

Quality and Customer Service



Overview

Basic Approach

In recent years, customers and other stakeholders have become increasingly concerned about the protection of consumer rights. Product safety, security, and accessibility are vital in this respect. True to its philosophy and policy for product quality and customer service, Sony is wholeheartedly committed to improving product and service quality from its customers' viewpoints in order to maintain and enhance satisfaction, confidence, and trust. In particular, Sony is working to ensure product safety and security while also improving usability and accessibility, in the conviction that its most important goal is to remain a highly trusted partner to all customers.

Philosophy and Policy

Since the start of its operations, Sony has been firmly committed across all of its businesses to providing customer-oriented, high-quality products and services. This philosophy is also set forth in the Founding Prospectus drafted in 1946 by Sony's co-founder, Masaru Ibuka.

As set out in the Sony Group Code of Conduct, Sony delivers life-enhancing products, services and entertainment. The Code of Conduct also states that Sony meets or exceeds legally mandated standards for quality, safety, security and accessibility, and sets out Sony's commitment to providing customers with information that is accurate, and easy to read and understand.

Sony has established the Sony Pledge of Quality, which lays out its basic policy on product and customer service quality. This is aimed at reinforcing awareness of Sony's commitment to ensuring that the quality of its products and customer services exceeds the expectations of its customers around the world.

Looking to the Future

Sony remains committed to a fundamental policy of ensuring product safety, security, and accessibility, taking its customers' viewpoints into consideration in order to deliver product quality and customer service that exceed expectations. It will continue leveraging its worldwide network to collect and analyze information, which can then be reflected in the next releases of products and customer services.

Milestones

- 2001: Sony CS Charter established
- 2004: Corporate quality standards established based on the customer's perspective
- 2006: Corporate executive in charge of product quality and safety appointed, and rules enhanced for rapid reporting of product incidents to management
- 2007: Sony Pledge of Quality established (revised in 2012), and Quality officers appointed for each electronics affiliate and region
- 2009: Product security system enhanced, and Quality Reliability Lab opened
- 2014: Secure@Sony program established, allowing anyone to report security issues relating to Sony products, network services, or websites
- 2017: Sony Product Security Incident Response Team (PSIRT) launched and external initiatives enhanced
- 2019: Systematic operation of teams responsible for promoting accessibility implemented
- 2020: Hiring and training of employees with human-centered design (HCD) skills enhanced, and AI ethics requirements incorporated into the electronics business commercialization process
- 2021: HCD expert certification system launched

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Product Quality and Quality Management

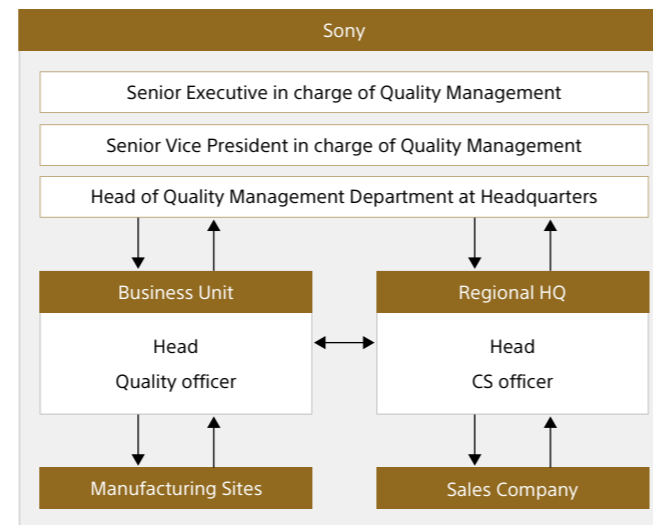
The Sony Pledge of Quality declares that “Sony employees will always respect our customers’ viewpoints in striving to deliver product quality and customer service that exceed their expectations.” To this end, Sony makes continuous, decisive efforts to enhance product quality and to reinforce its quality management system.



Sony’s Quality Management System Framework

Sony has configured its quality management system by defining quality management mechanisms across all processes, from product planning, development, design and manufacturing to sales and customer service. This has included defining the roles, responsibilities and authority of those responsible for product and customer service quality and establishing guidelines. Based on this quality management system, Sony is implementing measures on an ongoing basis to improve the quality of its products and services. This section describes some examples of such measures.

