: The Relationship Between Confidence and Feeling Empowered to Work Authentically

Compared to men, fewer women feel empowered and feel that they are able to bring their authentic selves to work every day.

- 87% of men feel empowered and are able to work authentically compared to 67% of that of women.
- 50% of men feel **very** empowered and are able to bring their most authentic selves to work, whereas only 27% of women feel this way.

For both men and women, a sense of purpose and opportunities for growth impact how empowered they feel and whether they can work as their authentic selves.

- A sense of purpose and growth were the top-rated factors to feeling empowered and working authentically
- For men, a lack of purpose and growth were the number one reason for not feeling like their authentic selves at work. For women, this ranked third place.

More women feel less confident of their knowledge and skill than men.

- Many men chose "confidence in one's knowledge and skill" as the reason why they feel empowered and are able to bring their authentic selves to work, whereas very fewer women answered the same way.
- For many women, "not feeling confident in their knowledge and skill" was a factor that prevented them from feeling empowered and being able to bring their authentic selves to work. In comparison, fewer men chose this reason.

For women, confidence is key to feeling empowered and being able to bring their authentic selves to work.

- Women who answered that they do not feel confident in their knowledge and skill were especially likely to answer that they only feel **somewhat** empowered and like their authentic selves at work.

> The percentage of women who are able to be their authentic selves and feel empowered at work is lower than that of men. Among the factors that prevent one from feeling this way, lack of confidence in knowledge and skill is especially evident in women. In addition, women with this concern are more likely to feel only **somewhat** empowered and like they can work authentically. **For women to be able to bring their most authentic selves to work, having self-confidence, a clear vision of the future, and a sense of purpose and growth is crucial.**

To gain some qualitative insight, we interviewed a number of women who currently does not feel empowered nor feel like they are able to bring their most authentic selves to work.

Part 2: Effective Ways for Empowering Women To Work Authentically

Peer support systems outside of the workplace help women to alleviate their concerns at work.

- Many answered that utilizing networks outside of the workplace is more effective than participating in networks within their company.
- Some reasons behind this were the ability to receive objective feedback and how these networks can help women to gain new perspectives.

Many women believe that peer support is an effective way to build confidence.

- Participation in events and communities outside of the workplace is considered the most effective way to combat the top 3 hurdles women face, including lack of confidence.

> To overcome the numerous obstacles that women face as uncovered in Part 1, many respondents see gaining new insights through participating in peer support systems outside of the workplace as an effective solution. This also applies for women who lack self-confidence. **Rather than gaining input from books and seminars, respondents believed that they can find solutions to their concerns through sharing dialogue with others, such as through various communities.**

In the interview section, we introduce examples of peer support systems outside of companies and the voices of users who have felt empowered by through utilizing these systems.

Part 3: Peer Support Systems That Empower Women and Help Bring Their Authentic Selves to Work

The more empowered people felt and like can bring their authentic selves to work, the higher they rated the effectiveness of peer support systems along with actual participation.

- About half of the women who answered that their workplace has an effective peer support system said that they feel **very** empowered at work and are able to work authentically as themselves.
- On the other hand, only 10% of women who do not feel empowered at work thought that such peer support systems were effective.

Not enough effective peer support systems are available in the workplace.

- Around 50% of women said that there aren't any support systems they find effective in their company.

Among small and medium-sized companies, availability and limited development is the issue. For large corporations, underutilization is the problem.

- 60% of those working in companies with less than 1,000 employees responded that there are no effective support systems available at work.
- 30% of those working in companies with over 1,000 employees responded that there could be an effective support system available, but that they have not utilized it.

Peer support systems at the workplace are also in demand.

- Respondents ranked "mentorship and peer support" as most effective when it came to support systems at the workplace.
- "Communities within companies" was ranked third most effective, indicating a desire among employees to connect and support each other.

Peer support systems at the workplace are needed, especially for women who listed lack of confidence as why they do not feel empowered to work as their authentic selves.

- Women who currently lack purpose, a sense of growth, or a clear vision of their career path were more likely to rate subsidies to attend external events as effective.
- Women who lack confidence in their knowledge or skill were more likely to rate communities within the workplace as effective.

This survey revealed that those who feel empowered and are able to bring their authentic selves to work are more likely to be utilizing peer support systems within the workplace. **Notably, many women who listed lack of self-confidence as the reason behind not feeling empowered at work seem to be looking for peer support systems within their companies, such as communities and mentorship programs. However, these company-lead support systems often are insufficient developed or underutilized.**

In the interview section, we introduce examples of corporate initiatives aimed to improve self-confidence in women through peer support, along with other workplace support systems that empower female employees to bring their authentic selves to work every day.

Results and Discussion

The Relationship Between Confidence and Feeling Empowered to Work Authentically

Compared to men, fewer women feel empowered and feel that they are able to bring their authentic selves to work every day.

Q1 Do you feel empowered at work and that you can work authentically?

Men

Not at all 3.7%
Not much 9.3%
Very much 50.0%
Somewhat 37.0%

n=54

Women

Not at all 4.2%
Very much 27.2%
Not much 27.2%
Somewhat 41.4%

n=261
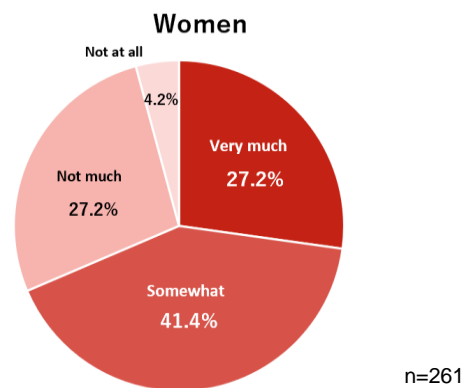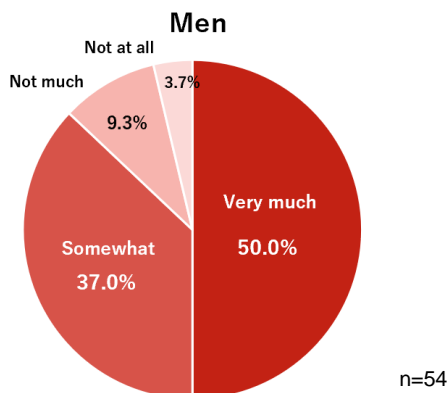
The total number of those can be themselves feel empowered at work is about 20% lower for women than for men. There is also a notable difference in the number of women feel **very** empowered and can work authentically compared to the number of men who feel the same. Half of all men feel that they are **very** empowered and can bring their authentic selves at work, but only about a quarter of women feel so.

For both men and women, a sense of purpose and opportunities for growth impact how empowered they feel and whether they can work as their authentic selves.

Q2 Please select the factor that best affect to be yourself and feel empowered at work.
<Target: Those who answered **very much** in Q1>

Men

I can't gain the sense of purpose and growth	25.9%
I am clear about my future career path	22.2%
I feel confident about my knowledge and skill	22.2%
I have enough personal / family time	14.8%
My relationships in the workplace are great	11.1%
I feel safe about my health	3.7%
I feel satisfied about my salary and evaluation	0.0%
Other	0.0%

n=27

Women

I can't gain the sense of purpose and growth	66.2%
My relationships in the workplace are great	12.7%
I have enough personal / family time	5.6%
I am clear about my future career path	5.6%
I feel safe about my health	2.8%
I feel confident in my knowledge and skill	2.8%
I feel satisfied about my salary and evaluation	1.4%
Other	2.8%

n=71

66% of the women who feel **very** empowered and bring their authentic selves at work selected gaining the sense of purpose and growth as a factor. The same item was selected by the largest number of male respondents.

