

THE POWER OF CLOTHING

Making The World A Better Place



01 SPOTLIGHT ON EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

The Power of Clothing, Vol. 01 Making the World a Better Place

On the surface, the store is ordinary, even peaceful. Look a little closer, however, and it is clear that there is more to see than individual articles of clothing—the sheer volume of products being particularly noteworthy. But who makes these items? Where were they produced, and how? And finally, what will happen to them after they are sold?

UNIQLO, recognizing the wide range of issues related to its core business, has already started trying to address these matters toward making the world a better place, one step at a time. This publication, designed to inform people about what we are doing, is a part of that process. We also hope it will increase the number of people who share our way of thinking. One might ask if this can be accomplished through clothing. We believe it can, and that the “power of clothing” is greater than we all might imagine.

In this issue, we look at the employment of people with disabilities. We decided to approach this topic from a range of different viewpoints, so in these pages we bring you the ideas of UNIQLO store staff members, as well as the opinions and insights of other colleagues and staff from external organizations. We also speak with writer Randy Taguchi, who visited one of our stores. But above all, we hope that the stories here offer our readers fresh perspectives and a new opportunity to consider social relationships.

CSR Department, Fast Retailing Co., Ltd.

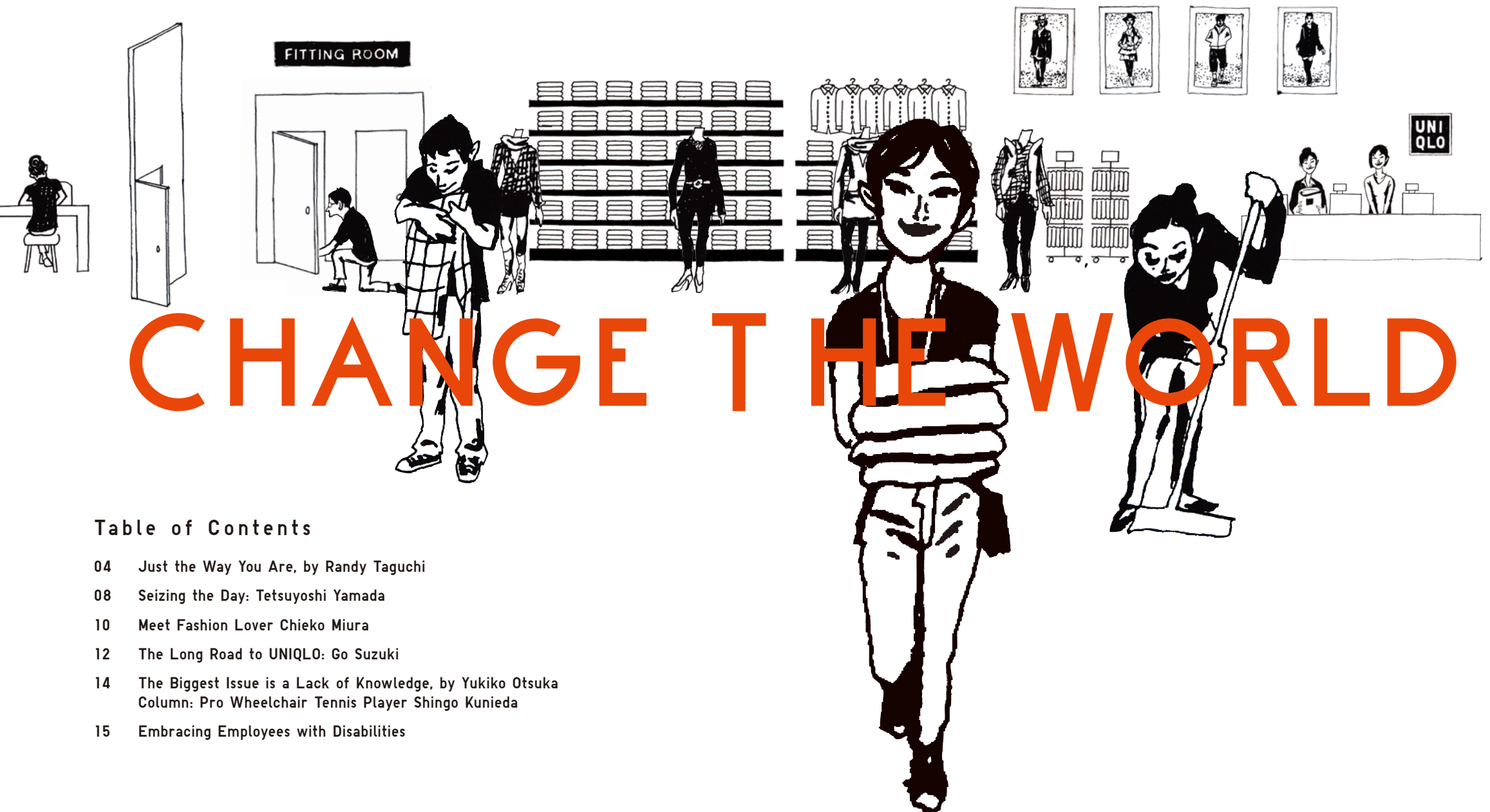


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UNIQLO continues to employ individuals with disabilities across Japan, because the company takes pride in having significant numbers of disabled people working in its stores. Several organizations that implement social programs have started to take notice. Author Randy Taguchi recently visited Okinawa to investigate the roots of UNIQLO's efforts to employ disabled individuals. She shares her discoveries here.

Tosato Gima clearly remembers the first time she met Rieko Uehara. "We were different ages and we liked different things. Our lives were very different, but there was something about her that made me want to get to know her. She can't hear what other people say because she has a hearing disability. But she is so full of life, despite her disability. She loves to work and she is able to laugh off the little things that trouble so many of us. I was drawn to her attitude toward life, because I too have had problems. One person with a disability and another without one—we are different, but I wanted to explore the common ground between us."

Ms. Uehara said: "We as people are all different, but we are all also perfect just the way we are. By helping one another, we can live together in a better way."