Sony’s Quality Management System Framework



The Role of Senior Vice President in Charge of Quality Management

The Senior Vice President in charge of Quality Management is appointed with the task of coordinating efforts to improve product and customer service quality and ensuring timely responses to problems. Rules worldwide have been strengthened to ensure prompt reporting to the Senior Vice President in charge of Quality Management when Sony receives information about an incident involving a Sony product that affects or may affect customer safety, and information about security issues relating to products and network services or the potential for such occurrences. Based on the reports received, the Senior Vice President in charge of Quality Management provides the necessary follow-up and instructs the relevant divisions to investigate the incidents and respond appropriately to the customer.

The Role of Quality Officers and CS Officers

Sony has appointed Quality officers within each business unit and tasked them with promoting activities to improve product quality and spearheading initiatives to enhance the quality of products and services

in specific business areas under the direction and supervision of the Senior Vice President in charge of Quality Management and the head of the relevant business unit. Regular Quality officer meetings are also held to evaluate the progress of quality-oriented business plans, promote initiatives aimed at achieving targets, and debate specific activities and responses to quality-related issues and common challenges. Sony has also appointed CS officers responsible for improving the quality of customer service in markets around the world where Sony products are sold and has tasked them with spearheading a network of global-level initiatives under the supervision of the Senior Vice President in charge of Quality Management and the individual in charge of the relevant regional headquarters. Meetings of business unit Quality officers and regional CS officers are held to evaluate the progress of quality and customer service business plans and promote initiatives aimed at achieving targets, and to share information on customer service and product quality activities and common challenges, thereby contributing to global efforts to improve product quality and customer service. In addition, Sony has also created frameworks specific to each business unit and region in order to ensure its products comply with pertinent laws and regulations.

Quality Management

With the aim of fulfilling the Sony Pledge of Quality, Sony has formulated mid-term and fiscal year targets for product quality and customer service initiatives and has also established key quality-related indicators for business plans. Business units and regional headquarters subsequently devise their own quality and customer service targets and business plans for the fiscal year, in line with which they continue to promote quality improvement initiatives. Sony holds meetings of top managers of the electronics business to deliberate and decide on key strategies related to product quality and customer service. It also formulates and administers quality standards applicable to Sony’s electronics products and related customer service, focusing on criteria such as product safety and performance, labeling, customer service, usability and accessibility. These standards are updated continuously to reflect technological advances, changes in applicable legal and regulatory requirements, and social changes, with the aim of ensuring Sony’s ability to deliver quality and services

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that exceed the expectations of customers. Sony has also obtained certification under ISO 9001 for all sites manufacturing electronics products.

Responding to the Customer

Sony makes active use of customer feedback to improve its products and customer service. Sony customer information centers promptly and accurately collate customer opinions, reports of malfunctions after purchase, questions regarding use, and other feedback. This feedback is aggregated into a database for the planning, design and product quality groups to work together to improve product quality and strengthen product performance, reporting progress to top management on an as-needed basis. Sony is also committed to ensuring responding to security vulnerabilities in a timely manner. To this end, it has established Secure@Sony, a public hotline for customers and security researchers to submit vulnerabilities found in Sony products and network services.

The communication tools used by customers are becoming more diverse. In order to meet these broader customer expectations, Sony also analyzes customer feedback on social media.

Quality Hotline

It is vital to detect product quality-related problems at the earliest stage possible. To that end, Sony has established the Quality Hotline to gather product quality-related information, including reports of problems, as well as opinions from Sony Group employees.

Group employees can use the Quality Hotline, an in-house website, to send messages regarding matters that are too difficult to handle at their workplace, such as certain product or service quality issues. They can also share findings identified during customer use of products and any problems with the quality of product-related customer service as perceived by customers who have made use of those services. Upon investigating a problem to ascertain the veracity of the information received, the Quality Hotline office proposes and introduces measures to prevent previous problems from recurring and potential new problems from emerging.