In Q3 below, the contributing factor to those who answered that they feel **somewhat**, **not much**, or **not at all** feel empowered at work and work authentically was not gaining the sense of purpose and growth which ranked first for men and third for women. **For both men and women, whether they gain the sense of purpose and growth has a significant impact on feeling empowered and working authentically.**

Many men and women also answered that being unsure about their future career paths as a factor in not feeling empowered and working authentically.

More women feel less confident of their knowledge and skill than men.

Q3 Please select the factor that best prevent you from being yourself and feeling empowered at work. <Target: Those who answered other than **very much** in Q1>

Men

I can't gain the sense of purpose and growth	29.6%
I am unsure about my future career path	25.9%
I am unsatisfied with my salary and evaluation	18.5%
I don't have enough personal / family time	7.4%
I don't feel confident in my knowledge and skill	**7.4%**
My relationships at the workplace are not good	7.4%
I am worried about my health	0.0%
Other	3.7%
No response	0.0%

n=27

Women

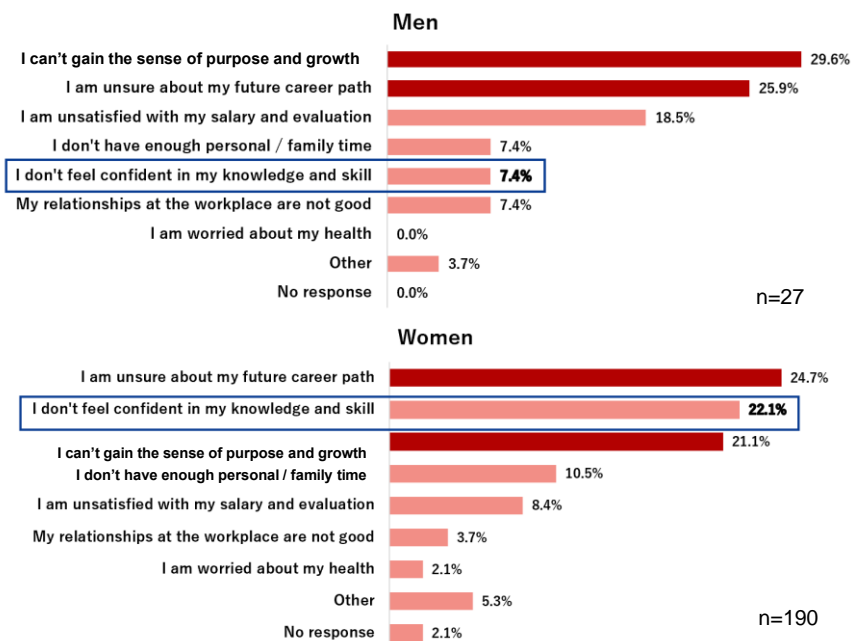|	
I am unsure about my future career path	24.7%
I don't feel confident in my knowledge and skill	**22.1%**
I can't gain the sense of purpose and growth	21.1%
I don't have enough personal / family time	10.5%
I am unsatisfied with my salary and evaluation	8.4%
My relationships at the workplace are not good	3.7%
I am worried about my health	2.1%
Other	5.3%
No response	2.1%

n=190

While there was a common trend between men and women, there was also a difference between them in the self-confidence. The second most common factor (Q2) for men was self-confidence at 22.2%, but only 2.8% of women selected this item. On the other hand, when asked about the factors that prevented them from being themselves and feeling empowered at work (Q3), the second most common response was lack of confidence in their knowledge and skills at 22.1% of women, while only 7.4% of men selected this item.

The results show that women have less self-confidence than men, and this affects their ability to be themselves and feel empowered at work.

In addition, as a factor for not being able to feel empowered at work and work authentically (Q3), 18.5% of male respondents seleced lack of satisfaction in their salary and evaluation as the third most important factor, while only 8.4% of female respondents the same item. This result also indicates that men are more confident in their work performance.

For women, confidence is key to feeling empowered and being able to bring their authentic selves to work.

Factors that prevent people from being themselves and feeling empowered at work.

<Target: Female>

I can somewhat be myself and feel empowered at work

Factor	Percentage
I don't feel confident in my knowledge and skill	26.9%
I am unsure about my future career path	25.9%
I don't have enough personal / family time	13.9%
I can't gain the sense of purpose and growth	11.1%
I am unsatisfied with my salary and evaluation	9.3%
My relationships at the workplace are not good	2.8%
I am worried about my health	0.9%
Other	7.4%
No response	1.9%

n=108

I can very much be myself and feel empowered at work

Factor	Percentage
I can't gain the sense of purpose and growth	34.1%
I am unsure about my future career path	23.2%
I don't feel confident in my knowledge and skill	15.9%
I am unsatisfied with my salary and evaluation	7.3%
I don't have enough personal / family time	6.1%
My relationships at the workplace are not good	4.9%
I am worried about my health	3.7%
Other	2.4%
No response	2.4%

n=82

Looking more closely at women's tendencies regarding lack of confidence, the largest number of women who don't feel empowered at work answered that not gaining the sense of purpose and growth is a main contributing factor, while the largest number of women who **somewhat** feel empowered at work answered that they don't feel confident in their knowledge and skills.

Based on the survey responses, it can be assumed that although women gain the sense of purpose and growth, they still cannot fully be themselves and feel empowered at work due to the lack of self-confidence. The reason why there was a difference between the number of male and female respondents who answered that they feel empowered at work in Q1 can also be described by the fact that women in the **somewhat** group were suffering from lack of confidence, which is not often seen in men.

For both men and women, it is important to be able to gain the sense of purpose and growth to have a clear idea of what they want to do in their future in order to feel that they can be themselves and feel empowered at work. On top of that, self-confidence is key for women to feel empowered and work authentically.

Please tell us specifically about the factors that prevent you from being yourself and feeling empowered at work. <Target: Women who answered other than **very much** in Q1>

Here are some comments from women on the three main factors that prevent them from being themselves and feeling empowered at work.

I'm unsure about my future career path

- I don't know what I want to be, and I feel like I'm just struggling to do what's in front of me.
- It is fulfilling now, but I am wondering if I will continue to work for this company forever and if I will continue to have this type of job in the future.
- There is a disconnect between what I want to do at work and what I want to do at home. At work, I want to be promoted more, but at home, I want to have more space and peace of mind during the limited time I have with my children.
- Although departmental rotations and transfers, both domestic and international, are required for career advancement, I refused to be transferred due to pregnancy and childcare, and am engaged in the same work. There are few places where I can work flexibly, and I don't know what I want to do in the future.
- It's time for me to let go of my children as they've grown up, but I've been working with the priority of raising my children, and when I think about it again, I realize that I've been working without facing myself, and I can't find anything I want to do.

I don't feel confident in my knowledge and skills

- I feel like I can't make appropriate comments, so I make myself look small and can't express myself at work.
- I'm so busy with housework and work that I can't find the time to learn.
- I think I have too high expectation for myself. I work and study hard but no matter how hard I try, it seems like anyone can do it, or I can't have a sense of self-affirmation and satisfaction compared to someone with a great career like Superman.
- Since the results are hardly visible and almost never acknowledged, confidence is rapidly diminishing.
- I was assigned to a department where my skills were needed, but I had to perform my duties before I could actually acquire them, and my lack of skills limited the scope of my work.