What was not achievable by one individual was accomplished by two. And while this may sound like a fanciful dream, this is a true story.

Just the Way You Are

By Randy Taguchi

SPECIAL FEATURE

01

A STORY FROM OKINAWA

"I don't know what it's like to live with a disability, but I do know that life's challenges are things we both share." —Tosato Gima



Rieko Uehara
UNIQLO Aeon Naha Store
Okinawa Prefecture
Hearing disability

"I was scared of the customers at first, but Gima's words gave me courage."

SPECIAL FEATURE

01

A STORY FROM OKINAWA



Gima was surprised by what she read in the Employment of People with Disabilities Manual. Everything in it was related to procedures. Without substantive guidance, she felt the company was simply throwing the disabled person she had just hired into the workplace. "Something was missing," she said.

Uehara was the first disabled person that Gima's store had hired under the company's employment policy. Uehara was shy and anxious when she first started the job. Gima, as a supervisor, was concerned about her after noticing that she always worked at the sewing machine in silence to avoid standing out. If she continued to distance herself from the other staff, she would not be able to work as a member of the team. Gima was also worried that Uehara would not fit in unless she could find some way to express herself.

Uehara, 40, didn't know how to react when asked why she wasn't reaching out to others. She lacked prior working experience—after all, UNIQLO was her first job. But she needed to earn a living and she was grateful to have a job at a time when the economy was so sluggish. At work, she often worried that she would somehow fail if she had to come face to face with customers, because she believed that she could not work as effectively as her coworkers.

Gima sympathized with her. This feeling stemmed from seeing Uehara quietly working at her sewing machine. She started to realize that no matter how hard Uehara worked, she would always have to deal with her disability. So Gima decided that she was the one who needed to change, and she did so by resolving to learn sign language. If she could use sign language to communicate, then Uehara would be able to express herself at work. During lunch breaks, Gima began learning the language from Uehara, and also introduced one sign-language pattern to the other staff members at every morning meeting.

Soon, everyone at the store was practicing sign language, which meant a lot to Uehara because it was a sign of acceptance that gave her the



Tosato Gima
UNIQLO Haninsu Ginowan Store
Okinawa Prefecture

"We've had our share of arguments, like when Uehara said 'I can't,' for example."

courage to interact with others. Uehara had long accepted that she would be forever in the background, but Gima's willingness to reach out was a strong source of support.

