

sustainable japan

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Gavin Dixon: changing organizations, and the world

Roundtable

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In the corporate world, sustainability is one of the hottest topics and biggest goals. Unfortunately for most companies, it is also one of the hardest things to achieve. Gone are the days when sustainability meant a yearly event (a beach cleanup!) with a press release. Sophisticated reporting, shareholder demands and a very knowledgeable public require companies to look at all aspects of their organization from a sustainability lens. How does a company do this, when its people are not sustainability experts? They ask for help. Here in Tokyo, one of the people they can ask is Gavin Dixon.

Dixon was the guest on the 16th episode of the Japan Times Sustainability Roundtable, hosted by Ross Rowbury. The roundtable has featured many guests, each of whom approached sustainability from a different angle: from glamorous executive chefs to aerospace leaders, the series has found the most interesting people in Japan working in this space and told their stories. Dixon is a guest who is directly enabling the sustainability effort and brings a workmanlike approach to actually achieving it. His stories and observations of consultancy, change and organizational transformation weren't glib or personal. Here was a guest who was talking about work.

Reframing human resources

Dixon is a co-founder of Global Perspectives K.K., a "sustainability consultancy" based in Tokyo that specializes in helping companies develop their employees and organizational culture for success in sustainability. He formed the company after working in human resources and business consulting and recognizing that while a shift had occurred in society, the corporate world was lagging behind. "As sustainability was becoming front and center, one of the key missing pieces was working on the people," he said. "So we decided to help people try to reframe human resources from the perspective of sustainability."

What does all that mean? It means that a change to sustainability now requires real investment from companies... but that doesn't have to mean hiring a new department. Dixon used a metaphor to explain: "There's the hardware and the software. By 2021, the companies are trying. So there are now ESG reports, there's an ESG strategy document — that's the hardware. But reporting is just words. Now it's all about actions. You've got your reporting, but what are you doing?" He chuckled, remembering a client's consternation at turning those words into action. "It's easy for senior leaders to forget that a company is just a group of people who work in the same building. And so you can have many systems and frameworks and value propositions in place, but if your people aren't on board, it's not going to work... If you're going to get strategies and frameworks



Co-founder and Director of Global Perspectives K.K., Gavin Dixon YUIKO TAIYA FOR PHOTOMATE

put in place, you need the right people."

Linking home values to work

The interesting thing about looking at sustainability from an HR perspective is that Dixon isn't talking about new hires, he is talking about the current workforce. "Most people separate sustainability from work," he said. "They recycle at home, but when they get to work they forget all that. We're

trying to connect their home life and their home values with work life. We're giving people the understanding that when you go to work, you have a big opportunity to do this on a bigger scale. And that will do the company good and society good. And the forward-thinking companies are starting to understand that, and allow their people to bring that to work." This is no doubt music to the ears of Japanese corpo-

rate leaders, who are loath to take on new talent due to restrictive labor laws.

But how does Global Perspectives develop current employees? Dixon gave a very specific example. "We work with an organization called One Young World, something that used to be called 'Young Davos.' It's a yearly event around the world. We set up a sustainability training program that runs for six months, with OYW in the middle. Our client companies participate. We work within a company, identify the young leaders in an organization, and the program helps them develop a project that in the end is meant to go live." Rowbury's eyebrows shot up at the phrase "go live." Dixon nodded: "That's right... This wasn't just a training exercise. This was real!"

As Dixon talked, his eyes flashed with excitement. "One of the companies that we worked with, the people who attended the program worked with their New Projects (RX) department. The projects that came out of the training program are now live and generating profits for the company. Another company, who we are working with this year, that team is working with their Digital Innovation department. They have to present at the end to senior leadership to go live. When you see those people given the trust, responsibility and resources to create change in an organization, you start seeing a business return and senior leaders get excited."

Excitement of new challenges

The reason Dixon is so different is that for him, sustainability is all about helping the people already working at a company to simply use their values. He also made it sound incredibly fun. Imagine if your company's leaders hired Global Perspectives. Suddenly middle managers and junior staffers are called together. Everyone gets a chance to look at how they are operating. The new challenge: Where can we be sustainable? Ideas that are feasible aren't just



Gavin Dixon at Al Gore's Climate Reality Leadership Community training held in Tokyo, on Oct. 2-3, 2019. GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES K.K.

written on whiteboards, they are explored. Outside experts are tapped. Budgets are set. Suddenly instead of just talking, those employees who are passionate or sharp are leading the change, with projects that are on timetables and within budgets. It would be hard to imagine a more reinvigorating thing to happen at work, no matter where you worked.

In a country where the natural environment is so cherished and recycling is considered a default requirement, Dixon is helping bring sustainability from the culture to the workplace. The quotes and stories in this article are just a small sample of the many anecdotes, observations and points he shared during his conversation with Rowbury. To hear more about his efforts and see the passion of a person on the front lines of sustainability, check out the movie of the Roundtable by scanning the below QR code, or search for the Japan Times Sustainability Roundtable series on YouTube. Or maybe you will be lucky — you will turn up for work next week and he will be there, waiting to help your company do better.

Roundtable is a monthly series of English-language events organized by The Japan Times Cube. For more information visit <https://sustainable-japan-times.com/roundtable>



Gavin Dixon and roundtable host Ross Rowbury discussing about sustainability in the corporate world YUIKO TAIYA FOR PHOTOMATE

Fukuyama, City of Roses, to host world convention and expo

Satoyama - Authentic Japan

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The World Federation of Rose Societies' 20th World Rose Convention will be held in the Hiroshima Prefecture city of Fukuyama from May 18 to 24, 2025. The triennial convention on roses is the largest event of the World Federation of Rose Societies, which has a history of 50 years and about 40 member countries.