No sense of the sense of purpose and grown

- I don't feel the growth of the company's business, and I don't feel the professional growth of myself working in the company. I feel that it is a waste of time.
- For better or worse, women are seen as "girls" and are entrusted with too many different responsibilities from men.
- There is no feedback and there is no way to learn if the work is good or bad.
- Since the company is foreign-affiliated, there are restrictions on the posts that Japanese can take up, and I have no expectations for future promotions. I don't think I can retire at this point, and I want to grow professionally and aim higher.
- There is a lot of routine work and little stimulation.
- After all, I'm doing what anyone else can do, and I cannot find my own strengths.

Why I can't be myself and feel empowered at work

We interviewed women who cannot be themselves and feel empowered at work. Here we would like to introduce the real voices of women who have concerns about their career.

- **Women who can somewhat be themselves and feel empowered at work**

While I sometimes feel that I can be myself at work, I also feel that **I am not in control of the assigned work** when the workload is heavy, and I am **not confident enough to meet the expectations of my supervisor and team.** Also, while people who are good at self-promotion are promoted, I am **not good at self-promotion and I am wondering how I can communicate my achievements to my boss**. My worries are endless, but I am not thinking of changing my job because there are things I want to do at my current company.

Before the pandemic, I was able to get together with my team members and share my worries with them. I could feel that I wasn't the only one who was troubled. However, **since I started working from home, I get stressed out more easily from not getting to talk to anyone as much**. My boss doesn't like conflicts and doesn't want to get involved in the mental health of her subordinates. In order to feel empowered at work, I think it **would be good if there were workshops within the workplace to learn self-promotion skills and a community where we can share common problems.**
(20s, works for a cosmetics company)

In the fourth year of my career, I changed my job from a major financial institution to an IT venture, and I find it challenging to work in a position close to the management level. On the other hand, in a corporate culture where mid-career hiring is the mainstream and immediate ability to work is required, I joined the company with no prior experience, and **I always feel uneasy about whether I can be of help to the members around me and the company.**

In my previous job, I felt unsatisfied in an environment where I was told, "You've done enough already, you don't need to work any harder," and my peers were promoted at the same time. At my current workplace, I have a supervisor who points out my problems, and I can feel my professional growth by improving them. I feel that I am gaining experience that will be beneficial for my future career. However, **I do not feel psychologically safe with my team or my supervisor because I am not given much recognition for my achievements and I am only pointed out my shortcomings. I feel that I am not able to demonstrate my abilities even in my strongest areas.** Therefore, I am constantly questioning myself about the value of my existence.
(In his 20s, works for an information and communications company)

● Women who **can't** be themselves and feel empowered at work

During regular job rotations, I was reassigned to a department in a field I had no experience in, and I was required to develop skills completely different from those I had developed up to that point. The people around me were being given more and more tasks, while **there was very little work for me to do on my own**. **As the tasks continued to be few and far between, I gradually lost the sense of being myself at work.** Also, the company and my superiors gave me less and less expectations, and I **felt that I could not contribute to the department, which made me lose confidence more and more.**

I was grateful that there were senior female employees in my department and that I had an environment where I could easily ask for advice. However, there are few women who aspire to management positions, and there are no regular opportunities to talk about their careers, so I am struggling to envision my career development within the workplace. I would be grateful **if I could have more frequent opportunities to meet with my supervisors and HR.**
(20s, works for a railroad company)

What is bothering me about the **company is the evaluation system and the lack of role models**. Even if I achieve the same results, anyone can be promoted automatically by a year. and there are few women in career-track positions, so there is no image of how I want to become or what I want to do in the company. I often share my career concerns with my OJT seniors, but I have not been able to discuss my concerns because it is difficult to offer solutions. The company also has a mentor system for the first year of employment, but I found it difficult to discuss my personal life with my mentor since he was 20 years older than me.

I have a strong desire to challenge myself in the future, but there are few people in the company, both women and men, who have strong upward mobility. My peers work in different job categories, so we cannot talk in depth about our careers. I think it would have been easier **if there were people in the company who were in the same situation and we could share our worries.**
(20s, working for a trading company)

When I was working at a local branch, I was able to work in a way that was most comfortable for me because I had a relationship with my seniors who took care of my juniors at work and in the dormitory. After I was transferred to the head office, I found the large-scale projects challenging, but I had to worry about whether **my older female colleagues would dislike me. Also since there were few women in career-track positions, it was difficult to ask for advice.** Moreover, there was **an atmosphere within the workplace that I should not stand out or show my confidence, so I tried not to show it**.

For me, the conditions that allow me to work in a way that is true to myself are that I can use my strengths, that I don't have to worry about work relationships or other issues outside of work, and that I am evaluated appropriately. I**n the company, I can talk to my peers and senior colleagues who are close to my age, but I can't really talk to my boss because he is a man more than twice my age and I thought he wouldn't understand me.** I think it would be good if there was an internal mechanism that would allow me to consult with them while ensuring my psychological safety.
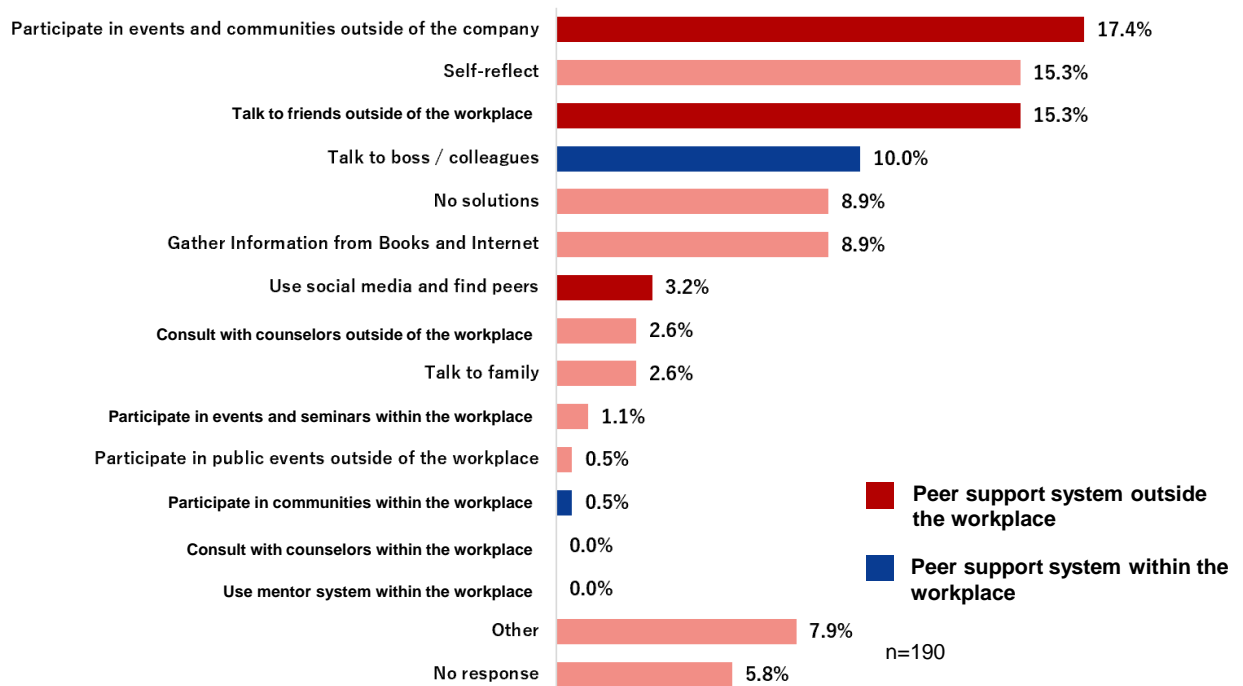(30s, works for a food manufacturer)

Part 2

Effective Ways for Empowering Women To Work Authentically

Peer support systems outside of the workplace help women to alleviate their concerns at work.

