Challenge 2
Cultivating individuals who are competent on a regional and global level

FR’s approach to people
We recruit and train international talent to develop individuals who can succeed in the world. This approach is rooted in our basic belief that the growth of the company and its employees hinges on respect for the individual.

The people behind the business
Respecting and supporting individuals to foster both corporate and personal growth

On the opening day of the UNIQLO ATRIUM Store in Russia.
Career paths of global talent

Fast Retailing strives to attract top talent from around the world and is in the midst of establishing a system that offers equal opportunity and fair evaluations, enabling employees to develop their careers at any of its operations worldwide.

FR’s approach to people is not just respecting individuals. By succeeding in the world of business, all of our employees offer value to society, discover the true meaning and joy of work, and grow as individuals. This process in turn leads to growth of the company and improves society by steering it in a better direction. FR has its sights set on being a company that attracts and nurtures talented people from around the world.

A structure that is highly transparent and ensures fair recruiting practices and treatment is key to attracting talent and empowering these people to shine. Similarly, FR needs to offer a working environment and work style that appeal to people throughout the world. We are currently building a personnel system that will standardize our global hiring practices in order to ensure that everyone is given the same opportunities. Through this system, everyone’s abilities and performance are evaluated so that employees can develop their careers with FR anywhere in the world. We believe that establishing this system will help to foster the highest respect for the individual.

We want all FR Group companies to function as a single entity, with all of our employees adhering to international best practices. This means working under a uniform, international platform, which the FR Group has dubbed “Global One.” Establishing English as the official means of internal communication is important for building and operating the Global One system. As such, FRMIC strives to train managers to think independently and be flexible so that they are capable of altering their approaches as necessary to solve the problems they encounter in day-to-day business. With an approach that views the entire company as a vehicle for resolving issues and opportunity development, FRMIC will remain dedicated to the ongoing development of human resources.

FR Chairman, President and CEO Tadashi Yanai serves as the president of FRMIC while esteemed Harvard Business School Professor Hirotaka Takeuchi serves as vice-president. Looking ahead, the FR Group will establish strategic bases of operation for FRMIC in such places as New York, Paris and Shanghai instead of only in Tokyo. FRMIC strives to create a hub of venues for developing human resources that are unrivaled while drawing on the knowledge of renowned business managers, researchers and top consultants from around the world. FRMIC is set up with the express purpose of supporting FR growth by simultaneously promoting management training and corporate reform. The genesis of FRMIC is rooted in a way of thinking that is diametrically opposed to the conventional conception of off-the-job training held by general training institutions. Implementation and actual practice are the cornerstones of sound business management. As such, FRMIC strives to train managers to think independently and be flexible so that they are capable of altering their approaches as necessary to solve the problems they encounter in day-to-day business. With an approach that views the entire company as a vehicle for resolving issues and opportunity development, FRMIC will remain dedicated to the ongoing development of human resources.

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To develop and grow highly profitable businesses throughout the world as a global company, FR realizes it is particularly vital to train personnel capable of managing Group companies. FRMIC was set up with the express purpose of supporting FR growth by simultaneously promoting management training and corporate reform. The genesis of FRMIC is rooted in a way of thinking that is diametrically opposed to the conventional conception of off-the-job training held by general training institutions. Implementation and actual practice are the cornerstones of sound business management. As such, FRMIC strives to train managers to think independently and be flexible so that they are capable of altering their approaches as necessary to solve the problems they encounter in day-to-day business. With an approach that views the entire company as a vehicle for resolving issues and opportunity development, FRMIC will remain dedicated to the ongoing development of human resources.

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UNIQLO Japan has a goal of employing at least one staff member with a disability at every store. Under this policy, introduced in 2001, there are now staff members with disabilities at nearly 90% of UNIQLO stores. These employees improve our stores by making all of our staff more considerate and observant, ultimately leading to better customer service.

Mariko Fujisawa, affectionately known as Marilyn, is a people person and is loved by everyone around her. She also has big goals for the future. 

As a child, Mariko Fujisawa loved playing dress up with doll cards and enjoyed mixing and matching clothes in different combinations. Ms. Fujisawa, who got a job at UNIQLO in 2008, is a perfect fit for the business.

"One day I went to see my sister at the UNIQLO in my neighborhood, where she was working part-time. She was talking to a customer and looked really cool," recalls Ms. Fujisawa. She was a first-year high school student at the time and strongly aspired to work at UNIQLO.