About 600 to 700 people from around the world, including rose researchers and growers, rose lovers and rose artists, will gather at the forum. The conventions are a place for making and deepening friendships and exchanging information as well as a forum for discussing measures such as diffusing knowledge about roses, promoting rose research and standardizing classification and judging criteria for rose trials.

During the convention, a number of committees with representatives from each participating country will exchange thoughts on achieving the goals of the World Federation of Rose Societies, hold lectures on the latest information in the field and conduct visits to rose gardens to deepen the relationships among participants.

In addition, the winners of the Award of Garden Excellence will be chosen and new inductees to the Rose Hall of Fame, selected in a preliminary vote, will be announced, making the event truly an authoritative convention with a tremendous impact on the world of roses.

The deep relationship between Fukuyama and roses began during the postwar reconstruction period. About 80% of the central city was destroyed by fire in an air

raid on Aug. 8, 1945. In the mid-1950s, when the city still had not fully recovered from the wounds inflicted by the war, some residents working hard to rebuild the city started to say, "Let's plant flowers — enrich the devastated city and restore people's peace of mind." They planted about a thousand rose seedlings in the place that is now Bara Koen (rose park). This was the beginning of Fukuyama's community development based on roses. Many people were touched by this movement and started making small rose beds everywhere in the city under the slogan, "Flowers are beautiful, and the hearts of those who love and nurture them are even more beautiful." Many citizens have participated in the annual Fukuyama Rose Festival. The last two festivals were held online due to the coronavirus pandemic, but the one held in 2019 gathered a record high of 860,000 visitors. Roses have played a key role in the development of Fukuyama's building.

In 1985, roses were designated as the city flower, becoming the symbol of Fukuyama. The Bara Koen, which has become an important place for citizens to interact, received the Award of Garden Excellence from the World Federation of Rose Societies in May 2006.

The people of Fukuyama believed that "fostering roses leads to fostering a friendly town." This led to the creation of the term "rose mind," which refers to a spirit of compassion, kindness and mutual help that they believed would be nurtured through a love of roses. Just as rose mind spread throughout the city, roses spread from residents' yards to small flowerbeds along the streets and to the entire town. As a result, the Fukuyama City Rose Town Ordinance was enacted in 2015, and the "City of One Million Roses" was achieved in 2016, the 100th anniversary of the city's establishment. The ordinance promotes further expansion of community development based on roses and citizens' rose mind and established May 21 as the Day of Roses, commemorating the day in 1956 on which Rose Show, was held.



Pergola with full bloom roses at the Bara Koen FUKUYAMA CITY

In recognition of these 60 years of post-war efforts that included the creation of a city of roses and the fostering of rose mind, it was decided at the 18th World Rose Convention in Copenhagen that Fukuyama would host the milestone 20th World Rose Convention. Fukuyama Mayor Naoki Eda-hiro posted a declaration on the convention's website as one of the supporters of the event together with a number of citizens, companies and organizations who also support the event, which said: "I will make efforts to make Fukuyama a city of roses where everyone shines."

The theme for the convention is "Roses for the Future — A New Future Begins in Fukuyama." In addition to the convention, the Rose Expo Fukuyama 2025 will be held concurrently to introduce "the charm of flowers and greenery" and "the charm of Fukuyama, City of Roses" to the world. The expo will consist of exhibitions, contests, performances, workshops and markets held at different venues in the city.

Commemorating the milestone year for the convention, Fukuyama will send out a message of hope for peace and create a new value based on roses while introducing the city's efforts to realize a sustainable society as outlined in the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, making the event itself sustainable to hand down to future generations.

This section highlights the environment and a sustainable society. For more information please visit www.sustainable.japantimes.com



Times Gallery



Kosovo Ambassador Sabri Kicmari (second from right) visits the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (Tufs), where he met with President Yoshiko Hayashi (second from left). The meeting was also attended by Vice President Jun Matsukuma (left), and diplomat Arber Mehmeti. TUPS



EMBASSY OF CUBA



Jordanian Ambassador Lina Annab met Sophia University Chancellor Tsutomu Sakuma on enhancing partnerships with Jordanian universities. From left: Yuka Fukumuro, Morishita Tetsuo, Chancellor Sakuma, Ambassador Annab and Third Secretary Talal Masarweh. EMBASSY OF JORDAN



Thanks to the International Exchange Organization (IEO), Charge d'Affaires Natalia Salazar (top, second from left) shared the meaning of the Bolivian traditional festival Fiesta de Alasitas with more than 100 Japanese young people. Top left: Yasuyo Sato, president of IEO. EMBASSY OF BOLIVIA



The PROPEA professional business service agreement between the Czech Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan (CCCJ) and the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Tokyo was renewed on Feb. 5. Left: Roman Watanabe, CCCJ chairman. Right: Czech Ambassador Martin Tomco. CCCJ



EMBASSY OF SERBIA



Jarman International's CEO, Ruth Marie Jarman, joined a panel of key women in the Tohoku region to discuss the city of Jonezawa's great potential as a destination for tourism and living. From left: Miho Uematsu, Satomi Abe, Miika Kuroda, Jarman, Meiko Hata. JARMAN INTERNATIONAL



The Embassy of Lithuania participated in the photo exhibition "Things We Want to Preserve for the Future" in Tokyo's Minato Ward. Taking part in the opening event were families dressed in traditional Lithuanian clothes. EMBASSY OF LITHUANIA



The Bara Koen (rose park) received the Award of Garden Excellence from the World Federation of Rose Societies in May 2006 FUKUYAMA CITY