Q4 — Select solutions that help you identify factors, which prevent you from being themselves and feel empowered at work.
<Target: Women who answered other than **very much** in Q1>

Solution	%
Participate in events and communities outside of the company	17.4%
Self-reflect	15.3%
Talk to friends outside of the workplace	15.3%
Talk to boss / colleagues	10.0%
No solutions	8.9%
Gather Information from Books and Internet	8.9%
Use social media and find peers	3.2%
Consult with counselors outside of the workplace	2.6%
Talk to family	2.6%
Participate in events and seminars within the workplace	1.1%
Participate in public events outside of the workplace	0.5%
Participate in communities within the workplace	0.5%
Consult with counselors within the workplace	0.0%
Use mentor system within the workplace	0.0%
Other	7.9%
No response	5.8%

■ **Peer support system outside the workplace**

■ **Peer support system within the workplace**

n=190

The most common effective means for women to find solutions to the factors that prevent them from being themselves and feeling empowered at work was participating in events and communities outside of the workplace, followed by talking to friends outside of the workplace and self-reflection. Relatively few respondents selected talking to boss / colleagues and participating in communities within the workplace, indicating that they tend to believe that communities outside of the workplace are more effective than communities within the workplace. Those who chose participating in events and communities as well as talking to friends outside the company gave the reasons that these methods were effective as being able to receive objective opinions and broaden their perspectives.

Although many respondents chose to solve the problem on their own, such as self-reflection, more chose to support each other both inside and outside of the workplace.

Many women believe that peer support is an effective way to build confidence.

Q4-1 Effective ways to be themselves and feel empowered at work: Ranking by factors that prevent people from being themselves and feel empowered at work

<Target: Women who answered other than "very much" in Q1>

	I'm unsure about my future career path	I don't feel confident in my knowledge and skills	I can't gain the sense of purpose and growth
1st place	Participate in events / communities outside of the workplace	Participate in events / communities outside of the workplace	Participate in events / communities outside of the workplace
2nd place	Talk to friends outside of the workplace	Self-reflection	Talk to friends outside of the workplace / Self-reflection
3rd place	Self-reflection	Talk to friends outside of the workplace / Talk to boss / colleagues	Gather information from books and the internet

Pinkish boxed...solutions through peer support inside and outside of the workplace
Bluish boxes...solutions that you can use by yourself

According to Q3, the top three reasons for women who cannot be themselves and feel empowered at work were: "I don't know what I want to do in the future," "I don't feel confident in my knowledge and skills," and "I can't gain the sense of purpose and growth". In all these cases, most respondents thought that participating in events and communities outside of the workplace was an effective way to solve their problems.

For the lack of confidence, which women tend to feel, peer support was one of the top choices. This result indicates that people think that they can solve their problems by talking to other people rather than inputting information from books and seminars.

In our interviews, we introduce examples of peer-to-peer support outside of the workplace and the voices of participants who have felt empowered at work by using the peer support systems.

Peer-to-peer support outside of the workplace

Case 1 — **Lean In Tokyo**

A community that encourages women to gain confidence and ambition.

Lean In Tokyo holds speaker events where female leaders share their experiences, and workshops to help people who have concerns take the first step. Lean In Tokyo also conducts educational activities using social networks, and provides training to companies. The organization is run by about 20 volunteer members, 90% of whom are women in their 20s and 30s. Meetings and social gatherings are held regularly to provide members with opportunities to talk about their work, careers, and personal lives, regardless of age or position.

Event Participants' Voices

I read *Lean In* when I was in college. I then found Lean In Tokyo on my friend's social media and followed it, which led me to attend the event. I was worried about balancing work and childcare, and since I don't really talk about my career with my friends at work, I wanted to get new insights at the event. In addition to being able to empathize with and learn from the speakers, **I was able to gain useful insights from the discussions with other participants.**
(20s, works for an information and communications company)

When I was struggling to find a job, a friend recommended the Lean In Tokyo event. I hadn't done any major activities during my university years, and I was unclear about what I wanted to do. I certainly didn't know who to talk to about it. I participated in a networking event organized by Lean In Tokyo, and was able to talk to other working women in a group discussion. They told me that **"You don't have to decide what you want to do right now, just by coming to this event you are doing a great job!".** After that, I stopped thinking too much about what I wanted to do, but **instead reevaluated what I was interested in and what I could do, which gave me confidence.**
(20s, working for a consulting firm)

rolemy, a mentor matching service for women

Mentorship to share concerns and support each other outside the office.

Under the vision of liberating women's careers positively, rolemy is a platform where working women can casually discuss their career concerns with each other. It was founded in 2020 by Kanako Sakai, whom herself was troubled by the difference in the way women and men were treated in her workplace. She later found solutions to her concerns by listening to the stories of women who had similar problems but had taken the first step into various ways of life and careers.

On rolemy, users can also utilize paid consultations with official mentors who come from a variety of career backgrounds, including those who have studied abroad for an MBA. In addition, paid group consultations are held on a regular basis. Many of the consultations are about career planning, workplace issues, and balancing work and private life. Most users are women in their 20s and 30s at the general employee level, including recent graduates and university students.

Website: https://www.rolemy.jp/

User's Voice

I joined my company as a new graduate in the spring of 2020, and I felt anxious because I had to work remotely every day. In addition, there are only three women out of 40 at my workplace, and so it has been difficult to discuss my concerns within the workplace. That's when I found out about rolemy and talked to my official mentor about how to enhance my private life while continuing to do the work I wanted to do, the timing of marriage, balancing childcare and career, and obtaining MBA. I consulted with her for the first-time last month and we have been continuing to exchange messages since then. **I was able to share my career concerns, which were difficult to discuss in a workplace with few women. Talking to her has helped me to change my mindset positively.** I was also able to remember the strong and outgoing attitude I had as a college student, which I had lost sight of recently due to being busy at work. I am planning to consult with my mentor regularly in the future.

(20s, works at a venture capital firm)

Part 3

Peer Support Systems That Empower Women and Help Bring Their Authentic Selves to Work

The more empowered people felt and like can bring their authentic selves to work, the higher they rated the effectiveness of peer support systems along with actual participation.
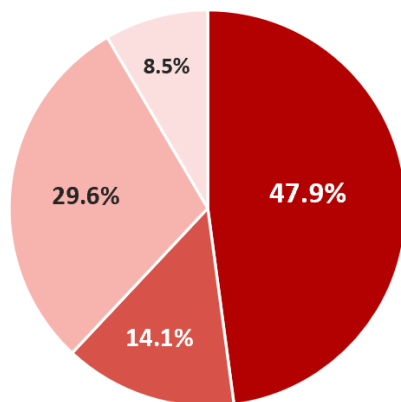
Q5 Does your company have an effective support system to help you be yourself and feel empowered at work?
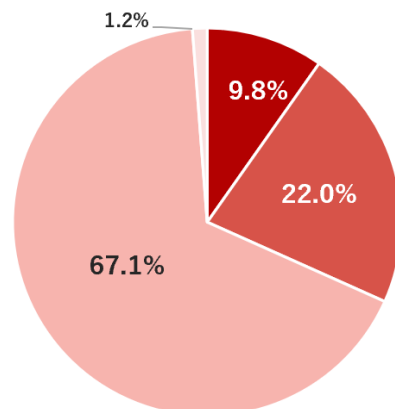
Q5-1 Effective support systems for being yourself and feeling empowered at work

Women who can be themselves very much and feel empowered at work

- 47.9%
- 14.1%
- 29.6%
- 8.5%

n=71

Women who can't be themselves and feel empowered at work

- 1.2%
- 9.8%
- 22.0%
- 67.1%

n=82

- ■ There is an effective support system at the workplace and it is being used.
- ■ There may be an effective support system, but it is not being used.
- ■ There is no effective support system.
- □ Other

About half of the women who feel **very** empowered and can bring their authentic selves at work answered that their workplace has an effective support system, and they use it. On the other hand, less than 10% of the women who can't be themselves and feel empowered at work made use of the support system. In Part 2, it was revealed that communities outside of the workplace are considered more effective than communities within the workplace, but from these results, it can be concluded that support systems in the workplace are also effective for employees to feel empowered at work.