After hearing about her ambition, a guidance counselor in her school got in touch with the company, which paved the way for a trial employment period.

Ms. Fujisawa’s affinity for interacting with others helped her fit in right away. Looking back, she says that she was overjoyed when the store welcomed her with open arms. At the end of her trial training period, the staff wrote messages to her on cards, encouraging her to come back soon with each one of them writing words such as “Let's work together!” To this day, she still treasures these cards and the memories they represent.

After starting at UNIQLO, Ms. Fujisawa was tasked with unpacking products in the back room and restocking the floor with the merchandise. Like every employee, she had to quickly learn the ropes, master new tasks and move heavy boxes. She allocates a portion of her salary to her family and makes sure some goes to savings so that she remains on the path to a more independent life.

"The really great thing about UNIQLO is how much importance it places on the products and customers," she says, adding that she hopes to continue working with her colleagues at the Yodobashi Yokohama store so she can lend it a hand in achieving the high-stakes sales among UNIQLO stores worldwide. Even today, she vividly remembers the sight of her sister on the sales floor skilfully helping customers—a personal goal that she dreams of one day reaching.

Yuki Ogata sews with such incredible speed and accuracy that he can alter a pair of pants in three minutes flat. His formidable skills and strong sense of responsibility have earned him the trust and respect of his colleagues.

Yuki Ogata
UNIQLO Tokyo Dome City LaQua Store, Tokyo, Japan
Mental disability

Yuki Ogata has excelled on the sewing machine since his days as a student at vocational school. There he studied a number of subjects, including agriculture, woodworking and computers, but he has always been most passionate about sewing.

"I worked really hard to learn to use the sewing machine. I practiced sewing in a straight line, moving ahead and then going back, as well as pyramid stitching," he says. 

Mr. Ogata started working for UNIQLO when he was a third-year vocational school student in 2008, the same year he won first place at the 30th National Skills Competition for Persons with Disabilities and an accompanying award from the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare recognizing his achievement. He knew that he wanted to make a career out of sewing, so he joined UNIQLO as soon as he graduated from vocational school.

From Kitaarazu, Chiba Prefecture, Mr. Ogata commutes to work on his own by bus via the Tokyo Bay Aquiline bridge-tunnel, which runs beneath Tokyo Bay. He leaves home at 6:20 a.m. and arrives at his store half an hour before his 9:00 a.m. starting time. During the morning meeting he shares his goals for the day and discusses other tasks that need attention. Then he starts cleaning the store and taking out the waste. After the store opens he begins unpacking items of clothing, putting them on hangers and organizing them.

But his talent comes to light when the store gets busy with a surge in alteration orders. He is a whiz on the sewing machine and can alter garments with incredible speed. More importantly, his stitching is always straight and on point. He is so fast that he can alter a pair of pants perfectly in just three minutes on average. While his co-workers do regularly chip in to offer assistance, as he finds it difficult to measure, cut the hems and select the thread, he is an indispensable asset in his store.

“Everyone here is so nice—they teach me a lot,” he says.

Mr. Ogata has been selected to represent Japan at the 8th International Ablympics in Seoul, South Korea in 2011.

“I’m going to sew an apron with two pockets and a shoulder strap that ties behind. I’m so glad to have been selected to represent Japan,” he says.

When he listens to other people, he places both hands on his knees, sits up straight and focuses attentively on the speaker’s words—something he says one of his teachers taught him. Given his impressive skills and sense of responsibility, it is no wonder the staff place so much trust in him.

What underlies our concept of diversity and the employment of people with disabilities are one in the same.

The FR Group’s approach to business is based on the concept of ZEN-IN KEIEI, which requires every employee to do their work from the perspective of an actual business manager. At FR, workers are not just cogs in the corporate machine. Rather, they are empowered and encouraged to see themselves as business managers, which means thinking independently, determining what needs to be done and taking action.

The rationale for a diverse workforce and for employing individuals with disabilities is one and the same. Absolutely everyone has abilities and everyone can contribute to society. This is true of employees with disabilities, so all store team members need to work together to determine how each individual can best demonstrate their value to the company, put this into action. This kind of approach increases the strength of the team, as does our placing the same expectations for all of our employees. I know that I place a lot of demands on staff with disabilities, but this is something that I must do because we are a business and doing so is fair to everyone.

Jun Yokohama
Group Officer in charge of human resources
Fast Retailing Co., Ltd.