Market Quality Improvements

Sony has established dedicated quality management organizations in each of its business areas that are responsible for improving the

quality of pertinent products in each market. At Sony headquarters, information related to quality issues arising in the marketplace is gathered in a timely manner from a broad range of sources in Japan and overseas, and is reported weekly to headquarters quality management and technical specialists. Based on the reported information, Sony ascertains whether or not issues in the marketplace have been addressed appropriately. In addition to ensuring that such issues are thoroughly addressed, Sony is accelerating its quality improvement performance by promoting measures to prevent recurrence and proactive measures in relation to quality issues.

Responses to Quality Issues

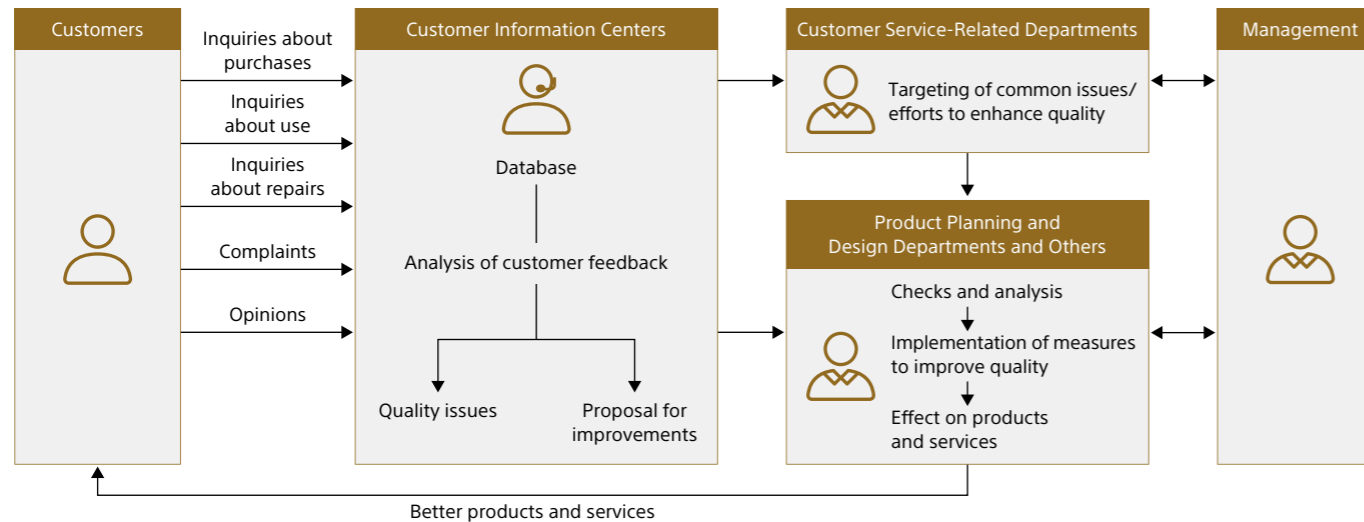
Sony recognizes that ensuring its customers' satisfaction, confidence and trust is one of its most important management tasks, and strives to prevent quality-related problems through the systems and efforts described earlier in this document.

Sony responds swiftly in the event of a quality-related issue, with the relevant departments working together to investigate facts and take appropriate action on a global scale. When such an issue arises, Sony decides upon the need for public announcements and market action for customers, and implements any needed steps after undertaking various studies of the issue, following a process common to all Sony products.

This process starts with the gathering of information from customer service centers worldwide and collaboration with concerned local parties to ensure an accurate grasp of the issue. Based on information collected, Sony then works to determine the correct response by identifying the cause of the issue, implementing countermeasures and promptly verifying the effectiveness thereof, and reviewing the issue from the customer's perspective. Sony also cooperates with CS officers at sites in each region to ensure the same level of service is provided to customers the world over. With regard to methods and media for issuing public announcements of product quality-related issues, Sony examines the effectiveness of the various means at its disposal, including websites, e-mail, notification via apps, or other media.

[Important Notices](#)

Utilizing Customer Feedback



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Product Quality, Safety and Long-Term Reliability

Improving the Quality of Products

Sony strives to maximize product quality by improving design, manufacturing, and parts.