## Not enough effective peer support systems are available in the workplace.

Q5-2 Effective support systems for working more actively as oneself <Target: Women>

All Women

5.7%
22.2%
50.6%
21.5%
n=216
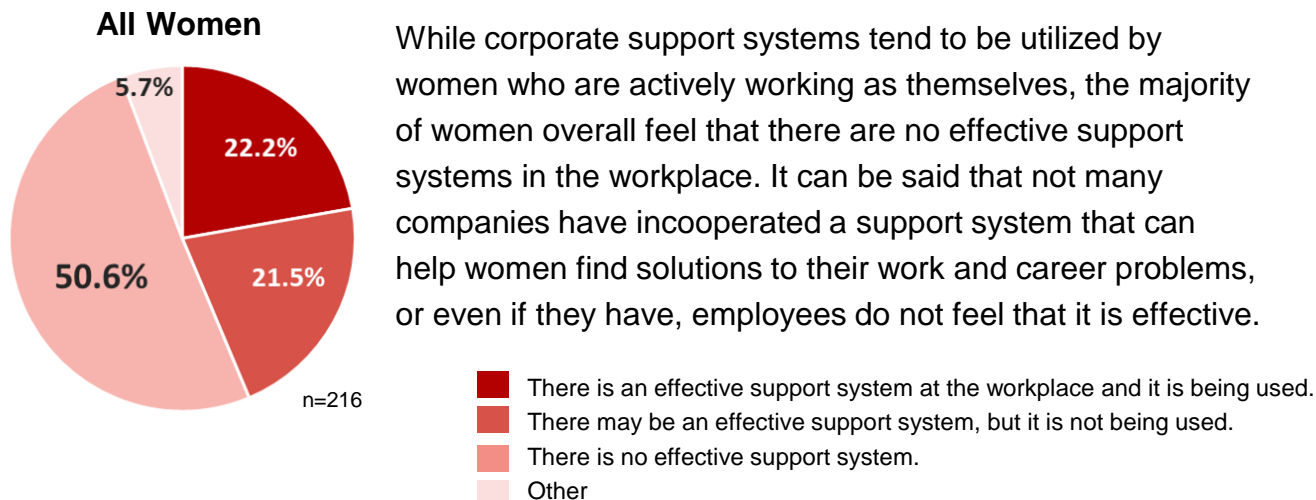
While corporate support systems tend to be utilized by women who are actively working as themselves, the majority of women overall feel that there are no effective support systems in the workplace. It can be said that not many companies have incooperated a support system that can help women find solutions to their work and career problems, or even if they have, employees do not feel that it is effective.

■ There is an effective support system at the workplace and it is being used.
■ There may be an effective support system, but it is not being used.
■ There is no effective support system.
■ Other

Among small and medium-sized companies, availability and limited development is the issue. For large corporations, underutilization is the problem.

Q5-3 Effective support systems for women who can be themselves and feel empowered at work: by employee size

<Target: Female>

Less than 1,000

8.3%
20.5%
11.4%
59.8%
n=132

Over 1,000

3.1%
24.0%
31.8%
41.1%
n=129
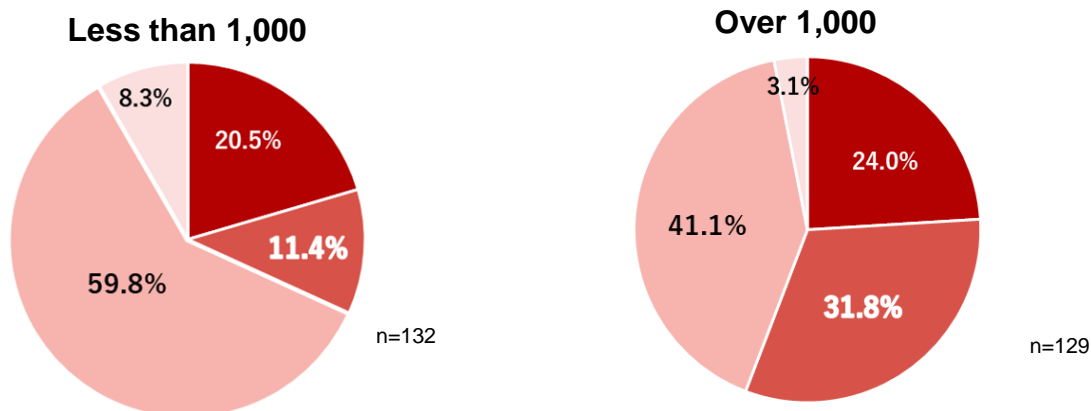
Approximately 60% of women who work at companies with less than 1,000 employees selected that there is no effective support system at the workplace, while about three times as many women who work at companies with more than 1,000 employees selected that there may be an effective support system, but they don't use it. Women who work at companies with less than 1,000 employees answered that their companies have inadequate support systems, while women at large companies with more than 1,000 employees may not be using the support system even if it is in place.

Some of the reasons given for not using the potential support system were "I don't know how to use or access it," and "I am afraid that my boss will find out about the consultation and it will affect my promotion." In order to encourage employees to use the system, it is necessary to devise ways to make the system known within the workplace and make sure that employees who need support can use it.

Reasons for not using an effective support system, even though it may be available:

Companies with more than 1,000 employees

- No information on what kind of support is available. Unclear on how to access.
- Because I think it may affect my career (transfer, promotion) in the future.
- Because it takes a lot of time to find support.
- Peer supporter systems (e.g., working mothers' groups) have been launched but activities have not been continued.
- Because I haven't been able to verbalize my problems and hesitations.
- It's difficult to be open to others when you don't find the sense of purpose and growth in your current job.

Companies with less than 1,000 employees

- There is no time to spare.
- Because it is held after work hours.
- Because we do not have enough information about the support system.

Peer support systems at the workplace are also in demand.

Q6 What kind of support system in your company would help be yourself and feel empowered at work?
<Target: Female>

Support system	%
Mentor system	36.0%
Subsidies for participation in events and seminars outside of the workplace	35.6%
Communities within the workplace	34.5%
Workshops and study sessions within the workplace	31.8%
Referral system for communities and counselors outside of the workplace	26.8%
1on1 meetings with boss / manager	26.1%
Consult with counselors within the workplace	8.8%
Subsidies for social gatherings within the workplace	7.7%
No solutions	5.7%
Seminars led by the company (HR etc.)	5.4%
Other	7.7%

n=261

As for support systems and initiatives within the workplace, most women think that mentor systems are effective. In addition, communities within the workplace were ranked third, indicating the need for peer support among employees. On the other hand, no one selected using the mentor system within the workplace as an effective means to be themselves and feel empowered at work in Q4 of Part 2, which suggests that many companies do not have such a system.

