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Feature

Dialogue with an Expert

Promoting Business and Human Rights Initiatives Through Both Prevention and Remedies

- November 13, 2023: Toyal Group Human Rights Policy and CSR Procurement Policy formulated -

Emi Sugawara, an expert on human rights issues who serves as a director of the Global Compact Network Japan and teaches international human rights law at the Faculty of International Studies of Osaka University of Economics and Law, was invited to discuss “business and human rights” with Takeshi Ariyoshi, Executive Officer in charge of sustainability.

Respecting human rights in a meaningful way enhances trust and value as a company

Ariyoshi: In order to further strengthen our efforts to human rights, the Toyal Group formulated our Human Rights Policy and CSR Procurement Policy on November 13, 2023, reaffirming our commitment to respecting the human rights for all stakeholders, including business partners and employees. We are aware that there are various important points to take into account when considering “human rights” in corporate activities, but what are the most important things?

Sugawara: I believe that the starting point is most essential. In this case, answering the question, “Why is the Toyal Group working to address human rights issues?” Additionally, it is important that this reasoning is not passive, such as “because more and more companies are emphasizing human rights” or “because our business partners demand it,” but rather more proactive. By demonstrating the Toyal Group’s strong commitment and perspectives and being persuasive, you can gain more support and cooperation from business partners, which will also lead to building trust and enhancing your company’s value.

Human rights involve engaging with the assertions of both sides through dialogue



Anywhere people are involved, there is always a connection to human rights, so how can we see this as our own issue?

Ariyoshi: In order to improve literacy in the company as a whole, it is also important to raise employees’ awareness of human rights. How should we go about accomplishing this?

Sugawara: The Toyal Group has a diverse workforce, regardless of gender, age, or nationality, working at various locations in both Japan and overseas. One of the characteristics of human rights issues is that even if an issue is the same, the way in which it presents itself can differ due to differences in backgrounds and ways of thinking. As you work to spread awareness within the company, one important aspect is helping employees understand how their work is connected to human rights and how they can view human rights as their own issue.

Ariyoshi: The phrase “human rights” by itself may only conjure a vague image for some.

Sugawara: You’re right. Some people hear the words “human rights” and think of it as something far off and not related to them. However, we all have some biases from our past experiences, and therefore human rights issues can arise wherever people interact. If people are aware that they are part of the human rights issue, they will naturally recognize it as something that directly concerns them, and this will help spread awareness throughout the company.

Ariyoshi: In my position as an Executive Officer, I tend to focus only on thinking about the details of policies and initiatives, but I have come to realize once again how important it is for employees, including myself, to be able to make these issues our own. I felt that it was necessary to communicate effectively if I wanted to ensure this idea was understood throughout the company.

Managing human rights risks by promoting dialogue that starts with the issue

Sugawara: You just mentioned the keyword “communication,” but I also believe that human rights are about



Internal penetration through careful communication

dialogue.

Rights tend to clash, and the same is true with respect to human rights. Dialogue is the process of finding a sincere compromise when rights clash. While it is certainly important to establish systems and frameworks for managing human rights risks, it is equally important to focus on adjustments when issues arise. It is necessary to proceed with both “prevention” and “remedies.”

Ariyoshi: What you just said made me once again realize the importance of communication. Human rights issues can occur anywhere, and it is important to take that as a starting point for dialogue.

Sugawara: Looking at the activities of the Toyal Group, I have the impression that you are already working to solve human rights issues from the recruitment aspect and the fact that a diverse range of human capital are working there. I hope that moving forward, human rights issues will be addressed not only within your company but throughout the entire supply chain, from upstream to downstream. Furthermore, I believe that the process of dialogue creates trust, which is essential for a company to be chosen by the market and society.

Ariyoshi: Thank you for your valuable opinions and advice on this topic today. We will use this information as a reference as we continue to engage in dialogue with all our stakeholders.