Design Quality

In the initial stages of the design process, the individual in charge of a particular business unit verifies new technologies and new parts and, from the user's perspective, determines how a product is to be used. At the conclusion of the design process, the individual in charge confirms the degree to which the intended levels of product quality and reliability have been realized. In addition, in order to give customers who place their trust in the Sony brand the smoothest possible experience, Sony requires relevant departments, including original equipment manufacturer (OEM)* and original design manufacturer (ODM)* companies, to comply with group-wide quality standards. Compliance with these standards is also tested at the end of the design process. Such approaches prevent the occurrence of problems pertaining to new technologies and new product parts, while also ensuring that product designs incorporate consideration of user convenience.

* OEM refers to manufacturers contracted to perform manufacturing, ODM refers to manufacturers contracted to perform design and manufacturing.

Production Quality

In the effort to ensure that Sony does not receive, manufacture or ship anything with quality-related problems, Sony adheres to a policy of workmanship at all of its manufacturing sites that ensures customers can use Sony products with confidence. Initiatives include

setting important targets at each manufacturing site and implementing PDCA processes to facilitate the achievement of such targets and the continuous improvement of production quality. Sony has also established standard production quality rules to ensure Sony products manufactured by OEM/ODM companies are of the same high quality as those manufactured at Sony production sites.

Component Quality

Recognizing the importance of parts and determined to manufacture products built for long-term use, Sony carefully selects key parts independently for each of its major product categories and is pursuing focused efforts aimed at increasing the reliability of the parts it uses through cooperation among relevant departments and the development of new reliability evaluation technology.

Improving Product Safety

Providing reliable products that customers can use safely is a top priority for Sony. Accordingly, at every stage of its business activities, including product planning, development, design, manufacturing, marketing, and after-sales service for all products and services, Sony takes steps to comply with safety standards based on laws and regulations while constantly striving to surpass those standards in order to maintain the safety of its products. As part of these efforts, Sony has established a team in charge of product safety assessment from a medical perspective. When developing products employing new technologies and using new technologies at events, Sony also seeks advice on product safety from a medical perspective from outside experts in order to ensure products do not affect customer health, and this advice is then incorporated into technology assessment, product development, design and engineering. When deemed necessary, Sony also conducts evaluation tests to assess safety with the assistance of a specialized organization.

If a safety-related problem involving a Sony product is reported, Sony immediately collects information and examines the facts, and then takes the steps necessary to rectify the problem.

Improving the Long-Term Reliability of Products

Sony has established a Quality Reliability Lab supporting Sony's commitment to deliver safe, durable and reliable products to customers. The Quality Reliability Lab has assigned specialists to work full time on improving technologies essential to product reliability and continues working to ensure the long-term reliability of products by developing elemental technologies for preventing age-related deterioration and corrosion of materials and parts, as well as technologies necessary to ensure the reliability of new technologies and functions required for new products and to analyze and evaluate such technologies and functions. These technologies and the information obtained through these activities are utilized to improve design and parts selection processes and increase reliability of products. Sony also presents some of its own knowledge of evaluation technologies at academic meetings and industry conferences and gatherings, seeking to go beyond its own walls and contribute to the industry.

Product Security

With more products connecting to networks, there is a heightened danger of personal information leaks, tampering or destruction of data, product hijacking and other such security issues. As a consequence, it is vital to improve the quality of the security of products and network services.

Sony has a function for collecting security risk-related information from outside experts, researchers and other individuals. Sony assigns managers responsible for the software security of products and has a dedicated department for this purpose. The department coordinates with business units to address issues with the security of products. Based on the information received, the department assesses the impact of risk on customers from a software security perspective and implements appropriate measures.

Sony also implements security design and response systems in order to deliver products that customers can use with confidence. In 2012,

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the Sony Security Development Lifecycle was formulated as measures and rules to enhance security quality throughout each phase, from product development and network service planning right up to the time the product is discarded or the network service is terminated. As part of this process, it subjects products and network services to pre-shipping and pre-release inspections, including security risk assessments and the use of product security vulnerability detection tools. These measures and rules are in place for all Sony products and network services, and regular inspections and audits are performed to ensure that they are being adhered to. Sony has also established internal guidelines pertaining to the security of products. It regularly reviews and updates these guidelines, and continues to implement employee training programs to enhance product security.