The other category included responses such as dual employment system, job rotation, and self-analysis tools.

Respondents who answered that there was no effective support system said, "Because there is a sense of stagnation within the workplace and there is no hope for improvement," "Because it seems that people are satisfied with the mere fact that there is a support system that will not be able to solve the root cause," and "Because I think that job satisfaction is a matter of individual experience, ability, and way of thinking."

Peer support systems at the workplace are needed, especially for women who listed lack of confidence as why they do not feel empowered to work as their authentic selves.

Q6-1 Effective support systems within the workplace for being oneself and feeling empowered at work : Ranking by factors that prevent people from being themselves and feel empowered at work <Target: women>

	I'm unsure about my future career path	I don't feel confident in my knowledge and skills	I can't gain the sense of purpose and growth
1st place	Subsidies for participation in events and seminars outside of the workplace	Subsidies for participation in events and seminars outside of the workplace	Communities within the workplace
2nd place	Mentor System	Workshops and study sessions within the workplace	Mentor System
3rd place	Communities within the workplace / Workshops and study sessions within the workplace / Referral system for communities and counselors outside of the workplace	Communities within the workplace	Workshops and study sessions within the workplace

Pinkish boxes...solutions through peer support within the workplace
Bluish boxes...solutions through peer support outside of the workplace

Looking at the factors that prevented women from being themselves and feeling empowered at work, those who aren't clear about their future career paths and can't gain the sense of purpose and growth were the most likely to seek subsidies for attending events and seminars outside of their workplaces. On the other hand, those who didn't feel confident in their knowledge and skills ranked communities within the workplace first, while the second and third places were also related to networks within the workplace.

As we have already seen in Q3-1, women who feel that they are unsure about what they want to do in the future or that they do not gain the sense of purpose and growthare more likely to claim that they can't be themselves and feel empowered at work. On the other hand, many of the women who lacked self-confidence can **somewhat** be themselves and feel empowered at work. This group tends to place particular importance on peer support within the workplace.

- **Voices of women who have used the support system within the workplace**

Through interviews with working women, we asked them about the effects of using each of the support systems listed in Q6-1.

Mentor system

When I joined my current company as a new graduate during the pandemic, I was worried about not being able to network with senior employees and peers. I wanted to expand my circle within the workplace early on and learn more about the company and its employees, so I took advantage of the internal buddy system. A buddy is a senior employee assigned to a new graduate. The manager selects the buddies, and the buddies and new graduates can freely set the content and frequency of their consultations. I set an appointment with my buddy every week. Since my buddy was from a different department, I was able to ask a lot of questions about things that were difficult to discuss with my manager, and I learned a lot about work and relationships. Even though there were times when I couldn't talk to my buddy face-to-face, I felt relieved to know that there was someone in the company who cared about me.
(20s, works for an investment bank)

1on1 meetings with supervisors and senior staff

I work for a small startup and we have a culture where employees feel free to consult with each other. Because we are a small team, all employees have the opportunity to have weekly 1-on-1 meetings with their supervisors so that they can support each other. I feel comfortable talking to my supervisor and team members.
(20s, works for an educational service company)

Subsidies for participation in external events and seminars

There is a system that covers the cost of attending external seminars and training courses as long as they are related to my work, and I make use of this system on a regular basis. I was put in charge of my current job with no prior experience, and especially at the beginning, I had to go to all kinds of events and seminars to get input and interact with people in the same profession at other companies. I was grateful for the company's subsidies because even if I spent a small amount of money at one time, the total amount was quite large. I was anxious about the fact that I had no experience, but having many opportunities for input helped me gain confidence.
(20s, works for an information and communications company)

In-house workshops and study sessions

After earning a master's degree from a graduate school in the United States, I joined my current company as a regular employee. From the beginning of my career, I felt conflicted because I could not get a position that was appropriate for my background, and at the same time, I could not change the culture of the company by myself. My supervisor noticed my struggle and encouraged me to participate in the company's diversity training program. It was a training program for female employees at the senior management level, and about 30 of us took part in it for six months. During the program, I participated in about five workshops, during which I received mentoring from my supervisor. I learned practical skills to involve others and had opportunities to think about my future career and what I want to do in five years, which was very useful for my career development afterwards. I felt that the training made it easier for me to take an action on what I wanted to do than ever before. I also passed the promotion exam and was promoted two levels. Participants other than myself also said, "After the training, I was able to say what I wanted to do in the promotion interview for the first time."
(30s, works for a hotel/leisure company)

Part 3: Interviews

Peer-to-peer support within the companies

It was found that peer support systems such as communities and mentor systems are effective in helping women be themselves and feel empowered at work, especially because they feel that they lack confidence. In the interview section, we will introduce examples of mutual support systems that have been implemented in companies and have produced positive results. In some cases, we also introduce the voices of participants.

Case 1 | # CyberAgent, Inc. (CAramel)

A cross-company organization within a workplace to create a place where female employees can connect with each other

Industry: Internet advertising, media, games / Number of employees: Approx. 5,000 / Ratio of male to female employees: Male: Female = 6:4

Title of Initiative	CAramel
Year of Foundation	2017
Goal	Promote diverse work styles
Overview	A cross-company organization established to encourage diverse work styles among female employees. **Activities are not limited to community activities, but also engages in full-scale internal reforms such as events, PR activities, and the creation of guidebooks.** For example, they hold events and seminars for different age groups and positions on topics such as balancing career and private life, women's health, etc. They also conduct questionnaires on the problems of female employees and propose the results and solutions to the management layer. **The organization has been involved in a** wide range of other activities, including **educational activities using company newsletters and holding events to connect remotely in the era of COVID-19.**
Background	Although the company had been focusing on training new graduates and supporting working mothers, there was a sense that **the support system for female employees in their third to fifth year of career (26-29 years old) was insufficient.** In addition, there were many senior female employees with strong career aspirations, while **younger employees often expressed concerns about balancing childcare and career.** The initiative was launched with the hope of **increasing opportunities to bring diverse values to the organization** without being bound by one image of female employees at CyberAgent.
Management Structure	We have 40~50 members and 6~7 executive members. The team consists mainly of employees in their 20s and 30s, all of whom are committed to the side of the business. **Teams are divided by year, new graduates, mid-career employees, and other attributes.**
Response from attendees	A member said, **"It's good to be able to discuss problems that are difficult to discuss with a senior member of the same department in a diagonal relationship.** In addition, an employee who joined the company midway through the pandemic said, **"From the beginning, I felt it was difficult to network because I was working remotely, but through CAramel, I was able to meet reliable colleagues."** It has created an opportunity to connect with trusted colleagues across the company, even outside of one's own department or team.
Future prospects	We aim to strengthen cooperation with the executive level and create an environment where women can work at CyberAgent for a long time. Furthermore, we aim to become an organization that is supported by all employees, including men.