Gima had developed a sense of discipline from her mother, who singlehandedly raised her from a young age after her father passed away. Due to her upbringing, Gima lived by the heartfelt conviction that people were meant to help each other. As the two women shared their own stories, they learned about each other's lives. We all have problems. Of course, many of us do not understand the difficulties associated with disabilities, but life's challenges are something that we all share. Every person is different, but certain commonalities link us, and this is what makes us human.

The relationship between Gima and Uehara eventually started to influence other staff members. People saw that even things that are difficult to understand can be learned through repetition. As time passed, most of the staff became skilled at sign language, and Uehara was able to tell customers that she had a hearing disability. But above all, a communal bond began to form in the store.

"Not being able to speak out about disabilities is the hardest thing to live with," Uehara said. After all, her disability is a precious part of who she is as an individual.

News that employment of a disabled person in Okinawa had been so successful spread to other stores across the country, eventually leading to the reexamination of UNIQLO's policy on the employment of people with disabilities. The friendship between two people had changed the company. Uehara is now in her fifteenth year of employment and she and Gima are still close friends.

People come first—this is the thinking that underlies UNIQLO's efforts to employ people with disabilities.

"A communal bond began to form in the store." —Tosato Gima



Gima and Uehara's sign-language conversations can become quite animated. Even people who don't understand sign language can clearly see that the two enjoy conversing with each other.



Gima suggested that everyone should learn one sign-language pattern a day at the morning meetings so they could communicate with Uehara.



Randy Taguchi

Author Randy Taguchi launched her writing career with her first novel, *Consent*, which was published by Shinchosha in 2000. Her books focus on a range of themes related to the human heart. Her latest novel, *Perfect Day to Live Again*, was published by Basilio.

Seizing the Day

Tetsuyoshi Yamada

UNIQLO Nakamozu Store
Osaka Prefecture
Limb apraxia

SPECIAL FEATURE

O2

FROM OSAKA

Tetsuyoshi Yamada's day begins early, and speed is of the essence. Each morning he rides his bicycle to work, arriving before everyone else. He has been working at UNIQLO for 12 years now, and people in his neighborhood have become used to seeing him race by at top speed.

Before Yamada started working at UNIQLO, he made his living at a bicycle factory, but he always wanted to directly interact with customers. Soon after starting his new job, however, he realized that other people were hesitating to interact with him, and he felt distant from the other staff. He knew that his new colleagues were struggling inside to figure out how to act around him. And even though he could learn everything about store operations, Yamada knew that there was no magic pill to help everyone understand each other. Time and time again, he found himself up against this wall.

"I've always liked talking to other people," Yamada said. "So I tried starting up conversations during breaks."

Of course, it was difficult at first. But he noticed that the walls between him and the other staff were beginning to slowly crumble away, particularly by his third month on the job. He gradually moved from working in the back-room to positions that put him in contact with customers. Eventually, he asked the store manager if he could work the cash register.

"The store manager was very concerned at first, but looking back, I can understand why," Yamada said.

So how did it go?

"I messed up and was lectured a few times, but I was still happy because UNIQLO was giving me the chance to see what I was capable of doing," he explained. "Of course, I overcame some hurdles and failed at other challenges, but I had a feeling of acceptance."

The cash register is the most critical place for customer service, and because money is exchanged, customers tend to pay extremely close attention to their transactions. And so Yamada kept track of how customers reacted to him as a cashier. "I was curious to know how many people actually checked their receipts after paying," he said.

He discovered that about eight out of ten people checked their receipts. He remembers that some customers appeared particularly concerned when they looked over their receipts as they walked away from the counter. Of course, work is difficult for everyone at times, but these challenges are an important part of gaining experience, and with them Yamada has changed.

"I just had to accept the fact that people would watch me whenever I was working at the cash register or helping customers," he said, adding that he used to feel bitter about it. "But my attitude now is that if this is the way things are, then I will just focus on what I can do to change them for the better. It's a pretty cool approach, I think."