Sony Security Development Lifecycle

(Development processes in product development focused on improving the security quality of products and network services)

Product Development Phases	Product planning	Design	Implementation	Testing	Production	Operation and maintenance	Disposal
Security Measures	Systematic adoption of security measures	Security by design	Secure implementation	Security tests	Compliant with security quality	Safe operations and maintenance	Deletion of data
Training							

Due to growing concern over security issues relating to the Internet of Things (IoT), regulators in various countries/regions are developing new laws and regulations concerning IoT security. Sony has included requirements for conformance to IoT security regulations in the Sony Security Development Lifecycle. It is also establishing internal frameworks for collating and ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements in individual countries and regions.

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Customer Service

In addition to continuously improving product quality, Sony is taking various steps to improve its responsiveness and its customer service capabilities, in line with the commitment set forth in the Sony Pledge of Quality: “Sony employees will always respect our customers’ viewpoints in striving to deliver product quality and customer service that exceed their expectations.” In customer service, this includes responding to changing customer needs, and in repair services this includes, building organizations designed to ensure the best possible repair service quality.

Organizational Structure

Sony has assigned CS officers in markets around the world where Sony products are sold. Under the guidance and supervision of the Senior Vice President in charge of Quality Management and heads of regional headquarters, Sony has also introduced a set of key performance indicators to enhance customer service quality on a global level. Sony has also established a network of bases through which it provides services tailored to the needs of customers in each region.

Training for Customer Support Staff

Sony is committed to providing high-quality services to customers around the world. To achieve this, it provides ongoing training for both its own employees and those service partners. In addition to focusing on the acquisition of new service technologies and the sharing of solutions to ensure issues are addressed swiftly and effectively, Sony is also making efforts to improve customer service and implement new tools. Staff also receive comprehensive ongoing

training to help customers get the greatest possible enjoyment from their Sony products.

Customer Information Centers and Customer Service Improvements

Sony established its first customer information center in 1963 in Japan to respond to customer inquiries. Today, Sony has customer information centers worldwide, enabling it to provide prompt responses to customer needs that reflect customers’ perspectives, thereby helping Sony to improve the quality of its customer service. Sony currently has 29 contact centers worldwide, providing service to customers in 127 countries.

In addition to support via telephone and e-mail, in several regions, Sony provides customer support via such means as live Internet chat sessions, support using social media and messaging apps, and online community forums where customers can share information to help each other find solutions. In these ways, Sony tailors its support to meet the increasingly diverse needs of its customers in every region of the world.

In addition, Sony conducts surveys to determine customer satisfaction at various touchpoints, and makes improvements based on the survey results in its efforts to continually improve customer satisfaction.

More convenient instruction manuals with less paper

To provide better explanations on how to use its products, Sony is bolstering its online support and providing online instruction manuals for improved searchability and greater convenience so that users are able to quickly find what they are looking for.

The Sony website has a support section that offers not only information on the products themselves but also additional support information on software upgrades and network service updates. This is designed to help users better understand Sony products, software,

and services, as well as to enable them, when needed, to troubleshoot as quickly as possible. To accommodate a variety of user environments, Sony also provides support information compatible with mobile devices for greater customer convenience. Sony currently offers services through its website in 40 languages. In terms of printed product manuals, Sony provides brief “startup guides” that focus on the information needed to begin using a product, such as how to connect and set up, and how to use the basic functions.

For some products sold globally, Sony has developed instruction manuals with minimal text and more extensive visuals, making it possible to include multiple languages in a single manual, which is expected to contribute to environmental protection by reducing paper consumption.

Repair and Service Network

Currently, there are 3,286 Sony repair service locations worldwide. To enhance customer satisfaction, Sony is working to meet customer needs by performing immediate problem diagnosis at the repair reception desk, improving repair quality and reducing the number of days required for repairs, among other efforts. In addition, Sony is continuously enhancing its service network to ensure that it can respond appropriately to repair requests in each region for each product. By strengthening the feedback mechanism for product quality based on repair information, Sony also aims to keep enhancing quality.