NTT DOCOMO, Inc. (LEAN IN DOCOMO)

A company-approved circle that started as a voluntary activity by three employees

Industry: Telecommunications and Smart Life / Number of employees: Approx. 8,100 / Ratio of male to female employees: 8:2

Title of Initiative	LEAN IN DOCOMO
Year of Foundation	2017
Goal	Creating opportunities for docomo women to lean in with confidence, courage, and aspiration
Overview	As a club activity of employee volunteers, we plan events with various themes. In the past, we have held **casual lunch meetings, workshops to identify strengths, reading sessions, and lectures by outside guest speakers. During the pandemic, we have held online lunch meetings where we have invited guests with diverse attributes such as executive officers, managers, and young employees to give relay talks**. We also interact with other companies' circles and are working to **build communities both inside and outside the company.**
Background	Among female employees, **worries about balancing childcare and career advancement are often heard, but it is not always possible to find someone nearby to talk to.** In order to create a connection where they can share their worries and encourage each other to take a step forward, three female employees who joined the Diversity Promotion Working Group run by the Human Resources Department started their activities. After six months of activities, the group was recognized as a company-approved circle. **Currently, the company also supports the circle activities.**
Management Structure	As of September 2020, there are 58 registered members, and the event is run by three volunteer employees. A total of about 300 people participated in the event, with the largest number being general employees in their 30s and 40s. **The number of participants from regional offices is increasing as the circle has started running online events.**
Response from participants	The circle receives feedbacks such as **"I learned that there are various role models within the workplace and was able to learn about various career plans,"** and "**I was able to find other people who have the same positive attitude toward stepping up as I do."** There are many participants who come to events repeatedly, and we are able to continuously provide opportunities for participants to take the first step for leaning in.
Future prospects	We hope to involve a wide range of people in LEAN IN DOCOMO activities, including young employees who are struggling with their future career plans, as well as employees of regional branches and group companies.

● Participant's Voice

I was introduced to the LEAN IN DOCOMO event by a senior colleague during my first year at the company. At the time, I wasn't sure how I was going to build my career, and I was feeling anxious. I participated as a young employee representative in a panel discussion hosted by LEAN IN DOCOMO with former Business Insider Japan Managing Editor as the guest speaker. She told me, "I don't think you can find what you want to do unless you work hard at your current job," which made me realize that I had been in too much of a hurry.

I think the best thing about LEAN IN DOCOMO is that you can listen to women who are active in their careers and hear their positive stories.

(20s, general employee)

Case 3	**WeWork Japan LLC (Women of WeWork)**

Promote peer support among employees through an inclusive internal community

Industry: Coworking space / Ratio of male to female employees: Male: Female = 5:5

Title of Initiative	Women of WeWork
Year of Foundation	2020
Goal	Eliminate the notion of being feminine or masculine
Overview	**An initiative to promote support among female employees by allowing them to share their concerns in a more inclusive environment through speaker events with internal and external guests and small group discussion circles.** It is one of the Employee Community Group (ECG), an employee community that aims to achieve inclusion and diversity at the U.S. headquarters, WeWork Companies, Inc.
Background	The internal survey on inclusion and diversity shows that many employees feel that they are given fair opportunities regardless of their gender/sex, and few women feel difficulty in working. On the other hand, **since there is a large percentage of female employees in their 20s and 30s who do not yet have children, female employees often expressed concerns about how they would be able to balance childcare and career when they have children in the future.**
Management Structure	Members are recruited from all employees, **including male members**, as side commitments while having main tasks. In order to keep the management members motivated, **the management layer actively communicates the significance of the activities and contributors to all employees.**
Response from attendees	Participants said, **"I was able to apply the insights from the discussion circle to my own work," and "I want to correct the image of female managers,"** which has actually had an effect on their work and generated insights for employees.
Future prospects	In the future, we would like to further expand the circle of discussion circles and create more opportunities for employees to support each other. We would also like to contribute to women's empowerment in society as a whole by engaging in activities to encourage working women outside the company.

● Participant's Voice

I participated in an event organized by Women of WeWork to hear the career story of a female executive. I was encouraged to learn about her experience of how she reached her current position in her thirties. Her story removed the ceiling that had unconsciously limited myself. At another event on gender bias in the workplace, there was a speaker who was a male manager, and I was relieved to know that there were many allies within the workplace who understood the concerns among female employees. Although I had never met the other participants before until I participated in those events, I felt that I could work with them and share the same feelings.

(Manager, 30s)

Money Forward, Inc. (Internal magazine, Maneho)

Creating an environment in which employees with diverse backgrounds can work comfortably

Industry: Internet service development / Number of employees: Approx. 800 / Ratio of male to female employees: Male: Female = 7:3

Title of Initiative	Dissemination of information within the workplace using the company newsletter "Maneho" and holding roundtable discussions
Year of Foundation	Launched an internal newsletter, Maneho, in 2019, and expanded to roundtable discussions in 2020
Goal	Create a workplace where everyone can work comfortably
Overview	**A group of volunteer members contributed an article to the company newsletter on the theme of diverse work styles.** They interviewed female employees who had problems with their work, careers, and childcare, but had found solutions, and wrote articles on the backgrounds of their problems and solutions to disseminate information within the workplace. **We also invite employees who are interested in the article to a roundtable discussion to share their concerns with other employees.** Discussions have been held on such themes as balancing childcare and career, how female managers work, and childcare by male employees.
Background	The founder herself took maternity leave, which led her to realize that there were few working mothers in the company who had also taken maternity leave. **She wanted to increase the number of role models who were actively working while raising children.**
Response from attendees	A reader of the company newsletter commented, **"It was encouraging to learn that there are working mothers in the company who are actively taking on the challenges they want to take on while raising their children.** A participant in the round-table discussion also said, **"If I had the opportunity to be promoted, I would like to take on the challenge of becoming a manager.**
Future prospects	In the future, we will provide more full-fledged opportunities for employees to realize diverse work styles.

● Participant's Voice

After seeing an article about female managers in the company newsletter, I participated in a lunch roundtable discussion on the topic of female managers.

While I feel that many women are active in the company, my impression is that there are still more men in management positions. At present, I am confident in my achievements and work, but as I move on to the next career step, I sometimes feel a little uneasy because there will be more men around me. What was particularly exciting in the roundtable discussion was the difference in the way men and women work and communicate with each other. My boss recently changed from a woman to a man, and our team is now all male. At first, I was troubled by the differences in text communication between men and women during remote work. For example, men's content was simpler when communicating via text, and I had the impression that face-to-face communication was easier to convey than women's. I was able to solve this problem by talking to my supervisor about it, but I was able to learn from the roundtable discussion that there were other people who felt the same kind of distress and discomfort about the way work is done between men and women.

(20s / Team Leader)

SoftBank Corporation (Peer Supporter System)

Peer supporters as familiar figures whom employees can consult without anxiety

Industry: Mobile communications services and other related businesses / Number of employees: Approx. 17,300 / Ratio of male to female employees: Male: Female = 7:3