A day on the job for Tetsuyoshi Yamada

7:15 a.m.
Arrive at work by bicycle and check notes from the previous day



8:30 a.m.
Open the cash registers and prepare small change for each one



9:00 a.m.
Remove items from boxes and display them in the store



9:45 a.m.
Attend the morning meeting to share information with other staff members about the previous day's sales and the daily targets



10:00 a.m.
Open the store, remove merchandise from boxes and serve customers



4:00 p.m.
Check merchandise inventory and fill out forms on the computer to request new stock for specific items from headquarters

5:00 p.m.
Leave the store, with a stop at a local convenience store or supermarket to buy dinner on the way home



"I was curious to know how many people actually checked their receipts after paying." —Tetsuyoshi Yamada



Meet Fashion Lover Chieko Miura

"I wasn't able to talk to other people at first," Miura said. "Actually, I didn't plan on applying for a UNIQLO job because the work involved interacting with customers."

SPECIAL FEATURE



FROM YAMAGUCHI

Yoko Jinno

Koeikai Center for Employment and Welfare Support of People with Disabilities
Employment Support Representative

Chieko Miura

UNIQLO Ubeshimizugawa Store
Yamaguchi Prefecture
Mental disability

Chieko Miura had heard about UNIQLO, but thought that the requisite contact with customers would not suit her so she did not plan on applying.

Miura had just left her job and was looking for a new one, so she called Yoko Jinno at the Koeikai Center for Employment and Welfare Support of People with Disabilities. But Jinno, who was well acquainted with Miura, noticed something different about her voice this time. She was usually passionate about working, but now she didn't sound at all like her usual self. Then Jinno had an idea. At that moment, she knew without a doubt in her

mind that UNIQLO would be the perfect place for Miura.

There are a range of employment support organizations throughout Japan, including Hello Work and the Center for the Employment of People with Disabilities, but the Koeikai Center for Employment and Welfare Support of People with Disabilities is different. It provides everyday support for individuals in need of assistance, in addition to helping people look for work. Over time, Jinno had become Miura's most trusted consultant at Koeikai.

Miura was very positive about looking for a new job. But her passion waned when Jinno suggested UNIQLO, because it did not seem like a realistic option for her. At her last job in a food processing facility, she did not have to interact with people outside of the company, and the work itself was largely repetitive. The working environment at UNIQLO, however, would be completely different, with customers from all walks of life visiting on a daily basis. Given this, it was not surprising that Miura would be hesitant about working in such an environ-

ment. But Jinno had other ideas.

"I knew that she loved fashion," Jinno said. "That was the first reason I thought she might be happy there. After all, if you like what you do, you can stay positive about your work. Miura had worked at the same place for a long time, so she had developed a framework for establishing new routines. Moreover, her work ethic was extraordinary, and so I was certain UNIQLO was the right place for her."

As they worked together to find a suitable job, Jinno began to gain a better understanding of Miura's strengths beyond her abilities, including her likeable personality and enthusiasm about her work.

"She always looks fashionable, even when she talked to me about how difficult it was to find a job," Jinno said.

Miura started working for UNIQLO after a supportive push from Jinno, and she remains enthusiastic about what she does. When Jinno dropped by the store to see how she was doing, Miura burst forth with her latest plans. "I'd like to try altering pants next," she gushed.

Jinno said she was pleased to see Miura setting and pursuing goals. "It's wonderful. This new environment has given her the ambition to take real steps, despite her disabilities. I am so glad that everything has worked out for her."

Miura may not have been able to pursue a job at UNIQLO on her own, but Jinno's support has helped her to broaden her horizons.



In the staffroom during break times, Miura talks to her colleagues not only about work, but about lunch, places she has gone on her days off, and other things. This is remarkable because nobody could have imagined her doing so before she started working for the company.



Miura takes clothing out of boxes and sorts items by color and size before removing garments from their plastic wrapping, building a rhythm as she carries out her duties.

