



Ever since I was appointed Group CEO in April 2019, I have urged employees to “Break the Mold.” The message behind the slogan is that I want our employees to proactively pursue new challenges in this rapidly changing business environment without being bound by precedent, fixed ideas, or organizational boundaries. I would like to take this opportunity to share a few examples of how employees responded to this message.

Break the Mold

Our Challenge

Selecting a Free Workstyle

A free dress code policy was introduced in FY2019 as part of efforts to develop a corporate culture in which employees could pursue new challenges without being bound by precedent or convention. We received generally favorable feedback, such as “I felt that our corporate culture is changing” and “I was able to carry-out my responsibilities with a positive attitude” in our employee surveys. The policy also received positive feedback from the media, saying that it softened our conservative image. We also introduced frameworks allowing employees to telecommute or adopt flexible work schedules. I hope that providing employees with the flexibility to shape their working lives based on their lifestyle and professional responsibilities, without being bound by strict rules governing where or when they work, will allow them to produce a steady stream of new ideas that are unrestricted by fixed ideas.



Self-Development of RPA Tools

SMBC Group has been promoting the use of Robotic Process Automation (“RPA”) since FY2017. The purpose of introducing RPA is to free employees from routine tasks so that they can focus on high-value added tasks. While many companies have also introduced RPA, what makes our RPA efforts stand out is that we provide our employees with the training necessary to develop RPA tools themselves. Specifically, we established a comprehensive training program that not only includes classroom learning, but also provides one-on-one support to employees interested in developing RPA tools. Employees now play a critical role in pushing forward work style reform as they are further automating tasks and operations after experiencing firsthand the benefits of using self-developed RPA tools to enhance efficiency.

Participants

Approx.

1,200

Automated (hours)

Approx.

120k

Producing new CEOs

I am producing new CEOs from our employees in order to support them in breaking through the confinements placed upon them by the expected norms and precedents of the financial sector so that they could pursue new challenges. Through this project I have proactively allocated funds and human resources to employees who have come up with interesting new ideas that I feel could develop into new growth areas for SMBC Group, with the said individual assigned to lead the new in-house business venture. Nine companies have been established so far, with the establishment of SMBC CLOUDSIGN drawing particular attention given its CEO is still in his 30s. Mr. Hideki Mishima, the CEO of SMBC CLOUDSIGN, was a mid-career hire who joined SMBC in 2018 and was originally responsible for overseeing our digital innovation center, “hoops link tokyo”. The initial vision for SMBC CLOUDSIGN was born from discussions between Mr. Mishima and representatives from benigo4.com at a hoops link tokyo event, and Mr. Mishima was named the CEO of SMBC CLOUDSIGN after successfully pitching the vision to SMBC Group’s top management team. I will continue to extend the maximum level of support to motivated, proactive employees, such as Mr. Mishima.

Feedback from RPA Training Participants:

Members of my department are often required to travel for work, and the calculation of monthly travel expenses had become a time-consuming burden. Thus, I developed an RPA tool which automatically calculates employees’ travel expenses. As of today, I have developed ten RPA tools, and I feel that I have been able to contribute to the streamlining of my department’s operations. My experience with RPA led me to develop an interest in programming, and I earned a certificate in JAVA through self-study. Going forward, I want to challenge myself by taking on new responsibilities where I can leverage my programing skills.



Satoe Umezawa

Business Promotion Group
Sustainable Business Promotion Dept.
Planning Dept., Wholesale Banking
Unit

Becoming a Role Model as CEO of the new in-house business venture:

Discussions with my General Manager was the first step in my journey to becoming the CEO of SMBC CLOUDSIGN. I strongly believed that the project should be led by someone who was the most passionate about the new business, and I conveyed this to him. An employee directly approaching his or her superior as I did is unthinkable in the conservative culture of Japanese banks, and I feel that the company taking the time to listen to me and actually appointing me as CEO shows how seriously SMBC Group views the topic of self-reformation. Furthermore, the establishment of SMBC CLOUDSIGN was made possible due to the generous support I received from various internal departments. SMBC Group is an organization where employees who are pursuing new challenges or are thinking about pursuing new challenges can count on receiving the full support of their colleagues and supervisors. The importance of telecommuting is rapidly increasing given the current environment, and our digital contract services are receiving much interest as the last piece of digital technology that makes telecommuting a truly viable workstyle. I take great pride in leading a business that has the potential to make a positive impact on society, and I will do my best so that I can become a role model as the CEO of the new in-house business venture.



Hideki Mishima

President & CEO
SMBC CLOUDSIGN, Inc.