Title of Initiative	Peer Supporter System
Year of Foundation	2000
Goal	First, to support employees to help each other, so that each one of them can lead a healthy and vibrant work life, both physically and mentally. Second, to realize a work environment where everyone can work comfortably. Third, to foster a corporate culture of mutual support.
Overview	It is a volunteer system in which employees who have obtained industrial counselor or career consultant qualifications serve as peer supporters, encouraging employees and providing individual consultations. A list of peer supporters is posted on the company intranet to encourage consultation, but as *peer* means colleague, **the peer supporters themselves often talk to other employees around them, leading to consultation**. There are three activity policies: **(1) to create a workplace where employees can mutually support each other by providing daily support such as noticing and talking to their close colleagues, responding to consultations, and cooperating with the Wellness Center (*); (2) to make peer supporters reliable and familiar supporters (people who listen, understand, and help) in the eyes of employees; (3) the peer supporters themselves should be healthy in mind and body and be able to communicate for the promotion of the system, and demonstrate cooperation among peer supporters, the Wellness Center, and human resources.** (*)An EAP (Employee Assistance Program) operated by SB At Work Co., Ltd. as an organization that is responsible for maintaining a safe and comfortable work environment at SOFTBANK Group companies and for maintaining and promoting the health of employees. Activities (three pillars) (1) Daily support: Peer supporters with expertise will notice changes in their colleagues, talk to them, build trusting relationships, and consult with them as a familiar presence. If necessary, they will connect you to a specialized department within the workplace. (2) Information dissemination and educational activities: To disseminate information to promote the use of the peer supporter system. (3) Improvement of the work environment: dissemination of information useful for creating a comfortable workplace (distribution of departmental online newsletters, posting on departmental websites, etc.), intra-departmental training, revitalization of communication, etc. (departmental exchange meetings, greeting campaigns, etc.)
Background	**It all started around 1998 when a counselor at the in-house counseling office of the then Japan Telecom Corporation (now Softbank Corp.) encouraged other employees to get certified as industrial counselors in order to provide mental support to employees**. From there, the number of certified counselors increased, and in order to reduce the number of employees experiencing mental health problems and those on leave, a peer supporter system was established (around 2005) as a mechanism to connect certified counselors with counselors in order to increase the number of people who can support them. **Furthermore, at that time, more and more women were continuing to work after childbirth, and the number of employees struggling to balance childcare and career was increasing.** Based on the peer supporter system, volunteers established the "Oyaoya Club (Parents Club)" to learn about parent-child communication and the "Working Mother's Subcommittee" to hold lunch consultations and other events led by peer supporters.
Management Structure	Currently, there are about 100 registered peer supporters (about 80 are currently active), 70% of whom are women. Peer supporters are appointed on an application, and after being appointed, the management office (Wellness Center) holds regular training sessions for peer supporters.
Response from attendees	The most common concerns of the counselors are workplace relationships and communication, and second is stress at work. Although we did not conduct a questionnaire survey of the counselors, **70% of the peer supporters who responded to the survey felt that it helped the counselors to sort out their feelings and relieve or reduce their stress**. At the working mothers' subcommittee, we often hear about the worries of working mothers who feel guilty about balancing work and housework, or about not being able to do both work and child-rearing even though they really want to. **Peer supporters who have actually experienced child rearing provide consultation and advice based on their experiences, which seems to help the participants feel relieved and refreshed**.
Future prospects	The number of peer supporters is still small compared to the number of employees for a volunteer system based on the concept of "a familiar advisor". We will continue to promote the peer supporter system in our group companies, and **aim to have one peer supporter for every 150 employees (about one in each department) in the future**. We also aim to increase the trust of employees in each peer supporter and the system, and to make it a cornerstone of psychological safety.

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Accenture Japan Ltd (Gender Diversity)

Training for female employees at different career levels and employee-led activities that work with the company to achieve high levels of satisfaction

Industry: General consulting / Number of employees: Approx. 15,000 / Ratio of male to female employees: Male: Female = 65%: 35%

Title of Initiative	Gender Diversity
Year of Foundation	2006
Goal.	**The company has set a global goal of achieving a 50:50 ratio of male to female employees by 2025.** In addition to strengthening the recruitment of women and maintaining and improving their willingness to continue working, management, human resources, and front-line workers will work together to continuously produce female leaders. Initially, it was launched as an initiative to promote the activities of female employees based on the current situation within the workplace, but the scope of the initiative has expanded as it has progressed**. In addition to promoting the activities of female employees, the company also aims to achieve gender equality in the workplace, including support for employees raising children, regardless of gender**.
Overview	**Training for female employees is held periodically according to each career level.** Workshops, discussions among employees, and panel discussions with senior employees are held to build career plans and dispel concerns about promotions. In addition, we have introduced the 3R Sponsorship Program, which monitors whether female employees who are candidates for management positions are receiving sufficient opportunities for professional growth within the workplace from the perspective of the three "Rs" (Right Sponsor / Right Role / Right Client).
Background	In the past, the main issues were the utilization of the childcare system and active networking among female employees, but after repeated surveys with employees every year, the data showed **that female employees were less motivated to advance and self-evaluate their skills compared to male employees.** In order to improve the issue that women tend to be more cautious about their careers even if there is no difference in their abilities, a training program was launched with the aim of relieving employees' anxiety and encouraging them to view career advancement in a positive light.
Management Structure	**As a measure to promote diversity, including gender, each organization has established a manager (department head level) as an Inclusion & Diversity (I&D) sponsor.** In addition, there are committees for each area (Gender, Cross Culture, Disability Inclusion, LGBTQ Pride), where interested employees from young to senior level gather across the organization to solve company-wide issues. Among the committees in the gender area, there are teams for planning and running seminars and trainings for women's career building, and for planning and running International Women's Day. There is also a management team for working parents' initiatives.
Response from attendees	**The average satisfaction score of the training for female employees is 4 or more (out of 5), and it has been highly evaluated by female employees of all career levels.** One participant said, **"It was good to be able to have discussions with other participants who are at similar career levels,"** providing an opportunity for employees who rarely work together to support each other. A female employee who is currently in a managerial position said**, "I used to think I didn't want to be promoted, but this training made me feel like I want to be promoted."** In addition, internal surveys have shown that employees who have been involved in I&D activities, including gender equality, are more satisfied with their careers and jobs, and their actions to achieve an equal work environment are linked to their own positive feelings.
Future prospects	Gender equality has already progressed with a 50:50 ratio of male to female young employees, and the number of female managers is increasing every year. As our next step, we are planning to strengthen training for female managers who are candidates for general manager positions. In addition, the percentage of male employees who take childcare leave is high, and the gender gap in work styles is becoming smaller, so we will prepare training programs for employees at different life stages, such as those who are balancing work and childcare, regardless of gender.

Conclusion

Through this survey, we learned that self-confidence is key for women to feel empowered and bring their authentic selves to work. We also found that peer support through community and mentorship is effective for working women to find solutions to their concerns about career. In addition, the survey revealed that many working women are using communities, networks, and services outside of the workplace to find solutions than support systems within the workplace. Utilizing communities outside of the workplace may be effective in terms of getting advice from an objective and new perspective.

It was surprising to find that the number of respondents who use support systems within the workplace was extremely low: 50% of the women thought that there was no support system in their workplace that they felt was effective, and another 20% said that there might be an effective support system, but they did not use it. In the background of most respondents who think that support systems outside of the workplace are effective, the reality may be that they have no choice but to rely on support systems outside of the workplace due to insufficient support systems within.

Career concerns vary from person to person. These concerns can be abstract such as confidence and anxiety, and sometimes they are even sensitive. It is not easy for companies to deal with such issues. This survey also revealed that simply preparing a support system is not enough for employees to feel empowered at work. Even so, the companies that we have interviewed in this study are sincerely addressing issues about diversity and inclusion and are making their own efforts to solve them essentially. As remote work is expected to advance in the future, it will become even more important to create a work environment where employees can work vigorously and healthily, both physically and mentally.

The work environment where all employees can be themselves and feel empowered benefits not only the employees but also to the company. It is our hope that this report will help increase the number of women who feel empowered at work. To this end, we hope that this report will serve as an opportunity for companies to work on creating inclusive workplaces where employees can support each other.

Closing Remarks

Through this project, we ourselves have learned a lot. We will continue to take steps toward the realization of a society where women can be themselves and feel empowered at work. Finally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who helped us in this project.

Lean In Tokyo / Global Shapers Community Tokyo Hub Project Team