"I am not sure if working at UNIQLO is right for me." —Chieko Miura

"I knew UNIQLO would be the perfect place for Miura." —Yoko Jinno

The Long Road to UNIQLO



SPECIAL FEATURE

04

FROM TOKYO

Go Suzuki
UNIQLO Asakusa ROX Store, Tokyo
Higher cerebral dysfunction

Mayumi Suzuki
Mother

Mayumi Suzuki's son, Go, was just 20 years old when he was involved in a skiing accident. He miraculously survived and was out of the hospital within a month. The doctors assured them that "there would be no aftereffects from the injury," and at first it appeared as though the young man had fully recovered. But his family could tell that something was clearly different about him. He would forget conversations seconds after having them and would erupt in sudden bursts of anger and violence. His condition, higher cerebral dysfunction, was not officially diagnosed until more than four and a half years after the accident.

Suzuki did not interview for a position at UNIQLO until after he had been certified as having a disability. He had just started to recover to the point where he could function normally in society. His condition, however, had not disappeared.

"I almost had to trick him into going to the interview because he was so reluctant," his mother recalled. "The first three years were extremely difficult."

Even his commute to work was a reason for concern. He went to work on his own in the mornings, but his mother made him text her before returning in the evening, and she waited at the train station for him to return every day.

It wasn't until quite some time later that his mother learned he had not talked to his coworkers during his breaks throughout the first two years that he worked at UNIQLO. Instead, Suzuki frequently went straight to the men's restroom

after eating lunch, where he would remain until his breaks were over.

"He told me that conversations with others would 'wear out' his brain, and that it would leave him struggling to concentrate for the rest of the afternoon," his mother explained. "I was really shocked to hear this. But he stuck to it, despite making mistakes, and his memory slowly returned."

In his earliest days at UNIQLO, Suzuki often took notes, but he frequently lost them or forgot that he had taken them. Now, he is able to deal with customers, run the fitting rooms and handle regular tasks without his disability affecting his performance. In fact, his condition has improved considerably since he first started working at UNIQLO.

When Suzuki had his accident, higher cerebral dysfunction had yet to be identified as an actual condition, and to this day, very little is known about it. His disability is not visible or externally obvious, so it is difficult for other people to understand his condition.

Suzuki's mother now gives lectures in various places on higher cerebral dysfunction to raise public awareness about the problem. Suzuki and his family have blazed a path for other individuals with disabilities to follow, and they have created a dialogue for all people, disabled or not, to better understand one another. And this path will only continue to become more clearly defined as time goes on.

"He would forget conversations seconds after having them. His disability is not readily visible, so it is hard for people to understand, which only makes things more difficult for him."

Go Suzuki: At Work and At Play



Suzuki is from Asakusa, Tokyo. He almost always goes out for lunch, and is known as a regular at a local sushi bar he frequents.



Suzuki likes clothing, especially T-shirts with bold designs. His friends often tell him that the T-shirts he wears look good on him.



In the morning, he takes notes on the daily sales targets, the previous day's sales figures and the time of his shift. He has memorized everything else, including the complicated names of all the products.

The Biggest Issue is a Lack of Knowledge

Yukiko Otsuka

CEO, Fukushi Venture Partners Co., Ltd.

Why haven't we seen an increase in the employment rate for disabled people? The main reason is a lack of knowledge. There is also a distinct lack of interest throughout the government, companies and the general public. This has kept awareness low. In contemporary Japanese society, it is rare to see people with disabilities in the workplace; the possibility of actually being served by a disabled individual is even less common. In this kind of social environment, because companies and individuals are not used to working with people who have disabilities, many people inevitably fail to view disabled individuals as a viable and capable part of the broader workforce.

UNIQLO has embraced individuals with disabilities as fellow comrades and invaluable human resources. This is not just because this industry is conducive to providing these opportunities. Rather it is the result of UNIQLO making the employment of disabled individuals a key component in its corporate management strategy—which boils down to doing the right thing in the right way in order to raise corporate value—and the uncompromising manner in which this is carried out by employees at the store level.

I would like to urge UNIQLO to share its efforts in this area, as well as the knowledge it has accumulated in the process, with other companies, in addition to society at large. In particular, I would like to see more staff members with disabilities working on the floor instead of playing supporting roles behind the scenes.

The sheer number of people that are actively involved in this project also inspires courage among the families of individuals with disabilities. As more and more people are exposed to opportunities to interact with the disabled, awareness will grow and the employment outlook for people with disabilities will improve.