Consumer AV Product Service Locations (Fiscal Year 2023)

Region	Repair Service Locations
Japan	405
United States/Canada	608
Europe	726
Mainland China and Hong Kong Region	567
Asia Pacific*1	531
Other Areas*2	449

*1 Southeast Asia, Oceania, India, South Korea and Taiwan Region

*2 Middle East, Latin America and Africa

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Improving the User Experience

User experience is an essential aspect of quality at Sony. In order to gain an accurate understanding of the increasingly diverse needs of customers and to deliver user experiences that meet those needs, Sony has adopted Human-Centered Design (HCD) processes and ensures that its design efforts always take the customer's perspective.

System

Sony is promoting HCD via collaboration between relevant departments such as business groups. This initiative is driven by a team that promotes activities across the Group and is overseen by the Senior Vice President in charge of Quality Management. Products and services are becoming more multi-functional all the time, and their user interfaces also tend to become more complex with the advance of technology. Sony employs intradepartmental cooperation on development to deliver products and services that people can use with ease and comfort.

Using Human-Centered Design in Product and Service Development

Sony is working to improve product usability and create experiences that meet the core needs of customers. It conducts worldwide user research including home visits and user interviews. These efforts are part of a continuing cycle of issue identification and product improvement, which includes prototyping and usability testing in the upstream stage of design. Employees also conduct long-term usage surveys, including interviews with customers, both before and after

product release. In addition, Sony analyzes how customers feel and behave when they use a service, and then works to improve the user experience by sharing customer feedback with relevant personnel. With the WF-1000XM4 Fully Wireless Headphones, this HCD-based approach enabled Sony to achieve both compact, simple packaging design and a seamless setup experience for customers. As customers unpack the product, they are intuitively given the information they need to complete necessary operations. Sony enlisted its HCD experts, planners, system developers, and design staff to work together on conducting operational log analysis, prototyping, and usability testing to ensure that the significantly smaller packaging design compared to the previous model did not compromise the customer experience. With the Tokyo Matrix attraction in the Tokyo Kabukicho Tower in Shinjuku, Tokyo, Sony focused on the user's point of view from the planning stage and continued to pursue the ultimate in strategy experiences. Before the attraction's opening, repeated verification and improvements were carried out with users' perspectives in mind, successfully reducing waiting times and ensuring the game's difficulty was appropriate.

- [WF-1000XM4](#)
- [The Tokyo Matrix](#)

Systems for User Research and Testing

Sony has built an environment and established systems that ensure user research and testing can be carried out quickly and efficiently via group-wide collaboration spanning sites in Japan and overseas and the use of online tools. There is also an internal monitor program through which employees and their families participate in questionnaire surveys, interviews, and usability tests. Employees with disabilities also play an active role in this program, enabling the collection of input from a diverse range of users. These systems and programs enable Sony to deliver a superior user experience and keep creating products that are easy to use.



Scene of usability testing

Formulating Internal Standards and Applying Acquired Expertise

Product and service designers from across the Sony Group meet to formulate guidelines for elements such as interactions, use of words and icons on screens. Some of these aspects are also included in Sony Group's quality standards, which are quality requirements that products and services must comply with. As such, they are continuously managed and implemented through the quality management system. For implementation of inclusive design, Sony has also established the rules of product commercialization processes incorporating HCD. The knowledge gained through user research and testing, the expertise of the Product Development departments, and case studies of the application of user experience (UX) design are shared across the Group as well. Documentation containing the relevant guidelines and expertise, including commercialization processes, is posted on Sony's internal portal site to ensure that everyone at the Sony Group has access to them. This information is used in product and service development as Sony continues to work to enhance usability for customers.

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Human Resource Development and Awareness-raising Activities on HCD

In order to further deepen employee understanding of HCD, Sony also holds lectures featuring experts open to all employees and provides an e-learning course for all employees covering HCD. It is also working to hire and train employees with HCD-related skills. Sony is continuously implementing programs to develop employees who are ready to lead customer-focused initiatives, including training to learn techniques for creating experiences that reflect customers' needs and systematic study of HCD processes and methods over the course of approximately six months. Through these activities, employees involved in various aspects of product and service creation are working to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to master HCD.

In 2021, Sony launched a system to certify employees with a high level of expertise and experience as HCD experts. These experts will play a leading role in the workplace. Three HCD experts were newly certified in 2023, and all 16 HCD experts are working to ensure that it becomes further entrenched in development departments in Japan and overseas.

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