After working at a consulting firm, Yukiko Otsuka started her own consultancy in 1999. She was compelled to establish Fukushi Venture Partners Co., Ltd. in 2003 after meeting the late Masao Ogura, the then-chairman of Yamato Transport Co. Ltd., and learning about his efforts to create a workplace for people with disabilities by combining social service concepts with business management methods.



Column

Challenges are Fun

Shingo Kunieda

Professional wheelchair tennis player

When I first started playing tennis, I was actually more fond of basketball, mainly because it was featured in a popular manga that I liked at the time. But my attitude about tennis changed when I went overseas as a high school student and saw professionals with disabilities play the game for the first time. Their skills and intensity were really exciting, and I remember thinking that someday I wanted to be out there competing just like that.

Now that I compete professionally, I am more determined than ever to spread the word about wheelchair tennis. I'd like to raise awareness and generate buzz about the sport by playing in and winning bigger tournaments. And I want kids out there to hold on to their own dreams, because even if they have disabilities, I want them to tackle head on any challenge they may face. Challenges can be daunting, but they can also be fun. I think it is very important to bring a courageous attitude to all your endeavors. After all, how can you know what you're capable of unless you try?



Shingo Kunieda was confined to a wheelchair at the age of nine due to a tumor on his spinal cord. He was a singles gold medalist at the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games. In April 2009, he became Japan's first professional wheelchair tennis player. He signed an exclusive endorsement contract with UNIQLO in August 2009.

Embracing Employees with Disabilities

UNIQLO has been proactively offering job opportunities to people with disabilities since 2001, in line with a management policy that requires the company to employ at least one person with a disability at every store. By the end of August 2009, there were 763 people with disabilities working at UNIQLO stores throughout Japan.

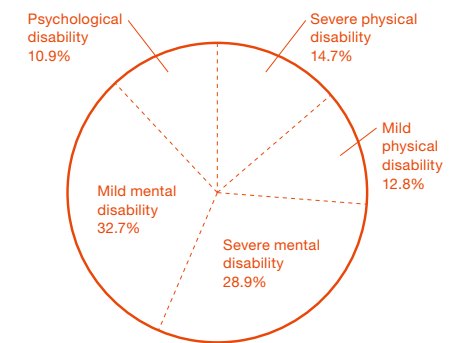
At the outset of this program in 2001, we were still prisoners to preconceived misconceptions. We feared that employing individuals with disabilities would hamper efficiency and that such individuals would struggle with the work. But as we began hiring disabled individuals, we started to realize that we needed to shed our preconceptions and should not treat such individuals differently, and that work should be assigned to people in line with what they can actually do. It is also important for staff members with disabilities to articulate what they can and cannot do.

Currently, there are individuals with disabilities working at 90% of UNIQLO Japan stores, and we have benefited significantly from working with them. One plus is the positive attitude that has developed through the process of working together. An additional merit has been the heightened understanding of people

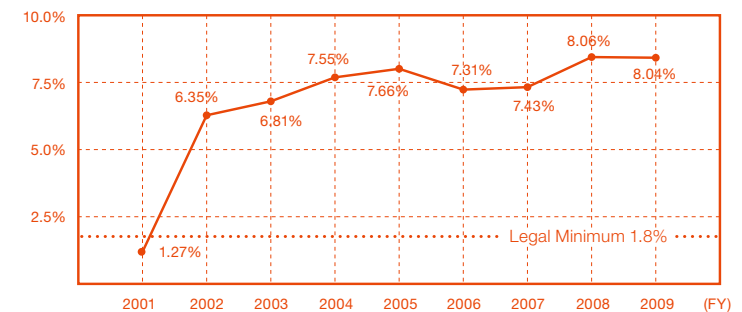
with disabilities that has taken place throughout our network of stores.

Customers ranging across a diverse spectrum of ages and lifestyles shop at UNIQLO. We believe that the heightened thoughtfulness and attention to detail resulting from having people with disabilities on staff will improve the quality of service we provide to them. Although we have yet to employ people with disabilities at all of our stores, we remain determined and committed to achieving this goal.

Types of Disabilities at UNIQLO



UNIQLO Employment Rate of Individuals with Disabilities



*Data through fiscal 2006 is for the period through March. From fiscal 2007 onward, figures are current through June 1.